

# RØDE NT6

The NT6 is one of Rode's latest offerings, designed to go where few mics have gone before.

**Text:** Greg Walker



► It's pretty hard to miss Rode microphones these days. From the ubiquitous NT2s hanging over a drum kit to the distinctive double-headed NT4 catching a rehearsal or a live gig, they've become a common sight in many film sound recordists' and recording musicians' tool kits as well as countless studio mic collections. It's amazing how quickly Rode has made the transformation from cheap, cheery and Chinese to offering a range of seriously high quality, locally produced (and still relatively cheap) microphone products. (Is Rode, in fact, the only audio manufacturer in the world to move away from Chinese manufacture into local design and construction?) The latest in Rode's increasingly sophisticated range is the NT6 small diaphragm condenser, aimed at applications such as theatre, film and live performance where an unobtrusive and flexible microphone mounting setup is required.

The NT6 features the same 1/2-inch gold sputtered diaphragm that graces the NT5 and it looks identical from front on. That's where the similarities end however, as the NT6 is very much a microphone of two parts. The capsule itself is housed in a very small 45mm-long body, which has its own multi-swivel mount that's connected by a thin 3m Kevlar cable to the rest of the microphone (the preamplifier and associated circuitry). The preamp section, which also has its own mic clip, is a weightier item, measuring 160mm and housing switches for a high pass filter and -10dB pad. The flexible but durable three-pin cable is detachable via a simple plug system allowing the various parts to be stowed separately and a couple of handy Velcro mini-straps are provided for tying the cable snugly alongside the mic and out of the way – a nice touch.

Initially, I found the most fascinating part of this mic 'system' was the petite swivelling capsule holder, which just begs you to fiddle with it. A smooth rotary locking mechanism allows quick adjustments on the vertical plane, and a second rotary lock controls the horizontal axis. A dedicated foam windshield and a series of adaptors are also supplied to enable mounting on almost any mic stand or boom arm thread and the capsule can also be unscrewed from the mount and freed up for more vertiginous placements such as the 'dangle' and the 'flop'.

I've got to say I'm very impressed by the build quality of this mic – its small and finely-machined parts and satin

nickel-plated bodies certainly inspire confidence and the general impression is of a quality microphone that's built to last.

I've never had the 'German mic snob' attitude (or the budget) that you sometimes encounter in the recording industry so I've always been able to listen to Rode mics with an open mind, and have used just about every variety of Rode microphone at some stage (actually my favourite is still the original NT1). And after putting the NT6 through its paces, I have to say that this is another accomplished offering from the Australian manufacturer. It gave a smooth and ear-pleasing account of my battered old acoustic guitar and did a very nice, realistic job as a room mic on piano. In front of a wound-up guitar amp it also delivered plenty of serviceable tone and detail, though probably not as much grunt as you might capture with something bigger. I've been a fan of small diaphragm condensers on vocals for a long time (especially on quieter 'character' singers) and I found the NT6 well and truly up to the task here as well.

Given its price, size and intended uses, sonically it's hard to find fault with this microphone. It has the characteristic treble boost around 7kHz that many modern manufacturers favour, and while the odd purist may dislike this, it's a bonus for the majority of us who would, often as not, EQ the same thing in later anyway. Placing the NT6 unobtrusively while filming an interview or miking stage instruments with minimum visual impact would be a doddle, and with the flexibility of the -10dB pad and the high-pass filter toning things down below 80Hz, a wide variety of miking tasks can be undertaken with this mic.

Interestingly, Rode now offers a range of interchangeable NT45 capsules that can be used with the NT6 housing. These include: omni, 'flat response' cardioid (as opposed to the NT6's standard 'presence peak' cardioid), and hypercardioid. The potential for this mic to be used in location and field recording as well as in a variety of other non-studio applications becomes even more obvious once these additional capsules come into play, and the combination of diminutive design smarts, reliability and sonic integrity will no doubt see this microphone become a popular choice in a wide variety of roles. ■



## NEED TO KNOW

**Price**  
\$545 each

**Contact**  
Rode Microphones  
(02) 9648 5855  
ozsupport@rodemic.com  
www.rodemic.com

**Pros**  
Very compact detached capsule design with clever mounting options.  
Excellent build quality  
Clear and quiet  
Filter and pad provide further flexibility.  
Good range of supplied accessories.

**Cons**  
Swivel mount can be a bit fiddly.  
Comes supplied in soft case only.

**Summary**  
A well thought out, quality microphone system aimed at live, location, film and broadcasting applications where a low-profile, flexibly-mounted solution is required at an affordable price.



# Rode NT6

Unlike Victorian children, good mics sometimes need to be heard, but not seen – and the new NT6 promises high fidelity in hard-to-reach places. Huw Price hits the Rode.

#### KEY FEATURES

- Cardioid, pressure-gradient 1/2-inch gold-sputtered capsule
- 2-position variable pad: 0dB and -10dB
- 2-position variable high-pass filter: flat and 80Hz
- Phantom power: 44–52V
- Recommended load impedance: 1kΩ and above
- Frequency range: 40Hz–20kHz
- Output impedance: 200Ω

#### NT6

Manufacturer **Rode**  
 Price **£230**  
 Contact **HBB 020 8962 5000**  
 Web **www.ode.com.au**

Rode made its name delivering affordable, large-capsule condenser microphones to the rapidly expanding home studio market of the early 1990s. These days, Rode can arguably count itself as one of the big boys and its product range

Naturally enough – since it's also a true condenser rather than an electret microphone – it's also intended for recording studio applications, which is great news for anyone who has struggled to squeeze chunky microphones into a tight spot.

The technology isn't entirely new because the NT6 relies on the same tried-and-tested 1/2-inch cardioid capsule that Rode uses in the NT5. A conventional mic clip is supplied for the preamp along with a dedicated mini clip for the capsule. There are also two thread adaptors (1/4-inch to 5/8-inch and 1/4-inch to 3/8-inch) to

## RØDE HAS CREATED A FINE-SOUNDING MICROPHONE THAT CAN GET YOU INTO THE TIGHTEST OF SPOTS.

has expanded to include shotgun and live microphones. Naturally, the company also produces small-capsule microphones and the NT6 is a particularly interesting and unusual product that's designed for a wide variety of applications.

#### Off with its head!

Rode has separated the capsule housing from the body of the microphone that contains the transformerless preamp. The two are joined together by a three-metre length of Kevlar-reinforced cable terminated at each end by a cute mini-XLR connector. This makes the whole assembly very compact, so it's well suited for unobtrusive sound reinforcement duties in TV studios, on stages and on a podium for conference or presentation work.

attach the capsule assembly to a wide variety of mic stands, tripods and boom poles.

Anyone who has used Rode microphones will be familiar with the high-quality satin nickel finish and that trademark gold dot. There are also two switches that provide 10dB attenuation and bass rolloff at 80Hz.

#### Neutral, but nice

Since the NT6 is intended for vocal applications, we started testing with a spoken-word session. First impressions are that the NT6 sounds very neutral and transparent. Consonant definition is extremely good and those 'esses' and 'tees' come over cleanly, but without any apparent sibilance. The cardioid pattern is tight, with strong rear rejection and an off-axis response that drops in volume quite quickly.

## Measuring Up

If Rode develops a few more capsules for the NT6 it will have created an affordable modular system that could compete with AKG's Blue Line, with the SE300B preamp (£155) and variously patterned CK capsules (£155 each). Sennheiser has a system, too, with its K6P preamp (£216) and various capsules.

Moving to acoustic guitar produced some very impressive results. This microphone has plenty of top-end airiness, but it doesn't sound at all harsh. What's more, it goes very deep, but retains the tautness and definition of the wound strings even in dropped tunings. Most vocal and musical action takes place in the midrange, and this is where a lot of modern mics are let down through excessive colouration. Fortunately, the NT6 retains its even and neutral response throughout the frequency range.

Of course, when you're bashing away on a plywood pig of an acoustic guitar with the musical tonality of an adenoidal walrus, a neutral-sounding microphone can be a mixed blessing. It won't do many favours for a poor vocalist either, but there are plenty of large-capsule condensers that are better suited for the job. Small-capsule microphones should be about integrity rather than flattery anyway.

It's a shame that the connections on the preamp and the capsule are both female. If one had been male, the capsule and the body could have been joined together when required and used as a conventional pencil mic. In every other respect, though, the NT6 performs well. Compared to an Oktava MC012, output is noticeably lower and the sound isn't as warm, but we found the freshness and airy brightness of the NT6 better suited to a wider variety of recording applications. **MTM**

## SUMMARY

#### WHY BUY

- Smooth, neutral sound
- Fine build quality
- Ideal for restricted spaces
- Unobtrusive
- Attenuation pad
- Bass rolloff

#### WALK ON BY

- Capsule and body can't be joined
- Slightly low output
- Cardioid only

## VERDICT

By separating the capsule from the preamp, Rode has created a fine-sounding microphone that can get you into – as well as out of – the tightest of spots.



BUY THIS PRODUCT AT [WWW.MUSICTECHMAG.CO.UK/STORE](http://WWW.MUSICTECHMAG.CO.UK/STORE)