

Review of the AMT's "Roam Elite" Wireless Microphone System.

By: Robert Griffith

I searched on the Internet for several months for a wireless microphone system for both my trumpet and flugelhorn. I wanted mic that transferred easily and quickly and also didn't have me "wired" to my horns..

The product I kept coming across was the AMT (Advanced Microphone Technology) "Roam Elite" Microphone. I read a positive review for the product from a musician in the UK. Since I had an outdoor gig coming up and wanted to do live recording, I decided to purchase the \$590 system. I ordered it over the Internet for immediate delivery.

The unit arrived about 3 weeks before the Santana Row gig. So, luckily I had time to test it out.

Physical Description:

The Microphone is well done and suspended on a rubber "O" ring mount that does a good job insulating it from Valve and vibration noises.



Photo of Roam Elite clipped to a Saxophone bell

The Transmitter is wireless and quite small; pre-tuned to a single channel. Mine was tuned to channel 3. It is clipped on to the microphone boom and is about the size of a large tube of lipstick.

The microphone clip is sturdy and clips easily from trumpet to flugelhorn in about 10 seconds or less.

The Receiver is dual diversity with a modulation display, an RF signal display, and a "Channel in use" display.

The system had problems immediately. The receiver was picking up a strong voice signal and the only remedy was to turn the squelch knob all the way up. This limited the range of my transmitter considerably. Additionally, during practice sessions, the receiver emitted loud "Pops" even with the squelch turned all the way up.

The technical representative I called at AMT stated that in a populated area like mine (SF Bay Area) , there are too many RF interferers to use the “single channel” AMT Roam Elite system. He said the older receiver (with no diversity) were considered a “better built” product. Furthermore, if I sent my system back, he would evaluate it and either send me a different channel “dual diversity” receiver or an older model “no diversity” model. He also stated that “There have been problems with the Sampson Receivers and some sound engineers won’t use them on their stages.” He alternately suggested an upgrade to a “beltpack” type wireless system. This would have cost me another \$200 and would defeat what I wanted with the Roam Elite System (i.e. having a system that was not wired between my horns and my body).

After receiving my returned unit, he told me that it tested out perfectly. However, he received information that TV channel 69 in our area was parked right on top of their channel 3. His decision was to send out a older model (no diversity) unit tuned to channel 6. The new receiver only had an “On/Off” LED and a volume knob. It was about the size of a deck of cards and not very impressive.

At first, everything appeared to be working alright at the weekly practice sessions.

Problems cropped up at the outdoor stage in Santana Row. The receiver was positioned about 30 feet from where I was standing with the transmitter. Every time I moved my horn behind the metal music stand, the sound system would put out a loud “snap”. This drove our sound engineer nuts. His only solution was to watch when I switched horns or set one down and quickly kill the sound on my channel. In the future he’ll put a long cable on my receiver, locate the unit closer to me, and position it so no metal shields the signal from the transmitter to the receiver.

My overall evaluation (XX out of XXXX Stars):

The system is an “Idea Before It’s Time.” Either the technology is not advanced enough yet, or the “Sampson” design is not as good as it should be. I feel that if the receiver had adequate shielding, the problem would have been eliminated on the original unit. Since the original unit had “dual diversity” the problem we had at our gig might have been reduced or eliminated.

I recommend buying a unit locally instead of using the Internet. I imagine I could have tried and easily returned unsatisfactory components. As a musician (and retired RF Design Engineer), I am extremely disappointed that Sampson does not currently do a good enough job with the RF design on the RF parts used in the AMT Roam Elite System.

Pros

No wires between horn and you
Small, Lightweight
Battery Life ~ 11 hours
Sturdy Clip (mute insertion works OK)

Cons:

No squelch on loss of RF (Pops)
Not enough RF Shielding
Expensive for what you get
Single Channel System