

SPECS

Frequency response: 20Hz to 15kHz
Sensitivity: 11mV/Pa (0dB = 1V/Pa, 1kHz)
Polar pattern: Figure-8
Impedance: 1500hms
Equivalent Noise Level: 14dB (A-weighted)
Max SPL: 135dB (with 0.5% THD @ 1kHz)
Power: 48V Phantom 4Volts
Dimensions: 164 x 72 x 32mm
Weight: 270g



Sontronics Delta Ribbon Mic | £499

A rugged new ribbon mic designed for studio and live situations. *Jon Musgrave* powers up the Delta

WHAT IS IT?

Phantom-powered ribbon microphone for recording guitar amps, brass and percussion

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Delivers excellent guitar amp sound
- 2 Easy to use
- 3 Rugged build

Sontronics' existing Phantom-powered ribbon mics – the Sigma and Apollo – have cemented the company's deserved reputation for well-designed and reliable mics that combine a traditional ribbon sound with the benefit of active electronics. So it should come as no surprise that their latest offering, the Delta, follows suit and looks set to build on this heritage.

Shorter and fatter than the Sigma, the Delta is designed to be more rugged and up to regular use in a live environment. Reading Sontronics' press release it's clear they have that ribbon favourite guitar amplifiers firmly in their sight. But to be fair, any instrument with complex high frequency content (drum kits and brass spring to mind) can benefit from the smoothness of a ribbon mic.

Different strokes

So, aside from the size and shape, what else marks the Delta out from its sibling? Basic specs such as figure-8 pattern and noise figures (14dB) are similar, and you get the same type of suspension cradle. Mics are individually serial-numbered, although for the Delta this is a sticker on the underside, rather than an etched faceplate like the Sigma, which is a shame. At £499, its price is also similar to that of the Sigma. But beyond these points, the Delta is definitely a different beast with slightly lower sensitivity (11mV/Pa) and a quite different frequency plot.

Clearly, my first test has to be an electric guitar amp. With the Delta in close at a few inches and centred on the speaker cone, you can really see where they're coming from. The sound is brilliantly rounded and balanced with

plenty of proximity and none of the pokiness you tend to get from dynamic mics. Obviously, the higher top end is restrained, and this may not be ideal for all applications. What's more, although the plot indicates a slight mid-range lift at 2kHz, this isn't obvious to me. However, in typical ribbon mic style, you can add plenty of top end EQ without things sounding too processed.

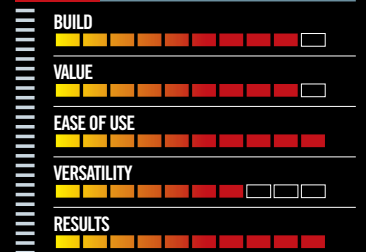
Although ribbon mics have theoretical figure-8 patterns, the front and back do tend to sound slightly different. Sticking with the guitar amp and flipping the Delta round, to my ears, produces a slightly brighter sound, although the differences are subtle.

Moving on to some other sounds, the Delta easily delivers a warm, radio-friendly speech sound. It also does a good job of rounding off the edges for hand-held percussion such as shakers and tambourines. Peering through the mic grille, it's obvious there's an extra layer of protection compared with the Sigma, and the ribbon assembly (or motor as it's known) is not visible. This may have been done to add wind protection or modify the frequency response... either way, with any plosive or air-shifting source, speech and vocals especially, the Delta still benefits from a standard pop shield.

Verdict

Clearly, the Sontronics Delta sets out to deliver silky smooth electric guitar sounds with a retro flavour, and in that respect it really delivers. What I didn't expect was how easy it would be to achieve this. Positioning on a guitar amp is quick and simple, making it an instantly rewarding mic. And if you want some extra top end, it responds well to EQ. Even so, if you're considering buying one, like all ribbon mics it's not what you'd consider an all-rounder, so it should be purchased to complement the condensers and dynamics in your mic collection. **FM**

FutureMusic VERDICT



Excellent for guitar amps – quick and easy to use while delivering a beautifully balanced sound.