

SE Electronics Titan

At first glance, this Titan seems something of a misnomer as it's actually quite a diminutive, ever so slightly squat looking microphone and seems positively miniscule when compared its sibling, the Gemini. But size, as they say, isn't everything, according to an unapologetic **JON THORNTON**



I T IS ACTUALLY the internals of the Titan that account for this mic's appellation — namely a diaphragm made of titanium rather than the more usual gold-sputtered Mylar. This isn't a new idea, indeed there are several pieces of microphone exotica that feature titanium diaphragms, most notably Neumann's M150 and TLM50. The attraction of using this notoriously difficult-to-work material lies in its low mass and high rigidity — meaning that lighter, thinner diaphragms with corresponding improvements in transient response are possible. At £850 (+VAT) the Titan is a cheaper proposition than either of the two Neumann's — but still one of SE's most expensive offerings. The question is, does it deliver the goods?

Overall build is typical of what we've come to expect from SE — good and constantly improving, if somewhat utilitarian. The light-bulb shaped housing is finished in the same matt grey used throughout the high-end of the range, and unscrews easily to reveal a fairly densely packed circuit board that seems well constructed and laid out. Electronics are FET-based, married to a dual-sided, centre-terminated capsule with those famous diaphragms.

Switches provide a choice of omni, cardioid and fig-8 patterns, a -10dB pad, and a high-pass filter. The whole kit comes complete with an elastic suspension (which rather grandly has a 'Titan' name plate fixed to its front) and a microphone cable, all neatly packed in a hard case. Sitting on the end of one of SE's own mic stands (see sidebar), the whole ensemble has a slightly alien retro look about it — strange but quite pleasing.

Setting a female vocalist in front of the microphone to start with, first impressions are of quite a hard sounding microphone. Not harsh, although there is a hint of this with sibilance, but with a definite edge to it. Coupled with a very taut sounding bottom two octaves, and there's a sense that the sound is ever so slightly unnatural. What is surprising is the degree to which the tonality changes when switching



polar patterns. The fig-8 pattern, for example, almost sounds like a completely different microphone, losing a lot of its edginess in the upper-mids. Off-axis response on the cardioid setting drops off the HF response quite dramatically — so care needs to be taken on vocals if used close up with singers who move around a lot. I suspect that this is a microphone that needs careful matching to a singer's tonality — certainly with the female vocalist in question it wasn't the most flattering match.

Moving on, and intrigued by that edginess and tight sounding low frequency response, the Titan was put on kick drum duty for a fairly minimally miked jazz kit. Positioned just slightly in front of the shell and about 45 degrees off-axis, the result was a really nicely defined, punchy sound with plenty of air and low frequency extension, coupled with a really good attack. Not what you'd expect from that particular placement, but very nice indeed. Encouraged by this, electric guitar via a venerable old Roland JC120 was next on the agenda. Close in, and things started to sound very brittle, but moving the Titan further away, eventually settling on about a meter away, opened the sound out considerably — again preserving the attack to the sound but giving lots of body. There was a pattern emerging here and in many ways it was almost the exact opposite of another of SE's line-up, the Icis. With this, I found that it really liked to be worked close-in, whereas the Titan seemed to give its best results when given a little more distance from source (*Sounds like an interesting dual-mic combo. Ed*).

All of which makes the Titan hard to categorise. There's no doubting that it has a very distinctive sonic character but in some cases this might prove a little too distinctive for anybody wanting a microphone for all seasons. ■

Stand and deliver Partly, I suspect, to deal with the not inconsiderable weight of its Gemini microphone, SE has started manufacturing its own boom stands. I first encountered a preproduction version when reviewing the Reflexion Filter (*Resolution V5.5*) and was less than impressed at the time. Mostly this was to do with the base, which looked like drum hardware grafted onto some rather over-engineered pieces of steel tube. The end result was somewhat less than stable, shall we say.

I'm happy to report that the stand that arrived with the Titan is an altogether different proposition. It still has that industrial, 'made from girders' look about it, but the folding base is much more substantial and, critically, creates a much broader tripod. Everything about the stand, from the clutch, to the knurled wheels that lock off height and reach, look like they will probably outlive you and mechanical adjustments are made easily and firmly. Some nice touches are springs located within the telescoping sections, which give a little shock absorption should you inadvertently loosen off a section without keeping hold of it. Minor niggles are the design of the clutch, which makes it impossible to point the boom straight up vertically and the sheer weight of the whole assembly. However, there's no doubting its ability to hold the heaviest microphone in your collection, even at maximum reach, with no trace of instability or droop.

[SE makes three models of mic stand: the Stand 1 being looked at here for £135 (+VAT); the larger Stand 2 which offers a maximum extension of around 2.5m for £185 (+VAT); and the orchestral boom Stand 3 for £467 (+VAT).]



PROS Good transient response; taut bass response; distinctive character.

CONS A little too 'hard' sounding for some sources; might not be flexible enough if this was your only large diaphragm capacitor microphone.

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