Neumann TLM49 Microphone | Reviews

WHAT IS IT?

A condenser microphone for critical recording (particularly vocals).

CONTACT

Who: Sennheiser UK Tel: +44 (0)1494 551551 Web: <u>neumann.com</u>

HIGHLIGHTS

Classic vocal sound
Quality construction
Looks the part

SPECS

Frequency response: 20Hz – 20kHz Sensitivity: 12mV/Pa Signal to noise ratio: 82dB (A-weighted)

Equivalent noise: 12dB (Aweighted)

Maximum SPL: 110dB (less than 0.5% THD)

Supply voltage: 48V (+/-4V) Size:

78 x 165mm Weight: 0.83kg

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Neumann TLM49 CardioidCondenser Mic£1,056

Neumann continues to expand its transformerless range with the TLM49. *Jon Musgrave* steps up to the mic...

erman mic company Neumann should need no introduction. Along with Austrian counterparts AKG, their models pretty much defined the

European microphone in the 20th century. Quite an achievement, but where does it leave them in the 21st?

In a world where quality and value often go hand in hand, spending over a grand on a mic has become a choice rather than a necessity.

Neumann's answer has been to reinvent their product range, offering more and more choice. One major aspect of that process has been the transformerless or 'TLM' mic range; the TLM49 is the latest to arrive.

Bang for buck

Neumann's famous large capsule mics have always been quite pricey, and with many of them being valve designs (with associated power supply, cabling and so on) it's no surprise. The TLM range combines these successful capsule designs with more contemporary (and cheaper) electronics.

The result is simpler mics, often with only one polar pattern, but with better signal to noise ratios. Visually, of course, they have those familiar Neumann looks.

As you may have noticed, the TLM49 looks pretty much like the M49 (and M149), and hardly surprisingly sports a capsule derived from the M49 and U47. However, unlike the valve 49, this one is a single pattern (cardioid) and solid state design. And unlike the most recent M49 incarnation (the M149) it has no roll off.

On the technical front, an Aweighted equivalent noise figure of 12dB is good, though not the best I've seen, and with 12mV/Pa sensitivity, again other mics are better. Even so, overall the specs seem pretty good.

Vocal coach

The TLM49 is very much being promoted as a vocal mic, so that's my first port of call. With no polar patterns, roll-offs or pads to press, this really is a set up and play (or sing) mic.

That simplicity means any variations in sound will be down to mic position, and it's immediately obvious that you have to get in close to achieve the proximity effect.

A quick look at the polar pattern reveals a very gentle tail off below 500Hz, but also a gradual presence lift from 2.5kHz to around 5kHz, with a further lift to 12kHz. Both of these contribute to intelligibility and sparkle for vocals and speech.

It's worth noting the scale of this mic – it's big! The massive capsule grille creates plenty of space around the capsule, which helps to reduce unwanted colouration.

Obviously a good large capsule condenser should perform well on most acoustic instruments. The M49 works well up close on acoustic guitar, but would also make a good orchestral spot mic, particularly for cello and bass, although in some circumstances the size of it may make it a little unwieldy.

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It also seems very well insulated from contact noise. With both the capsule and internal electronics elastically mounted, the included suspension cradle provides added protection from stand vibration.

Comfy

There's something comfortably familiar about the sound of Neumann mics and the TLM49 delivers that sound (albeit at a price). As I've said, quality and value have become expected from equipment, particularly microphones.

But there remains something quite seductive about the feel and performance of the best European mics, and the TLM49 falls well within that category. Highly recommended. FM



There's nothing lacking in the performance of Neumann's retro-styled vocal mic.

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