

Brauner Phantom Anniversary Edition

Ten years in and Brauner has released a limited edition for its anniversary. **JON THORNTON** is predictably impressed with the performance and with the lower price.

WHEN DIRK BRAUNER started a microphone design and manufacturing company in an old barn in Germany 10 years ago, I suspect even he couldn't have anticipated the success and critical acclaim his microphones would achieve in such a relatively short period of time. And given that my first encounter with a Brauner microphone was a little over three years ago, I couldn't have anticipated just how expensive that encounter would turn out. That first encounter was with the original Phantom, and I ended up buying the microphone from distributors The Home Service rather than having to return it after the review — the beginning of a rather slippery slope.

The Phantom AE (Anniversary Edition) is a limited edition of 1000 microphones, intended to celebrate the company's first decade. Based on the Phantom C, which is a fixed cardioid version of the original Phantom, it sports a special satin black finish rather than the usual silver. Also included is a Vovox microphone cable and a compact hard shell case. But the most surprising thing is that Brauner isn't expecting you to pay more for the privilege of owning this limited edition, but less. The standard Phantom C retails for £999 (+VAT), but the Anniversary Edition can be yours for just £759 (+VAT) — never has Brauner ownership been more affordable.

I was curious, therefore, to see what corners had been cut (if any) to reduce the price, and to see how the AE stacked up against a standard Phantom C.

Certainly there's no difference in build quality — the AE has the same sense of solidity and weight as the original, and that wonderfully tightly machined shockmount that the microphone clicks into is still there. I've written about the Phantom before, so I'm not going to repeat myself, but comparing the AE and a Phantom C reveals no discernible difference in audio performance. There is still that terrifically uncoloured and smooth bass extension, still that great transient response, and still the sense that the microphone delivers 'more of everything' — particularly on vocals.

Having spent far more time with both the original Phantom and the Phantom C since my first review, one of its more appealing traits is the way in which you can work proximity effect. The way



the bass response lifts is one of the most progressive and smooth of any microphone I've come across, and it makes tuning its sound very easy. Again, the AE performs in this respect every bit as well as the Phantom C does.

In summary, if Brauner has changed anything in the AE — either to cut costs or simply for the sake of tweaking, it hasn't been to the detriment of the sound. I suspect that simply committing to a production run of 1000 pieces has had its effect on lowering costs, and Dirk has simply passed these savings on as a way of saying 'thanks' to his customers. Yes, there are the same little shortcomings that the original Phantom C has — no pad switch as on the Phantom V, for example — but these are easy to forgive, particularly at the reduced price. Do yourself a favour and buy one before they sell out. Better still, buy a pair — they make terrific drum overheads. ■

PROS Build quality; transient response; bass extension; workability of proximity effect; price.

CONS No pad; buying a pair suddenly seems like a good idea.

Contact

BRAUNER, GERMANY:
Website: www.brauner-microphones.com
UK, Home Service: +44 208 943 4949

tannoy.com