



MXL's most eye-catching microphone gets put to the test

MXL V6

MXL's latest microphone hits the streets. But what's all this about valves made of silicon? **Jon Musgrave** puckers up...

DETAILS

PRICE £199

CONTACT

Web: www.mxlamics.com

TECH SPEC

Cardioid condenser capsule, 25mm (6 micron) gold sputtered diaphragm

Frequency response: 30Hz to 20kHz

Sensitivity: 22mV/Pa

Maximum SPL: 130dB

S/N ratio: 78dB, 1kHz @ 1Pa

Equivalent Noise Level:

16dB (A weighted)

Power requirements: 48V phantom (+/- 4V), 2mA typical

Dimensions: 215mm long, 55mm diameter

Weight: 0.52Kg

OK, IT HAS NOT got a valve made of silicon, or indeed a valve at all, but MXL's latest model is the first in a new range designed to sound like classic valve condensers (hence the name). And in keeping with rather more expensive valve mics, it does look the part, combining chunky construction with a bit of bling, and all for just £199.

Main features

MXL's aim with the Silicon Valve design is to use discrete solid-state circuitry (a Field-Effect Transistor, FET) to impart some valve mic characteristics (harmonic distortion) to the more robust and simpler phantom powered condenser design. It's not entirely clear which particular valve mic they've got in mind here, but of the two that MXL make (the V69 and the V76t), my money would be on the V69. With the V6 coming in cheaper than the V69 (£329), it would certainly make for an interesting A/B comparison.

Anyway, let's sum up what you get for your money. The V6 is a single pattern, phantom powered cardioid condenser. Its design is simplicity itself, with no integrated pad or roll-off. It comes in a padded wooden box, and a basic mic clip is included. If you want a shockmount,

MXL make one for wide-bodied mics (£19), though we didn't get round to trying it with the V6.

On the numbers front, an A-weighted equivalent noise of 16dB looks quite healthy, and 22mV/Pa sensitivity should result in a good signal level. Weighing in at just over half a kilo the V6 certainly feels like it could take a few knocks without getting too damaged.

In use

Up on the stand the V6 does look impressive, and should elicit a decent performance from even the most timid performer. But what of its sound? For me vocals and speech are always a first port of call with a large cap condenser. Given the enclosed frequency chart I expected quite a hyped top-end. In actual fact the top end is very smooth and nothing like some of the ultra-bright mics out there. The specifications on MXL's website have a slightly different response curve, which I would say better reflects the reality.

With regard to proximity, I feel the lower frequencies are more in evidence and maybe there's a little less going on in the low-mids. Overall though, the frequency balance is quite pleasing and works very well on acoustic guitar, as well as male vocal and speech. Most surprising,

though, is the general smoothness that the mic exhibits.

Verdict

I think MXL's attempt to re-create the sound of a valve mic with solid-state circuitry is a laudable one. That will mean different things to different people. Vintage valve mics do sound individual, even when compared like for like, and I would hope that this isn't the case with the V6.

Anyway, this detracts from what is a great sounding and good-looking mic. Given how competitive the mid to budget price mic market can be, manufacturers need to set their products apart. The V6 is set apart by being good value for money. **FM**

VERDICT MXL V6

BUILD QUALITY



VALUE FOR MONEY



EASE OF USE



VERSATILITY



QUALITY OF RESULTS



If you ignore the slightly misleading name you'll find a solidly built mic. Worth a look.