

REVIEW: QUE AUDIO DA12 HEADWORN MICROPHONE

Reviewer: ...sounds good, very stable in use, appears to be durably built

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Que Audio released the latest version of its DA-12 omni headset mic (formerly branded Da-Cappo) in late 2012. This new version of the company's most popular microphone incorporates changes to the earpiece for increased comfort and fit, improvements to the headset mic boom and cable to enhance durability for professional use, and new connector offerings to match a wider variety of wireless beltpacks.

Designed to fit securely over one ear, the mic is unobtrusive and quite stable with movement. Without the cable attached, this extremely lightweight headset tips the scale at a bit over 5 grams (1/5 ounce)—about the weight of a nickel coin. Let's explore its features in greater detail.

Mic capsule pattern and response

The "European-designed," 2.5-mm miniature electret condenser microphone capsule has an omnidirectional polar pattern, so it is equally sensitive to sound coming from all directions, and won't tend to emphasize the lower frequencies of the voice when used very close to the mouth. Positioning the mic as near as possible will maximize gain before feedback. The water-resistant design will prevent failure in action from sweat and other sources of moisture.

Frequency response per the specifications is nominally 20 Hz to 20 kHz, and the response graph on the website shows a wide, approximately 3-dB boost centered at about 10 kHz—a presence peak designed to enhance intelligibility. Maximum SPL is 140 dB, so it should be able to take shouts without overloading. Sensitivity is -45 dB, although in practice the gain settings at your console are likely to be similar to what you would use with a standard handheld mic, given that the headset's capsule is positioned to the corner of the mouth. Operating voltage is from 0.9 to 5 V.

The headset

The DA-12 features a soft, C-shaped earpiece that works equally well on the left or right ear. A malleable metal core allows the earpiece to be loosened or tightened to fit

securely on any sized ear. A petite (child-sized) earpiece model is available. This flexible rubber earpiece is so light and unobtrusive that it can barely be felt a few moments after putting it in place. Yet the rubberized surface provides enough friction that it holds in place, even with vigorous movement—such as an animated sermon or a performance involving dance or similar motion.

The headset's boom arm is designed to position the mic element near the corner of the user's mouth. The thin, durable boom is straight when new, and can be bent to a gentle curve to fit the side of the face with firm pressure from the fingers; first, decide which ear to place it on. This boom can be shortened by pressing it back into the earpiece, so that it fits the size of the user's face and properly positions the mic—a nice additional feature.

The earpiece end of the mic boom features a threaded, gold-plated miniature two-conductor female connector molded into a kidney-shaped projection of harder plastic (which slides back when the boom is shortened). This connector mates with a durable, quite thin 1.8-meter cable that has matching connectors on both ends. A variety of connectors are available, ranging from a right-angle XLR to go to a patch bay or console, to several different connectors to match virtually any manufacturer's wireless beltpack.

Audio test

Positioning the mic at the corner of the mouth about a half-inch away, I found the audio response to be natural and intelligible, with spoken word and singing. High frequencies seem apparent, with consonants, lip smacks, and similar sounds reproduced well. The lows were present without being overwhelming, and with the omni mic there was no proximity effect.

I did feel the mic had a "warmer" sound when positioned where the windscreen over the mic capsule was barely touching the corner of my mouth. The windscreen does a decent job of minimizing p-pops and breath noise. Being an omni, the mic can be more prone to feedback in the coverage pattern of the speaker system. However, I found that it provided more than sufficient level for a presentation when close to the mouth.

Overall, the headset sounds good, is very stable in use, and appears to be durably built. Que Audio provides its DA-12 headset in beige or black, at a retail price of \$399.

Gary Parks has served as marketing manager and wireless product manager for Clear-Com Intercom Systems. He has also worked with loudspeaker and wireless product management at Electro-Voice, technical writing at Meyer Sound, and RF planning software sales with EDX Wireless. Gary is a freelance writer and can be reached at garycparks1@gmail.com.