

MXL DX-2 Dual-Capsule Guitar Mic

By George Petersen

I've been around for a while (a *good* while) and thought I had seen and heard everything, particularly in the area of microphones, where it seems every possible idea or new product concept has already been tried or taken. So earlier this year, when I heard that MXL microphones was launching a new guitar amp mic, my initial reaction was a resounding "Meh!" You see, I already have just about every conceivable transducer that could be used to capture guitar amps.

Then I found out this new MXL DX-2 is a dual-dynamic capsule design combines a large-diaphragm supercardioid element and a small-diaphragm cardioid with a Crossfade knob on the backside for customizing the mic's sound to match any guitar amp. Now as something truly new — presenting a wholly different take on the process of getting a guitar sound — this DX-2 caught my interest, and I wanted to check it out.

There are numerous dual-capsule mics on the market, ranging from true stereo models to twin capsules mics designed to capture the "boom" and "snap" of a kick drum from a coincident single point source. However, the ones I've used in the past had 5-pin XLRs for dual-channel output and the concept of an on-mic balance pot controlling the blend of the two capsules that feed a single output makes this design singularly unique.

» About the DX-2

As its "DX-2" (dynamic times two) name implies, there are two dynamic capsules, placed one above the other beneath that flat-front/rounded-back, semi-cylindrical body. These are arranged in a side-address configuration, with both facing forward toward the flat grille. Located closer to the output jack, capsule #1 is a supercardioid large-diaphragm unit, while the other is a cardioid small-diaphragm design. The mic can be stand mounted or

simply hang over amp/speaker cabinets. As the markings on the crossfade control read correctly when the DX-2 is upside down, I assume the mic is meant more for the latter.

Roughly the size of a can of Red Bull, the DX-2 is just over six inches long and about 1.75 inches wide, weighs about seven ounces and is finished in non-reflective dark gray and black. Besides housing the rotary Crossfade control, the back of the body has a rounded, tough aluminum shape with open slots on the back side that allows the rear of the capsules to "breathe," beneath which is an open-cell foam windscreen that prevents strong gusts from affecting the sound. The mic's flat front side has a metal honeycomb mesh, and beneath that, a finer metal screen and open cell foam. Clearly, air noise will NOT be an issue with this mic.

» On the Road

The DX-2 includes a vinyl carry pouch and a generic-style swivel adapter that threads onto the chrome housing for the XLR output connector. I say "generic-style," because the swivel mount was made for mics with a tapered base and while functional, does not sit flat when the mount is positioned in line with the right-angle portions of the mic body, limiting rotation of the mount to about 190-degrees, rather than a full 360-degrees. That said, I placed a couple rubber garden hose washers around the threads, which allowed a more secure mount (with full 360-degree rotation) and while adding a bit of shock isolation.

Over a period of several months, I used the DX-2 on a wide assortment of guitar miking applications, ranging from 4x12 stacks to a vintage Deluxe reverb to a older but very cool Yamaha solid state G100-112, along with a varied assortment of Crates and Vox reissues. The two capsules are very different in timbre. The larger supercardioid capsule #1 is actually very SM57-ish in tone, and worked with 335's into Fender Twins and the classic Strat/stack configuration — rich and full with a nice roundness/warmth around 200 Hz. Going full-on with the smaller capsule #2 yielded a brighter, more aggressive sound with defined presence and a crisp top-end that was almost condenser-like in sound.

The real fun kicks in when you start experimenting with the Crossfade control. As a starting point, the mic really shined in the 60 percent bottom/40 percent top setting, with a balanced sound exhibiting, with a smooth blend of growl and bite. Pushing a lit-



The DX-2 features two dynamic capsules with a Crossfade (blend) control.

tle more into the #2 mic setting provided an edgier tone yet with plenty of bottom drive. But there was no single "perfect for everything" setting — the DX-2 just requires a bit of tweaking for each player's setup. Here, a small investment in time really pays off and as an aside, I didn't encounter any phase issues between the capsules at all. Perhaps the best aspect here is the amount of night-after-night consistency the DX-2 can provide (as compared to two separate mic setups) and anyone running a 16- to 24-channel board will surely appreciate saving that extra input.

At a street price of \$149, the DX-2 is a winner. It's great on guitar, while its combination of the two high-SPL handling dynamic capsules should be equally at home on other midrange-heavy sources, such as horns, Leslie tops, steel guitar and more. Thumbs up on this one! **FOH**



The side-address mic (shown here with capsules pointed downward) has a flat front that is designed to lay up against amp grill cloths.