

Tasty Sonics, Tastefully Presented, Popularly Priced

Violet Design's Amethyst Vintage Condenser Microphone

by Randy Poole

Fresh on the scene with a complete lineup of new microphones is Violet Design with mics manufactured in Latvia and its central offices in Estonia. Today we're reviewing the Amethyst Vintage, designed mainly for vocals and stringed instruments, though with a range of other applications. The Amethyst Vintage utilizes a large, 1-inch, dual, 6-micron, gold-sputtered Mylar diaphragm that is center-terminated with dual brass back-plates (as opposed to a single diaphragm in the Amethyst Standard model). This diaphragm design, according to the manufacturer, gives it a "classic, wide-spectrum, vintage sound."

in the field

Translation, this is Violet's VD67 capsule that sound-wise is somewhere between a U67 and a C12 capsule in character. Configured with a cardioid-only pattern, the Amethyst Vintage is phantom-powered with minimal proximity effect and a fully discrete, Class-A, transformer-less output, capable of handling 134 dB SPL. The grille is said to be acoustically transparent, reducing internal resonances and reflections, while the internal shock-mount, and its heavy gray/blue body construction reduces rumble and external resonances. The mic can be mounted directly to a stand or shock-mounted using Violet's unique optional

elastic shock-mount. Violet also includes gold-plated contacts on the output XLR, a nice touch. All of this is contained in a package 6.6x2.5 inches and weighs in at only 12.3 ounces.

In Use

First up was vocal tracking with veteran singer/producer, Chris Harris, singing a rough vocal for an upcoming release. No more than a few words into warm-up, he remarked he liked the sound. Listening back, we observed that the mic handled loud passages as well as soft with no breakup and minimal coloration differences. The Amethyst Vintage exhibited good bottom end without being muddy, with excellent detail, and the track sat well in the mix. We also noted a fairly large sweet spot with a mild proximity effect—the wide working angle helping to reduce unwanted variations in frequency response when a singer moves slightly during recording.

Next up was a Gallagher acoustic guitar with session guitarist, Tom Hemby. We miked the acoustic with the Amethyst Vintage at about the 12th fret. Tom called it the most natural high end he's heard on a recording. I must say that the Amethyst Vintage frequency response worked perfectly with acoustic guitar, and its smaller size helped with positioning. The signal path on both occasions was through the pre in an early broadcast Neve module, with no EQ added. Some tube compression was added later just to smooth out the strumming a bit.

While some mics accentuate the sound of the pick on the strings a little



too much, which can be hard to tame later, the Violet's sound was never harsh. Again, the mic's nicely tailored proximity effect filled out the bottom end, without being "boomy." The optional side-mounted, elastic shock-mount worked well at isolating the mic from unwanted vibrations, didn't take up too much space, and it was very easy to load and unload the mic.

Conclusion

Violet has plenty of experience building mics, despite the brand name being relatively new. In my opinion, they've put one of their best capsules into the Amethyst Vintage. What you get is a mic that is great for vocals, excellent on acoustic guitar, and works well on drums and percussion. It includes features like a Class-A transformerless design with a U67-style capsule that is phantom-powered, in a medium price range. The optional shock-

mount is a simple design that works great, getting it into tighter spots than most large-diaphragm mics. If you need to get it into closer quarters still, Violet has provided a stand adaptor on the bottom of the mic as well.

It's clear to me that Violet Design has a winner on its hands with the Amethyst Vintage. Anyone looking at a microphone in the street price territory around \$1,000 needs to have the Amethyst Vintage on their short list. Wooden box included.

Violet Designs
www.violetusa.com

Product information

Amethyst Vintage: \$1,295
Amethyst Vintage w/ASM
shockmount: \$1,434

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