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Review: DPA 4099 Instrument Microphone

"I really think this is the most compact and simplest-to-position drum microphone on the market."

by Nolan Rossi

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Audio engineers, let's be honest. We are all really comfortable with mic'ing the typical instruments that an average Sunday morning offers us. I'd even wager that many of you have the same microphone on your

through seasons of experimentation and then times of constancy. The question is what do we do about “bluegrass Sunday,” when an accordion, fiddle, and mandolin show up? For most of us we don't get much experience with these types of sources and so our microphone locker doesn't provide us the tools to win in these situations. DPA Microphones is one company that has a great solution for these situations. In fact, I've used the company's microphones on tour in the past and they have provided excellent solutions for situations such as these.

Closer Look & Cello Application

The new d:vote 4099 Instrument Microphone series is designed to cover a plethora of instruments with its versatile mic clip options. I took it into my studio for an in-depth look at what it can offer. The d:vote 4099 is a compact super cardioid condenser microphone; its small and sleek design is useful in tight situations. Atop a small, 5.5-inch, gooseneck rests the capsule, which has a shock mount and windscreen. The cable, thin by any means standard, comes in 12.6 mm for standard mic'ing applications and 2.2 mm for more rigorous situations. (designed for upright bass) and 1.6mm (designed for handheld instruments). At the end of this cable, the mini MicroDot connector works with virtually every wireless transmitter on the market with an adapter system. In addition, a mini MicroDot- connector to- standard XLR adapter is provide for a hard wire connection.

The same d:vote 4099 microphone works in an exhaustive series of smart ingenious microphone clips that provide solutions unique to each instrument. Each clip option designed for its purpose is described by the letter following the model number. The d:vote 4099B is for upright bass, the d:vote 4099C is for cello, and so on.

piano, saxophone and , violin and many others. A standard microphone stand adapter (SM4099) is available, as well as a music stand “clip on” adapter (CM4099). The “universal” clip (UC4099) utilized utilizes a nylon strap the user can wrap around and belt onto an instrument.

“Every touring cellist that I’ve worked with travels with his or her own 4099.”

There is a mounting option that will work for virtually any instrument and in any situation. As stated before, I’ve used these microphones on stage in the past. What I’ve seen most often is the application for cello. Every touring cellist that I’ve worked with travels with his or her own d:vote 4099C. It is the standard

for this application, without a doubt. The microphone is so easy to travel with and does the job so well that a cellist does not have to worry about how their sound will be reproduced.

I can attest to the quality of the sound and to the design. The mount works brilliantly by attaching to the strings just bellow the bridge. The gooseneck offers multiple positions to place the microphone. Although I had experience in the past, I still wanted to hear how the d:vote 4099C worked in this isolated studio situation. I asked my friend Cara Fox to come and play a bit for me in the studio. Cara plays for All Sons and Daughters, Gungor and Kari and she also plays at her home church, Journey in Franklin, Tenn. We spent about 45 minutes recording parts and listening to the d:vote 4099C. There are two popular mic’ing techniques for the d:vote 4099C with the cello. One option is to position the microphone toward the f hole of the cello. This produces a warm and resonate sound. It sounds more classical to my ear, and if I was working with a quartet I

The other popular position is to place the mic right under the bridge, aimed at the body of the cello. This provides more detail on the top end while still remaining balanced. This is typically what you see from cellists that are accompanying bands. That extra detail in the top end helps to cut through a band mix. The design of the clip makes it easy to position while perfectly isolating the sound of the cello. No handling noise is heard; just the pure sound of the instrument.

Similar to the cello application, I've had great success using the d:vote 4099V on violin and mandolin. This clips here works by attaching to the body of the instruments. The clip provides a stable foundation for [a mic] that is inevitably going to be in some type of motion with these instruments.

Drum Application

Since I had experience with this mic in certain applications I wanted to try something that was new to me. I chose the d:vote 4099D (drum clip for drums) because the drum kit is a more common source for Sunday morning. I also choose it because I questioned if it could stand up to the task. With the high-energy drummers that we often have on Sunday mornings, using condensers on the drum kit can be a challenge. The drum clip mount is [thoughtfully designed], yet simple. I was able to attach the clip to various types of drum hoops rims (metal/wood), but I never had a problem clipping and positioning the microphone. The d:vote 4099 has a 90-degree mounting ability so that you can position the microphone in any way needed on a drum. Because of its compact size, I was able to fit the microphone into the compact areas with ease. I really think this is the most compact and simplest to position drum microphone on the market.

compare both the sound quality as well as the bleed of the d:vote 4099D to something that I was familiar with. My assumption on the outset was that the d:vote 4099D would sound great for a jazz or country style of playing, but it would become less usable with a higher energy-style of playing. I was wrong. After listening back to what was a common worship style of playing, I preferred the d:vote 4099 to my other mics in every way. There was much more detail in the d:vote 4099—and I picked it every time in a blind test. My concern about cymbal bleed completely went away. I found the cymbal bleed to be no worse than other dynamic and condenser microphones that I use in a similar fashion. On the toms I found it to be very accurate, capturing the low end beautifully.

I really thought the d:vote 4099D worked well on the snare drum. The super-cardioid pattern provided the needed rejection from the hi-hat and other cymbals. I loved how the mic gave the snare punch in ways that the other mic lacked. I'm looking forward to using the mic in this application in the future.

I came away from my time with the d:vote 4099 Instrument Microphones [very] pleased. With endless mounting clip options you will be able to mic any instrument that comes into your church. As useful and innovative as the clips are, they would be useless if the mic did not sound good. Fortunately, the d:vote 4099 provides exquisite sonic results, capturing everything from upright cello to dynamic drums with precision and detail. Any church would be wise to have a few of these on hand. The d:vote 4099 covers more common tasks like strings, but it is an [ideal] utility microphone for any situation. Because each mount is a bit different, prices vary between models, Mounts can be purchased separately, but the d:vote 4099D and C Instrument Mics sell for about \$610.05 street price

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