

Natural 5 & 6 Acoustic Instrument Amplifiers

DRUM PARTNER/MUSIC PARTNER | DRUMPARTNERS.COM.AU | EXPECT TO PAY: NATURAL 5 \$1049.00, NATURAL 6 \$ 1349.00

Under general circumstance, amplifying acoustic instruments can prove to be quite troublesome: either you're plugging straight into the PA and being forced to deal with the icky sound of your dry signal, or you're combating whirring feedback and tempestuous white noise from your usual amplifier. Although a range of brands have made amplifiers dedicated solely to acoustic instruments, very few possess any notable character or mojo, and for that matter, tend to fall into the gear-hole abyss.

Enter Prodipe's Natural Acoustic Instrument Amplifier range. These French-designed contraptions are constructed for not just the acoustic guitarist, but for an entire ensemble, offering a comprehensive solution to rehearsals and even intimate performances. With two models available in the series – the 5" speaker equipped Natural 5, and the slightly beefier 6.5" fitted Natural 6, these amps play host to a wide range of TRS, XLR and even RCA inputs, allowing you to run acoustic guitars, keyboards, microphones and auxiliary sources such as a sampler or iPhone to run backing tracks. This makes the Prodipe Natural range a no-brainer for any jazz group or singer/songwriters who make a living performing night-after-night in smaller venues, and the relatively compact dimensions and weight of

both the Natural 5 and 6 (11 and 13 kilograms respectively) ensure that they'll easily squeeze into your boot or even on the backseat for transportation between gigs.

With two TRS inputs, an XLR input, an RCA I/O and a single Direct Out, the Prodipe Natural 5 packs much less than its bigger sibling, but it'll certainly suffice for solo artists, duos or even trios in a pinch. Each input also features a three-band EQ, gain knob and a control for reverb, which should allow you to shape each player's tone or into something pretty enough for a live setting, while inbuilt phantom power lets you plug in your favourite condenser microphone to ensure your singer's vocals sound as crisp live as they do in the studio.

I tested the Natural 5 out solo with an acoustic guitar and condenser microphone for my vocals, and was quite impressed by the woody acoustic tone I received from the amp. Unlike the flat tones of other acoustic amps, the Natural 5 had quite a warm midrange, perfect for finger-picked passages and chords alike, while the 1" tweeter projected high-frequencies without sounding too jagged or icy. I was also surprised to hear that my vocals didn't sound secondary to my guitar in the mix, and the inbuilt reverb didn't disappoint. The Natural 5 also boasts a pair of very handy legs to tilt the amp for some sweet sound

isolation – if you're rehearsing from the confines of your apartment, your neighbours will love this feature.

For those needing some extra grunt, the Natural 6 should keep you happy, with four inputs and outputs and an impressive eight reverb presets making it a surefire pick for downtempo folk, jazz or blues ensembles. Prodipe stake the claim that the 50Hz to 20kHz bandwidth of these amps should let it play nicely with drums, synths and bass sounds, so I thought I'd put the Natural 6 to the test with a singer, keyboard, bass guitar and a Roland SP-404 plugged into the RCA input to trigger some drum loops. After a few tweaks to the mixer section, I can happily report that the Natural 6 definitely didn't crumble under pressure. The low-end frequencies, whether via a kick drum, thumping semi-hollow bass or the rumbling bottom notes of a Rhodes, delivered a nice punch that a normal guitar amp might lack. The Natural 6 also features a pole socket for stand mounting, which is certainly a welcome feature for live performances.

Prodipe have definitely tapped into a good little niche with these Natural Acoustic Instrument Amplifiers. They're compact, abundant with useful features and sound



surprisingly good: for those acts gearing up for the corporate festive function season, these amps will definitely be your mate.

BY WILL BREWSTER

HITS:

- Warm acoustic tones and very usable vocal sounds
- Compact size and affordable pricing

MISSSES:

- Not much

Dynamic Microphone Range

DRUM PARTNER/MUSIC PARTNER AUSTRALIA | DRUMPARTNER.COM.AU
EXPECT TO PAY: TT-1 PRO VOCAL \$99.95, TT-1 PRO INSTRUMENT \$99.95, M85 \$149.95

From the incredible fidelity of their '60s recordings to the groundbreaking technical advancements of the ORTF (Office de Radio diffusion Television Française), when it comes to the white-lab-coat school of audio engineering, the French have always been at the top of the class. The country's strong roots in broadcast and orchestral recording have meant that France has always been one of the world's premier exporters of audio engineering talent but, in terms of actual contributions to microphone design, they have always been somewhat overshadowed by the Austrian and German classics of yore. That is until now.

Prodipe are a French Audio company with a purpose; to produce legitimately Pro products that come in (well) below traditional 'Pro' pricing. Employing the same level of R'n'D and design nous as many of the better known prestige manufacturers, Prodipe are set to create some major waves amongst FOH engineers and studio veterans alike. It was with this in mind that I jumped at the opportunity to put their Ludovic Lanen designed dynamics through their paces, starting with the TT-1 Pro Pro.

The TT-1 Pro has long been a cult favourite amongst savvy engineers and forum dwellers for a number of years. A real insider's microphone, the TT-1 is often praised for its sonic fullness, versatility and rugged construction (and exceptionally low pricepoint).

Equally adept at live vocals as it is in front of a guitar cab, the TT-1 Pro has garnered a reputation as something of a 'giant killer' amongst modern dynamic mics.

Whereas the TT-1 Pro is more concerned with versatility of application, the slightly more specialised TT1-Pro Instrument is an instrument mic in its truest form, with its slender profile and signature robust voicing (think SM57 without the midrange chirp or a front address version of an e609).

Superbly engineered by the great Ludovic Lanen, the TT-1 Pro Instrument is a utilitarian, multi-purpose microphone capable of producing a more than workable sound across a wide variety of sound sources. Like all Lanen mics in this review, it has a classy fullness to it that never seems to cross the line into muddiness, even at close proximity. I found the smooth voicing and broadband frequency response of the TT1-Pro Instrument to be the perfect antidote to janky sounding snare drums and brittle guitar sounds that often plague young bands. The low-mid fullness also make it a great go-to for toms.

The third and final Lanen mic to be tested was Prodipe's contribution to the world of handheld vocal dynamics, the M-85. With its silver ball-grille and transparent voicing, the M-85 definitely has a very different vibe to the aforementioned models, sounding almost like the exact middle ground between a sm58 and



a DPA. As a stage mic, I found it to provide ample resistance to plosives/handling noise and it's impressive gain-before-feedback properties meant that it compared favourably to the classic handhelds pitted against it. It has the same broadband capture and sonic fullness that we have come to expect from a Lanen mic, albeit with an airier top. This fullness and ability to handle plosives would also see the SM-85 as a good backup or beginner mic for podcast.

In conclusion, Prodipe's new line of Lanen designed dynamics are a force to be reckoned with. By combining the savoir-faire of French engineering with the most efficient Asian manufacturing in the business, Prodipe have managed to create the ultimate outlier: truly

Pro quality mics at a fraction of the cost of the bagboy's. Get on them early, because when word gets out about the level of audio quality we are talking about here, they won't be a trade secret for very long.

BY PAUL FRENCH

HITS:

- High fidelity output
- Rugged construction
- Extremely good value for money

MISSSES:

- Could do with a sturdier mount