



DPA MICROPHONES

d:vice Digital Audio Interface

d:vote 4099 Instrument Microphone

d:fine Headset Microphone

Making things smaller is easy; making them more functional at the same time is a challenge. DPA Microphones has designed and produced some amazingly small devices, and while they function well and sound great, they do leave us with a little head-scratching. More on that in a minute.

First up is the d:vice Digital Audio Interface. It's super tiny, like the tech stuff in *Black Mirror* tiny. Roughly the size of a hockey puck, its only I/O is a micro USB cable interface and two MicroDot microphone connections. Download the app (iOS for mobile devices only) and it brings the gain and low pass filters for each channel, as well as the ability to save up to four presets. Basic monitoring is provided by the iOS device, and works well.

It's a pretty interesting and small (did we mention that, yet?) system, and would be great for providing quality audio for videos, with separate audio feeds that can be done in stereo or mono. It also functions as a more traditional audio interface for Mac or PC, and works well for mobile, on-the-go singer/songwriters who might want to capture simple demos or song ideas on the road. Thankfully, cables for all configurations are included.

DPA really likes the Dot microphone connection, and also provided its XLR to MicroDot adapter for us as part of the review. So, even though it might not appear this way out-of-the-box, DPA microphones can be used with traditional XLR connections. It's a neat design, and is fully functional with both the d:vote 4099 family of Instrument Microphones, as well as their d:fine Headset and d:screet Miniature Microphones. Both of which are super small, and inconspicuous.

The instrument mic is a condenser that comes with an adjustable mounting adapter, and easily mounts on an acoustic guitar's body, for example, with non-marring rubber connections and a flexible gooseneck for optimum placement. The sound quality is flat-out outstanding, and the unit

itself is flexible (no pun intended) for optimal placement, physically as well as sonically. It has a nice dynamic richness that doesn't color things. It's great for instruments that don't have a piezo pickup, but sound too good not to use live (or in the studio). DPA's headset mic is equally flexible and comfortable, also featuring a MicroDot connection and a clip to relieve stress on any of the cables, when attached to a shirt collar.

Again, the sound quality and clarity are excellent, however..

Each unit in the package is a well-made, precision-engineered item that embraces the MicroDot connection, and the price tags might strike some as a bit high. The d:vice audio interface comes in at a street price of \$659. It's small, sure, but there is really no shortage of portable options to record audio to a mobile device or Mac/PC. And while those devices might be slightly larger in footprint, they can still fit comfortably in a backpack for mobile use and all use more standard XLR or combo inputs for mics and instruments. Both the mics we tested were really nice, but feel a tad delicate and spindly. Knowing how some musicians treat the gear on the road, it's a nice touch that DPA includes padded cases. But again, there are other mics that deliver great sound quality, with a bit more robust design and connections that can be used universally with any PA or recording interface.

Overall, the interface and mics make a great pairing that offers up a lot of flexibility, and great tonal options. DPA makes some really nice, small, low profile items, with well-designed functionality, but the decision to use a proprietary, non-standard connection means that using basically any other microphone is a challenge. If you're willing to invest in the DPA ecosystem, that all makes sense. But if, like many artists and sound engineers, you use a mix of brands and gear, jumping into the MicroDot connection world might not make sense for you.

Chris Devine

d:vice Digital Audio Interface

PROS

Hyper small, great app.

CONS

Only mobile device support is iOS, no XLR or combo inputs on board.

PRICE

\$659

d:fine Headset mic

PROS

Very inconspicuous, great sound quality.

CONS

Slightly pricey.

PRICE

\$719

d:vote Instrument mic

PROS

Great sounding mic for acoustics that don't have a piezo.

CONS

Slightly pricey.

PRICE

\$619

d:vote Instrument mic

PROS

Works great with MicroDot connection.

CONS

None.

PRICE

\$115