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Roswell Pro Audio
Colares

Attitude and great sound from a cool new mic design

REVIEW BY PAUL VNUK JR.

Roswell Pro Audio has built a very well-respected reputation in just over three years. This is largely due to two mics: the Mini-K47 (reviewed September 2015) and the Delphos (updated from the Aurora, reviewed May and December 2016).

The Mini-K47 is Roswell’s entry-level offering at $299. It’s a compact large-diaphragm condenser with a cardioid K47-style capsule and a distinct unmistakable 47ish FET sound. It’s one of my top recommendations for anyone wanting a great entry-level mic under $500; I own a pair and they see use regularly in my sessions, and our Editor has one that he loves for vocals/voiceovers and string instruments.

The $899 Delphos is a full-sized LDC mic with a K67-style capsule, switchable between cardioid and omni. It has a dimensional yet largely neutral “big picture” sound with a nice controlled top end; I consider it the best all-rounder model in the Roswell line. Roswell also makes the RA-VO, a $999 mic custom-designed for ultimate neutrality on voice and intended for voiceover use.

Roswell was so quick out of the gate with microphones of such great sound and high build quality thanks to the man behind the curtain, Matthew McGlynn. Matt is the founder of recordinghacks.com, the world’s largest online microphone database and a source we Editors turn to often. He also runs microphone-parts.com, a one-stop website for microphone mod info, parts, and full DIY kits.

These paradigms collide wonderfully under the Roswell Pro Audio banner, resulting in mics made with expertly-researched, globally-sourced parts that are tweaked, tuned, and assembled in Roswell’s northern California facility. Roswell deals in mics that classify as boutique in build and design, but don’t come with boutique price tags. This month, we’re pleased to bring you the world premiere review of the latest Roswell mic: the Colares.

Where and what is a Colares?

Colares is named for an island off the Brazilian coast where, in true Roswell fashion, multiple UFOs were sighted in the 1970s. It’s built around a 34mm CK12-style dual-backplate capsule with a 3 micron Mylar edge-terminated diaphragm and is cardioid-only. You could assume that the CK12 capsule means Colares is intended to be voiced like a C12 or C414, but according to Matt, the starting point was actually to make a 251-style mic.

Inside the mic is a modified version of an old Neumann FET circuit. According to Matt, “We tested a half-dozen JFETs until we found one that has the distortion characteristics we wanted—a different JFET than we’ve used before. Then we use a distortion meter to select the specific bias resistor value for each individual JFET, mic by mic, to give us the 2nd-harmonic profile that gives this mic its sound.”

The Colares also uses a custom-wound transformer from Cinemag and exclusive US-made film-and-foil capacitors. Specs include a frequency range of 20 Hz–20 kHz, 35 mV/Pa sensitivity, output impedance below 200Ω, signal-to-noise better than 82 dBA, and less than 12 dB of self-noise.

One of Colares’ two switches engages a 10 dB pad on the input, which (as we’ll see below) has just as much to do with the mic’s sound as it does with its volume level. The other is a 3-position filter switch with a choice of flat, –3 dB @ 60 Hz, or –3 dB @ 150 Hz.

The mic features a heavy, dense all-brass body, dressed in a unique copper metallic-flecked enamel with a Roswell badge and a satin-finished nickel headbasket and end cap. It measures 7.24” x 1.97” and weighs just shy of a pound, shipping in a small rectangular flight case with a Rycote lyre shockmount.

The sound of Colares

Colares starts with a bold extended low-frequency response, about 3 dB up at 25 Hz and sloping down to 150 Hz. It remains flat in the mids up to 2 kHz, where it has a 2 dB rise up to 5.5 kHz and then another 3 dB rise centering on 8–10 kHz.

The frequency plot only tells part of the story. Colares’ secret sauce is how the circuit saturates with lovely 2nd-order harmonic richness. My initial reaction to the Colares was that this is a mic that has a great unapologetic presence and attitude. If a mic could shout, “Let’s do this!”, Colares would.

It offers a very full, bold low-end capture with a top end that is detailed, but rather than bright and open, it’s a mix of dimensional and excited. This might be the first time that I’ve ever been so aware of the sound of a mic’s transformer; I’m used to hearing it in preamps, but this is something special.
I usually don’t use mics’ pads unless I hear the mic clipping on input. However, on the Colares the pad is an essential part of the mic’s voicing, as it’s pre-input stage. If Colares is yielding too much harmonic attitude in the upper mids and highs, turning on the pad and boosting your preamp to compensate will smooth out the harmonic edges of the sound for a cleaner and more open capture. The two highpass filters are also useful for taming the mic, as they can remove rumble and clear up some of the subharmonic lows that this mic can capture.

**In use**

I put two Colares to work on stereo drum overheads, bass cabinet, electric guitar cab, acoustic guitar, percussion, and vocals. On the one hand, I wouldn’t recommend Colares as a studio’s one and only “does it all, everything in the mix” type of mic... which is OK, because Roswell already has a mic like that in the Delphos!

I would, however, recommend it as a great mic for adding boldness and harmonic excitement to any source in a mix that you want to highlight. I loved it on drum overheads; blended in with the rest of the up-close kit pieces, it gave the cymbals and even the snare and toms a nice saturated sound, rather than just brightness and sizzle.

Thanks to its low-end oomph, it’s a great bass cab mic, whether clean with the pad or letting its transformer sound shine. Using the filters to clear up mud makes it a great guitar amp mic, pairing beautifully with both ribbons and dynamics. On acoustic guitar, it can be a bit more source- and style-specific; it’s best suited for when you need the guitar to be bold in a mix, or even the aggressive focus of a song.

On vocals, the phrase that comes to mind is “larger than life.” The saturation circuit is perfect here, as a singer can lean into the mic and add a bit of harmonic excitement that should make for an equally exciting vocal performance... especially since it can be controlled by their own proximity and volume level in a very organic way. The filters are great to get rid of rumble, control plosives, and help seat the vocal in the mix.

One of my favorite uses was as a room mic. When tracking drums, I usually hypercompress this source, but not with the Colares. It helps keep things open, yet gelled and exciting, tucked in the mix—adding a great room dimension to the drums.

**Wow!**

I’ve probably overused the words ‘exciting’ and ‘bold’ to describe Colares, but they really are the best descriptions I can find. What I loved most about this mic is that it starts with a classic big clean sound, then takes it into new sonic areas. It’s a truly unique beast in a zoo of me-too clones—exciting to use, experiment with, and discover new sounds. 😮

**PRICE:** $1399 ($1259 street)

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