

ROBIN GREEN puts two Australian condenser mics, the Rode NTG-1 and NTG-2 to the test, and finds that they don't necessarily have to be used upside-down!

When I took delivery of the two Gun mics, I naturally tore off the packaging like a small child on Christmas day, and frantically started reading their accompanying blurb. To my surprise, I read the words 'Made In Australia' – not 'Made In Austria'! I soon, however, realised that this is no cause for alarm.

As a boom operator for films, TV shows and commercials, I have used a wide range of mics in the field. From gun mics like the trusty Sennheiser 416, its much longer brother, the 816, the newer MKH 50, 60 and 70, right through to the small, warmer sounding modular mics (more often used in small, indoor spaces) with removable cardioid / hyper-cardioid capsules like the Neumann range and the Aston-Martin of boom mics – Schoeps!

The one thing that links all of these microphones, of course, is that they are all relatively expensive. Perhaps a little healthy low-cost competition wouldn't go amiss? Well, here is one such competitor and it has come from the other side of the globe.

Incarnation

Visually, if I could compare these two gun mics to any other

The XLR connection is solid and the general feel of the mic lends itself to confidence. The NTG-1 weighs 105g while the 2 weighs 161g so there isn't too much weight on the end of your pole.

Rode Test

This unfair test came out well for Rode, considering it was up against a Sennheiser MKH 60. The Rode sounds superficially similar, and has comparable side rejection to the MKH 60 (less than a Sennheiser 416), but there are certain differences for your money.

The 60 has more bass response than the Rode, (no shocks there) and has stronger presence. The 60 also had (surprise surprise) a slightly 'warmer' sound than the Rode and more output level.

Sound Mixer John Arkley of UKTV show *The Bill* agreed to try out the Rode NTG-1 and said "There's very little difference in sound between this and a Sennheiser 416. This would make a great back-up mic." He also commented that the Rode was more susceptible to handling noise than the 416. That is a pretty favourable review, however, for a mic that costs under £150.

RODE NTG-1 & NTG-2 TUBE MICROPHONE

series, it would probably be the Sennheisers MKH 50 and 60. The 50 would relate to the NTG-1 and the 60 to the NTG-2. They are very similar in length to the afore-mentioned pair; in fact the NTG-2 measures exactly the same in length as a 60 (278mm). This is where the comparison ends. The NTG-1 is 218mm long; just short enough to swing in a room with a low ceiling and beams!

Despite the difference in length of the NTG-1 and 2, the interference tube is exactly the same length on both. There is therefore no difference in the polar pattern, or the frequency response of the NTG's. The only reason for the 2's extra length, is its addition of a single AA battery

compartment for those without 48V powered desks and video cameras. An average alkaline battery apparently provides 500 hours of use. All the other features are identical.

The only control on the two mics is a high-pass filter switch located on the side, operable with a tiny flathead screwdriver or a ballpoint pen. The filter is set at 80Hz. There is no -10dB pad featured, which can often be handy for recording high-pressure noises like gun shots and explosions, but remember that this mic is incredibly inexpensive.


The body feels durable and substantial (and (although I haven't tested this!) I guess it could take the odd drop.

Conclusion

You get a lot of mic for your money here. The microphone is provided in a black leatherette pouch with a stand mic holder and, more usefully, a puff-gag, although it is quite thin. Something more substantial may be needed if you want to make faster swings, or indeed, venture outside. Although this mic seems to be designed primarily for video cameras, it does have its place on the end of a boom.

Rode can help with this too as I hear there is a range of low-cost boom mic accessories which are available now. These include a short boom pole at £42.50, the typically Aussie Rode 'Dead Cat' – you guessed it – a wind gag at £19.95 and much more. If the boom pole cuts it, put me down for one!

In themselves, the Rode NTG-1 and 2 are very respectable microphones and sound incredibly quiet and professional given the reasonable prices.

For my money, they are an absolute bargain and I would be happy to use them on drama or documentary-style productions. They are a great entry-level microphone for those on a budget. This is an impressive sound for the price. 

INFORMATION

Ⓜ Rode NTG 1 £139.99 inc VAT; NTG 2 £154.99 inc VAT.

Ⓐ UK Distributor: HHB Communications.

☎ +44 (0)20 8962 5000.

🌐 www.hhb.co.uk

Ⓐ Rode Microphones, PO Box 6685, Silverwater, NSW. 2128, Australia.

☎ +61 2 9648 5855.

☎ +61 2 9648 2455.

🌐 www.ode-microphones.com

THE REVIEWER

Robin Green has been a journalist, DJ and re-mixer though now spends his time as a freelance sound recordist and boom operator.