

# MY MYK SMARTMYK



## SOUND CHOICE

Australian design helps the SmartMyk stand out from the growing crowd of external microphones for D-SLRs, so do some smart features and a heavy-duty construction.

If you thought photography had its fair share of gadgets, just wait until you get involved with shooting video with a D-SLR. It's gadget heaven and you can, of course, end up spending a small fortune on a full camera rig loaded up with accessories. Some of these you can live without – at least until you get more involved – but pretty well essential no matter what camera you're using is an external microphone.

Consequently, the choice of models available for use with D-SLRs (or compact still cameras) is growing, and among them is the Australian designed SmartMyk. The company behind it, My Myk, is based on Sydney's lower north shore and has a background in audio production for TV and cinema. It's specifically designed the SmartMyk for use on a D-SLR or CSC, giving it highly directional pick-up characteristics to minimise both background noise and handling noise. Incidentally, Australia must be gaining a bit of a reputation in this area because the Rode video microphones are designed in Sydney as well.

In microphone tech terms, the SmartMyk is a compact electret condenser design combined with a rejection – or resistance – tube to give a 'super cardioid' pattern of sensitivity. Essentially, this means that sounds from the sides and behind aren't picked up (at least not at levels that are noticeable) and maximum sensitivity is achieved directly in front... i.e. from whatever the microphone is actually pointing at. You can think of it as being 'focused' on your subject so the SmartMyk is particularly suited to dialogue or somebody delivering a 'piece to camera'. Additionally, the SmartMyk has a high-pass filter (fixed at 70 Hz) to minimise its sensitivity to low frequency sounds in order to reduce background noise such as the rumble of traffic.

### BUILT TO LAST

What you see externally is a polyurethane foam windsock which is designed to filter out some wind noise, but may not be enough in very breezy conditions in which case you can fit a 'fluffy'.

Perched up on the camera's hotshoe, you'd be surprised how vulnerable an external microphone can be so the SmartMyk's internals are insulated against vibration and shock, and also protected against moisture. The mic's two external switches – we'll get to them in a



✦ The red-coloured shock mount is made from TPE synthetic rubber which is weather resistant and insulates the microphone from handling noise.



✦ All the SmartMyk's casings are made from highly durable polycarbonate ABS. The two switches on the rear are for power on/off (right) and a three-position gain control.



✦ The SmartMyk's exceptionally low profile means it can be stowed on the camera.



✦ The SmartLynk has an audio output for connecting headphones and (at the far left of this image) an output to an iPhone or iPod also for monitoring purposes via the My Myk Camera Audio app.

minute – are also sealed against the intrusion of moisture and the 'cold shoe' mount is made from stainless steel rather than plastic. The flexible shock mount is made from TPE synthetic rubber so it insulates against the transmission of handling noise from the camera.

The SmartMyk's casings are all made from polycarbonate ABS so it's reasonably tough, but remember that microphones are sensitive instruments and should be treated with as much care as, say, a lens. Despite the fairly heavy-duty construction, the SmartMyk still only weighs 60 grams, making it the lightest model in its class. My Myk says that its low-profile design means it can be left on the camera when you pack it away which is true, but we'd still recommend detaching it and finding a suitable pouch to store it more safely.

One of the reasons the SmartMyk is so compact is that it's powered by a 2032-type three-volt button cell housed in a slide-out tray (rather than the more commonly used AAA-size battery or something even bulkier) and which My Myk claims is good for over 200 hours of operation. One of the two switches mentioned earlier is the on/off control while the second is an amplifier gain switch which has three settings. In most cases, you'll just leave it at its central 'normal' position which means the mic's amplifier delivers a 'straight' audio signal direct to the camera (mono to both the left and right channels). The two other settings either boost or reduce the signal – by 15 dB either way – to, respectively, deal with cameras which have auto gain or if the sound source is extremely loud.

**ADDED FLEXIBILITY**

You'll need to refer to your camera's manual to see if there are any specific instructions regarding the fitting of an external microphone, but in general terms it's necessary to switch off the automatic gain control (AGC) – a.k.a. the auto levels control or auto sensitivity – when using the SmartMyk. This is because the auto control will lower the input signal or increase the levels (thereby creating more noise) when you don't necessarily want it to.

However, not all cameras allow for the AGC to be switched off or for the manual setting of recording levels so My Myk offers the SmartLynk module which incorporates an AGC blocker to disengage the circuit. The SmartLynk also offers the added

functionality of two microphone inputs each with their own level controls, an audio output for connecting headphones and an output to an iPhone, iPad or iPod (also for monitoring purposes). Additionally, the inputs from the two mics can be mixed and sent to either the camera or an external recording device. It's a step up in terms of your D-SLR audio recording options, but probably not something you need to purchase straight away, as the SmartMyk's gain-up control helps get around the AGC issue (which isn't an issue anyway on the latest video-savvy D-SLRs such as the Nikon D600 and D800, and Canon's EOS 5D Mark III that allow for manual level setting).

We tested the SmartMyk on the D600 and found its directionality to be exceptional, giving great clarity and depth to the nicely isolated sound source, and effectively minimising the ambient noise. The dynamic range is good and handling noise appears to be very effectively suppressed. It operates very well up to a subject distance of around ten metres beyond which, in the situations where there's a reasonable amount of background noise, it will start to intrude, but in reality there probably aren't too many shooting situations where you'll need this sort of range. Over longer distances you'll need to think about using a lapel mic anyway. What using the SmartMyk graphically highlights, however, is the woeful inadequacies of built-in camera mics. There's no going back.

The SmartMyk microphone is priced at \$275 and the SmartLynk unit at \$350. My Myk products are distributed in Australia by Adeal Pty Ltd, but for more technical information visit [www.mymyk.com](http://www.mymyk.com)

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