Neumann TLM 67 | £1,699

Mike Collins checks out the latest offering from high-end microphone giants Neumann

WHAT IS IT?

A contemporary take on the classic U67 large diaphragm condenser microphone.

CONTACT

Who: Sennheiser UK
Tel: +44 (0)1494 551551
Web: neumann.com

HIGHLIGHTS

1 Versatile polar patterns
2 Wide frequency range
3 Dual-colour design

SPECS

Directional patterns: Omni/Cardioid/figure-of-8
Frequency range: 20Hz ~ 20,000Hz
High Pass Filter: 160 Hz, 6 dB/Octave, switchable
Preattenuation pad: 0/-10 dB (switchable)
Sensitivity: 10/18/9 mV/Pa at 1 kHz into 1 kohm
Equivalent noise: 16/11/17 dB-A (A-weighted)
Dynamic range: 94/104 dB (0.5% THD/5% THD) (A-weighted)
Maximum SPL: 110/105/111 dB SPL (for 0.5% THD), 130/125/131 (for 5% THD)
Signal/Noise: (A-weighted) 78/83/77 dB
Weight: 490g

As a mark of Neumann's 80th year of business, the TLM 67 is based on Neumann's classic 1960's U67 microphone: it uses the same K67 capsule and features a special circuit design that closely reproduces the 'valve' or 'tube' sound characteristics of the U67. The TLM 67 uses an electronic circuit instead of an output transformer – the 'TLM' bit stands for 'transformerless microphone' – and it's the same shape and size as the well-known U87.

The microphone has a frequency range of 20Hz to 20kHz, features cardioid, omni and figure-of-eight polar patterns, and has a 10dB pad and a low-cut filter. It can operate at sound pressure levels of up to 105dB without distortion, and has a dynamic range of 94dB(A), or 104dB(A) with the pad switched in.

Handling the brass section

If you are recording very high sound pressure levels, say, from brass or percussion instruments, the pre-attenuation 'pad' on the back of the microphone can be switched in to avoid overloading the next stage – ie the mic pre. The actual pre-attenuation amount depends on the polar pattern: 14dB with cardioid and 10dB with omni and figure-of-eight patterns.

The other switch on the back can be used to change the cutoff frequency of the high-pass filter. This helps to suppress unwanted low-frequency sounds from wind noise, trucks rumbling past, or whatever. It can also be used to compensate for the proximity effect that boosts low frequencies when the microphone is close to the source.

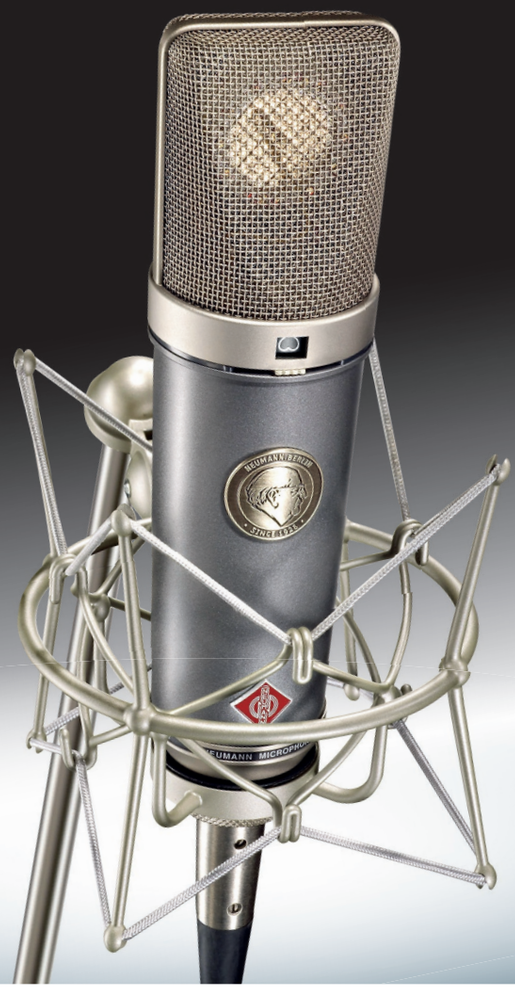
The TLM 67 is supplied without any accessories, so you have to pay out an extra £250 if you want the EA87 elastic suspension and around £30 for the WS87 windscreen mount, which provide better suppression of structure-borne and wind noise.

Darker in character

Comparing the TLM 67 with an early '70s Neumann U87i, which you might be inclined to think that it would be very close to, I realised that they are really quite different. I recorded piano, in mono, through both microphones and discovered that the older microphone sounded a lot more 'open' and natural.

The TLM had an appreciably different tonal character. I did prefer the sound of the TLM to several of the less expensive condenser mics that I tried, such as the Shure KSM44. And compared with the Mojave MA100 and the Telefunken AK47, the TLM 67 delivered an extended bass response.

The TLM 67 is very much a 'workhorse' microphone that you can use for anything from speech to Rock bands to Orchestral recordings, but it would not be my first choice for vocals. The nearest comparisons for me would be the AKG C414 XLS and the Beyer MC840. The C414 did not sound quite as smooth as the TLM67 and the MC840 didn't reproduce the piano as well, but did sound more 'open' and 'sweeter' in the mid range. My recommendation? Try before you buy! FM



FutureMusic VERDICT

BUILD
VALUE
EASE OF USE
VERSATILITY
RESULTS

A useful microphone for heavy-weight instrument recording duties with versatile applications.