

# RODE NT55

The Rode pencil has been sharpened yet again. This latest addition to the range proving the old adage that two heads are better than one.

**Text:** Greg Walker



► The folks at Rode sure know a good thing when they see one (or build one). Their 1/2-inch gold sputtered ‘true condenser transducer’ capsule, which first appeared in the NT5 and then returned in an elegant format somewhat separated from its electronic housing in the NT6, has made another curtain call (no doubt by popular demand and through careful market research). This time – as is almost predictable by now – Rode has upped the ante once more by providing a very classy package featuring a mic body and two removable capsule headstocks: one cardioid, the other omni-directional.

As with the NT6, this new Rode is designed not only for recording studios but also film, broadcast and theatre applications where omni capsules are often called upon to capture sounds in context. The build quality and features, such as three-position switches for variable pad and high-pass filter, make Rode’s intentions clear: this is a mic with high ambitions for repeatable precision recording.

The NT55 comes in a tasteful black ‘special edition’ metal case, which, in and of itself, alludes to a certain more rarified air that Rode happily breathes these days. Opening up the case reveals a beautifully made microphone body, which somehow seems classier than anything else I’ve seen from Rode to date. Maybe it’s the two inset three-position ‘pen’ switches and their associated embossed legending, or maybe it’s the double-digit model number... Either way I found the build quality to be both reassuringly solid and expensive looking.

The NT55 is somewhat longer (145mm) and heavier (110g) than the original NT5, though it still easily qualifies as a small microphone and Rode rightly claims it to be an “unobtrusive” choice for high-visibility gigs. The cardioid capsule comes already attached, while the spare omni head is snugly stored in a high-density rubber mould within the case. A very tight but functional rubber mic clip is also supplied. The heads are a cinch to change and I liked the simple omni and cardioid symbols

which clearly identify which one’s which and sit neatly above the ubiquitous gold Rode dot when attached.

There are two ‘pen’ switches on the microphone body that facilitate filtering and mic input attenuation. The 12dB/octave high-pass filter can be set flat or roll off low-end frequencies from 75 or 150Hz while the pad can be set flat, to –10 or –20dB. The combination of these settings and the two polar patterns allows for a great deal of fine tuning – anything from close miking instruments (where proximity effect can be curtailed), to room miking an extremely loud sound effect (where distortion can be easily avoided) are all well within the NT55’s job description. The NT55 has very low self-noise and both capsules exhibit smooth frequency response from 50Hz up to around 10kHz, where there’s a gentle lift in the cardioid response and a more marked lift in that of the omni.

## PENS & PENCILS

In use, it takes less than a minute to make the switch between the two capsules and the sonic results are quite impressive. I used the NT55 on a variety of sources, from violins and hand percussion to acoustic and electric guitars and drum overheads. The sonic signatures of the two capsules are quite different, which to my mind is a plus. I liked the tighter midrange of the cardioid head for things like percussion and strings, while the more open, brighter omni head sounded great on acoustic guitar and drums. My only real gripe with the NT55 is with the ‘pen’ switches, which I’ve never liked; they’re fiddly and I can never find a pen in the house when I need it. I know they’re an industry standard but they’re also somewhat annoying at times.

This gripe aside, I was very impressed with the NT55. With its additional pad and filtering options I can see this microphone being a popular choice for both studio and stage applications as well as doing the hard yards on location recordings and foley sessions. Altogether, a sweet package from the Rode crew and further proof that two heads are indeed better than one. ■

## NEED TO KNOW

**Price**  
\$455

**Contact**  
Rode Microphone  
(02) 9648 5855  
ozsupport@rodemic.com  
www.rodemic.com

**Pros**  
Good sounding professional package.  
Cardioid and omni heads have their own flavours.  
Variable pads and high-pass filters add flexibility.  
Up to 10 years warranty.

**Cons**  
‘Pen’ switches can be tedious to engage.  
Be careful not to ‘lose your head!’

**Summary**  
A beautifully crafted small condenser microphone system with swappable cardioid and omni-directional heads, as well as considerable attenuation and filtering options. Full marks for style and functionality, and the somewhat up-market presentation.