Røde NT1 5th Generation £265

This long established mic has had a significant upgrade. **Jon Musgrave** sees what's new

KEY FEATURES **CAPSULE:** 1" true condenser **PICKUP PATTERN:** Cardioid **FREQ. RANGE:** 20Hz–20kHz **OUTPUT IMPEDANCE:** 100Ω **MAX. SPL:** 142dB SPL **EQUIVALENT NOISE (A-WEIGHTED):** 4dBA **SENSITIVITY:** 25mV @ 94dB SPL (+/- 2dB @1kHz) **POWER:** 48V phantom or 5V USB **CONNECTION:** XLR or USB-C **FINISH:** Black or Grey **INTERFACE:** 48, 96, 192kHz, 24-bit / 32-bit float **ONBOARD PROCESSING:** HPF, compressor, gate, Aphex exciter and Big Bottom

Røde's NT1 is one the most popular affordable large capsule cardioid condensers available and this 5th Generation model is its most innovative yet. The bundle provides everything you need to get started. In addition to the mic, you get a suspension cradle with integrated pop shield holder, a pop shield, storage bag, 7m XLR cable and a three-metre USB-C to USB-C cable. That last aspect is significant, as the NT1 now incorporates USB interfacing, so you can connect it to your computer without an additional audio interface. The mic uses the same 1" gold sputtered HF6 capsule as its predecessor, although powering is now 48V (not 24 or 48V) or 5V via the new USB connection. Output sensitivity (25mV/Pa) is lower than before, while self noise is slightly improved (4dB A-weighted).

The integrated USB interfacing uses a cleverly designed dual-connect XLR/USB-C socket which is much slicker than a body-side USB socket. There are no on-body controls, but the mic is plug-and-play so applying gain to the onboard Revolution preamp may be available directly in your DAW. To access NT1's further features, you install Røde Central (Mac, PC, iOS, Android). Gain (0-60dB) is joined by Aphex-powered effects including a high-pass filter (75 or 150Hz), compressor, noise gate, Aural Exciter and Big Bottom. The A/D interface delivers impressive specs, with high sample rates (48, 96 and 192kHz) coupled with 24-bit and 32-bit float functionality. This means that if your DAW can record audio at 32-bit float, and assuming you don't exceed the capsule's maximum SPL, audio won't clip.

> If a product reaches fifth generation the maker is doing something right

As you'd expect from Røde, build quality is excellent, and although slightly lighter than the previous version, the Aussie-built mic sports the classic NT1 shape and capsule grille. The cradle with integrated pop shield mount and shield is very handy, and the shield itself is a decent 2-layer design. One slight frustration is that the shield can only sit opposite the mic stand elbow and not to the side. I found the USB interfacing worked seamlessly and, once set up for 32-bit use, I was able to clip the recording and then use the file gain in my DAW to restore the unclipped waveform. Alas, one downside is that 32-bit mode disables all the onboard processing. There's also no 44.1kHz option and no minimal latency monitoring.

The NT1 delivers a reasonably neutral response with a slight lift in upper frequencies. There's a noticeable proximity from about 10cm, and the mic handles plosives very well beyond about 20cm. The polar pattern isn't too tight and rear rejection quite good. Sonically, it's not the most exciting mic but it's neutral enough for a variety of applications and, as noted, it's very quiet.

If a product reaches its fifth generation the manufacturer is clearly doing something very right. FM

FM VERDICT

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With integrated USB interfacing, 32-bit float support and impressive noise figures, this is an excellent budget choice

THE PROS & CONS

+

Box includes everything you need to get started

Integrated USB interface with 32-bit float option

Clever dual-purpose XLR/USB connector

Very low self noise

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Integrated USB interface doesn't support 44.1kHz sample rate

Integrated USB interface has no minimal latency monitoring facility