

Lapel Mic Basics – extract from Sound Techniques April 2009 newsletter, with thanks to Stephen Buckland:

At Sound Techniques we often see used and abused lapel mics requiring maintenance, re-termination, or in rare cases, complete replacement.

Here are some basic tips to help get the best performance out of your precious tools, for as long as possible.

Use a mic clip with two holders, or a secondary cable clip, or simply 'loop' the cable with a loose overhand knot, anchored to the clothing. Using this sort of strain relief will help in two ways. Firstly, low frequency rumble and vibration noise will be cut down, as the capsule is somewhat isolated from the rest of the cable. Secondly, wear and tear is minimised due to less tension on the mic head – think of it as a safety net for clumsy talent or over-eager assistants. Nine times out of ten damage at the capsule end of a lapel mic is un-repairable, so treat it with care!

Damage to the cable at the connector end is another common problem. Avoid winding the cable around the transmitter body with the connector still plugged in – this creates unnecessary stress on the joint and will cause it to deteriorate quickly. If the cable is strained at the connector while the talent is wearing the mic, a discretely placed piece of tape can help pull the cable in the right direction. Be sure to remove the tape after use, as glue residue is hard to remove once the mic/body-pack has been stored with tape on it.

As soon as you've finished shooting, remove the radio mic setup from the talent. We've had various reports of talent damaging mics they had forgotten were still attached, or simply walking away with expensive equipment accidentally.

Lapel mics are electret condenser mics and the pre-polarised capsule will lose its charge over several years. The mic will sound duller and should be replaced to restore it's original fidelity.

For more information please contact Stephen Buckland:
<mailto:stephenb@soundtq.co.nz>

or visit the Sound Techniques website at <http://www.soundtq.co.nz/>