

SE Electronics

H1



SE has re-voiced the capsule of its SE1a for a new role in the company's hand-held H1. Petra Jones finds out more...

KEY FEATURES

- Hand-held condenser
- Frequency response: 20Hz–20kHz
- Sensitivity: 2mV/Pa at 1Hz into 1kΩ
- Polar pattern: cardioid
- Impedance: $\leq 200\Omega$
- Max SPL: 145dB
- 48V phantom power

MEASURING UP

The SE H1 is competitively priced at £150, edging ahead of rivals such as the AKG C535EB (£170) thanks to its superior maximum SPL of 145dB. While it may not be as cheap as Audio Technica's ATM710 (£110), it offers a wider dynamic range with more low end.

H1

Manufacturer **SE Electronics**

Price **£150**

Contact **Sonic Distribution 01582 470260**

Web **www.seelectronics.com**

The latest product from Shanghai-based manufacturer SE Electronics is the H1 – a hand-held entry-level mic based on the company's SE1a condenser (which itself is an updated version of the SE1). Like the SE1a, the H1 has a satin metallic silver finish and is supplied in a cardboard box with protective foam cutouts and a mic clip. Both mics feature handmade and hand-tuned capsules, but there are a number of significant differences between them. Unscrewing the mesh head reveals the H1's re-voiced SE1a capsule underneath. The re-voicing has increased the maximum SPL to an impressive 145dB and softened the top end a little, which gives a warmer sound that's particularly noticeable on vocals and piano recordings.

Keep it simple

H1's predecessor, the *MTM*-award-winning SE1a pencil mic, had only two weaknesses: a slightly hard sound and spiky top end. However, the re-voicing undertaken for the H1 seems to have greatly improved the capsule in both of

these areas. And what's more, the H1's cardioid capsule is interchangeable, with two further capsules (omni and hypercardioid) available to give you even more recording options.

Unlike some rival hand-held condenser mics (AKG's C535EB, for example) the body of the H1 is devoid of switches. This is because switches can potentially compromise the isolation of the capsule from the body, introducing handling noise. Unwanted noise is further kept at bay by the four layers of varying gauge mesh around the capsule (Neumann's KMS104 has a three-layer mesh). The mesh head itself is easily unscrewed for use in the studio, providing less high-end rolloff for detailed instrumental recordings.

Indeed, using the mic without the mesh to record electric guitar demonstrated the difference clearly. Without it the H1 captured more of those distinctive overtones and harmonics that give electric guitar recordings character. But while SE's other budget condenser, the SE2200a, may be happy being pressed right up against a guitar amp, the sensitive H1 would rather be about 45cm or so away.

Jack of all trades?

SE maintains that the H1 is the company's most versatile budget condenser mic to date, suitable for anything from acoustic instruments

through to live drums. Versatility is certainly one of the H1's strengths – it really delivers as an overhead mic when used to record drums, hi-hats and cymbals, for example, yet it also manages to be an exceptional performer when it comes to capturing the high end and personality of steel-string guitars, even the complex timbre of 12-string acoustics.

On the quiet

The H1 also manages to preserve the intimacy and feel of acoustic playing without an amp, from busy chord progressions and percussive-style folk to delicate arpeggios. Woody, low-end acoustic depth is captured equally well and the H1 could very well spell the end of quiet, ear-straining acoustic recordings or the need to boost an acoustic guitar part in the mix.

These are just some of the H1's best assets – and they're in addition to the complete absence of handling noise while recording vocals, even when you're waving the mic around frantically (a definite plus for any band with a hyperactive frontman or vocalists). One of the H1's few weaknesses can be discovered when trying to capture the warmth and dynamic range of nylon-string guitars, though, as it can sound a little spiky in the top end. Overall, though, the H1 is a versatile mic that is flexible enough to cope with a wide range of different recording scenarios. **MTM**

SUMMARY

WHY BUY

- Zero handling noise
- Suitable for live and studio use
- Capable of handling a range of instruments
- Crisp, clean sound

WALK ON BY

- Weaker at coping with warmth, sustain and the dynamic range of nylon-string instruments

VERDICT

An affordable hand-held condenser that's flexible enough to handle a range of instruments and locations.



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