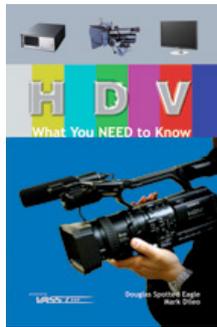




# Reaching Out with Rode!

Douglas Spotted Eagle/VASST Trainer ©2005 Sundance Media Group



HDV:What You NEED to Know



Rode' microphones, perhaps best known for their NT-Series studio microphones, is jumping into the videographer's arena with their first mic designed for use with a video camcorder in mind. Considering that the video market is much larger than the studio/musician market, this is a wise and timely move for Rode.

There shouldn't be any confusion as to the use of this mic, Rode' has dubbed it "VideoMic" and it is designed to mount on a camcorder hotshoe. In fact, it has a shoe mount built directly into the bottom of the mic, which is a little unconventional, but will keep users from having to hunt down the ever elusive shoe mount adaptors that always seem to disappear just when you need one.



### ROUGH CUT:

The VideoMic is extremely lightweight at slightly more than half a pound complete with battery and shock mount. Made entirely of ABS plastic, this mic won't be bouncing around due to front end weight, and won't be providing drag for those whip-style panning movements.

Nearly 10 inches in length, like most shotgun-type microphones it functions as a line plus gradient mic, using the barrel to cancel side audio.

Conveniently attached to the mic is a 3.5mm stereo plug that will feed both inputs of the standard DV or HDV camcorder with mono sound. The 3.5mm plug cable is coiled, allowing for some stretch to make the difficult to reach camcorder input more accessible. The coiled cord is kept in check by tie-downs on the side of the shock mount.

Of course, the 3.5mm plug means that the condenser microphone won't be able to access phantom power via XLR connectors, so Rode' has included a battery compartment on the microphone to hold a 9 volt battery. Battery life suggested to be 100 hours. I haven't had opportunity to wear out the battery yet, but suffice it to say that the battery wasn't significantly worn out after 2 full days of being attached to a Canon ZR 40 camcorder running on AC, recording all movement in a reasonably busy office space. Obviously, if you'll be in a "condition critical" shoot like the average run n' gun, you'll want to keep a fresh battery on hand at all times, changing out at least every other day. Changing out the battery is as easy as sliding the battery cover off the body of the mic, removing and replacing the battery, and sliding the cover back on. No screwdriver or nickels needed to change this one out.

The shock mount is integral to the microphone. In other words, it's part of the microphone and may not be removed. The shock mount is fairly typical in it's design, except that rather than the barrel of the mic running through the shock mounts, there is a mounting pylon that is attached to the power compartment of the mic, and the pylon is suspended in the air by eight rubber "O" rings, four rubber rings on each end of the shock mount. The rubber rings attach to a fairly sturdy flat plate with small hooks, making it easy to replace the rubber "O" rings when they wear out. (And they will wear out, based on previous experiences with several shock mounts over the years)



Building the shock mount into the mic assembly isn't an entirely new concept, but at this price point it certainly is. We'll revisit this later in the review.

A foam windscreen rounds out the physical appearance of the VideoMic. The foam windscreen is attached to the mic barrel with Velcro™ but is fairly easily removed if one is careful. You'll want to leave this on for nearly all shooting.

### MAKING THE CONNECTION:

After putting a new battery in the VideoMic (battery not included) I then mounted and connected the mic to a Sony XX20 palmcorder. I monitored the audio through my trusty Etymotic ER 6 headphones. These headphones because not only are they very flat, but I'm also very used to them with a wide variety of microphones. I then took the microphone and camcorder around my barnyard, recording horses, barking dogs, and later, a conversation with my neighbor. I then took a similar mic of a different brand but similar price point around to record the same sources. I've got to say I was pleasantly surprised. The Rode' mic significantly outperformed the other microphone, even though it's not quite as impressive looking as the other budget line microphone.

Like most shotgun microphones, the directional pickup is somewhat broad in the lower frequencies. In other words, it's most directional at the higher frequencies, ignoring crisp sounds that are not directly in the axis of the VideoMic. Below 300Hz, this mic is fairly rounded in it's pickup pattern; this is typical of lower cost shotguns mics. Above 1K or so, this

mic is very directional as one might expect it to be. Expect reasonably narrow pickup patterns in the 3K and above range.

This could be confusing for entry-level users, as many people see shotgun mics and immediately think "zoom microphone" or "super directional microphone" because Hollywood movies have portrayed shotgun microphones as being used to listen in on conversations 10 stories high and a city block away. Sorry to disappoint, but that's not what this mic is designed to do and it will not work for eavesdropping on the neighbors. It will reach out and "touch someone" if the user is reasonably close, dependent on ambient noise and environment. Distances of greater than 5' are not recommended unless the audio source is relatively loud compared to a noisy background. (This is true for most shotgun/super-cardioid mics)



This mic has reasonably low self noise, which is surprising for a microphone constructed entirely of ABS plastic. In fact, this was the one turn-off I experienced when opening the box and taking out the mic. It's likely a personal prejudice as I know I expect mics to be heavy and beefy. But heavy and beefy mics don't sit on most smaller DV camcorders, and this is what Rode had in mind when they designed this product. As the plastic housing doesn't seem to affect the overall sound of the mic significantly, it's a tremendous benefit to the videographer with a lighter weight camera rig.

**THE HOOK:**

One place this mic really shines vs the competition in its price class? Indoor recording. Shotguns by nature, are not designed to be used in most indoor settings, and certainly not in small rooms due to reflection and other

issues. However, the sound of this mic wasn't significantly different indoors compared to outdoors, but with a signal to noise ratio of 74dB, I'd not expect it to be. So, while I'd still not use this mic in a square, gypsum-board covered room that was only 12 x12, I'd have no problem using it in a standard reception or gathering room of reasonable size, and expect to get a good quality out of it.

The Videomic has a fairly definite bump in the lower frequencies at around 200 Hz. Knowing this, you'll want to use an EQ in your NLE with this microphone, most microphones will require some EQ to tweak up the sound anyway. The mic is reasonably sweet in the 4K area, not nearly as harsh as it's competition in the same price range, and definitely smoother than any sub 300.00 shotgun microphone.

You'll definitely get a closer, more sweet sound with this mic than the typical camcorder's built in microphone offers.

Another uncommon use for the VideoMic is voice-overs. . Pointed at the lower corner of the mouth, this mic allows for a rich and clear V/O. Lots of professional V/O's are cut on shotguns, and if you've never tried it, you should. However, due to the integral shoe-mount design of this mic, you'll need to have your camcorder on a desktop or tripod to easily mount the mic at mouth level.

Knowing that rumble in the jungle is a big issue for microphones, shock mounted or not, Rode also provides users with a high pass filter (HPF) that kicks in at 80Hz. This is handy for recording in windy environments, on motorized decks, in vehicles, or on older, VHS or BetaCam cameras that have a high level of rumble. Enabling the HPF is as simple as pushing up the power switch to it's uppermost position. Keep in mind that this will impact the lower frequencies, so only use it when it's necessary. (You do monitor through headphones, right?)

Another sweet (and unusual) feature of this product is the battery indicator. Rode designed the mic so that when the battery runs low, the LED on the mic changes from green to red, letting the user know that there is approximately one hour of battery life left.

Overall, I'm impressed with the VideoMic from Rode. It's important to take this mic into perspective; it's not a high end shotgun/hypercardioid mic, and it's not marketed nor sold as such. What it is though, is a very nice, well thought out entry level shotgun mic aimed perfectly at budding videographers, video hobbyists, serious home-moviemakers, corporate/in-house video producers, and any other cost-conscious video recordist.

At first, having the shock mount built in seemed a little strange to me, but after working with the mic for a while, it's apparent why Rode built the VideoMic the way they did. I didn't use the same kind of shock mount on the competitors mic that I tested, and it was considerably noisier. By including the shockmount as an integral part of the VideoMic body, Rode assured users of the lowest noise possible while saving them the expense and trouble of locating a shock mount that would be complementary to the microphone. (it's rare a shotgun doesn't require a shock mount) The same could be said for the built in battery; most lower cost DV camcorders don't provide phantom power options, and so Rode assures users that they enjoy the benefit of a condenser mic while offering the price of a dynamic mic.

**THE B SIDE:**

Things I didn't find attractive about the VideoMic would include the plastic construction of the entire assembly. The fact that the mic can only be camcorder mounted is a small detriment to those wanting to use the mic for purposes other than what it was intended for. The coiled cord could be just a smidge longer, or maybe less tensed, as the mic barely could reach the mic input on the Sony FX 1 camcorder, but if I disconnected the coil from the cable catch, it reached fine. Both are minor issues, but worthy of mention.

**FINAL MIX:**

If you're looking into low cost shotguns, or simply have realized that your on-camera mic isn't cutting it and you don't want to drop a lot of cash on a super-specialized mic, the Rode VideoMic deserves a second and third look. Compared to the other sub \$300.00 microphones, it's a serious value, not withstanding the built in shockmount. If you were to pick up a \$200.00 shotgun, you'd then need to buy a \$50.00-\$100.00 shockmount, plus a device to provide power to the mic, if it doesn't have power built in. The VideoMic saves all that cost and just as importantly, the hassle. It's all pre-matched for you.

Congratulations to Rode, they've reached out to an important and ever growing niche with their new VideoMic, and hit the target dead on.

**Happy Editing,**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Scott', with a small circular mark below it.

**Rode VideoMic Rode Microphones \$249.00 MSRP**  
**Street price around \$149.00**  
**[www.rodemic.com](http://www.rodemic.com)**

**Related Information**

**Foley Sound 2**  
 This Video On Demand highlights how to make sound effects free of royalties and copyright problems.

**Wireless Camcorder Microphone Review: Sony ECM-HW2 Bluetooth Wireless Microphone.**

The Sony ECM-HW2 Bluetooth camcorder microphone is lightweight & easy to use. The signal has an impressive operating range & remained strong during all tests.

**Audio Microphone Tech Specs**  
 Buying a microphone can be an ordeal. You have to balance features and price, and part of that is having to wade through the many technical specifications.

**Microphone Review RODE NTG-3 Shotgun Mic**  
 Excellent performance and value in a shotgun microphone.... RODE is a well-known Australian manufacturer of microphones, whose products tend to deliver more sound than their prices might suggest.

**TIPS & TRICKS: Foley Sound 2**  
 Jennifer shows you how to make sound effects free of royalties and copyright problems.

**Microphone Review: Azden SMX-10 Microphone**  
 Small and Powerful

**8 On-the-fly Guerrilla Production Tips**  
 Now more than ever, it's possible for one person to venture into the world and capture great video. By following a few simple guidelines, you too can be an on-the-fly guerrilla filmmaker!

**Sound Off! Microphone Buyer's Guide 2007**  
 Audio is one-half of your finished video, yet many people seem to forget that important element. It's time to sound off about microphones.

**Sound Advice: Mics for All Occasions**  
 All mics are NOT created equal; you have to do your research to find which mic best suits your needs. Let's take a look at a few needs to mic people, places and things.

**Sound Off! Microphone Buyer's Guide 2007**  
 Guide to selecting the best microphone for your video.

**Sponsors**

**Ask The Experts At A Videomaker Training Event!**

Join the experts at the Videomaker National Headquarters for a 3-day training event in Chico, California. Learn about shooting, lighting, editing and promoting your videos.

**Learn Advanced Editing on a DVD**  
 Get the essential guide to advanced computer video editing techniques!

**Microphone Review: Rode VideoMic**

**Microphone Review Testing...1... 2...3**

The VideoMic from Rode is a unique solution for intermediate and advanced shooters looking to add more audio control and power over their existing on-camera mic. It's surprising that there aren't more mics like this one, offering an all-in-one shock mount/mic design.

**Shoe Shock**

The VideoMic is not like any other accessory shoe item, in that it comes with its own innovative shock mount. The construction of the shock mount is relatively small, keeping the overall size of the VideoMic down to a minimum. However, if you have camera controls next to the accessory shoe on your camera, be aware that it may block access to them.

For this microphone review we will start from the basics. The mount and much of the mic is made of plastic, with the exception of a small piece of metal that reinforces the bottom of the shock mount and a couple of screws. It's definitely sturdy enough to take on the woes of video production and lightweight enough to not overwhelm small handheld camcorders. While the size has the minor drawback of possibly obstructing some controls, its lightweight properties make it easy to shoot with just about any camcorder. The front of the mic comes with a foam windscreen. The windscreen did help reduce noise from breezes and low wind speeds, however, if you plan to use this microphone outdoors in moderately windy conditions, consider getting a windsock that can reduce noise at higher wind speeds.

The on/off switch and battery housing are easily accessible on the back of the mic. The switch has three positions -- off, on and high-pass filter. Off and on positions are self-explanatory. The high pass filter cuts out lower frequencies and helps accentuate voices. An LED next to the switch lights up when you turn the mic on and blinks when the battery needs replacing. The battery housing holds a single 9V battery. Swapping out an old battery is incredibly simple and only took us a couple of seconds during this microphone review. You won't need to worry about swapping out batteries too often, as the expected battery life for this mic is about 100 hours.

**A Lock and Load Microphone Review**

The VideoMic attaches to your camcorder via the accessory shoe. The oversized accessory shoe fastener makes easy work of tightening down the mic. If you are a shooter with large hands, you'll find this feature welcoming; as it tends to be difficult to get a good grip on the typical, smaller fastener.

The mic has 2 threaded holes to attach it to a tripod or boom pole, but we needed to remove the shoe fastener using a Phillips screwdriver to access them during our microphone review. The holes are a 3/8" by 16 and a 1/4" x 20 threaded inserts. Having this added functionality could come in handy. If you are a videographer who needs both a boom mountable mic and an upgrade from your pre-existing on-camera mic, then having this mic could kill two birds with one stone (so long as you don't need to use them both at the same time). Of course, if you might consider attaching this mic to a boom pole, bear in mind what adapters or audio cords you might need to get the signal down the pole.

After you attach the mic to the camera's accessory shoe, connecting to an 1/8" mic input is all that's necessary to put the mic to use. The 8" long coiled audio cord can stretch to about 2 feet, which should give most shooters enough reach to the mic input. There are multiple cord clips along the shock mount that allow you to fasten the cord in different positions

depending on where you position the mic input on the camera.

**The Sound of Sound**

The shock mount helps reduce operator noise, protecting the mic from the shocks and jolts of camera operation, although it doesn't completely eliminate it. The reduction in noise, as compared to what you'd hear from the on-camera mic, is quite significant. Overall, we were pleased with the shock mount's performance.

The ability to capture sound at distances with the Rode VideoMic is also very pleasing. It could easily pick up voices at moderate volumes from over 20 feet away. The mic still captures sound quite nicely beyond twenty feet, but in situations with other competing noises like heavy traffic, the sound you don't want starts drowning out sounds you do want. Realistically, the audio is definitely best when the mic is pointed at the source you want to capture. There's a notable difference in sound from objects directly in front of the mic compared to those off to the sides. The Rode VideoMic is fairly balanced directionally, as well, which allows you to hear sounds coming from different directions.

The quality of the audio itself is the best attribute of the mic. It sounds rich and full. One of the nice results of focusing better on your audio sources is that you seem to get frequencies that are more dynamic from them. This mic is not skimpy on audio quality. Even with the high-pass filter activated, the audio still sounds nice, unlike some filters that can give a tinny sound effect.

Mark Montgomery  
 September 2005  
 Share This

» Next Image Previous Image «



**USB Studio Microphone**  
 "Worlds Best USB Studio Mic of its Class"  
 - FREE ShockMount  
 - Mac and PC  
 From £49.99  
 www.editorskeys.com  
 Learn more >>>  
 www.EditorsKeys.com Ads by Goooooogle

Rode VideoMic		
Shop at	Price	Seller Rating
	\$149.00	479 Reviews ★★★★★
	\$149.00	3004 Reviews ★★★★★
	\$149.00	1141 Reviews ★★★★★
	\$149.00	745 Reviews ★★★★★
	\$150.00	248 Reviews ★★★★★
Compare Prices for All 5 Sellers (\$149.00 - \$150.00)		