

TEST

SE ELECTRONICS SE2200-A CONDENSER MIC

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Budget condenser mics are usually fairly basic, but SE's 2200-A has a few unusual extras. **Huw Price** finds out what difference an 'A' makes...

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Recommended

SE2200-A CONDENSER MICROPHONE

Manufacturer **SE Electronics**

Price **£149**

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METHOD SPOT

Bass is the place

When cardioid or figure-of-eight mics are placed close to a sound source they exhibit a slight lift in their bass response which is known as the 'proximity effect'. This can be used to add extra body or warmth, but it can sometimes sound boomy and muddy. To get round the problem, the microphone is moved away from the sound source or has its pickup pattern switched to omnidirectional (if this facility is available). However, if you're trying to avoid spillage from other instruments or minimise room ambience, this isn't always practical, so cardioid-only microphones - like the SE2200-A - really benefit from a bass roll-off switch.

If you bought the inaugural issue of *MTM* back in April of last year you may currently be experiencing a sense of déjà vu, as the SE2200 was the subject of our very first mic review. However, while the model before you here - designated the SE2200-A - may sound like a minor upgrade, it has, in fact, been completely redesigned to include several improvements over the original version.

Pre-eminent among these are a 10dB attenuation pad and a switchable bass roll-off feature. If you're recording music at home or in a small project studio, it's likely that you'll have only one decent mic, so it needs to be capable of handling anything you throw at it. Condenser microphones can be a little over-sensitive and high sound pressure levels (SPLs) can cause distortion. This may occur in the onboard mic preamp itself, or in the mic preamp section of your mixer. So, if you need to record loud stuff like full-on electric guitars, you could be in trouble if your microphone doesn't have a pad switch.

China in your hand

The SE2200-A is assembled in SE Electronics' own Shanghai factory and features a new handmade capsule and low-noise preamp circuit plus a redesigned body. This sturdy metal chassis has a matte silver finish with the model number engraved in the side. The base unscrews to reveal the tidy electronic construction of the solid-state preamp, with two transistors and chunky output transformer clearly visible.

The housing includes two metal grilles to protect the 1-inch 'vapour-deposited' gold capsule. Below this are the switches for attenuation and bass roll-off, labelled on a grey band around the middle of the body. In fact, the whole assembly looks very classy indeed.

The SE2200-A ships with its own wooden box designed to fit inside a lockable aluminium flightcase with an SE shockmount and cable. The shockmount itself is a very high-quality accessory that wouldn't look out of place on a mega-bucks Neumann or AKG model.

Most mics with Chinese capsules are characterised by a frequency lift above approximately 4kHz. Quite often, this translates as a slightly shrill and scratchy high end, though the better examples can be bright without sounding too harsh. Happily, the SE2200-A falls into the latter category and the overall sound is smooth and natural.

Touching bass

Another area where budget condensers often fall down is in their lack of low-end depth, but again, the SE2200-A can 'get on down' with the best of them. The mic also offers a fairly wide sweet spot that helps capture those 'expressive' vocalists who find it impossible to stand still while singing.

The pickup pattern seems more hyper-cardioid than true cardioid, with maximum rejection occurring a little off-centre at the rear of the mic. With acoustic guitars, the SE2200-A combines a lot of high-frequency content with impressive detail, tracking notes all the way down to the lowest strings without running out of puff.

Giving the SE2200-A a blast up against an electric guitar speaker presented no problems; the attenuation switch wasn't absolutely necessary, but it's good to have it for safety's sake. The bass roll-off also worked smoothly, without introducing any weird side effects. All in all, the SE2200-A sets a new standard for sound quality and style in this price range and is certainly destined to become a poplar and respected addition to the SE's range of microphones. **MTM**



SUMMARY

KEY FEATURES

- Frequency response: 20Hz-20kHz
- Impedance: 1.2K +/- 30Ω
- Max SPL for 1% THD @ 1kHz: 130dB
- 1-inch 'vapour-deposited' capsule (cardioid)
- Transformer output stage
- -10dB pad
- Bass roll-off switch

WHY BUY

- Smooth, natural sound
- Switchable bass roll-off
- Real low-end weight
- Excellent build quality
- Try-before-you-buy scheme

WALK ON BY

- Slightly exaggerated top end
- Badge looks slightly tacky
- Cardioid only

VERDICT

The SE2200-A is an adaptable and highly specified microphone offering a clear, smooth sound with real depth at a bargain price.

