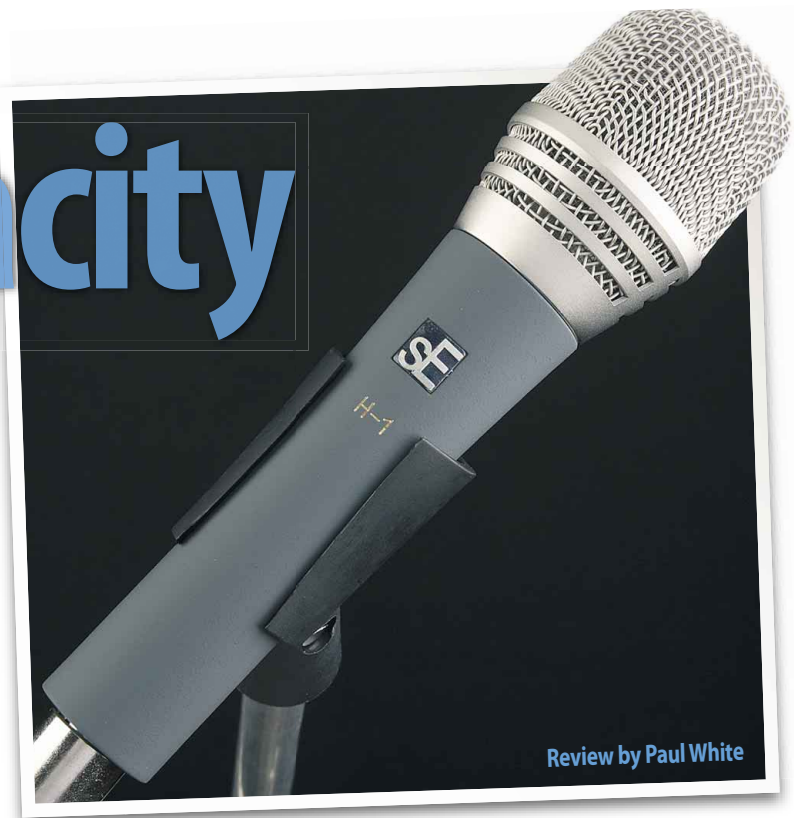


Hi-capacity

SE H1 hand-held capacitor mic

Hand-held stage vocals, once the exclusive province of dynamic mics, is a role increasingly being taken over by the latest generation of robust capacitor mics.



Review by Paul White

Traditionally, live vocals are handled by robust dynamic mics while studio vocals are recorded using capacitor microphones, which deliver better high-frequency accuracy and generally sound smoother. Until recently capacitor microphones were considered too expensive and too fragile to be used for general live performance, but today, thanks to new materials and manufacturing methods, capacitor mics are far more robust, and the prices are much lower too due to competition from the far east.

Although it looks much like a typical dynamic stage microphone, the SE H1 is a true capacitor microphone, and as such requires a phantom power source of 48 Volts to operate as it has on-board circuitry that needs power to operate.

This particular microphone is based on SE's

musicmart

SE H1 £149

Key Notes

- Hand-held capacitor mic.
- 20Hz to 20kHz frequency response.
- Max level 145dB.
- Sensitivity 2mV/Pa at 1kHz into 1kOhm.
- Noise 18dB (A weighted).

High Notes

- Solidly built.
- Classy studio-like sound.
- Good resistance to popping.

Low Notes

- May not have enough presence for some singers.
- No storage pouch.

Sonic Distribution: 01582 470260
www.sonic-distribution.com

sE2a studio mic capsule, but this version has been revoiced for vocal use and can withstand levels up to 145dB, so it won't be troubled if you scream into it. To minimise handling noise, the mic has an internal shockmount while the dual-layer wire basket assembly augments the fine mesh covering the end of the capsule assembly to reduce popping from plosives and breath noise. A further fine-mesh layer is fixed inside the basket spaced around 7mm from the outer grill, which helps make the assembly even more resistant to popping as breaths tend to be broken up into harmless turbulence by the various layers of mesh.

Unlike typical dynamic mics that might offer a 70Hz to 16kHz frequency range, the H1 covers the full 20Hz to 20kHz audio spectrum and has a sensitivity of 2mV/Pa at 1kHz into 1kOhm, so it produces a similar output to other stage mics for a given sound level. It has the expected cardioid (directional) pickup pattern needed for most live sound tasks and produces a low level of background noise — 18dB (A weighted) when used for close mic'ed vocals. A three-pin XLR connector carries the output, and because the microphone needs phantom power, it must always be used with a three-pin XLR cable and never with an XLR-to-jack adaptor. In virtually all respects then, the H1 is a studio microphone packaged in a tough, hand-held housing.

The mic is weighty without being excessively heavy and is finished in an easy-to-grip grey textured paint. A plastic stand mount clip is included but there's no hard box or plastic pouch.

Testing... testing

I compared the H1 with other hand-held vocal mics, both dynamic and capacitor, and found the resistance to popping very impressive, no

doubt due to the careful multi-layer screen design, and tonally the mic was pretty neutral, almost hinting at a large-diameter capacitor studio mic sound. The cardioid pattern is nicely tight with good side rejection, which bodes well for feedback control and handling noise compares well with dynamic models.

As expected, the H1 exposed more top end detail than the dynamic mics I compared it with but it didn't have the presence projection of the LD1011 back-electret capacitor mics that I use for all my live work these days. Whether that matters depends to a large extent on the type of voice you're dealing with. Where a rock singer needs to cut through a loud backing, a little extra presence can help, but if you're after more of a studio sound or if your voice is already a bit on the thin side, then the H1 is a great choice. The mic also feels just right in the hand, neither too light nor too heavy, and it sits securely in just about any standard vocal mic clip if you lose the one that comes with it.

Impressive engineering

Personally I think there's room in the market for a mic like this but with a switch on the side to offer different presence settings, achieved electronically, but as it is, we all need to match the character of the mic to the vocal spectrum of the singer, just as we do in the studio. There is no one-mic-fits-all answer, but if you have a PA capable of delivering an accurate sound and you want to get more of a studio vocal sound on stage, the H1 is definitely worth trying out. It costs a little more than some of its competitors but the impressive standard of engineering and classy sound may well win you over. Once you've used a capacitor mic on stage you may find yourself reluctant to go back to a dynamic model. www.musicmart-mag.com