



Peluso R14

Does Peluso's hand-tuned R14 set new standards for ribbon microphones? Huw Price finds out.

KEY FEATURES

- Frequency range: 30Hz–16kHz
- Polar pattern: figure-8 (bi-directional)
- Impedance: 200Ω
- Max SPL: 149dB

R14

Manufacturer **Peluso**

Price **£499**

Contact **KMR Audio 020 8445 2446**

Web **www.pelusomicrophonelab.com**

Much has been made of badge-manufactured microphones in these pages recently. We're talking about mics that are mass-produced in China and bought by companies in the West to be sold under various brand names. Prices vary widely, so what makes one version more expensive than another – besides maybe a paint job, wooden box and the badge? The truth is that some of these mics benefit from upgraded capsules, components and transformers.

You've got to hand it to Peluso because the company is totally up-front about the whole badge-manufacturing thing. It imports most of the components for its microphones from China then assembles, tests and fine-tunes them at Peluso HQ. You don't get fancy paint jobs or faux retro styling, but you can be confident that one Peluso will sound the same as the next.

Peluso's affordable take on the classic Neumann U47 – the 2247 – impressed us, so we were excited by the prospect of getting our hands on the R14. This is a passive ribbon microphone, probably based on the Alctron HRM-10 that was also marketed as the Nady RSM-3. The original

Alctron/Nady head basket design featured B&O/Royer-style slots, but there seems to be a consensus that this didn't do the sound quality any favours.

Mic-modders commonly replace the stock head basket with a conventional grille, so Peluso has just saved everyone the trouble. Another common upgrade involves changing the transformer, and the R14 comes with a custom-output

THIS MIC SOUNDS SMOOTH, EFFORTLESS AND NATURAL – WHICH IS WHAT RIBBONS ARE ALL ABOUT.

transformer made by Tom Reichenbach of CineMag Transformers as standard. Peluso installs and tensions the ribbon and the package ships in a velvet-lined oak case with a suspension mount.

Magnetic attraction

It's no coincidence that so many ribbon microphones are made in China as it's the hub for rare-earth magnetic materials – like the neodymium used in this mic. It produces a very strong field but it's lightweight by comparison to the alnico and ceramic magnets that were used in classic ribbons.

If health and safety officials had been around in the 1960s to see Ringo Starr with an STC 4038 dangling above his head, something would have hit the proverbial fan. But at only 496g, the R14 is unlikely to tip your mic stand or kill your drummer if it lands on his head.

Setting our MOTU 828MkII to -10dB operating level, the R14 needed around 55dB of gain from the mic amp to achieve a satisfactory level for recording an acoustic guitar at arm's length. But that's just typical of the breed.

Starting with the front side, a fat midrange combines with solid lows to produce smooth and big sounds. If you need to get the R14 up-close but you need to control boom or you want to emphasise high frequencies, then turn it around and play into the rear. The sound isn't necessarily brighter, but it might seem that way because there's a slight roll-off in the low end.

For vocals, the rear side helped to tame the proximity effect and accentuate the consonants for enhanced intelligibility. On electric guitar, the bright side was superb for clean sounds, while the front sounds smoother and more powerful if you want rockier tones. The only downside of this asymmetrical figure-8 is that you can't get strictly accurate mid-and-side stereo recordings from a pair of R14s. Crossed-8 stereo won't be strictly accurate either, but if the source is in a fixed location, you can choose which side of the R14s to use depending on whether you want to emphasise or de-emphasise room ambience.

The R14's high frequencies aren't as quite as sparkly as some other ribbon designs – like the ShinyBox 46M – but

we couldn't say we preferred one to the other. This mic sounds smooth, effortless and natural – which is what ribbons are all about. **MTH**

SUMMARY

WHY BUY

- Classic ribbon sound
- Versatile two-tone pattern
- Cool wooden case
- High build quality

WALK ON BY

- Needs a low-noise/high-gain preamp
- Asymmetry negates mid/side stereo

VERDICT

Peluso has modded and fine-tuned a fundamentally decent Chinese design to create a superb-sounding and affordable ribbon microphone.



MEASURING UP

Ultimately, this is a hand-built and individually tuned ribbon microphone, so you're expected to pay a little extra, but at least you don't have to take your chances with the Chinese cheapies or the OEM corporate crowd. The R14 substantially undercuts the SE Electronics SE R1 Ribbon (£700) and it offers a more natural and brighter character than the Sontronic Sigma (£589). The beyerdynamic M130 (£560) is the figure-8 version of the cardioid classic M160 (£489), but both beyers need very high-gain/low-noise mic amps. Don't overlook the TR14 (£899) – an active R14 with an onboard valve mic amp.