

JZ Vintage Series LDC Microphones

The Vintage V47 and Vintage V67 FET LDCs from JZ Microphones impressively portray classic Neumann performances at prices that encourage “new vintage” over “actual vintage” purchases.

Latvian manufacturer JZ Microphones is widely known for exceptionally stylish and effective microphones that always bring a bit of personality to the table via performance or design, or both. This trend continues with the company's new V47 and V67 Vintage Series large-diaphragm condenser (LDC) microphones, which have enough style, personality and limitations to intrigue (and occasionally confuse) this recording engineer.

Features

The V47 and V67 share almost all of their defining traits: a shallow and flat shape (not unlike a flask except with a curious cutout, or hole, towards the mic's bottom), a built-in swivel mount instead of a clip or shock mount (an “internal shock mounting system” is built into the design, offers JZ); a Class-A discrete amplifier design; and a five-year warranty.

Selected Audio Clips: JZ V47 and V67

Visit the link below to hear the various audio clips referenced in Rob's review of the V47 and V67. — Ed.

proaudioreview.com/jzv47v67



Front and back views of the uniquely designed Vintage Series microphones from JZ.

The operative difference between the two are in the capsules; both are 25mm diameter “Golden Drop” designs — JZ's GDC47 and GDC67 — with different voicings, similar enough by design to the classic Neumann U47 FET and U67 (a tube mic) to warrant use of those legendary numbers, respectively. The V47 and V67 each have 6 dB of self-noise (A-weighted) and can handle 134 dB SPL.

In Use

Prompted by JZ Microphones' intentions for these two Vintage Series products, my primary task at hand here was to arrange a “shootout” alongside their inspiration (vintage, “rental grade” Neumann 47s/67s). Yet first, some standard testing gave me a better understanding of these curious JZs.

I first tried the V67 on two male pop vocalists and received excellent results. One fellow was throaty, the other a tad nasal, and the V67 did very flattering things to both; mids became prominent while the V67's "crisp yet smooth" top plus a touch of compression made for nicely articulated vocal tracks. Meanwhile, the slightly nasal fellow did some nice rhythmic, lip-snappy stuff that never became harsh like it might with some other condensers.

I found the V47 to have a more sculpted sound than the V67 featuring carved-out low mids, a deeper and fuller bottom end and an understated top. With it, we tried some lilting BGV tracks with about 45 dB of gain from an AMS-Neve 4081 mic amp and received very good results. The V47 is ideal for "whispery," breathy vocal tracks (where I often find the right frequency balance hard

“But then, I discovered their reason for being: recording acoustic guitars.”

to achieve) even though I initially thought it would be too tubby and carved. But it sat right in the mix, without EQ, or even heavy HP filtering. I also found the V47 made a very polite and unobtrusive double for the above husky-voiced fellow, with a generous amount of low-end filtering.

I tried the V47 and V67 on electric guitar, too, with mixed results. Frankly, I couldn't get the V47 to do much of anything right ... while the V67 could do no wrong! The V47 was just too chubby and unarticulated, for my tastes, on guitar cab, but the V67's mids and highs were detailed, smooth and classy — really "expensive"-sounding. On this application, though, you will likely need inline padding, as the JZ outputs are hot with [typically loud] guitars.

Many folks swear by a Neumann U47 FET out in front of a kick drum, so I dutifully followed suit with the V47. It was OK, in my opinion, but nothing special; it handled the SPL

without a problem, was a little boxy at 400 Hz, and picked up a fair amount of cymbal spill, but is quite usable with some liberal EQ.

At this point, I was appreciating the colorful Vintage Series duo, but was also becoming a bit frustrated; their attached windcreens were nearly falling off of the bodies, attached by what looks like one very tiny screw; I feared that I would damage the mics with the smallest misstep. Further, their integral stand mounts just weren't doing it for me, either. Sure, the swivel ball (visible through that funky hole) and tightening nut

work while looking pretty cool, but the overall range of motion it provides is very limited; the nut is too hard to loosen and the mic is tricky to get where you want it — really tricky. In other words, the stand mounts are most effectively used in wide-open spaces. [According to JZ, the cause of Rob's concerns "is due to a built-in shock mount, which lessens the expense" of both microphones. Regarding the less-than-flexible stand mount, JZ "soon will include a special holder for V47 and V67" models, providing a wide range of positioning options. — Ed.]



An Entire Studio

The Digital Mixer packs an entire studio worth of gear into a small, compact system. Delay, EQ and dynamics are found on all inputs and output channels, so there is no need to waste money on external processors. An astonishing 77 signal processors are built in, including 25 dynamic processors, 25 4-band parametric equalizers, 25 delays, and 2 digital effect processors with a large array of effects and user adjustable parameters. Over 9700 research and development hours went into perfecting the Digital Mixer. As a result, users are rewarded with fast, accurate dynamics; smooth, flawless equalization, and high definition digital effects normally found on pricey, stand-alone processors.

PC and Mac Recording

Through the optional FireWire and USB interface, users are able to record up to 64 tracks — with four Digital Mixers daisy-chained — to the computer in 32-bit, 96 kHz resolution. Recorded signals can be returned directly back into the channels with the touch of a button. The interface is compatible with Windows XP, Vista and 7, as well Mac OSX, Snow Leopard, and can be used with the most popular digital audio workstation programs, including Cubase, Logic, Sonar, Sound Forge, Garageband and Pro Tools 9.

Digital Circuitry

High quality AD/DA converters can be found on each and every input and output channel with a state-of-the-art 40-bit floating point DSP processing all digital signals. Digital AES/EBU inputs and outputs are included, which allow for expanding the scope of your system by connecting it to external digital consoles. The detailed color touch-screen offers clear, concise visual depictions of all settings and functions and allows users to control all features quickly and easily. A high definition digital algorithm takes care of the rest.

Powerful and Versatile

With built-in EQs, dynamics, delays, digital effects, signal generator, and input/output meter bridge, the Digital Mixer is not your run-of-the-mill mixer. It is powerful enough to suit multiple applications as a live sound reinforcement mixer, a stage and in ear monitor mixer or for producing professional studio recordings.

Next Generation Digital Mixing

At last, a digital mixer with more feature, more technology and less snob!

With the Digital Mixer, Phonic redefines the ultimate live and studio mixing/recording experience. An advanced digital mixer with the soul and usability of an analog console, the Digital Mixer is the culmination of Phonic's 35 year mixing and electronics heritage. On the surface, the Digital Mixer is a 16 input channel mixer with a set of XLR and 1/4" inputs per channel. The unit also has flexible output possibilities through 1/4" multi outputs, and XLR main and control room outputs. But the Phonic Digital Mixer offers so much more than mere inputs and outputs...

• FEATURES •

- 16 balanced microphone and line input channels
- 8 balanced 1/4" multi-purpose outputs
- Stereo balanced XLR main and control room outputs
- 8 auxiliary and 8 subgroup mixes
- 17 ultra-smooth automated faders encompassing a 3-layer design
- -20 dB PAD button on all inputs for attenuating hot inputs
- Insert points on all input channels
- 2-track RCA input and output connectors
- Dedicated headphone output with individual trim
- Digital AES/EBU input and output onboard, assignable to main
- Pair and link feature on all input channels
- Individual delay adjustable on all inputs and outputs
- A full digital meter bridge available for all input and output signals (pre/post)
- Flexible soloing with user-selectable AFLs and PFLs and safe soloing
- 25 onboard 4-band parametric equalizers for all inputs and outputs
- 25 dynamic processors with expander, gate, compressor and limiter
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Singer/songwriter Perry Fowler auditions the JZ V47 and V67 alongside their vintage inspirations — "rental grade" Neumann U47 and U67 mics, courtesy of Wayne Jernigan's Reflection Sound Studios, Charlotte.

But then, I discovered their reason for being: recording acoustic guitars.

Acoustic guitars recorded so well with the V47 and V67 that I forgot their physical limitations and immediately fell in love with them: to paraphrase, they suddenly grew up to be Latvian supermodels and the windscreens and stand mounts became "beauty marks." I aimed the V47 at the lower body of a variety of acoustic guitars — a nylon string, a modern steel string and a 1940s Gibson steel, all for a beautiful, five-take composition — and the V67 aimed at the neck/body joint, amplified with the Neve 4081, and gently squeezed with an Empirical Labs Fatso for gorgeous "to die for" tones. The results: "right" yet polite tops, full bottom with no woofiness, rather inaccurate mids that were caressed into something better than the truth and a touch of helpful compression. Mmm-hmm ... beautiful!

Neumann vs. JZ

Operating as a "mid-level" studio, I don't have the budget for \$6k tools the likes of vintage U47s and U67s, so I rented the real deals from Wayne Jernigan at Reflection Sound Studios, here in Charlotte. With singer/songwriter Perry Fowler in for a session, I attempted some trustworthy comparisons

with the V47/V67, and their inspirations.

Perry played his acoustic with the Neumann and JZ '67s aimed at his guitar's lower body, then the '47s aimed at the neck/body juncture, all four microphones about one foot away from the instrument and each pair as close to coincident as possible. I made sure they were aligned closely on the more "placement sensitive" horizontal access and sharing the sweet spot on the vertical axis (see pictures 1 and 2).

In webclips 1A and 1B, some minute differences between the U47 (1A) and the V47 (1B) can be heard; the V47 was approximately 15 dB hotter than the U47, but I've level matched (using both preamp gain and gain in my DAW). The JZ appears to have nearly captured the robust bottom end of the original, matched the stylish mids and ever so slightly brightened up the classic high end of the original. Maybe the V47 is just a touch brighter in relation to the U47's old age, but the two were much closer in performance than I ever expected; in my opinion, they are so close it could be said, "Yes, that's a '47 on acoustic guitar" — sonically, at least.

In webclips 2A and 2B, the more substantial difference between the '67s is apparent. The V67 (2B) appears to have reasonably duplicated the leaner bottom and forward

(continued on page 50)

JZ Vintage Series

(continued from page 38)

mids of the U67 (2A), but puts out a good bit more high end and a slightly tighter bottom. While the V67's top is similar in character, it is more extended and abundant. The V67 was approximately 20 dB hotter than the U67 (and again, I used both preamp gain and my DAW to level match the two).

Summary

All in all, I really like both the V47 and V67, but with serious reservations. Primarily, both models sound reasonably close to their namesakes (at least when the originals are in cardioid, without pad, without HPF) to surprise me; that's a feat that frankly caught me off guard.

Even beyond their intended comparisons to Neumann classics, these JZ Vintage Series models offer much utility of their very own, though pads, filters or multi-patterns would make them eminently more useful. Both JZs do delightful things to voices and acoustic instruments: colorful,



Top view of the V47/V67 LDCs.

artistic things that are best suited for those with big mic closets housing more neutral offerings, when "neutral" is what you need.

The V47 and V67 are "sonically focused" — JZ does not tout them to be utilitarian. My few concerns aside, the Vintage

Series does a very good job of bringing de facto "classic microphone" magic into the modern world, within reach of those with smaller budgets but premium tastes.

Price: \$1,789 (factory direct)

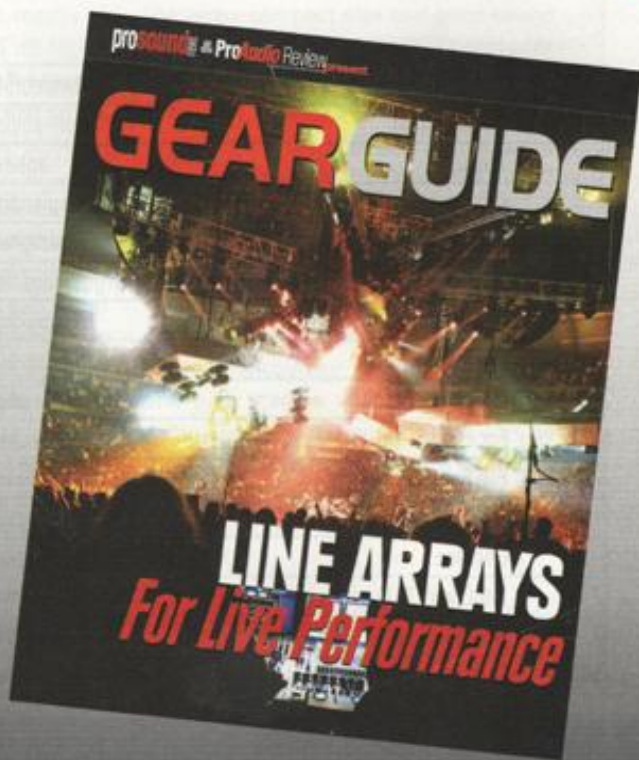
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