



JZ Microphones

V12

JZ's Vintage mics aim to re-create the sounds of classic valve models. Can the V12 compete? **Huw Price** finds out.

V12

Manufacturer **JZ Microphones**

Price **\$1,430**

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This is the third model to recently be added to Latvian microphone manufacturer JZ's Vintage series. The first two models were the V47 and the V67, so classic mic enthusiasts will already have spotted where JZ is headed with this one.

The V12 is designed to sound like a vintage AKG C12, just as its stablemates were designed to sound like Neumann's U47 and U67. But the curious thing is that JZ's approach to re-creating these classic valve-mic tones involves transformerless discrete solid-state circuitry and capsule tuning.

JZ is clearly far more interested in maintaining its own sense of style, too, because none of the Vintage series

Key Features

- Pattern: fixed cardioid
- Frequency range: 20Hz–20kHz
- Output impedance: 50 ohms
- Maximum SPL: 134dB

microphones looks anything like the models that inspired them. However, they do look exactly like each other – to the extent that reading the logos on the back is the only way you can distinguish between them.

Gold standard

A textured silver-grey metallic finish covers the brass body; the wide oval design leaves plenty of space around the edges of the 35mm GDC12 capsule. JZ also uses a proprietary 'Golden Drop' sputtering technique to reduce the mass of the gold on the diaphragm, which is said to improve transient response and accuracy. The diaphragm therefore has several circular spots of gold in preference to a uniform covering. Rather than employ the edge-termination of a vintage AKG CK12 capsule, the V12's capsule is centre-terminated in the Neumann style.

Although striking – perhaps even beautiful to some eyes – JZ's designs are not always entirely practical. Since the V12 is shockmounted internally, the V12 screws directly onto a mic stand via a ball-and-socket swivel mount that's tightened by a knurled thumbscrew. Unfortunately, the swivel itself severely restricts angle adjustment. It's adequate for vocals, but to achieve the required angle for acoustic instruments, drums or electric guitar you may need a half-stand or a gooseneck adaptor.

When we reviewed the V47 and V67 (Issue 88) we were assured that an optional shockmount would be available for around \$199. At the time we thought it was a bit steep given the (then) asking price of \$1,999 for the mics themselves. Unfortunately, we can't find anything resembling a Vintage series shockmount on JZ's website, so be aware that placement can be problematic. Still, the fit and finish of the V12 is excellent and the magnetically sealed plywood case with its scorched edges has an undeniable old-world charm.

Aiming to emulate one of the greatest condenser microphones in recording history is audacious, but unfortunately we didn't have a vintage AKG C12 to hand to make a direct comparison. We were able to compare the V12 with a Telefunken ELAM 250F plus another similarly priced C12 soundalike from Peluso called the P12.

Close enough for jazz

The similarities between all three microphones were more apparent than their differences. The V12 produces a

Measuring Up

The V12 is undeniably an accomplished microphone, however it's competing at the same price point as several other C12 soundalikes. For obvious reasons most of these are valve microphones with up to nine pickup patterns; the list includes the Peluso P12 (£999) and the Telefunken M16 MkII (£1,462). Solid-state alternatives include the BLUE Bottle Rocket Stage One (£695 inc capsule) and the Violet Global Pre (£528). Both companies produce a range of interchangeable bayonet capsules (£450/£694 each).



very similar tinselly treble with plenty of detail and fast transient response. The balance in the low-frequency range also proved very well-matched. The Peluso arguably had a slightly fuller midrange than the V12 while the Telefunken had more physical presence, but the V12 certainly kept pace and there was absolutely no noise floor to speak of. Our only concern was a slight colouration around the 1.8kHz region, other than that the midrange sounded relatively neutral.

Proximity effect makes the V12 very easy to 'tune' through placement. The midrange fills out nicely without becoming boomy or indistinct. This certainly helped when recording vocals and by and large we found ourselves favouring close-mic'ing techniques.

Off-axis frequency response remained fairly consistent, but the cardioid response wasn't quite what we had expected. There's certainly treble and upper midrange attenuation from the rear, but frequencies below that weren't quite as attenuated as we might have expected. It's not a particularly big deal, but it's worth considering if you're after dry sounds in a lively recording room or you're keen to achieve maximum separation. **MTM**

MTM Verdict

WHY BUY

- + Impressive sound quality
- + Ultra-low noise floor
- + Great looks
- + Cool plywood case

WALK ON BY

- Fixed pickup pattern
- Limited angle adjustment
- No suspension mount
- No bass rolloff
- No pad

Although it claims to evoke the tone of a vintage AKG C12, the V12 is a fine microphone in its own right, but it's a pity about the design of the stand mount.

