

Josephson C715

Classy, unusual looking, and beautifully screwed together, JON THORNTON lends Josephson's latest single-diaphragm, variable pattern studio microphone some serious ear time and is impressed by what he hears.

A year or so ago I reviewed the Josephson C720 dual-diaphragm microphone, which turned out to be an impressive bit of kit. However, the chances are that very few of you will have actually heard it in the flesh, simply because it was produced in a strictly limited edition of 20 microphones to celebrate the company's 20 years in the microphone business. But there's a gleam of hope for anybody who might have felt that this was a missed opportunity in Josephson's new C715.

Cosmetically, the C715 looks very similar to the C720, the most striking feature being the employment of the same open-cell metal foam material for the

to be open, resulting in a cardioid pickup, or closed, giving an omnidirectional pickup. In theory, interim positions can also give wide or sub-cardioid responses, but, in practice, this is tricky to set repeatably, and isn't helped by the fact that the positioning of the vent to give these patterns is very non linear.

As a result, I was happy to leave my testing to the two-end stop positions: cardioid and omni. Setting the vent is easy enough with the supplied tool, although slightly worrying as engaging it through a hole to the rear of capsule causes some significant flexing in the diaphragm mounting. The manual is also full of warnings about not attempting this when the mic is powered and open on a console — for obvious reasons.

The whole assembly ships in a high-quality, weatherproof Pelican case, and is supplied with an integral yolk assembly for mounting, plus a captive cable (approximately 3.5m), terminating in the usual male XLR. Internally, the electronics also seem to be broadly similar to the C720 — discrete Class A circuitry, with a cascade FET stage directly driving a custom Lundahl output transformer. One side effect of this arrangement is the choice of output level chosen by Josephson. In comparison to most modern capacitor microphones the output is extremely low — specs quote a sensitivity of 1.7mV/Pa, which puts this in non-active ribbon territory.

Plugging in and gaining up (to start with using a Millennia HV3) and first impressions on male vocals with the cardioid vent setting are of the same solidity to the sound that so impressed me with the C720. It's perhaps a shade less bright, but shares that almost 'in the room' solidity to the sound. Moving the talent

closer to the microphone adds a little more weight to the sound as proximity effect comes into play, but this isn't the all or nothing bass tip that plagues many microphones, instead sounding very progressive and weighty, rather than lumpy. It's also apparent that the open-cell metal foam structure coupled with the finer mesh that is attached to it on the inside of the assembly works as a very effective pop shield — you could probably dispense with one entirely for some vocalists.

This same progressiveness applies to the off-axis response — a nice deep null at the rear of the

microphone, but with a very uncoloured and smooth change in output as you move the source around the microphone — one of the most natural off-axis responses I've heard for some time, in fact. All of which really starts to make sense when switching applications to acoustic 12-string guitar. The C715 delivers a thoroughly rounded, solid sound with plenty of harmonic detail; altering its working distance to the source gives great fine tuning to the sound, but without ever sounding overblown when very close in, or overly roomy when pulled back.

Switching (very gingerly) to the omni pattern changes the character of the microphone quite considerably. Everything sounds a little bit thinner, which isn't a criticism as, if anything, this sounds a little more natural and less 'hyper-real' on some sources. There's a fair bit of high-frequency attenuation at the rear of the microphone, though, which gets more pronounced as the source gets closer. However, this isn't entirely unsurprising when you consider the masking effects that must occur with a pressure capsule of this size and in a housing this big.

On balance, though, in nearly every application I used it on, the C715 seemed to perform much better in cardioid configuration than omni; that includes some scenarios where I'd ordinarily be reaching for an omni (close in on an acoustic guitar, for example). I think that this really sums up the key strength of this microphone: everything about it means that you can put it where you want to — not where it needs to be. It has the reach and transient resolution to work at a distance, or right up close and personal, without ever sounding out of its depth, and always delivering that almost startling clarity. And it's at this point that even the only thing that irked me about the C715 — its low output — starts to make sense. You see, that choice means that even without a pad, the overload sound pressure is 136dB SPL. And it sounds just as at home (awesome, in fact) placed just outside of a kick drum as it does capturing a delicate female vocal.

It would be tempting, given its provenance, to pigeonhole the C715 as yet another boutique capacitor microphone — wheeled out for lead and backing vocals and then carefully replaced in its smart Pelican case. But that would be a mistake that really wouldn't scratch the surface of what this microphone is capable of. Classy, unusual looking, and beautifully screwed together it certainly is, but it's also got the capability to be a truly capable studio workhorse. Highly recommended. ■

head grille. The idea here is to provide a single sturdy structural element that is reasonably transparent acoustically in order to minimise internal reflections that can be caused by more conventional grilles and their associated hard support structures.

While the C720 is a dual-diaphragm design that outputs the signal from each diaphragm separately, allowing the effective polar pattern to be derived in postproduction by summing the two signals with varying level and polarity relationships, the C715 (UK£2500 + VAT) is strictly a single-diaphragm design. Nevertheless, it does offer some variability in its polar pattern, but this time achieved by mechanical means.

An adjustable vent at the rear of the capsule can be rotated (using the supplied screwdriver-like tool)



PROS

Solid, detailed sound; very uncoloured off-axis response; extremely well built; hugely flexible in application.

CONS

Changing polar patterns can be a little nerve-wracking; low output level needs a decent preamp for quiet sources.

EXTRAS

The e225 originated as a drum mic developed in cooperation with Steve Albini. It's a small-diaphragm side-address cardioid designed for use close up and aside from drums it's also found application for any close-up instrument pickup where natural sound is important.



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