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Tech // reviews

MOJAVE AUDIO MA-300 TUBE MICROPHONE

Big-Sounding, Multipattern, Large-Diaphragm Condenser

The sixth model in a growing line of microphones, Mojave Audio's MA-300 comes from the mind of David Royer, a stickler for details. Just after Mojave released its first product, Royer told me about the difficulties of producing a mic long-distance (the units are built in China) and said that although he would painstakingly map out production details, he later found some elements had been changed, even in a small way.

For instance, an extra inch of wire was used from point to point—or some other detail was altered—and he wasn't too happy about it. He returned the early production test models and made sure subsequent attempts closely followed the design spec before he approved the final build. It's this kind of attention to detail that makes or breaks a product, especially when it's manufactured 6,000 miles and 15 time zones away. For this reason the Mojave line has picked up some serious street cred. The pair of MA-300s tested here were used on a wide variety of instruments and vocals and sounded great across the board.

THE BODY AND BUILD

Everything about the physical product is top-notch. Packaging is excellent, offering more than enough protection for the mic and accessories. The shockmount is sturdy and offers a good range of adjustability. It was easy to set up and place the mic in all applications. The cable from the mic to power supply is a well-made seven-pin XLR.

The MA-300's two capsules are 3 microns thick and based on the design of Mojave's MA-200. Rather than a stepped pattern selector, the MA-300 offers a continuously variable, remotely controlled pattern control between omni and figure-8. This is always welcome in a multipattern mic because it offers infinite possibilities in the amount of room you let into your recording. Too much room spill? Dial it



The MA-300 features three continuously variable polar patterns, switchable pad and roll-off.

MA-300

back toward figure-8. Want more room vibe? Head toward omni.

The build inside is based around a military-grade JAN 5840 vacuum tube and Jensen transformer. Before coming to market, each mic, power supply and cable is burned in for 24 hours, tested, and then packed and shipped in a sturdy outer briefcase that contains the mic (housed in yet another latching hard shell case), power supply, cable and shockmount.

MA-I USE YOU?

Whenever I get a pair of mics for review, I like to hear them over a drum kit and piano right off the bat. Placed as overheads over a kit, the MA-300s rendered transients beautifully, with an even and pleasant balance of lows, mids and highs. You can definitely hear the tube and how it beefs up the low-mids and bottom. Cymbals are nicely reproduced, with clear stick hits and open highs without hype. Tom hits, kick and snare are well-represented, and the room is also brought into play as the pattern selector is rotated closer to omni.

The mics fared equally well over a Yamaha C3 piano. The piano sounded warm and natural, with tight transients and even tone that was never strident, even when played hard. The pattern adjustment let me dial in more or less spill from the lid and room, making for handy adjustments on-the-fly as other players were added to the mix.

I heard the MA-300 placed just off-center of the speakers of a Fender Supersonic guitar amp. I also placed an SM57 and Sterling ST6050 Allen Sides Edition in relatively similar positions. As I expected, the MA-300 had much more bottom than the 57, which rolls off naturally starting at about 150 Hz. The Sterling sounded very good in the upper mids and highs, but didn't have the beefy vo-