

DPA d:vice MMA-A Digital Audio Interface

Taking the tiny audio interface to a whole new level

by Phil O'Keefe



Danish microphone manufacturer DPA is well-known for making some of the world's most respected microphones, but microphones are not the only thing that they have to offer. In this review we're going to be taking a look at another interesting product from their line - the d:vice MMA-A Digital Audio Interface. While lots of companies offer audio interfaces, this one has some rather unique features that make it substantially different from any other audio interface that I've ever encountered. Like what? Read on to find out!

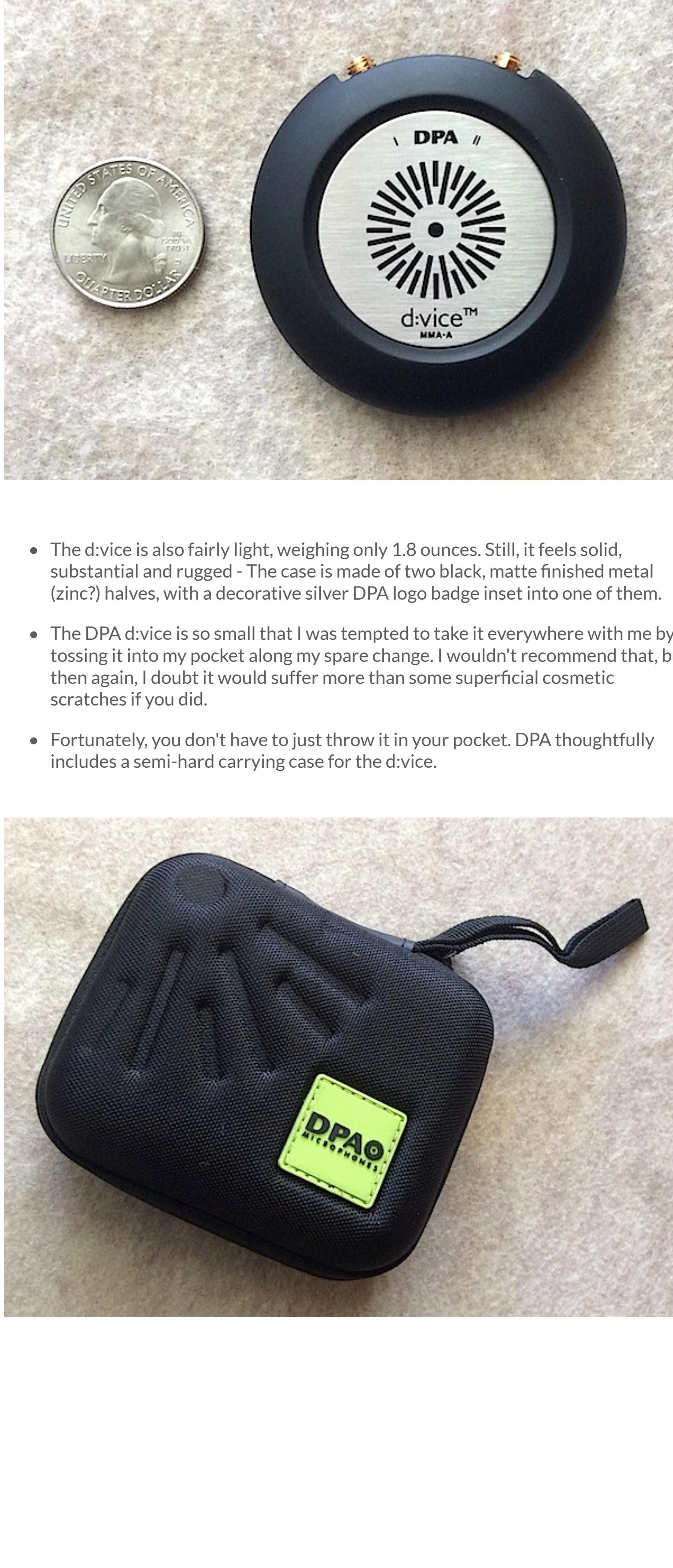


What You Need To Know

- The DPA d:vice MMA-A is an ultra-compact, bus-powered 2 in / 0 out 24 bit audio interface that is designed to work with a wide range of third party software. It supports 44.1, 48 kHz (default), 88.2 kHz and 96 kHz sample rates. Sample rates can be set by the recording program or app that you're using in

partnership with the DPA d:vice.

- Physically, the very first thing you're bound to notice about the DPA d:vice is just how small it is. Pictures just don't do it justice. My initial thought was that, while it dwarfs a quarter, it looks to be not a heck of a lot bigger in diameter than a silver dollar, and while that's under-estimating its size somewhat (the d:vice is actually 2.2" in diameter vs a silver dollar's 1.5"), it's not really that big of an exaggeration.



- The d:vice is also fairly light, weighing only 1.8 ounces. Still, it feels solid, substantial and rugged - The case is made of two black, matte finished metal (zinc?) halves, with a decorative silver DPA logo badge inset into one of them.
- The DPA d:vice is so small that I was tempted to take it everywhere with me by tossing it into my pocket along my spare change. I wouldn't recommend that, but then again, I doubt it would suffer more than some superficial cosmetic scratches if you did.
- Fortunately, you don't have to just throw it in your pocket. DPA thoughtfully includes a semi-hard carrying case for the d:vice.

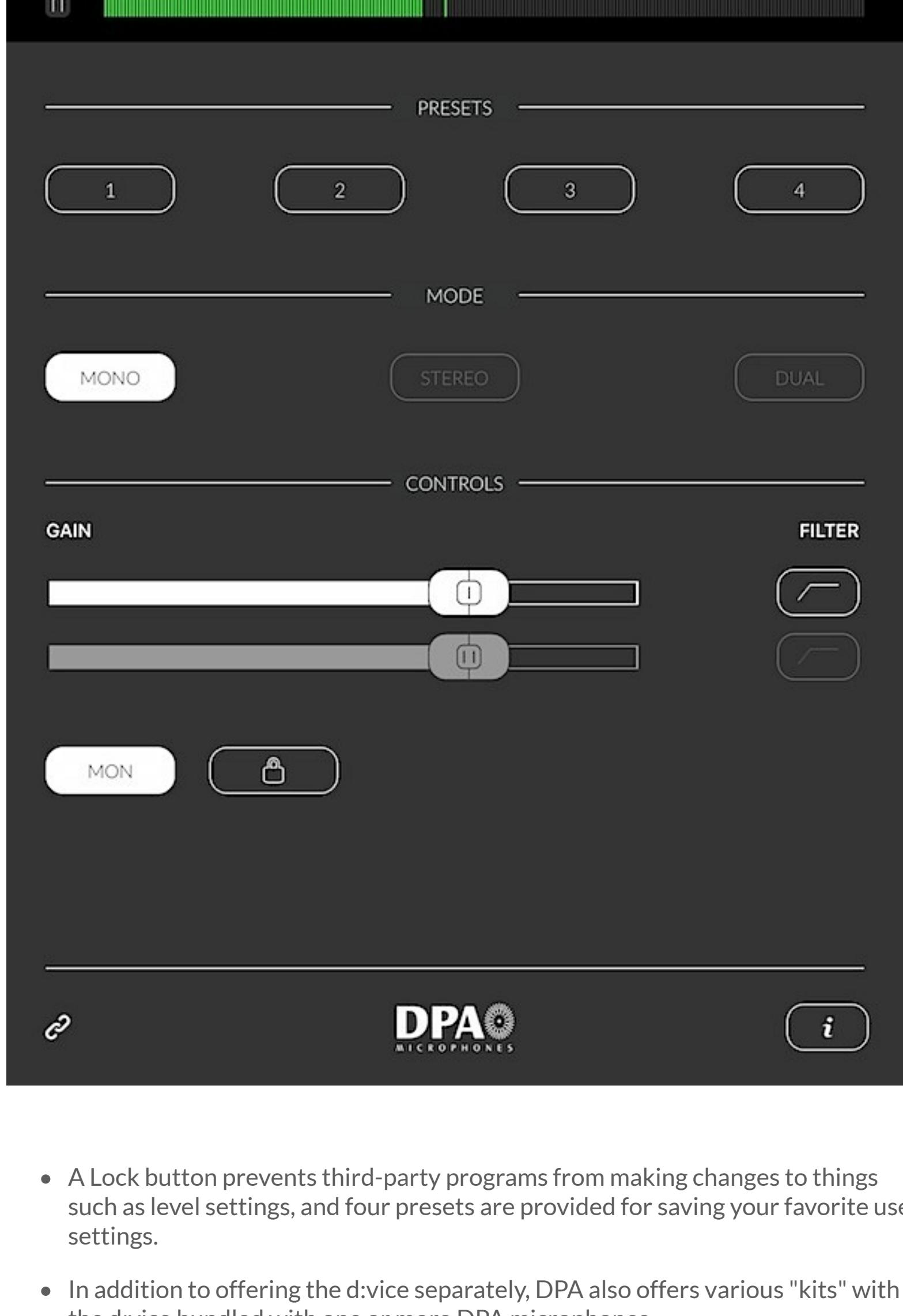




- Another thing you will quickly notice when you look at the d:vice closely is that there are no controls or switches on it at all. As in "none." All adjustments are made in software. A free app is available for iOS devices, and iOS devices (running iOS 10 or later) are really what the d:vice is designed to work with. While I didn't test it with a computer, DPA also says it will also work with Macs and PCs too, although you'll need to configure it with your computer's system tools since no app is offered for either computer platform.
- Supported iOS devices include the iPhone 5, 6/6S, 7/7S, 8, and iPhone X, iPad Air and Air 2, iPad mini 4, iPad Pro (12.9"), and iPod touch (4th generation).
- The dynamic range of the d:vice is rated at 114 dB (Typ.)
- The frequency response is rated at 20 Hz - 22 kHz, +/- 0.2 dB @ 48 kHz Fs (sample rate), 20 Hz - 40 kHz +/- 0.2 dB @ 96 kHz Fs.
- Total Harmonic Distortion is rated at < -100 dB, 0.001% @ 1 kHz @ -10 dBFS.
- There are two types of physical connectors on the DPA d:vice. One is a micro USB connector that is recessed into the side of the d:vice. Micro USB to USB and Micro USB to Apple Lightening connector cables are included with the d:vice for connection to your computer or iPhone or iPad.



- The second type of input that the d:vice uses are DPA MicroDot connectors. Those are used to connect DPA microphones directly to the d:vice, which functions as a mic preamp and A/D converter / audio interface.
- There are two MicroDot connectors, so you can connect up to two microphones at once. Each can be individually adjusted in terms of level, high pass filtering, and so forth, which is great for when you want to record two sources simultaneously with different levels.
- DPA's iOS app is available as a free download from the Apple App Store and provides control over several aspects of the d:vice. There are three modes of operation - mono, stereo and dual, which allows for independent control over each of the two channels.
- The d:vice app also offers level controls and meters, as well as control over the 80 Hz high pass filters.



- A Lock button prevents third-party programs from making changes to things such as level settings, and four presets are provided for saving your favorite user settings.
- In addition to offering the d:vice separately, DPA also offers various "kits" with the d:vice bundled with one or more DPA microphones.

Limitations

- The setup app from DPA is currently available only for iOS devices. While the d:vice can be used with Mac and PC computers, there's no corresponding app for them, so you're largely on your own if you want to use a computer - you'll need to rely on the controls in your computer's system tools (Audio MIDI Setup on the Mac, the Control Panel and Device Manager on the PC) along with whatever controls your recording program offers in order to make even the most basic of adjustments, such as setting recording levels and sample rates - and Android users are completely out of luck.
- Since the d:vice is a 2 in / 0 out interface, you'll need to rely on the 1/8" mini jack headphone output of the iOS device or computer you're using along with it for

monitoring and playback. Fortunately, latency was low and not a significant issue for me when doing so. For users of newer iOS devices that lack a 1/8" mini jack headphone output, wireless headphones are recommended.

- Since the d:vice uses MicroDot connectors for its two inputs, it's not designed for use with third-party microphones. Furthermore, the lack of any line input jacks will also limit the usefulness of the d:vice as a general purpose audio interface for some musicians.

Conclusions

DPA has taken the tiny audio interface to a whole new level in terms of size and audio quality. If you need to have an audio interface with you at all times, chances are you won't find one that's any smaller than this - or that sounds better. I was surprised that such good sounding recordings could be made with such a tiny interface. I had initially wondered if latency was going to be a big issue since the only way to monitor as you're recording is to use the headphone output on your iOS device itself (or wireless headphones), but I was able to track and overdub comfortably using that exact monitoring approach while multi tracking in Cubasis 2.3.1 on my iPad mini 2 - which, it should be noted, isn't even on the officially supported devices list! So thankfully, latency isn't a major concern. However, there are some limitations to be aware of. The d:vice really isn't designed to work with microphones other than DPA's own, and the lack of line inputs is another limitation that some musicians will be bummed out about. But those limitations won't be a concern for everyone. For ENG, journalists, mobile podcasters, samplers and sound effects gatherers, it's just about ideal - it's a great sounding field recorder that can fit in your pocket. With the d:vice, an iPhone and a couple of DPA d:screet 4080 lavalier mics, you have everything you need to record true independent two-channel interviews, no matter where you're at - unlike add-on iOS stereo mics, the levels for each of the two channels can be set totally independently. For similar reasons, the d:vice would also make a good traveling partner for a singer-songwriter who plays guitar - I was able to get impressive sounding results using the d:vice with a DPA d:vote 4099G to record multiple acoustic guitar parts in Cubasis - just add a separate DPA headset mic to capture your vocals and you have a terrific yet tiny high-quality, portable audio recording setup. And best of all, the sound quality is high enough that you won't have to limit its use to "scratchpad" duties - you can make recordings of fully professional broadcast quality with this unit. If you own an iPhone or iPad, and as long as its limited I/O capabilities meet your needs, the d:vice is a great portable audio interface choice due to its very small size and excellent audio quality. -HC-

Want to discuss the DPA d:vice MMA Digital Audio Interface or have questions or comments about this review? Then head over to [this thread in the Studio Trenches forum](#) right here on Harmony Central and join the discussion!

Resources

DPA d:vice MMA-A Digital Audio Interface (\$1,024.95 MSRP, \$659.95 "street")

DPA's [product web page](#)

DPA d:vice [manual](#) (PDF file)

You can purchase the DPA d:vice MMA-A Digital Audio Interface from:

[Sweetwater](#)

[Guitar Center](#)

[B&H Photo Video](#)

[Musician's Friend](#)

[Full Compass Systems](#)



Phil O'Keefe is a multi-instrumentalist, recording engineer / producer and the Senior Editor of Harmony Central. He has engineered, produced and performed on countless recording sessions in a diverse range of styles, with artists such as Alien Ant Farm, Jules Day, Voodoo Glow Skulls, John McGill, Michael Knott and Alexa's Wish. He is a former featured monthly columnist for EQ magazine, and his articles and product reviews have also appeared in Keyboard, Electronic Musician and Guitar Player magazines.