

Interview: **GRAMMY®** Award-nominated Singer-Songwriter and Producer Michael Omartian

RECORDING

The magazine for the musician®

Tracking Vocals!

- Tips, Tools and Expert Advice
- Time-tested Techniques
- How to Talk to the Talent



15 New Reviews

API • Baby Audio • Earthworks
Flock Audio • Korg • LEWITT
Monheim • oeksound • Ohma World
RODE • SPL • TELEFUNKEN • Toontrack
Vanguard Audio Labs

\$5.99US \$5.99CAN



05

VOL. THIRTY-SEVEN
NUMBER EIGHT
MAY 2024
USA \$5.99
CANADA \$5.99



Ohma World Ribbon Microphone

A look, style and sound that's all yours

REVIEW BY DAVID BLASCOE

Ohma World was founded in 2023 in East Los Angeles, CA, by a group of audio engineers and musicians with years of microphone-building and design experience. Ohma World currently offers two models: a ribbon mic and a condenser mic, both of which use the same body. And that is just the beginning of the story...



Handmade for You

Ohma World designs, builds and tunes each mic in-house and hand-paints every mic body. While their website offers a variety of ready-to-ship mics in a wide selection of color combinations, they also offer a custom experience where you get to design the look and even, to a small extent, the sound of your mic to fit your style and aesthetic.

You can choose the mic type (ribbon or condenser), the body color (20 colors), the screen style (5 options in 22 colors) and even include a custom logo or icon.

Ribbons and Motors

The Ohma Ribbon is of the “large/long” ribbon variety, featuring a 2.35” 1.8-micron corrugated aluminum ribbon suspended between a pair of neodymium magnets. This is the same size ribbon found in classic RCA ribbon mics. This makes sense, as the Ohma founders spent years working at AEA Ribbon Mics. However, this is also an excellent place to point out that the Ohma Ribbon is not designed to be an RCA/AEA clone or copy.

The Ohma Ribbon mic is an active design and requires +48v phantom power. It also features a custom Lehle transformer.

Fit & Finish

I was sent a pair of Ohma Ribbon mics in a sleek, sexy black finish with stainless steel grilles and logo plates. Although this is one of the company’s stock offerings, it is the color I actually would have chosen.

When I unboxed these microphones, I was impressed with the quality of the packaging. Ohma went the extra mile here. The boxes are playfully designed with pastel colors, and the mic is nestled in a dense pink foam slide-out drawer. The mic also comes with a mic mount and a pair of Ohma guitar picks—more on their purpose in a moment.

The microphones are built like tanks made from thick, sturdy, machined aluminum and the screens are stainless steel. I was impressed, to say the least.

Screens

A “fun” feature of the Ohma mics is a selection of five different screens: Motif, Scales, Stripes, Holes and Windows.

These various shapes and designs dramatically change the mic’s appearance and offer slight tonal changes as well. I was sent their flagship Motif, Stripes (which reminds me of the grille on a classic Shure 55SH) and Windows (almost like no screen at all).

They snap on magnetically with a satisfying click. To swap the screens, take one of the included guitar picks, push the tip into a small slot and pry up. It is worth noting to take extra care while swapping the screens so you don’t accidentally touch the ribbon, which is protected by a thin white (or black) silk-like fabric—another custom choice.

Screen sets are available as add-ons for \$49 each in different colors—a great way to change your mic’s appearance and gently alter its sound. Ohma even has an online interactive frequency graph to help you select. My favorite screen overall was Stripes, which has a classic and timeless look and feel, especially in black and chrome.

How Do They Sound?

So, customization and color choice are fun, but most importantly, how do the Ohma Ribbon mics sound? In a word, fantastic; in another word, classic. As a session drummer, I first tried the pair on drums. The sound is big, rich and full with that hint of rounded top-end “darkness” (compared to a modern condenser mic) that one would hope for in a ribbon microphone.



REVIEW

Ohma World Ribbon Microphone



Nicely, these are not lo-fi or overtly colored in any way. The Ohma Ribbon mics are full and neutral, with some gentle high-mid tailoring, a bold low-end proximity effect and a gentle up-per-frequency roll-off.

| | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Frequency Response: | 20 Hz–20 kHz |
| Polar Pattern: | Bi-Directional |
| Open Circuit Voltage: | -44dBv @1 kHz (0dB=1v/Pa) |
| Normal Impedance: | 92R |
| Load Impedance: | 1kΩ or greater |
| Max SPL: | 140dB SPL |
| Equivalent SPL: | 19dB(A) |

Looking Through the Windows

Despite my partiality to the Stripes screen overall, I favored the wide-open Windows screen on drums. Windows allowed the sound to pass straight through to the ribbon unaltered, which slightly highlighted the mic’s low-end reach and gave a massive sound.

In addition to overheads, my favorite use of the pair was placing one outside of the kick drum about two feet away, with the second mic placed as a “crotch mic” pointed at the snare drum. These could easily become a mainstay drum tool in my studio.

I really liked the Stripes screen up close on soft, finger-picked acoustic guitar. The resulting sound was a mid-forward, mix-ready, balanced tone with an excellent bold focus. Using the Motif on vocals immediately brought a classic large ribbon mic crooner vibe to mind.

The Ohma Ribbon mics have an SPL of 140dB, and everything I threw at them was handled gracefully with zero breakup. I was rewarded with a smooth and rich sound again and again.

In Conclusion

Both the Ribbon and Condenser models are \$699. Custom color combinations add \$100. Additional screen sets are \$49, a small price to pay to change your microphone’s visual and audible vibe in seconds.

Color and customization aside, the Ohma Ribbon sounds excellent. This is a professional, phantom-powered ribbon mic of the utmost quality in build and sound.

Although audio engineering can be sterile, intellectual and scientific, it can also be fun and inspiring. If you’re looking for that extra dose of visual and aural inspiration in your recording endeavors, the Ohma World aesthetic is a breath of fresh air. I can’t wait to check out the condenser model soon.

Ohma Ribbon—Second Opinion

BY PAUL VNUK JR.

I first saw the Ohma Ribbon mics when co-founder Sammy Rothman showed me an early sample at NAMM two years ago. My first thought might have been similar to yours—fancy colors and swappable screens—nice gimmick!

Luckily, I am familiar with Sammy and his team’s dedication to quality, having tried out past designs from previous companies. I hoped (and was luckily correct) that the Ohma mics would be more than just “nifty.”

Because I am a ribbon mic freak, I was happy to try one out alongside some long-respected classics.

Matching My Space

I was sent an Ohma Ribbon with a custom Pure Red body and raw Brass set of screens. Ohma included the stock Motif, Stripes and Windows. The mic’s look, especially the Motif screen, was a perfect fit with the colors and aesthetics of my studio, most notably my red Mod Geometric GIK Acoustics Impression panels.

I also agree with David about the impressive packaging, presentation and build of the mic.

Good Company

My first order of business was to try the Ohma Ribbon alongside some well-respected ribbon mics—my AEA R44CE, a phantom-powered AEA N22, a Royer R-121 and an R-10 Hotrod mic. The Ohma Ribbon is squarely in the AEA/RCA tradition, not so much the Royer Labs school.

Sonically, it falls nicely between the two AEA models. It is a touch more open on top than the R44CE but less bright and modern than the N22. Impressively, it exhibits the large ribbon RCA bottom-end capture.

Being a phantom-powered mic, low levels will not be an issue. The Ohma Ribbon, despite its “colorful” visual nature, is a professional studio ribbon mic that more than holds its own with the classic heavy hitters mentioned above. It sounds THAT good.

A Change of Screen

When mic builders design a mic beyond components and body design, it's incredible how much the screen and grille can alter its sound, and this is nicely illustrated by the Ohma Ribbon. The differences are subtle, but they are noticeable. Sammy told me they went through 40 Screen designs before landing on the top 5. He even sent me photos of 13 rejects, some of which looked great but sounded pretty bad, I'm told.

As David mentioned, Windows is the most open and bold. It sounds great at a distance (overheads, front of kit, room mics, etc.) and is the most classic/vintage ribbon-like of the bunch.

Stripes was inspired by old vintage Bang & Olufsen ribbon mics. It presented a nice 3 kHz mid-forward tonality that worked well on both acoustic and electric guitar amps.

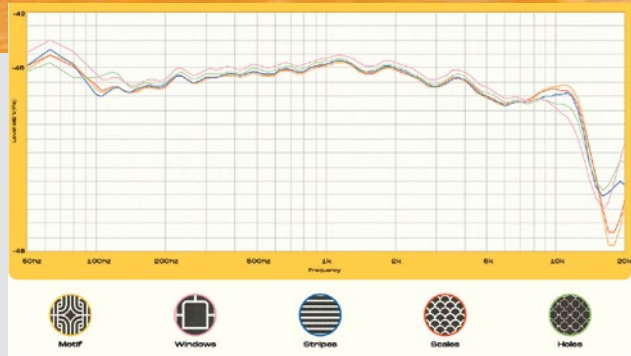
Finally, Motif is the most well-rounded and modern of the pack, with the most 10 kHz openness but still ribbony-smooth. From vocals to acoustic instruments, especially up close and personal, this would be the one I would leave on most of the time.

Character Traits

The mic with any of its screens has a full, blooming proximity effect (one of the things we love about ribbon mics), its front and rear lobes are perfectly sonically matched, and it has a killer off-axis rejection.

It's a Wrap

The Ohma Ribbon mic will be an excellent addition to any mic locker, adding a classic inspired ribbon flavor that manages to add its own voice to the mix. —PV 🎙️



Price: \$699; \$799 Custom; \$49 Screen Sets
More From: ohmaworld.com