

PELUSO P12

Carbon copies of classic condensers have spawned like mushrooms in recent times but that hasn't necessarily made them more affordable. Fortunately Peluso mics consume less Carbon Credits than most.

Text: Greg Walker



► The folks at Peluso sure know a thing or two about building and presenting microphones. Hand built in the good ol' U.S. of A, Peluso produces a range of mics derived from the classic German hall of famers, including the Neumann valve U47, Telefunken 251 and AKG C12. It also makes small-diaphragm valve condensers and ribbons to round out what is already proving to be a very seductive range of microphones indeed.

The microphone I'm reviewing here is the P12 (no points for guessing which of the above classics it's modelled on); a multi-pattern vacuum tube condenser with a 34mm edge-terminated capsule utilising a 66072A-M tube. This microphone, like several others in Peluso's range, also contains a custom output transformer made by CineMag Transformers' resident design guru, Tom Reichenbach.

CLASSIC REGALIA

Physically, the P12 is a beautifully robust, long-barrelled design, finished in classic silver that's very similar to the iconic AKG C12 it replicates. I have to say, from the moment I opened the box, my impression was of a seriously well-designed and... well... 'classic' microphone.

Build quality of the P12 is excellent and the mic exudes a solid confidence that extends to the very sturdy cat's-cradle suspension mount (supplied as standard). This is a true, large diaphragm side-address microphone with a big silver grille, weighing in at 750 grams and measuring 240mm in length and 45mm in width. Because of its substantial weight, the suspension system is a crucial element of the overall package and works brilliantly. I like the screw-in tighteners that control the pressure of the two ring-clamps.

The classic C12 styling of the Peluso P12 is not restricted to the mic itself either – it permeates through the whole microphone package. For instance, when not at work, the mic sleeps in a very attractive wooden case where it nestles in between layers of gold- and red-pillowed velvet (very nice indeed!). Similarly, the styled 'house-brick' power supply features a large toggle power switch and status LED, as well as a nine-position polar pattern selector, ranging from full omni mode through cardioid and onto figure-of-eight. A black, five-metre fabric-coated cable, sporting chunky seven-pin connectors, runs from the power supply to the mic, only leaving you to connect a standard XLR output from the PSU to a preamp of your choice.

PEDALLING A CLASSIC SOUND

The original AKG C12 is a full-blooded classic of the recording industry, so any mic that comes along looking like the original and boasting the ability to emulate its sound has a substantial hill to climb. So I chose a very low gear and the pedalling began...

I started my tests with the P12 by using it as a room mic on a drum kit and was pleasantly surprised by the airy quality of its sound. I quickly discovered that it was better in this role for softer drum styles where the delicacy of the capsule can really shine – when the skins and cymbals start getting bashed, the P12 tends to exaggerate too much of the sibilant range of the spectrum.

FEMME FIDELITY

The real epiphany with this mic came for me when I recorded a vocal with singer-songwriter Sophie Koh. We recorded her with the P12 set to a slightly 'wide' cardioid through a UA 6176 with a decent amount of 4:1 compression. When we listened back to the first take we both had the same breathless reaction – the P12 sounded absolutely *sensational* on her voice. There was plenty of body and midrange clarity but the top-end had a luxurious airiness that no other mic in my collection comes close to. We quickly found ourselves using that sound as the benchmark for all our previous vocal recordings (done mainly with a Neumann U87), and subsequently gave the Bomb Factory Pultec plug-in a serious working over as we tried to match our previous vocal recordings to the effortless presence of the P12.

Interestingly, a few weeks later I tried the P12 on a male singer with a strong midrange voice with very *different* results. Here the brightness of the P12 tended to exaggerate the upper midrange, making his voice sound a little harsh and 'barky' (the U87 easily won this particular shootout), proving once again that any mic, no matter what its pedigree, is only the 'right' one when your ears prove it be so.

Next, I used the Peluso on acoustic guitars with great results – this time through my Chandler Channel with a decent amount of bottom-end boost that really helped to balance the glossy top end. I found the ability to dial in just the right amount of 'narrowness' or 'wideness' to

the polar pattern extremely useful when recording live guitar/vocal takes and for general tone shaping. Its worth as a percussion mic was further underlined with great sounds on tambourines, finger bells and shakers, and it also did a lovely job in omni mode picking out all the subtleties of my old violin. A final test was performed on my Fender Tremolux where I set up the P12 a few metres away from the cab near the ground. Another guitar was already playing a more bottom-heavy part in the song and I had the Fender earmarked as the 'bright' guitar. In tandem with a close miked SM57, the Peluso (with an SPL of 136dB) frayed nicely around the edges from the volume and did a great job of adding some '60s-style fizz to the sound and, while it wouldn't work in all such situations, it was just the ticket here.

NO P76

The P12 sound exudes 'high-fidelity' and needs to be treated with a little caution as it doesn't work on everything. Having said that, where it *is* suited to a sound it delivers in spades, and with the right choice of preamp and some judicious use of EQ the Peluso P12 is right up there with the best mics I have ever used. When you consider that the entry price on this mic is around one fifth of what you'll pay for an authentic (and still functioning) C12, you have to take your hat off to Peluso for bringing the taste of such a sophisticated-sounding mic within reach of the decentralised modern recordist. While perhaps still a bit pricey and specialised for the average home studio hobbyist, I can think of many a pro and semi-pro setup that would greatly benefit from what the Peluso P12 has to offer. Professional valve mics don't come cheap and ones that sound (and look) this good are definitely worth investigating. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

Microphone Type: Condenser Pressure Gradient w/34mm edge-terminated capsule.

Frequency Range: 20Hz/24kHz

Polar Pattern: Nine switchable patterns ranging from omni- to bi-directional.

Sensitivity: 11mv/pa

Impedance: 200Ω

SPL: 136dB

Equivalent Noise: 15dB (A-weighted)

Tube Type: 6072A-M

Size: 45mm x 240mm

Weight: 750g



NEED TO KNOW

Price

€2149

Contact

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Pros

Luxurious sound.
A well constructed and realised 'rendition' of a classic C12.
Package includes a quality suspension cradle.
Reasonably priced.

Cons

Not the most versatile mic around.

Summary

The Peluso P12 is a surprisingly sweet rendition of a very famous microphone. When placed in front of delicate female vocals, gentle drums and sparkling percussion the results are very hard to beat. A compelling microphone indeed.