

USE Me,

Another cheap condenser mic? Not this time buddy... Say hello to Studio Electronics' SE2200a, you'll want one.

I'm confused... Something is not right... I look at the Studio Electronics SE2200a mic over and over again, rotate it in my hands, take it apart again, put it back together again, plug it in, use it, unplug it, slip it back into its case and look at it again... I've done this a few times now, and I still don't believe that this mic would only cost me £129.

Now, that last sentence has blown to smithereens virtually every rule I have about setting out a review – describe the product, describe using the product, formulate and express your opinion, and then conclude how you feel about it on a performance to cost basis. You certainly should not blow your conclusions or reveal the price in the opening paragraph... But I have to say that the fact that this mic is priced so competitively is going to shape virtually everything that I say about it from here on in. Yes, there are mics out there cheaper than this – just... But I've just pulled the SE2200a out of its own metallic, lockable, foam lined case, placed it in its own shockmount and am currently deciding whether or not to employ the 10dB pad or filter... Now that's VFM in my book.

Of course it could be the cheapest mic in the world, sound rubbish and nobody would buy it... but it doesn't sound rubbish. It could look like it's been thrown together with gaffa and matchsticks – but it looks like a quality mic; sturdy, thick skinned and with something of a Neumann/Shure KSM hue about it (funny how little things like that fire off the correct signals in the brain). Finally, you may just shrug and say – oh wow, another off-the-shelf Chinese mic import... And you'd be half right... it is Chinese, but it is far from being off-the-shelf... Sonic Distribution *is* Studio Electronics, they are one and the same as they have a deal which allows this well-known Far East OEM supplier to market its own brand of microphones through Sonic Distribution in Europe, whilst keeping up their production of mics for other big name companies. I'm told that this mic is designed and spec'd exactly to Sonic's requirements and desires, not picked from a catalogue, and thus is a unique product – but is it the budget mic of your dreams? Is it capable of all the things that that £700 quid model can do at a fraction of the price? Well... not quite, and here's why.

the fore are the two controlling switches for the two controls – a 10dB pad and 100Hz filter offering -10dB of cut to tame low frequency signals. With the pad in, the quoted handling of the SE2200a goes beyond the 125dB SPL quoted as standard – meaning that the mic is suitable for sticking right in front of all but the most aggressive sound sources with few problems.

There is no pattern selection features as this baby operates in a fixed Cardioid mode. Above these controls, the diaphragm (1" diameter, gold splattered) is protected by a reassuring double metal grille through which very little can be seen – apart from the fact that this vital component is affixed using a central screw attachment, hopefully aiding a sturdy rumble-free performance.

Internally, the enclosure protects the solid-state circuitry – a transformerless FET circuit with output through the base and centre XLR male jack, requiring standard +48V phantom power to operate. Frequency Response figures state a range of 25Hz to 20kHz – with a frequency response graph that shows favour to the higher ranges above 2kHz – plenty for a wide range of recording duties.

PERFORMANCE

Well, there's no doubt that this is a bright microphone – you'll hear that the second you fire up and hit record... For vocals some really great results are possible, with a good clear and lively

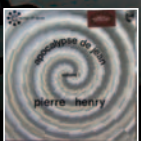
Sonic Distribution Loan Scheme

Well, this is pretty unique in terms of my experience in the Music Industry... Sonic Distribution give ANYONE the chance to try ANY of their products on a 7-day free trial basis. Now that's pretty cool. So, if you want to evaluate what one of their lines can do for you – be it Studio Electronics or any of the other kit you can see at www.sonicdistribution.com - they'll allow you to test drive absolutely free of charge. And even we'll admit that, though reviews are helpful, like Sonic say; "they're not the same as first hand experience so..." Here's what you have to do, go to the website or give them a call – provide proof of ID and address, leave Credit Card Authorisation (no money will be taken from your account unless you wish to buy the product/try to pull a swift one and disappear out of the country with it/damage or lose the product or the packaging) and they'll ship out whatever your studio desires to you free of charge... If you don't like what you hear, return the goods safely within seven days and no money will change hands... Brilliant. Now that's letting the products speak for themselves. Not that they're short of a good review or three.

THE SE2200A

When you open up the sturdy 'flightcase' of the '2200a you are presented with the mic and the shockmount. The SE2200a itself is an relatively small cylindrical side address condenser mic, with something of the look of a lithe AT-3035 about it. In the hand it feels weighty and every ounce the pro mic. To

Quick Flicks – Production



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Hear SE

The Score

KEYNOTES

- Large diaphragm condenser w/ 25Hz to 20kHz frequency response and Cardioid polar pattern
- Controls for -10dB pad and 100Hz filter (-10dB)
- Requires +48V power
- Packaged with flightcase and shockmount

HIGH NOTES

- ▲ The price... silly
- ▲ Looks the business, and is quite petite – which is occasionally very useful
- ▲ Bright, highly present results
- ▲ The price...

LOW NOTES

- ▼ A little harsh for some purposes
- ▼ ... But what do you want? The World?

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representation feeding through the SE2200a's circuits into the desk... It's like the SM58 of condenser mics, the vocals really leap out at you – again especially in the higher registers – but you're going to have to give the mic some air though, as it can get a little bassy if the singer gets too close. Another good use for the SE2200a is for up-front acoustic guitar – giving a picked arpeggio plenty of fizz and zing to really sparkle through a mix, strumming is going to take a little more EQ to calm it down and make it sit, and – as always, really – placement is vital to getting the character you desire from these subtle instruments.

Stick it in front of an electric guitar amp, slip on the pad and the filter and you could cut glass with the right electric sound – I'd love to hear a Ricky recorded with this, but if it's bright country tones or a really cutting solo you're after, you're in business here.

Of course, there are down sides to all of this, and this mic is not really going to be to everyone's tastes – some will find it 'uncultured' and lacking in the 'warmth' that they may desire... But at the price this mic retails at that – if it was a choice between this and a dynamic, I know where I'd be. As an additional mic for an existing studio set-up, for specific purposes (did I mention how good it sounds with congas and bongos, or how good I think a couple of these would be as overhead or ambient mics on drumkit) it's a steal at a little over 100 quid.

CONCLUSION

For £129, how can I say anything against a mic this nicely built and presented – it does its job well... It is not the Holy Grail of mics, but it's not the surf with the coconuts trailing behind the Knight either... It's ludicrously priced, for a mic that can rally do a job for you – up front vocals being number one on that list – and that can also handle pretty much anything up to the volume of a Pakistan vs. India cricket match. If this mic makes its way into your collection, I'd still be looking for a warm, killer mic for more subtle instrumentation recording. But for a bright delivery, this'll go against an AT-4040 or similar any day, and do you proud.

