

CAD Audio/Astatic Commercial 1700VP



Written by James Elizando



1700VP microphone with anti-rotational mount and remote control box

Once upon a time the pastor of my church asked me, "What can be done so that I can hear the choir?" My response was, "With a rock band on the stage, the choir has no chance unless we put them in another room and give them a TV to watch the service."

Of course, my response wasn't looked upon too highly, but any one of you who have been in my position know the difficulties of miking a choir - and to still be able to hear said choir when the stage volume is above a whisper. Needless to say, the choir had been the bane of my existence since the dawn of time. Please don't take this the wrong way - I love the members of our choir. I just haven't been able to find product that works great in all situations to show off the hard work that they put into rehearsals, because, quite frankly, my choir is pretty good. You just can't hear them most of the time. In my defense, it hasn't been for a lack of trying. I've tried any and all comers in the condenser world. I've come up with plenty of microphones that sound amazing, and also the quest has produced some less-than-desirable products.

The Gig

We'll start like this. On the stage I have drums, played by a rather large Hawaiian, so its kinda like he plays with baseball bats. There's also a pair of electric guitars, bass guitar, acoustic guitar, a pair of keyboards, a grand piano and six lead vocalists - so the stage has the ability to get loud. My poor 100-person choir doesn't usually stand a fighting chance against all that stage volume. I've used all manner of dangly (yes it's a word) choir mics, SM81s, AKG 414s, Shure KSM32s and 27s. After having spent so much money on mics, I never thought that I would be permitted to purchase more. But hey, those of you in the church circle know that when pastor wants something, he usually gets it. In this case, he still wants to hear the choir. So I finally landed with five Audix CX112s. It was the best sound I'd achieved yet, and everyone including pastor seemed happy with it.

Here's where this "ain't broke" story gets a fix. My good friend, none other then Rev. Bill Evans, calls me and says, "I need you to review a choir mic." Curses. I've had so much choir mic over the last few years I could vomit, but I kindly obliged. In walks the CAD Audio/Astatic 1700VP. I get all kinds of boxes of parts that go with this thing, and I honestly wasn't in the mood to try it. So it sat on the backseat of my car for close to a month. But finally I knew the deadline for this review was fast approaching, so I bit the bullet. (Pronounced boo-lay, if said with a French accent.)

On Sunday evenings we have a young lady who plays the viola. It has no pickup, so I decided this will be the 1700VP's first victim. Now, I must tell you that the claim to fame for this microphone is its remote variable pattern control, hence the VP, which is controlled by a proprietary VPC-1 (remote variable pattern control box). On the remote box is a recessed switch that controls the HPF as well as a rotary knob that allows you to continuously blend and select between an infinite number of polar patterns. So you shrug your shoulders and say, "Is that all it can do?" No. The best part is that you can put the remote box up to 2,000 feet away from the microphone. So I plopped the VPC-1 remote box at my FOH position and proceed to set the mic up on the boom arm that is provided with it. I'm starting to soften up at this point, because the boom seems sturdy, it's also easy to use, and easy on the eyes. We start to get sound check rolling, and I'm cruising along like normal. I then realize that I can hear the viola. Just like with the choir, the viola suffers from all the stage noise and usually gets lost in the mix. You say, "So what? You finally fixed your mix and can now hear a viola. Bravo." What I didn't tell you is that said viola player was standing right next to a Hot Rod 4x10. And you'll never guess what I couldn't hear. Yup, the 4x10. I was blown away. The pattern control could adjust in such a way that all I could hear coming through the mic was the viola. I am fast becoming a believer.

I will give you this much. To me, the mic was a little overly-present between 800-1000 Hz, and again, slightly harsh in higher frequencies. Not too big a problem - it was easily solved with small EQ correction on the channel strip. I am most definitely willing to make a few EQ changes if I can have the pattern control isolate that which I am trying mic. In subsequent weeks, I used it for some voiceovers in a recording booth and continued to use it on the viola. It wasn't until last weekend that I was the most impressed with the 1700VP. Keep in mind that I only have one microphone for the purpose of this demo. I used this lone mic on the choir in lieu of the usual five that I use. I was stunned - again, a few minor EQ changes, and we're off to the races. What was amazing was the fact that I could push the choir over the rest of the band and still have room to spare. I cued the channel up in my trusty cans and started to play with variable pattern. As I changed the pattern, I could hear the change in what the microphone was picking up. I could get it to the point where all I

heard was the choir. I could hear the person standing right under the mic as well as someone standing eight feet away. I was truly amplifying the choir better with one Astatic 1700VP than I had been with five fairly pricey condensers.

In conclusion, I almost can't find anything bad to say about the microphone. Thumbs way up to the boys and girls at CAD. This is truly a great product. And priced at around \$700, I think that it should easily be able to fit into any church's budget.

Of all the products I've reviewed for FOH over the years, I believe that this one is my favorite. I'm in the process of purchasing a pair of 1700VPs for my church, and if you're smart, you'll be in line right behind me.

CAD Audio/Astatic Commercial 1700VP

Pros: Pattern control lets you isolate what you are trying to mic, low price.

Cons: Slight harshness in higher frequencies may require EQ adjustment.

How Much: \$700 (MSRP); \$599 (street price).

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