

Audio Test Kitchen Creates Virtual Mic Comparison Showroom

DPA Microphones' 4041, 4011 and 4006 support an unbiased listening environment through continuous, identical audio conditions.



Launched by co-founders Alex Oana and Ian Hlatky, Audio Test Kitchen is the world's first online, unbiased, virtual microphone showroom. In order to provide the most comprehensive sound collection of all large condenser microphones available on the market today, Oana and Hlatky sought a microphone source that could help maintain identical conditions over a long period of time. The duo found their solution with DPA Microphones' 4041, 4011 and 4006 microphones.

Touted as the most comprehensive microphone comparison platform on the Internet, Audio Test Kitchen is a free website that allows consumers to audition equipment right from their own studio. Audio Test Kitchen allows people to hear and compare the sound of hundreds of different large diaphragm condenser microphones with no bias.

Using multiple audio sources across a variety of genres, Audio Test Kitchen has been able to showcase the personality of each large diaphragm condenser microphone. "DPA plays a crucial

role in how Audio Test Kitchen brings this resource to the world,” says Oana. “We utilize DPA microphones in ways that they may never have been implemented before. One of those is core to Audio Test Kitchen’s mission: creating an unbiased listening environment. In order to do that, every large diaphragm microphone has to record the source under identical conditions. Literally every new large diaphragm mic we put up, one of our DPA mics is also being recorded as a reference point to ensure that our source never changes.”

The team at Audio Test Kitchen is able to guarantee the consistency of all its microphone playbacks by utilizing the DPA 4041 Large Diaphragm and 4006 Omnidirectional mics as reference points. This ensures that website visitors are only hearing the difference between these large diaphragm microphone products themselves.

Audio Test Kitchen also uses its DPA mics to record vocals and acoustic sources, one of the most important applications for large diaphragm condenser microphones. “We didn’t want listeners comparing mics on Audio Test Kitchen to incorrectly assume the nuances between different vocal takes were attributed to sonic changes between microphones,” adds Oana. “With DPA mics, we are able to maintain 100-percent consistency by capturing one vocal performance in an anechoic chamber using DPA’s high-resolution 4011 cardioid mic and subsequently replaying that audio through a specially tuned loudspeaker that serves as a surrogate for the human voice. We call this process, ‘bottling the source,’ and it allows us to capture and reproduce only the pure sound of the voice itself.”

For Oana and Hlatky, even the selection of the recording and source-mic solutions took a great deal of research and reviewing. “DPA was among the first mics we tried in this bottling and re-amp system we developed,” says Oana. “After comparing six or seven mics, we arrived at the DPA 4011 as being one of our two bottling microphones. This high-quality cardioid microphone has the ability to capture the natural sound of a voice or acoustic guitar and retain all the life and intimacy in our re-amp system. It sounds as if each one of these 250 large-diaphragm condenser mics was in front of the source, live, from the beginning. It removes a layer of translation.”

In creating Audio Test Kitchen, the co-founders felt an immense responsibility to honor the design and the blood, sweat and tears that the manufacturers have poured into their products. “We have to represent all of the manufacturers with the utmost accuracy so that users can be sure what they are hearing is true,” adds Oana. “DPA’s attention to the smallest of details is now cascading into Audio Test Kitchen’s users’ ability to hear the true personality of the 250 large condenser-style mics. I think it’s easy to take for granted the care, design, passion and professionalism that a manufacturer like DPA pours into its products. In addition, the team at DPA, especially Chris Spahr and Gabriel Antonini, were incredibly supportive of us from the early stages and we are extremely grateful for their help in bringing this resource to the public.”

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