

Quality microphones from China. I am quite willing to admit that I was as sceptical as many others in this business, but it seems that things have, as they always do, changed. Shanghai-based SE Electronics has been gaining a reputation for producing large diaphragm microphones that are simply good in their own right, but also quite amazing value for money.

Large diaphragm mics occupy that glamorous end of the scale. Most manufacturers, especially the budget ones, seem to focus almost exclusively on this area, but there is also a need for quality, small diaphragm pencil microphones in all areas of professional audio. SE Electronics has not ignored this. I was provided with a factory stereo pair of SE Electronic SE1A microphones, and a single SE2A.

The SE1A is an update of the SE1, with a quieter output and increased sensitivity. A fixed cardioid pattern, output impedance is 300Ω with a noise level of 17dB (A weighted). This factory stereo pair comes with plastic microphone clips, a stereo mounting bar and mic stand thread adapters. The SE2A, just

the frequency response chart confirmed a slight bump around the 8kHz to 10kHz mark. This brightness was not overbearing, but I preferred the effect when used in the room rather than closer up. When used on a variety of other acoustic instrument applications, all the results were pleasant. There were a few occasions where a dull-sounding instrument, in particular an acoustic guitar and some very mid-heavy congas were brought a little more to life by taking advantage of the slight boost in the upper ranges.



SE ELECTRONIC

SE1A & SE2A MICS



like the SE1A, has a solid metal construction, and the build quality looks and feels good overall. Technical specifications are the same as the SE1A, but the capsule on the SE2A can be swapped to provide a cardioid, hypercardioid or omni polar pattern. Along with the interchangeable capsules, the SE2A is supplied with a full suspension cradle. Both the stereo pair of SE1As and the SE2A are well presented being supplied in lacquered wooden boxes with hard foam cut-out inserts.

Both the SE1A and SE2A are of a no frills design — true condenser units with a simple front address small diaphragm microphones devoid of both pad and filter features. The provided accessories all have the same solid feel as the microphones themselves. Rather than a simple elastic band, which is what I would have expected to see, the suspension cradle uses a braided elastic arrangement and a neoprene-lined central holder.

An Interesting Note

After a brief conversation with an American colleague, it was pointed out to me that the cardioid capsule on the SE1A unscrewed and the mounting looked suspiciously like it could accept the SE2A capsules. A quick test proved that this was quite true, and so the flexibility of these mics looks even better.

In The Studio

I went into session with a number of other small diaphragm microphones from a variety of manufacturers. First up, I wanted to see how well matched the stereo pair of SE1As were, and for microphones at such a low price this was surprisingly good. The stereo mounting bar was firm with no rattling or over-the-top microphone stand rumble. I used them in both drum overhead and room applications and found them to be detailed and open. They appeared to be quite bright sounding in comparison to some of the other options I tried, and a quick look at

The characteristics of the cardioid capsule on the SE2A were, as you would expect, very much in line with what I had experienced with the SE1A. There really were no distinguishing attributes to the sound. When fitted with the hypercardioid capsule, on-axis sound was very similar to the cardioid, with a little more low mid colouration. The slightest movement off axis, and things start to sound a little strange, with holes appearing in the upper and lower mid frequencies. The omni capsule, for me, was the choice of the three options. A very nice spacious feel, with good consistent pick up all round. The high-frequency boost was still present, but not as pronounced as both the cardioid and hypercardioid options. Getting closer into cymbals and high hats gave a pleasing lift to the presence without becoming over brittle. When compared to the other microphone choices I had available to me, several times the price of the SE1A and SE2A, they at no point seemed out of place or significantly inferior. It is fair to say neither are as full ranging as some. The depth to the sound was not quite up with some, but you always have to keep in mind the price of these SE Electronic microphones.

Conclusion

So a quality microphone from China is a reality. Both of these small diaphragm microphones, the SE1A and SE2A, truly defy their budget pricing. SE Electronics are developing a very comprehensive and usable range of microphones, and the entire range can be yours for the price of a single high-end, large diaphragm microphone from some other microphone manufacturers. Now that really is amazing. **TM**

THE REVIEWER

Simon Tillbrook is the Principal Music Tutor at Islington Music Workshop, in London. The rest of his time is spent as a freelance engineer, mainly in the USA.

INFORMATION

📞 SE1A £59 SE2A £127 + VAT.

📍 Sonic Distribution Ltd, 101 Dunstable Road, Ampthill, Beds, MK45 2NG, UK.

☎ +44 (0)1525 840 400.

✉ sales@sonic-distribution.com

🌐 www.sonic-distribution.com