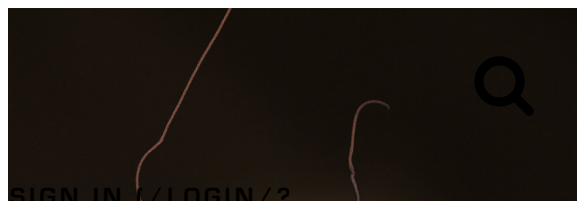




Tape Op

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ISSUE #102

N22 ribbon mic

BY AEA ([HTTP://WWW.RIBBONMICS.COM/](http://www.ribbonmics.com/)) | REVIEWED BY ADAM KAGAN
([/REVIEWS/BY/ADAM-KAGAN](#))BROWSE
ISSUE

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When I think of AEA, I think of vintage-styled, classic ribbon mics. The AEA R-series harks back to RCA ribbon mics in both looks and tonal qualities, while AEA's modern manufacturing approach includes innovations in internal shockmounting and adding active electronics for higher output levels and less sensitivity to preamp input impedance. The N22, in contrast, represents the first microphone in AEA's Nuvo series — the new generation of modern mics from AEA. The N22, built in Pasadena, California, sports a distinctive look, with a sleek, 1.5" diameter cylindrical body, satin nickel finish, and AEA's familiar cloth screening. Inside, the N22 sports AEA's trademark Big Ribbon technology and clean JFET active circuitry. Phantom power is therefore required, and care was taken to ensure that a typical USB audio interface could easily power the mic. Even as their entry-level microphone, the N22 sports the fit and finish of a much higher priced studio mic. No corners were cut on the build quality and finish, and the included shockmount provides a solid grip with a unique, low-profile configuration.

AEA's design goal for the N22 was to bridge the gap between traditional ribbon mics, with their classic, but sometimes mellow tone, and modern condensers, with their forward high-mids and rolled-off bottom. On paper

and in use, the N22 exhibits a slightly-hyped upper midrange, between 2 kHz and 6 kHz, and a bottom end that rolls off gently, starting at around 800 Hz. The top end also falls off quickly, dropping about 10 dB from 5 kHz to 15 kHz. The overall frequency response is not that different from a typical studio dynamic microphone, like a Shure SM57. The N22's ribbon motor, however, brings a smoother flavor and a bidirectional figure-8 pattern, which provides a bit more natural ambience to the recordings. High frequencies above 10 kHz are extremely attenuated, so the N22 will never sound harsh or strident. Fabric screening protects the sensitive ribbon element, and the N22 begs to be used up close, even for vocal and drum recording. As with all ribbon mics, care should be taken to avoid direct windblasts towards the capsule, but high SPL sources can easily be handled by this mic. A simple pop filter would protect the mic while recording vocals or kick drums.

I had the opportunity to put up the N22 in many sessions, using preamps from API, Chandler, Focusrite, Manley, and Warm Audio, to capture acoustic guitar, electric guitar amps, male and female vocals, drums, and piano. My first impression of the N22 was that it felt a bit thin and midrange focused — almost too narrow a frequency response for my taste. However, after playing around with placement on various sources, I found that I could (and needed to) place the mic very close to most sources. The N22's proximity boost in the low end is mitigated by its inherent frequency response, so even acoustic guitars and vocals can be close-mic'ed without fear of picking up too much low- end mud, or overdriving the capsule. The slightly-boosted upper midrange coupled with the ribbon's smoothness brought a nice size and color to snare drums, vocals, acoustic guitar, and piano. I would characterize the flavor as modern, but folksy, in that sources sound natural, but still present. Overdubbing and recording

multiple instruments on the same production all with the N22 resulted in a coherent blend of sounds that didn't build up in any particular frequency range.

A pair of N22s would provide a great way to record a singer who also plays guitar. Simply position each mic so that its null point (the side of the figure-8) rejects either the voice or the guitar, and there should be a good deal of isolation for each source. The off-axis bleed and rear pickup of room reflections actually add useful ambience and depth to the tracks. The N22 produced a useful and unique sonic character for almost all the sources I tried it on. I'm not sure I would want this as my only mic, but the N22 paired with a fuller-range mic would be a very capable combo for almost any recording setting. This mic does not compete with [AEA's superb A840 \(/reviews/gear/94/a840-active-ribbon-mic/\)](#) [Tape Op #94 (/94/)] or [R92 \(/reviews/gear/56/r92-ribbon-mic/\)](#) [[#56 \(/56/\)](#)] mics, but the N22 definitely fills a void in the affordable all-around studio mic category. I would compare the N22's usefulness (but not necessarily its sound) to the AKG C 414 and Shure KSM series. The combination of its ribbon qualities and nicely-shaped frequency response makes the N22 a winner in its category.



\$899 street with case, shockmount, cover; www.ribbonmics.com
(<http://www.ribbonmics.com>)

Adam Kagan; www.TemptressThePlugin.com
(<http://www.TemptressThePlugin.com>)

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AL-2 Stereo Microphone System ([/Reviews/Gear/39/Al-2-Stereo- Microphone-System/](#))

BY LARRY CRANE ([/REVIEWS/BY/LARRY-CRANE](#))

The AL-2 is sold as a matched pair of tube condenser mics with an external rackmountable power supply and cables. The mics are smallish, with 2.2 cm exposed of the diaphragm, and have light aluminum...

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VSM 1 (/Reviews/Gear/19/Vsm-1/)

BY LARRY CRANE (/REVIEWS/BY/LARRY-CRANE)

Several years ago I was looking around for a tube mic for my studio. There were very few "non-vintage" offerings out there, and I ended up buying a used Manley Cardioid Reference mic, which I never...

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BY BRIAN LUCEY (/REVIEWS/BY/BRIAN-LUCEY)

I borrowed a friend's Josephson C42's and am having a hard time returning them. I like a small-diaphragm mic with extended, smooth highs and good detail, full midrange, and lows without any boom or...

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BY LARRY CRANE (/REVIEWS/BY/LARRY-CRANE)

As the world fills up with many low-cost Chinese condenser mics, the manufacturers who have been around a while have had to take notice of this and offer mics in a comparable price range. Shure...

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KA-04, KR-2W, KR-1D, KR-2C, KR-1F, KR-3H, KR-25A, KR-33A, KP-6M, TT- 3M, BS-3D (/Reviews/Gear/28/Ka- 04/)

BY LARRY CRANE (/REVIEWS/BY/LARRY-CRANE)

Taylor Johnson, of The Sound Room, has been importing Russian mics like the Oktava brand for years, and now he steps out with his own line of microphones. Partially built in Argentina, these mics are...

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I-5 Dynamic Instrument Mic (/Reviews/Gear/44/I-5-Dynamic- Instrument-Mic/)

BY LARRY CRANE (/REVIEWS/BY/LARRY-CRANE)

The i-5 is Audix's attempt to offer a mic as versatile and rugged as the ubiquitous Shure SM57. Given the number of 57's out there and the amount of use they receive, that's a tall order indeed. The...

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Valvet Voice Condenser Mic (/Reviews/Gear/30/Valvet-Voice- Condenser-Mic/)

BY LARRY CRANE (/REVIEWS/BY/LARRY-CRANE)

The new Brauner Valvet Voice is a fixed pattern (cardioid) large diaphragm tube mic, specially designed for recording voice. It's only available in a limited run of 500 mics, and is at a lower cost...

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R84 Ribbon Microphone (/Reviews/Gear/38/R84-Ribbon-Microphone/)

BY LARRY CRANE (/REVIEWS/BY/LARRY-CRANE)

"More mics," that's what I always ask for when Christmas comes around. All the other tools used for recording are great, but mics are always the first in line to capture acoustic-based sounds. I'm...

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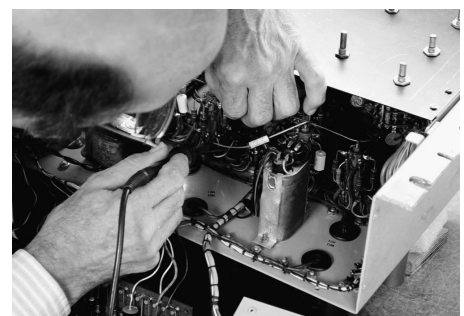
BY CRAIG SCHUMACHER (/REVIEWS/BY/CRAIG-SCHUMACHER)

Many years ago, back when my studio WaveLab was called 7n7, I was prowling around our musician's mecca, The Chicago Store, with JD Foster, in search of odd things to augment the Green on Red record we...

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BY

Vintage King co-founder Michael Nehra shares some of his love, knowledge, and practical advice for diving into the world of vintage audio gear, and then takes us behind the scenes for a walk through...

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BY MIKE JASPER (/ARTICLES/BY/MIKE-JASPER)

Jim Williams has spent much of his 56 years working with some of the biggest names in the music business, including Frank Zappa, John McLaughlin and Stevie Wonder. He's the owner of Audio Upgrades,...

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BY JOHN BACCIGALUPPI (/ARTICLES/BY/JOHN-BACCIGALUPPI),
LARRY CRANE (/ARTICLES/BY/LARRY-CRANE)

Bill Cheney and Jim Romney are the men responsible for keeping the amazing legacy of Spectra Sonics, a legendary, if criminally unheralded, pro-audio company alive.



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Rich Williams: Behind The Gear With Burl Audio (/Interviews/Btg/105/Rich-Williams/)

BY LARRY CRANE (/ARTICLES/BY/LARRY-CRANE)

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