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DPA Microphones d:vote CORE 4099

New electronics means cleaner, hotter sound

By Paul Vnuk Jr.

DPA builds some of the cleanest and most realistic, yet musical, microphones on the market. They are also masters of miniature microphone technology, found in the d:fine headworn mics, d:screet lavalier models, and—most relevant to our readers—the d:vote 4099 miniature instrument mic that we first reviewed in June 2010.

DPA mics have always been quiet and clear with low self-noise, but last year they announced a new technology called CORE by DPA, which takes mic performance to a new level. CORE by DPA is a newly designed amplifier/capsule circuit that makes the mics clearer and more detailed, with a dynamic range improvement of up to 14 dB, depending on the mic. The two 4099 mic versions have been renamed and color-coded with plastic rings for easy identification. The d:vote CORE 4099 for Loud SPL, with the red ring, has had its dynamic range increased from 100 dB to 108 dB; the d:vote CORE 4099 for Extreme SPL, with the yellow ring, has had its dynamic range boosted from 95 dB to 109 dB.

More dynamic range means a louder, clearer signal without pushing your preamp as hard. This leads to amazing clarity on high-end preamps; I tried the Loud SPL mic with my Millennia Media HV-3D preamp into the new 2x6 interface card in my Apogee Symphony MKII (review coming soon), and was stunned at the signal chain's dimensionality and realism. However, this increased signal with less gain is even more important if you're using a computer interface with a "mere mortal" preamp built in!

"Shotgun, gooseneck, windsock, shock mount"

The above is how I described the d:vote 4099 the first time I reviewed it, and it still describes the mic best. A miniature 0.2"



capsule lives at the end of a small 1.8" mesh tube, turning it into a miniature shotgun mic with an ultra-tight supercardioid pattern.

This tube fits inside a foam windsock suspended snugly in a dual O-ring rubber shockmount. The windsock has been redesigned for the d:vote CORE 4099 with a more conical shape. This is attached to a firm 5.5" gooseneck for positioning. While the entire assembly appears fragile and delicate, it is physically robust and well-built.

The ultrathin cable attached to the microphone terminates in a MicroDot connector which pairs with the DAD4099 XLR adaptor or any of the company's wireless adaptors for use with third-party wireless systems. The mic attaches the same way as before to one of the many mounts offered by DPA—violin, cello, bass, brass, winds, drums, piano, sax, accordion, and guitar, as well as general-use mic stand and clamp mounts.

In use

I was sent a matched pair of the new d:vote CORE 4099 Loud SPL models. In addition to single-mic and stereo tests on acoustic guitar, I tried them out on hand percussion, shakers, violin, mandolin, and cello. I have been using an original d:vote 4099 on all of these sources for eight years, and know its sound very well—I won't track cello or violin without it.

I am a huge fan of using two hypercardioid (or in this case supercardioid) mics on fingerpicked acoustic guitar, one at the 12th fret and the other just at the bottom edge of the soundhole to minimize boom. I then pan the results in stereo, and balance them with a third room mic a few feet back. Add a little reverb, and this yields a great 3-dimensional acoustic guitar recording. I tried this with the new mics and the Millennia Media/Apogee combo mentioned above, and was thrilled.

As a single acoustic guitar mic, I like the d:vote CORE 4099 thanks to its versatility. It can be easily positioned in the perfect spot, and since it moves with the guitar, you don't need to worry about the guitarist sitting in and/or returning to the same position for take after take. In live recording situations, this mic is much better sounding than most onboard acoustic pickups. Being close to the guitar, its tight off-axis rejection means it rejects both PA feedback and spill from other instruments very well.

What about the sound? No news is amazing news: the sweet clear tone of the 4099 hasn't changed a bit, but the CORE preamps offer noticeably cleaner sound at lower gain, which is saying something considering how clean the original was. I'm impressed, and I think you will be too. ➤

PRICE: \$619.95 with one mount of your choice

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