



## SE Electronics 4400A

On paper, the 4400a has everything required of a go-to studio mic, but does it have the sound? Huw Price sizes it up.

### KEY FEATURES

- Frequency response: 20Hz–20kHz
- Polar patterns: cardioid, figure-8, omni, hypercardioid
- Impedance:  $\leq 50\Omega$
- Max SPL: 130dB
- 48V phantom power

### 4400a

Manufacturer **SE Electronics**

Price **£399 (£849 pair)**

Contact **Sonic Distribution 01582 470260**

Web **www.seelectronics.com**

The 4400a is the latest in a range of mics that started with the SE 2200a. It's based on the same capsule, but the new dual-diaphragm design provides four switchable polar patterns – cardioid, hypercardioid, figure-8 and omni. What's more, there are two bass rollofs at 60Hz and 120Hz, plus two attenuation pads at 10dB and 20dB.

If all this sounds – and, indeed, looks – familiar, you'd be right. This mic bears more than a passing resemblance to AKG's old workhorse, the C414. The 4400a might be a little less Teutonic and angular, but if SE has managed to achieve a similar level of all-round performance, it will be something special indeed.

Despite the high quality of SE's suspension mounts, we have criticised them in the past for being too big. In combination with the massive microphone chassis it can be very awkward to squeeze some SE mics into small spaces between drums or to get them close-up and personal with a guitar or bass amp. This isn't the case with the 4400a, however, because the body is only 3/4-inch thick and the shockmount protrudes only slightly around it. What's more, the mounting

can be inverted to extend the mic fully outside the shockmount for ultra-close mic'ing applications.

The black, non-reflective, non-marking rubberised finish has been specifically designed for stage, theatre, TV and broadcast applications where light reflection can be problematic. The capsule tuning is the result of two years of pre-market tests with professional studios and broadcasters.

The 4400a ships in a steel-reinforced black SE flightcase and they're available as single units or matched stereo pairs, complete with SE's high-quality stereo bar standmount.

### All together now

We started reviewing the 4400a by testing a stereo pair for accuracy. The capsules were placed as close together as possible, two identical cables were plugged into two identically set preamps and we made recordings with each of the patterns. A perfectly matched pair would cancel out with the polarity of one side reversed, but since it's impossible to get two large capsules in exactly the same space, total cancellation is never on the cards. Nevertheless, we were extremely impressed with the stereo matching of this pair in every setting.

This test also revealed a quite surprising tonal consistency across the various pickup patterns. We're used to subtle and not-so-subtle changes as microphones are switched from cardioid to omni and so forth, but the

output level tonal signature of the 4400a hardly changed at all. So, what is that tone exactly?

It's fairly neutral, but in a very good way. The midrange has a warm but unhyped presence, the bass is smooth and tightly focused and the treble is sweet, glistening and totally devoid of edgy harshness. The cardioid and hypercardioid settings only really differ in intimacy, but that's to be expected. Omni mode sounds really special and natural, but figure-8 was a bit coloured by comparison to the others.

Unlike other SE clamping arrangements, the 4400a's clamp holds the microphone firmly but enables it to be twisted to achieve the desired angle. It's therefore effortless to swap from coincident cardioid or crossed figure-8s to mid-and-side. If you're using coincident techniques, which require the capsules to be as close together as possible, you should fix the 4400as to separate stands. The stereo bar can also be used with other microphones, but as with any side-fire large-capsule microphone, it's best suited to spaced stereo and/or OTRF-type techniques.

### Fit for purpose

SE's extensive market research revealed that professional users desperately yearned for a microphone that was truly general-purpose – and we think that SE has succeeded in making one. The 4400a performed admirably in every one of our tests. So, although it might not have the breathless intimacy of a world-class valve mic or the forensic accuracy of a small-capsule omni, the fact that such a usable, practical and versatile microphone is available in this price bracket is one of the most exciting developments in the microphone market that we've seen for some time. **MTM**

## SUMMARY

### WHY BUY

- High recording resolution
- Fantastically versatile
- High build quality
- Great looks
- Well-matched stereo pairs

### WALK ON BY

- Figure-8 slightly coloured

## VERDICT

A truly versatile, great-sounding mic that will fit in those awkward spaces but won't break the bank.



### MEASURING UP

SE claims that similarities with the AKG C414 (£850) are more than purely cosmetic. In designing the 4400a the company has actually reverted to using old-style switching circuitry to keep the signal path as simple and pure as possible. The market is fairly saturated with large-capsule fixed cardioid mics, but general-purpose multi-pattern mics like this are harder to find. The Audio Technica AT4050 (£500) has three pickup patterns, a -10dB pad and 80Hz rolloff. Another three-pattern mic with a pad (but no bass rolloff) is the Sontronics Orpheus (£329).