

>> Digta SonicMic II vs. SpeechMike

The new Grundig Digta SonicMic II is designed to go head-to-head against the Philips SpeechMike market which has gone virtually unchallenged for over a decade. The Philips SpeechMic Pro Plus and Dictaphone PowerMic II are 2 of the most popular handheld microphones among physicians today but this may soon change considering that the “slider control” SpeechMike Classic (SonicMic II equivalence) is MAP priced the same as the \$299 SonicMic II.



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>> SpeechMike Advantages:

- The SpeechMike’s circa 1979 disco looking mother-of-pearl rollerball, which lights up when you touch it, is absolutely gorgeous and if microphone appearance was my only consideration I could stop now because the SpeechMike would be the hands-down winner. Philips literally reinvented the word “cute” with the SpeechMike’s numerous LED lights and red ribbon microphone indicator. Although I prefer the Grundig’s TrackPoint mouse control, the SpeechMike makes a superior handheld mouse because of the additional upper and lower left and right click buttons along with the inclusion of a scroll wheel. The SonicMic II only includes 2 mouse control buttons on the underside of the unit which I found to be unnatural.
- The Philips Device Control application includes an additional option that allows the end-user to program a specialized function when you release the button. This option is ideally suited to NaturallySpeaking’s “press to talk” hot key but not available in the SonicMic II.



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>> Digta SonicMic II Advantages:

- At 1st glance, the SonicMic II doesn’t look quite as flashy or as cute as the SpeechMike because it is designed to be more functional than fashionable. In order to dictate into the Philips SpeechMike you need to hold it within 4 inches of your mouth which is an unnatural way to use the mouse. I found myself constantly moving the SpeechMike away from my mouth in order to use the mouse controls. The SonicMic II is about 2 inches longer but because the microphone works well over a distance, you can easily hold it in your lap or armrest while simultaneously controlling the mouse; a more user-friendly time-saving approach.
- I found the Grundig Digta SonicMic II to be 97% accurate with NaturallySpeaking; edging out the SpeechMike Pro’s 96% accuracy rating.
- It’s difficult for any handheld microphone to be very noise canceling but the SonicMic II earned the KnowBrainer highest handheld/desktop microphone noise canceling rating to date which is 7/10. By comparison, the SpeechMike earned a somewhat mediocre 5/10 rating.
- The SonicMic II includes a slider control similar to the SpeechMike Classic but with the additional option of being able to adjust the tension via an included metal jewelers screwdriver.

>> More Digta SonicMic II Advantages:

- The SonicMic II only includes 9 programmable buttons as compared to the SpeechMike Pro Plus 10 programmable buttons but 6 of the SonicMic II buttons can be programmed with 3 different functions which include single click, double-click and long click (3 second default) giving it the equivalence of 21 programmable buttons. You can even edit the double-click and long click duration times.
- The SonicMic II includes a weighted desktop microphone holder while the SpeechMike only comes with a small wall holder that doesn't even include mounting hardware and is likely to be discarded by the end-user.
- Both microphones include newly updated software that directly integrates with many popular NaturallySpeaking features and although the Philips Device Control Center looks more impressive, I found it to be more complicated and less bulletproof. The Digta SonicMic II application isn't as pretty but notably easier to work with. I also experienced issues with the Philips software not working on some test computers.
- Although this is more a matter of personal preference, I have a much higher appreciation of the Grundig's Track Point mouse control over the SpeechMike roller ball.
- The SonicMic II includes 3 volume input microphone adjustment levels. In the late 90s, the original analog SpeechMike also included a 3 position adjustable microphone volume feature but unfortunately Philips chose to abandon the technology when they went digital. As an experiment, I tried moving the volume slider to the 2nd position (increasing the microphone volume output) and found I could dictate from as far away as 4 feet in a quiet environment. However, the only way I could get away with dictating at the highest volume setting was by speaking very softly which gives the SonicMic II an advantage for end users with soft-spoken voices.
- The SpeechMike only works well when used within 2 to 6 inches of your mouth while the SonicMic II works equally well from 5 to 24+ inches. Note: Although the SonicMic II needs to be held within 8 inches of your mouth to pass the Audio Setup Wizard, you can optionally leave it in the included desktop microphone holder and effectively dictate much further away in a moderately quiet environment. Grundig informed us that one of the reasons why they designed the SonicMic II to be a couple of inches longer than the SpeechMike and raised the microphone up an additional 1.5 inches, in the included stand, was to facilitate hands-free "desktop style" dictation which, in my opinion, is an incredible feature that is sorely lacking in the SpeechMike.

>> Conclusions

Although both the SpeechMike Classic and the Digta SonicMic II are identically priced, I found the Digta SonicMic II to be more accurate, more noise canceling and more versatile than the SpeechMike. I feel that the adjustable volume control, end-user-friendly application (for programming the buttons), triple programmable buttons, Track Point mouse control and the hands-free desktop option give the SonicMic II a clear-cut advantage over the SpeechMike.

• Medical Field Recommendation:

The extra noise cancellation of the Digta SonicMic II should prove invaluable to physicians who need to dictate in front of their patients but don't want to wear a traditional cyborg or computer geek looking headset microphone. The SonicMic II is also the perfect microphone for physicians whose fiendish office manager insists on triple booking appointments and not leaving the doctor enough time to sit down to fill out patient notes or simply find it more convenient to use hotkeys to automate their EMR application because when it comes automating a patient chart, hotkeys are even faster than verbal commands.

• Personal Note:

My reseller work environment involves dividing my time between dictation, phone calls, commands and shipping. My favorite SonicMic II feature is the ability to wake up NaturallySpeaking from 8+ feet away while walking towards my computer, without having to sit down or pick up the microphone. Obviously I wouldn't want to attempt any serious dictation, from 8 feet away but simple commands usually work and I can often get away with verbally firing off the next shipping command, from my packaging station. This review was dictated with the Digta SonicMic II microphone while working directly below my office ceiling fan running at full tilt on an unseasonably hot southern night. The Philips SpeechMike is also an excellent microphone but under these conditions, I doubt it would've been up to the task.