

RØDE NTG-1/NTG-2 shotgun mics

REVIEW BY JAMES NOWICZEWSKI

These are the same shotgun (directional condenser) microphone, however, the NTG-2 offers the option of battery powering, while the NTG1 needs 48V phantom power (commonly found on higher end cameras and mixers).

These mics are firmly targeted at the professional end of the market, but the price may fool you. Sturdily constructed in aluminium, they employ the same mic element as found in the VideoMic, but the longer interference tube gives a better directional response.

While not as wildly innovative in appearance as the VideoMic, they are still different enough in appearance to have their own identity. The mic is supplied in a great carrying pouch, with a standard mic-stand (not suspension) mount, and a foam windscreens for moderate wind conditions.



NTG-2 with "Dead Cat".



A naked NTG-1.

A suspension mount is absolutely essential when this mic is mounted on a boom, but RØDE has you covered. By the time this article is published, RØDE expect to have their own affordable suspension mount available for separate sale. I've seen it, and it's a little ripper.

Both mics have a high-pass filter to cut out low-end rumble, and the NTG-2 takes an AA battery that will give approximately 500 hours of life (I assume battery consumption only occurs if there is a completed circuit between the mic and the mixer/recorder/camera, but I couldn't find it anywhere in the manual).

When I picked up this mic, I was told that it was aimed to compete with the big European boys in this market. I mounted the NTG-1 (my mixer supplies 48V powering) on a T-bar with the most popular shotgun in the professional market today, and recorded in a number of different situations to really test it out.

The first thing that I noticed is the mic has a really low self-noise, actually much quieter than the other mic. I then tested this against a few different mics to ensure that there wasn't a problem with my mic, but no, this baby is quiet. A great start.


Like the VideoMic, the mic has a full warm sound with that RØDE presence. I really liked it. Just out of curiosity, I placed the mic as a drum overhead and it worked really well, far surpassing the famous brand European mic.

The only point the high-priced European mic won on was the directional characteristics. In really noisy situations, the NTG-1 was slightly less effective at "picking-out" the dialogue, but perhaps only about 5% less.

What was certainly far better about the RØDE was the off-axis response. Shotgun pattern (or super-cardioid) microphones can drastically colour the sound that is not aiming directly at the microphone, making placement/angle

crucial. The RØDE was far more forgiving, which makes it great for trying to capture dialogue from a group of people.

Another characteristic of shotgun mics is that they can emphasise "roomy" or echoey environments. The RØDE also won hands-down here, giving a much more forgiving "picture" of a horrible environment.

To round out the line, RØDE is also offering their own line of accessories for the mics, including a high wind cover (seriously called the Dead Cat!), an extension lead for the VideoMic and a mini-plug to XLR adaptor. By the time of publication there will also be a boom pole, and suspension mount for the NTG-1/NTG-2. 

James Nowiczewski has been a professional sound recordist and post-production engineer for 13 years, and still loves it.

IN SUMMARY

RØDE NTG-1/NTG-2 shotgun mics

- AVAILABILITY** > www.rodemic.com
- PRICE** > NTG-1 \$425, NTG-2 \$475.
- VERDICT** > I really wanted to criticise this mic, to try to find fault. I couldn't, which is really frustrating when you consider that it costs a fifth of what my regular boom mic costs. Whilst RØDE haven't re-invented the wheel with this mic, they have certainly come out with their own product at a price-point that makes it unique.

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



set, with a 16mm diameter and a 218mm length. The 50 would relate to the NTG-1 and the 60 to the NTG-2. They are very similar in design to the Sennheiser 416 and 816, in fact the NTG-2 measures exactly the same in length as a 60. This is a very convenient size for use in a room.

Despite the difference in length of the NTG-1 and 2, the interference tube is exactly the same length on both. There is therefore a difference in the frequency response of the NTG's. The only reason for this is the addition of a single AA battery

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.

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.

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.

INFORMATION

- Ⓡ Rode NTG 1 £139.99 inc VAT; NTG 2 £154.99 inc VAT.
- Ⓐ UK Distributor: HHB Communications.
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