

Electric Lady Connections: Eddie Kramer, Michael H. Brauer, and John Storyk

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REVIEW

BY PAUL VNUK JR.

Earthworks SR40V Condenser Microphone

According to New Hampshire-based Earthworks Microphones, its new SR40V is the first and only High Definition Vocal Microphone in the world.

What's high definition? Well, for starters, if you are unfamiliar with the Earthworks mics, the firm is world renowned for a mic line that is sonically accurate, honest, uncolored as well as highly unique looking. In many ways they are the "straight wire with gain" of mics.

Most of Earthwork's mics are pencil-sized variants on the pencil condenser. Typically they specialize in models built for capturing acoustic instruments from drums to piano to cello and beyond, and in many instances all with just one model (such as the SR20, which we'll take a look at in a future issue) that can go from vocals to kick drum with ease.

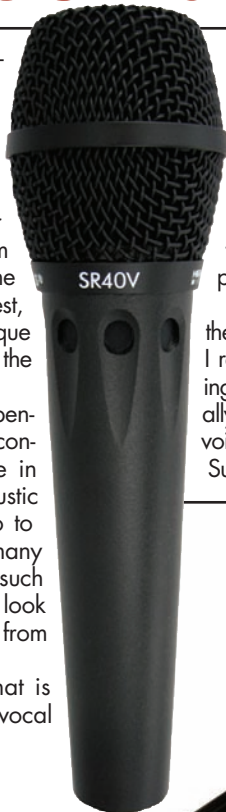
So back to the question: What is the world's only high definition vocal microphone?

The SR40V

The SR40V is a hand-held condenser microphone designed for both studio and stage. Visually it breaks Earthworks' typical mold and is physically similar in size to most dynamic hand-held mics like your average SM58, however it is three times as heavy and robust. It is finished in all black and comes with a clip mount in a classy ATA-approved Seahorse flight case.

The SR40V is a hypercardioid condenser microphone. It has a 30 Hz to 40 kHz frequency response. No, that is not a typo; this mic's high-end response is so high that it could probably track a dog whistle with accuracy and ease. It has a 145 dB max SPL and a 10mV/Pa sensitivity. Looking at its frequency graph (see the Earthworks website) you will see that this mic is quite frequency neutral.

The big question: Why go to 40 kHz? Essentially this is no different than many mastering eqs that go to 29 kHz; it adds a high end that you will never actually hear and yet opens up a source without sounding topky. In other words this could be the true definition of "airy".



On stage

Since this mic is geared for and will most likely see the most use on stage, that was the first place I tried it out. Put to work on a female pop singer, the first thing I noticed is that this mic needed to be padded—it's very loud.

As to its sound, I almost mistook the mic as having a character before I realized that character I was hearing when I soloed the mic, was actually inherent in the singer's own voice. This mic is both loud and clear. Surprisingly, even though it has such

Vocal miking goes hi-def

become very thick and woofy, almost like they are pushing the diaphragm too hard. Backing off a foot or more as a distance mic, the sound is just the opposite, with a very pronounced low to low-mid rolloff. All in all, this mic sounds the best if the singer gives the mic (literally) an inch or two of space, as it opens the vocal sound up to its natural tone.

So why choose a \$1000 handheld vs. a similarly priced LDC for the studio? I have three answers with respect to the SR40V.

One, rejection! This is a fantastic mic that still retains a precise studio sound, but without the sound of the studio. In other words, if you are forced to work in a bad room, or are tasked with tracking a live performance, the SR40V is a great choice. I used it to track a teenage singer-songwriter who wanted to play his acoustic while singing, and I was blown away by how much of his guitar it did *not* pick up.

Two, performance! Another reason this mic is a wise choice for studio vocals, is that it allows so-inclined singers to "perform" in the studio without too much of a qualitative sonic sacrifice. I noticed when I soloed the track that this mic does quite well at rejecting handling noise, so it may be the perfect solution for vocalists who get nervous when facing a mic they can't hold.

Three, it sounds great! This is an easy one; the SR40V really sounds nice and natural—I can pretty much say without any doubt that I have not heard a hand-held condenser sound this good in my life.

Conclusions

The SR40V attacks a very specific miking situation and nails it. If you are a professional gigging singer and/or an engineer who does a lot of business doing live concert recording... if you want a stellar hand-held vocal mic for the studio or the stage... and you don't think a thousand dollars is too much to pay for precise, clear, natural, controllable vocals... You should check out the Earthworks SR40V. ➤

Price: \$999

More from: Earthworks,
www.earthworksaudio.com



an extended frequency range, it is not hyped—this mic is not bright or top-end heavy in any way, just clear and natural.

Studio

In the studio for a male vocal session with a classic rock vibe, I was again reminded of how hot the SR40V is; I would recommend a mic preamp with a 10–20 dB pad. Again its clarity was noticeable and hung in there well with many of my usual uncolored large diaphragm condensers, while lacking a touch of their tailored top end.

Presumably due to its tight pattern, the SR40V has very pronounced proximity effect. If you have a vocalist who eats the mic, as many do with handhelds, it can