

## Review: Roswell Colares

by Rob Tavaglione / published 2019-01-25

In recording, you could say that the prevailing norm has now become “capture it clean and color it with plug-ins later,” or even the post-modern “capture it clean and then emulate the behaviors of the whole signal chain.” I, for one, still cherish the opportunities to capture signals with risky, stylized and colorful tones that don’t need much help from additional processors and box me right into creatively artistic mix corners. The new Colares LDC mic from Roswell Audio appears to be aimed at engineers like me who want to sometimes capture personality right at the front of the recording process—or not—with the flick of a switch or two.

Roswell’s Matt McGlynn found inspiration for the Colares from Telefunken’s ElaM 251 and hoped to capture such detail and crisp smoothness without the drawbacks of tube-based designs. He has come up with an FET-based pressure gradient condenser with an edge-terminated 34 mm, gold-plated, Mylar capsule. There’s also a NOS—new old-stock—JFET amp (“individually ‘biased’ using a custom test fixture”), top-grade resistors and capacitors, premium switches and a custom-wound Cinemag transformer at the crucial output stage complete the path. The design is meant to increase 2nd-order harmonic content, with a slightly saturated sound full of warmth and detail. Colares ships with a small flight case and a Rycote shockmount that is very nice. It firmly holds the mic without sag and is a universal design that would fit most large-body LDCs. How I wish most LDCs had as an effective shockmount.

The Colares employs a unique pad switch that not only attenuates the level by 10 dB, but also mitigates that harmonic color, reducing it by about 12 dB. The mic also has a three-position bass control switch HPF that allows full deep bass extension, or two rolled-off positions. And you are likely to need such filtering from time to time, as a Colares frequency response graph shows a long, gentle bass increase starting around 125 Hz, as well as a “presence bump” at three or four kHz and a little boost centered at 10 kHz—well-chosen positions for a little emphasis, I would soon find out.



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Despite ultimately a lot of versatility, Colares is marketed as a special vocal mic, so I threw it up for some male lead vocals without any hesitation. Sure enough, within seconds, it was clear that this was a “vibe” mic, a “color” mic or even an “attitude” mic. Not that it is distorted, or fuzzy or murky at all; rather, it is saturated, more so with a little grit than growl, with a lot more detail and finesse than you’d expect from these inadequate descriptions. **It’s like it is a tube-mic with abundant hi-end that is crisp but silky, not unlike a C-12. There’s this big bottom-end, too, and ample proximity effect, so there’s top and bottom on this voluptuous figure.**

I found this little bit of hype and color to mostly benefit lead vocals, as I could use something less personality laden on my backing vox and get nice contrast. A click of the HPF switch was very helpful when I needed to mic very close for intimacy but without proximity effect. I also found that the pad was indeed helpful to quickly eliminate saturation tendencies and clean things up without having to switch mics— not a problem as long as you’ve got another 10 dB of clean gain available at your mic pre.

The pad became the big artistic decision to make with the Colares when tracking instruments. Take drums, for example: I got good results with the Colares as a third overhead without any filtering, with either the pad in or out, providing slightly edgy and lively tones with it out, normal quick clean FET response with it in. With acoustic guitars, I found myself tracking with the pad out and a touch of color, as it wasn’t so over-the-top so as to ruin a nice natural guitar tone. Acoustic bass worked pretty well (paired up with a passive ribbon, too) with no filter and no pad. Guitar amps necessitated the pad, as you might guess, so the resultant sound was crisp, clean, usual solid-state LDC stuff.

Through thankfully months of testing, I tried the Colares on a whole lot of different sources and found its versatility to only be outdone by its ability to specialize. I know this sounds a bit confusing and inarticulate, but allow me to explain: Yes, the Colares is a very colorful and “character driven,” and that’s what makes it special—but with its unique pad, it can be an entirely different, neutral and “invisible” mic, making it really valuable. Its ability to do both personalities well and provide the extra versatility that the filter switch provides **makes the Colares a secret weapon mic**, one worthy of being toted around in that travel case and able to handle just about whatever is thrown at it with personality and flexibility. It’s \$1,259 direct from Roswell and **worth every penny.**

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