

Despite having an extended frequency response, neither the VR1 nor VR2 have compromised their beautiful ribbon characters, says SIMON TILLBROOK.

I am a fan of ribbon microphones. I have always used them, like most, for their natural smoothing or, in some cases, quite extreme rolling off of the higher part of the frequency spectrum. This common aspect did, however, make it tricky at best when wanting to take advantage of some of their other pleasant sonic attributes.

That was until quite recently, when sE Electronics CEO Siwei Zou and one Rupert Neve got together and designed the RNR1 ribbon microphone that extended the high frequency response in a very impressive and usable way.

sE Electronics has now added two more ribbon microphones to its range in the form of the sE Electronics Voodoo VR1 and VR2.

be expected but there must be 10-15dB of additional gain output.

The sound coming back from the sE VR1 and VR2 was full with the expected detail in the high frequencies. There are still the smoothed edges you get from a ribbon but not dull in any sense, simply bright and detailed.

Moving the microphones away from the source and dropping gain and performance dynamic levels, you can hear the variation in sensitivity between the VR1 and VR2, with the VR2 picking up the slightest nuances.

With electric guitar amplifiers, both the VR1 and VR2 delivered all the bite and edge that you want with the smoothed-off highs.

They handled higher amplitudes at close proximities

SE ELECTRONICS VOODOO VR1 & VR2

Ribbon Microphones

Overview

There are many similarities between these microphones as we look at them in detail.

The sE Voodoo VR1 is a straightforward traditional passive ribbon design and the Voodoo VR2 is an active ribbon requiring +48V phantom power for the on board electronics.

The two ribbon microphones share the same capsule, with its very thin two micron ribbon, and it is inherently within the Siwei Zou design of the capsule that the VR1 and VR2 are capable of picking up significantly more high frequency detail than other ribbon microphones.

This mechanical design approach (for which there is understandably virtually no detailed information) differs from the RNR1, which uses custom transformers and circuitry to achieve its extended high frequency pick up.

Both the sE VR1 and VR2 have a stated frequency response of 20Hz to 18kHz but, as you would expect with a passive versus active design, there are differences with sensitivity figures with the passive VR1 stating 1.6mV/Pa -56 (+/-1.5dB) and the active VR2 10mV/Pa -40 (+/-1.5dB).

As with sensitivity, there is an expected slight difference with inherent noise levels with the VR1 17dB (AA weighted) and the VR2 slightly higher at 20dB (A weighted).

Both the sE VR1 and VR2 can handle a maximum SPL of 135dB and, as with the vast majority of ribbon microphones, are a bi-directional polar pattern.

Using

Both the sE Electronics Voodoo VR1 and VR2 come presented in wooden boxes with a small mic clip, but each is supplied with a full suspension cradle in a separate box. The cradle is square, continuing the shape theme linked with the VR1 and VR2. Both are compact, but substantial, rectangular designs, with the bulk of the body taken up by the capsule, illustrated by the robust grille feature.

The body of the VR2 is a good bit longer than the VR1 in order to accommodate the electronics associated with its active design.

For testing purposes, I used the sE VR1 and VR2 on a basic range of sound sources to examine the range of response.

Firstly I used them overhead a drum kit. When setting up, the immediate thing I noticed was how much more basic gain there was with the VR2.

As an active microphone, higher inherent gain would

very well with careful off axis positioning.

Using a variety of acoustic string instruments (guitars, orchestral strings) a little more effort was needed to find positions that took advantage of the extended high response of the VR1 and VR2. Slight axis shifts illustrated the high levels of side rejection in the figure-of-eight polar pattern and a huge drop in the high frequency content, but results again were excellent.

With some of these sounds, I am sure many will feel a slight HF tweak with an equaliser may be required on occasion.

With various vocals the sE VR1 and VR2 performed, delivering warm and full vocal sounds with great detail. Vocals that have less body to their timbre seemed to especially benefit here.

Conclusion

Throughout all the tests, both the sE Voodoo VR1 and VR2 displayed the extension to the high frequency response that sE Electronics has introduced to its ribbon microphone designs that we first saw with the high end RNR1.

The method used to get this extended high frequency pick up is quite different, but just as successful.

With both the sE Voodoo VR1 and VR2, none of the character we love with ribbon microphones has been lost or compromised to achieve the extended response. This addition feels very complementary to the familiar sonic signature we expect from this microphone type.

The sE Voodoo VR1 and VR2 are welcome additions to sE Electronics ever growing range of impressive microphones. **AM**



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INFORMATION

① VR1: GB£529.00, VR2: GB£799.00 (exc.VAT)

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THE REVIEWER

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