

THE CALIFORNIAN CONTENDER

The boutique microphone specialist Roswell Pro Audio from sunny California already won us over last year with its Mini K47 microphone pair. In the meantime, the product family has grown and now the Delphos, a true large diaphragm condenser microphone, is on offer.

By Christian Stede • Translated from German by Julian David

Large-diaphragm condenser microphones are a dime-a-dozen nowadays. They are as commonplace as sand dunes in the Californian desert to be more specific to this particular case. Accordingly, a good dose of optimism is required for a small microphone shop like Roswell Pro Audio from Sebastopol in Northern California to enter this crowded market and try competing with the top dogs. Moreover, the Roswell product portfolio isn't exactly wide ranging: apart from the Delphos microphone reviewed here there's only the smaller K47 variant and the voice-over mic, the "RA-VO." Even so, once you've experienced a Roswell product you surely won't forget the name. The sonic merits of these mics are just too convincing, as this review will show.

Regal Housing

The Delphos is shipped in a sturdy hard case that is equipped with ample padding and also provides storage space for the microphone shockmount and a protective mic sock. Just visually the Delphos already stands out compared to the competition in this price segment. The dark blue metallic enamel finish looks particularly elegant without boasting, and the craftsmanship is excellent. With a diameter of 50mm and a length of about 19cm, the physical dimensions of the microphone are right about average for this product class. The head basket has a classic satin silver finish. The precise flip switches for the choice of polar pattern (Omni/Cardioid) and the 10 dB attenuation (pad) are nestled between the microphone body and the head basket.

Warm, Punchy Sound

To get a first impression of the sonic character of the Delphos, we kick things off with an acoustic piano recording. The microphone impresses with a very natural rendition of the instrument's treble strings including the hammer noises during the attack. The Delphos paints a very nuanced sonic image with a lovely warmth reminiscent of the sound of a tube microphone. This smoothness, however, by no means diminishes the presence or the transient response. Even at the highest highs the microphone does not sound colored at all.

We tried several pieces of completely different musical styles during the review. The unique, characterful sound of the Delphos particularly made its mark for slower pieces like Erik Satie's *Gymnopédies*, where it was just pure joy to follow the sustain of the strings until disappearing into silence. For more serial pieces (like the *Etudes* by Philipp Glass) we positioned the Delphos at about 10cm distance from the piano with the diaphragms aimed



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Engineering par excellence: the internals of the Delphos are the result of many years of microphone research.

directly at the strings. The spatiality that this position delivered just for arpeggiated chords in one octave immediately fascinates the listener.

Piano players will definitely love the Delphos. But to capture the full image of the sound in the room it is recommended to add a small diaphragm condenser microphone to the equation.

In front of a guitar cabinet, this Californian contender also left a good impression. Because of its tube-like, warm sound it is ideally suited for crunchy vintage tones of Lenny Kravitz and the like. Even when walking in the footsteps of Dave Murray and cranking the gain control a little further, there were no problems with excessive sound pressure levels whatsoever. But the Delphos also fares very well for clean acoustic guitar sounds. Finger picking noises are captured precisely, without a trace of harshness. The sonic character always stays warm, harmonious, and balanced, without growing old on the listener. Yet, it sounds detailed and transparent.

Finally, we also put the Delphos through its paces for a female vocalist. If the singer can deliver the goods, the Delphos captures the entire range and character of the voice. Changing the polar patterns allows adjusting the amount of acoustic ambience with which the vocal recording will be placed in the mix. The author of the review is not a singer, but occasionally records audio books. So the Delphos had to serve this purpose as well and once again delivered very convincing results. Voice modulations are captured very accurately and without any inclination toward a muffled sound due to excessive proximity effect.

Conclusions

The Roswell Delphos turns out to be an excellent addition to the not exactly small offering of large diaphragm condenser microphones out there. It stands out with its unique, warm, and punchy sound full of character. In addition, it offers a best-in-class finish with lots of attention to detail. For those of you looking for a distinct sonic signature off the beaten path of the microphone mainstream, the Delphos should be a sound investment.

Features: Very good
Finish: Very good - outstanding
Operation: Very good
Sound: Very good
Total score: Top class, very good

Delphos



- Well suited for many applications
- Warm, punchy sound
- Usefulness of both polar patterns
- Lovely workmanship



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The Delphos is a highly convincing microphone in almost all recording applications characterized by its balanced and warm sound character. It is equally well suited for recordings with high sound pressure levels and those with subtle nuances.

Made in California

How does a small American company manage to develop such an extraordinarily great sounding microphone? Matthew McGlynn, one of the two founders, has always had a big passion for microphones, which originated during his years as a drummer. Recording sound then grew in importance for Matt around the year 2000. He simply couldn't find an objective source of information that would help finding out which microphone is best suited for a particular application. So he started RecordingHacks.com, a portal that he describes as the "Wikipedia of microphones."

The knowhow that Matt acquired throughout the subsequent years is the foundation for the development of his own microphones at Roswell. What's unique about the circuitry used in the Delphos is the complete renunciation of transformers. Particularly the main circuit board is Matt's very own work and is completely manufactured in the USA including all its components. All parts are carefully selected to achieve a vintage sound despite the low self noise. The transistors (JFET) are manually selected and tested in a custom jig to ensure a precise high-frequency response. Only the microphone housing is imported from China, but gets its own individual, noble touch thanks to the rare, automobile paint job.

According to Matt, every single microphone is individually tested and "burned-in" prior to leaving the shop. Our hands-on review has revealed that this attention to detail definitely pays off for the Delphos.