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DPA d:vice Records On-the-Go for N.Y. Public Radio

Handy portable digital audio interface sips power

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The Danish are giants in the world of design: Think of “Danish” Modern; George Jensen’s fluid silver household accessories and jewelry; Louis Poulsen’s space age hanging lamps; Hans J. Wenger’s swan-like chairs; and the iconic spinosaurus-like Sydney Opera House by Jørn Oberg Utzon. So it’s no surprise that DPA Microphones, originally Danish Pro Audio, would engineer a pragmatically distinctive A/D converter for iPhone, iPad or laptops — the puck-like d:vice MMA-A digital audio interface.

This two-channel interface, with high-quality preamps and MicroDot input jacks, can accommodate a variety of DPA field and studio microphones, including lavs and shotguns. It is about the size of your palm and can fit in your pocket. The d:vice is well designed and easy to set up. With 114 dB of dynamic range, low-noise floor, and up to 96 kHz sampling rate, you can achieve high-caliber recordings in a compact package. The DPA d:vice also has efficient use of power. I found that it lasted almost seven hours, using two condenser mics on a fully charged iPhone.

It favors Mac and iOS devices through a Lightning cable but will work with Windows devices via a USB cable.

The d:vice has a free dedicated app that is simple to use. It has three modes: mono, dual mono — great for interviews — and stereo, along with individual gain controls and high pass filter. The app also allows you to store gain settings and low-cut filters. The app does, however, require a third-party recording app, such as FiLMic Pro, Hindenberg Field Recorder or GarageBand.

When I started my career, I worked in state of the art recording studios and pristine performance halls, all with the finest microphones. In my role as technical director at N.Y. Public Radio I am responsible for outfitting more than 30 reporters and producers with recording equipment. Because I have budget restraints I have had to sacrifice fidelity. It was fulfilling to return to pure, clean recordings with the d:vice.

Here in New York, our reporters don't have the luxury of throwing gear in the trunk of their car to drive to an assignment. They work mainly on foot or use public transportation, so it's important that their gear be lightweight and nimble. Also, in any city environment, there is inherently a lot of ambience and acquiring solid audio recordings can sometimes be challenging — having portable lightweight gear that works is always a benefit.

For instance, reporter Yasmine Khan met three other women from Brownsville in Brooklyn for their morning exercise walk. Khan, who was expecting her second child, did not want to carry her standard ENG kit. I sent her with a d:vice along with DPA's d:screet 4061 miniature omnidirectional microphone and d:dicate 4017B shotgun microphone. She was impressed with the quality and especially the weight. Khan said, "It was so easy to connect, I put the lav on me and used the d:dicate for the three women. The recordings sounded great and the women felt so comfortable because they were all moving like they do every day. The small form-factor of the d:vice made it a breeze to capture the story on the go with minimal gear to carry with me."

In conclusion, the d:vice is a great solution for urban reporters who need to carry their gear with them to capture a story. Its audio quality and battery life make it a great choice for this type of setting and any project that needs to be truly on the go. I will make a couple of small requests of the Danes. Create a pouch for d:vice so that it can ride with iPhone like a "joey;" and add recording to the d:vice application, so I don't have to use a third-party app.

Price: \$659

Info: www.dpamicrophones.com