Combining a Canadian sound engineer, several Danish microphones and you have the framework for the Holophone H2-PRO, a surround sound recording device of Canadian ingenuity combined with the excellence of DPA microphone technology.

According to Jon Godfrey, President of Rising Sun Productions, the H2-PRO was developed by Mike Godfrey with the assistance of the Canadian National Research Council and released as a product in 2004. The H2-PRO Surround Sound Microphone is the only patented device specifically designed for capturing reflected 5.1, 6.1, and 7.1 channel surround sound for all professional audio applications. The H2-PRO is the next-generation microphone born from extensive testing on the Holophone H1 by Rising Sun and feedback from recording engineers worldwide. It is well suited, according to the company, for television broadcasters (DVB and HDTV), radio broadcasters, consumer playback formats such as Dolby, DTS, and other surround systems. The H2-PRO provides engineers and producers total control over all incoming, discrete surround sound audio signals and delivers those signals in an intuitive way, continues the blur.

So, exploring its odd design more closely.

The head shaped microphone has eight DPA 4060 capsules and is held in place by two moulded screws that connect to a sturdy yoke. The internal wiring connecting all eight capsules exits the dummy head through a long rubber stress-reliever in the neck position.

The yoke allows the microphone to rotate around the front of the head if you wish to suspend and the microphone itself in a heavy duty moulded flight case.

Optional extras include a pistol grip and windjammer. There is a 3m tail of XLRs for connecting to an 8-channel preamp with the required phantom power and gain.

Our first recording was at Kemble Airfield, home to the largest collection of Hawker Hunter jets in the United Kingdom. Rycote Microphones (www.rycote.com) supplied suitable windblowing material, and attached a piece of fur around the exposed microphone elements.

It was agreed to place the microphone on the roof of the control tower. The left and right channels were then monitored by the ATC monitoring in a mobile unit. All eight channels were then recorded into any broadcast or studio environment, manipulated, mixed and encoded into any of the standard

“After several dive-bombings and fly pasts by the jets, the H2-PRO was de-rigged and set up in more familiar test conditions…”

music producers and engineers, for location recording crews, and for independent project studies.

All surround sound recordings from the H2-PRO are discrete and real-time, therefore it should be fairly easy to bring the recordings into any broadcast or studio environment, manipulate, mix and encode into any of the standard.

The perceptual reconstruction of the sound field on a 5.1 surround sound system was the final test. This was still accurate and immersive, achieved without the use of further processing, the Holophone H2-PRO does a superb job of capturing the detail in the sound.

To clarify this further, I was somewhat sceptical as to how the overall performance of this microphone would be, but on a pick-up performance shootout, Holophone would still be on its feet. The spatial imaging was splendid through a quality surround playback loudspeaker system (ATC again, if you were wondering).

Listening tests are by all means subjective, we have no means here of measuring the capsule scientifically, except by using our ears and placing ourselves in the sound field. Naturally most normal humans (and your reviewer too) can't remember the exact way something sounded away from the field, so we rely on the microphone's accuracy to reproduce it for us, and the Holophone seems to be a truly reliable transducer.

The simplicity of design and manufacture makes it a leading candidate for the capture of surround sound, with a quoted price of £6,000 US.

It's quite good value, if you consider the R&D that's gone into it, and the fact that you're effectively purchasing eight DPA 4060 microphone elements.

If you do decide to invest in the H2-PRO, spend a little more on the windjammer which is a custom item and an essential accessory for outdoor recordings.

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