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Rode nt1a vs akg p420

The AKG p220 and Rode nt1a are two large diaphragm condenser microphones. They are both made by very reputable companies and come in at a similar price point and with similar features. Sometimes when Musicians HQ mentions gear, we'll include our affiliate link & may earn a commission at no cost to you. This doesn't impact the products we mention. For all these reasons they often get compared alongside one another and people rightly have a tough decision to make over which one to get. But which microphone is best? The AKG p220 and Rode nt1a are both quality condenser microphones at this price point. If you are looking to use the microphone primarily for vocals, then the Rode nt1a is the better option, however, if you are looking to use it to record acoustic guitars or guitar amps the AKGp220 performs slightly better. Comparison Summary Table: AKG p220Rode nt1aLooks9/108/10Extra Features7/106/10For Singing6/108/10For Podcasting5/107/10For Acoustic Guitar6/107/10For Guitar Amps7/106/10 There are plenty of reviews out there that look at the specs etc. But I wanted to take it a step further. For this article, I decided to buy both microphones and put them through a series of tests over a series of months in the ultimate AKG p220 vs Rode nt1a showdown! I mentioned at the outset of this article, that the reason these microphones are often compared, is due to a similar price point. But they are not identical. In a search across the web the AKG averages around \$149. This was the same at Musicians Friend, Sweetwater and Amazon. The Rode nt1a comes in slightly higher at \$229 although you do get slightly more in the box (which I will come onto), so the comparison isn't exactly like-for-like. However, even taking that into account the Rode is still around \$50 more expensive. Let's find out if that price is worth it. The p220 comes in a lovely looking metal carry case which is very light yet feels very sturdy. You could definitely take this case on the road without worrying about the microphone getting damaged. Inside the case you have, of course, the microphone but also a shock mount for attaching to your microphone stand. A very handy additional extra, meaning you don't have to buy one separately and you can start using the mic straight away. The Rode perhaps slightly justifies it's higher price tag here as not only do you get a shock mount but you get a nylon pop filter and 6m cable too. The shock mount feels nicer and better made than the AKG one and the fact the pop filter is already attached is a very nice feature that keeps everything neat in your studio. The pop filter is detachable from the mount if you would rather use your own. The cable seems decent quality and from testing it the sound is great. Again, a nice additional item if you don't already own all the additional equipment you need to start using the microphone. The downside of the Rode compared to the AKG is the lack of carry case. All you get is a small pouch/dust cover. This thin piece of material really isn't going to offer much protection for the microphone and it would have been nice to have a case to store it in safely when it is not in use. As mentioned, the AKG p220 arrived in a lovely metal carry case that looked very sleek. Inside the microphone itself is a nice matt black and it has a good weight to it, it feels well made when you hold it. It is clear which side is the front with a robust metal grill and logo which look good and overall it looks very stylish. The Rode nt1a is a sort of 'off grey', perhaps you would call it a rose gold. A color typical of many condenser microphones for some reason. Unlike with the AKG it is not immediately clear which side is the front, however a small dot on one side is the indicator of this. Overall I think the AKG takes this round, not just because it comes with a shiny box, but it looks and feels great too. Round Winner: AKG The table below is a quick summary of the specs of both these microphones side by side. CategoryAKG p220Rode nt1aType of MicrophoneLarge Diaphragm CondenserLarge Diaphragm CondenserPolar PatternCardioidCardioidFrequency Range20 Hz to 20 kHz20 Hz to 20 kHzElectrical Impedance≤ 200 ohms100 ohmsEquivalent Noise Level16dB(A) 5dB(A)Signal to Noise78 dB(A)88dB(A)Size165mm165mmWeight530g326g The graphs below show a couple of useful things. The frequency response graphs shown on the left show the sensitivity of the microphone over its full operating range. You can see some microphones such as the AKG have a fairly flat frequency response, leaving it up to adjust the EQ if required. Whereas the Rode has some peaks and troughs in the graph, indicating they are trying to give a more 'finished' sound straight out the box without you needing to mess around with EQ. The polar response graph is taken as if you are looking down on the microphone from above. It shows how directional the particular mic is with 0° being directly in front and 180° being the rear. You can see in the Rode polar response graph, the microphone is very directional picking up virtually no sound from the rear. This feature can obviously be a pro or a con depending on what you are using the microphone for (which I will come onto in later sections of this article). With the Rode, what you see is what you get, there aren't any extra bells and whistles in terms of buttons, switches or knobs to speak about. With the p220 however, you get a couple of extra switches that can be quite handy. The first is a simple -20db switch. Very handy when you want to record some particularly loud sounds such as a guitar amp. The second switch is a 'bass-cut filter' which is designed to eliminate low rumbling sounds. AKG also say it can be used to eliminate footfall noise and traffic noise. I suppose which could be handy if you live in a noisy neighbourhood. Round Winner: AKG I suppose the main reason you are looking to buy a microphone is the sound right? So I should probably swiftly move onto that. In my tests, I tried out the two mics on a variety of sound sources. It is likely in a home studio on a budget you are going to want to use your new microphone for as many different things as possible. Before even testing the microphone out, just looking at the frequency spectrum graph of the Rode I can tell they are trying to make this microphone sound as good as possible for vocals without you having to do too much work. This is apparent in the slight drop in the bass frequencies with other boosts and dips in the spectrum to make vocals sound clear, full but avoid that boxy tone. The way that Rode have tried to tailor this mic to sound great straight out the box is actually the reason some people aren't massive fans of it. Some more experienced sound engineers are used to using microphones with a fairly flat frequency response that they can then tweak as required for the particular vocalist or situation. But for the majority of you out there, who I imagine aren't professional sound engineers, the work Rode have done should be seen as a bonus and should really help you get a great sound without much effort. I have to say, for the price point, the Rode sounds incredible on vocals. It is clean, clear and crisp. It is bright whilst not being overwhelming in the high frequencies and it is just a nice accurate representation of the voice in most cases and isn't that what we want? The AKG has a flatter frequency response and so may be better if you are a bit more experienced and want to make decisions on the EQ yourself a bit more. It still has the dip in the lowest frequencies and a small bump at the top of the spectrum but it is flat in between. When testing the p220 I actually found it a little overwhelming in the higher frequencies for vocals. It came out sounding a little harsh and was very breathy. This was particularly true when I tested it out on the podcast, I didn't like how airy and breathy I sounded at all, and I struggled to fix it using EQ after recording. For me the Rode nt1a is the clear winner on vocals. Round Winner: Rode If you are planning to use the microphone for podcasting, vlogging or other spoken word applications there are a few things you will be looking for. Firstly the clarity and realistic capturing of the voice and secondly minimal background noise. It is unlikely you will want to be spending a lot of money treating your room with acoustic foam just for podcasting, particularly when starting out. Well if you want that accurate representation of your voice then the Rode nt1a sounds like what you put in front of it. On top of that, it doesn't pick up too much background noise. It has a background noise level of just 5dB(A) which is pretty amazing. I tested it out in a pretty echoey room with no noise treatment and it wasn't bad at all. Testing it whilst typing and talking for example the sound of the keyboard is minimal. A problem I know some people have had with other condenser microphones. This makes the Rode quite a good option for vloggers and podcasters. The background noise level on the AKG is quite a bit higher at 16 dB(A). I could definitely tell when I was testing this microphone out. For example, with the keyboard test I almost couldn't hear my voice over the sound of the keyboard. And any slight movement in your chair or moving of a mouse will be picked up very clearly. I, therefore, conclude this makes the AKGp220 a poor choice for podcasting and vlogging in my opinion. It is very frustrating when you listen back to a recording and you constantly hear background noises that have been picked up by your mic. Round Winner: Rode In the acoustic guitar test there wasn't much to choose between the two microphones. I thought they both sounded pretty darn good. A nice amount of low end without being boomy, which is a common issue when recording acoustic guitar with other types of microphone. If I had to pick I would say the AKG p220 just wins it. Those higher frequencies that were a bit overwhelming on the vocal test made the acoustic guitar sound lovely and bright. A sound that personally I am always after when recording acoustic guitar. This was particularly evident when using a finger plucking technique. The bass notes were not drowning out the higher notes and everything balanced nicely in the recording. The Rode is still excellent though and whilst it is probably bt for vocals if you want to record some guitar too it will do a good job, and it certainly isn't worth buying a different condenser just for Round Winner: AKG (just) Similar to the acoustic guitar, on a clean setting the two microphones performed fairly equally. I found the -20db switch quite handy but that wasn't too much of an issue in a studio setting anyway. It was on a distorted setting that things were a little bit more interesting. The tone that I got from the AKG p220 recording on an identical distortion setting was much better than that from the Rode. It just felt a bit clearer, whereas in the final recording from the Rode notes overlapped more and it made the final mix a bit messy. Round Winner: AKG Despite the AKG winning more categories above, if I had to choose a winner it would be the Rode nt1a. This is because I'm assuming you are going to be using your large-diaphragm condenser microphone primarily for vocals and in that category, it wins hands down. I actually really wasn't a fan of the AKG p220 for vocals at all. Once you hear the breathiness in the recordings it's hard to un-hear it. That said, the AKG p220 is still an excellent microphone and it was actually my favourite of the two when it came to recording guitars. So if you are buying your mic to primarily record acoustic guitars and other instruments then I would actually save yourself a bit of money and go for this option. These are two top-quality large diaphragm condenser microphones. And once you factor in how affordable they are, these are well worth the money. Many top producers still use these microphones and until you are at a really high level, when you can get this quality for around \$200 it just isn't worth spending \$500 or more. Save that money and spend it on some other equipment ©. Check the latest Rode nt1a price Check the latest AKG p220 price

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