

# PRO AUDIO REVIEW

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For over 25 years Gene Lawson and his Nashville-based company Lawson Microphones have produced craftsman-quality, hand-built microphones based on some of the most revered models in the history of recording. A few years ago, Lawson introduced a significant new feature to its microphone line: quick-change capsules. As a result, Lawson now offers a Tube/FET combo package (\$3,490; note there is a limited-time \$3,390 special currently offered on the Lawson website) consisting of two microphone bodies and two capsules, giving the user two complete microphones and four distinct mic configurations.

## FEATURES

Like all Lawson microphones, the Tube/FET combo package can only be purchased directly from the Lawson via the phone, web or a visit to the Lawson factory. The combo can be ordered in two different configurations: an L251 tube mic and an L47 FET mic, or an L47MP MkII tube mic and a L251 FET mic. The offering of two

## Fast Facts

### ■ Applications:

Studio

### ■ Key Features:

Tube microphone body; FET microphone body; L251 Quick Change Capsule; L47MP MkII Quick Change Capsule; Lawson universal tube mic power supply and power cord; 30-foot 7-pin tube mic cable; two swivel mic holders; Pelican shock-proof case; five-year warranty.

### ■ Price:

\$3,490

### ■ Contact:

Lawson at 615-269-5542,  
www.lawsonmicrophones.com.

## Lawson Microphones Tube/FET Combo

different configuration choices is a bit misleading – or, at the very least, confusing – as both packages come with the exact same components; the only difference is which capsule is on which body when the microphones are shipped. You do, however, have a choice of finishes for the vacuum tube mic: satin nickel or Lawson's trademark gold (the FET model is only available in satin nickel).

The Lawson Tube/FET combo package comes with one tube microphone body, one FET microphone body, a L251 Quick Change Capsule, a L47MP MkII Quick Change Capsule, a Lawson universal tube mic power supply and power cord, a 30-foot 7-pin tube mic cable, two swivel mic holders, a Pelican shockproof case large enough for all of the above components and a five-year warranty.

## IN USE

For this review, I received an all-satin nickel Lawson Tube/FET combo package initially configured as a L251 tube mic and L47 FET. The components included in the combo package yield four possible Lawson mic configurations: L251 tube, L251 FET, L47MP MkII tube and L47 FET.

With the L251 capsule on the tube mic body, you get a L251 Tube mic, a faithful reproduction of the beloved Telefunken ELAM 251 microphone. My first experience with the L251 and, indeed, any Lawson microphone, was several years ago when I was asked to review the L251 for Pro Audio Review (PAR 11/02). Having had plenty of recent experience with original ELAM 251s, and just completed a review of the Soundelux ELUX

251, I was in a good position to evaluate this latest challenge to the ELAM throne. It did not take many recording sessions to determine that the L251 was one of the best mics I have ever used. The L251 presents a solid, detailed midrange and a smooth emphasis in the upper range, with a pronounced-but-pleasant proximity effect in the cardioid pattern.

With the L47 capsule on the tube body, you get the equivalent of a Lawson L47MP MkII microphone. The L47 capsule is a faithful reproduction of the legendary M7 capsule found in Neumann U47 and M49 microphones. In cardioid, the L47 exhibits an extended upper mid-to-high frequency response that rounds back down in at highest



end. The lower mid-to-middle range response is exceptionally flat and faithful to the instrument, while a gentle boost from around 100 Hz on down provides a little fattening.

The tube L251 and L47 mics, whether purchased separately or created in the combo package share the same tube electronics and extended Lawson feature set (of course, in the case of the combo, they literally share the same electronics). The tube mic electronics use individually selected 6N1P vacuum tubes. A special NASA-approved low contact resistance, gold-plated beryllium copper tube socket is used for lower noise and long life, and a Lundahl transformer is used in the output amplifier section.

One of my favorite features of the Lawson tube mics is the infinitely variable polar pattern control, found on the tube mic power supply. On both the L251 and

L47MP MkII, the pickup pattern of the mic can be smoothly swept from omni to cardioid to bidirectional and anywhere in between. Sweeping through the range not only affects the pattern but also the mic's frequency response, so it is possible to achieve slight tweaks that enhance the sound of the microphone with any given source. There is also a cardioid-only "lock-down" that disables the variable patterns, and increases mic sensitivity by 3 dB, resulting in a 3 dB lower noise floor. Can't forget to mention the cool blue light that emanates from within the mic capsules when in variable pattern mode!

When I tried out the L251 And L47 capsules on the FET body, the sonic differences were fairly predictable. It should be noted that in the FET configuration, both capsules operate in a cardioid-only mode. On one hand, the capsules retained their respective

unique characteristics, but in both cases, the all-discrete component FET electronics yielded a cleaner, more direct or focused signal than the tube body in cardioid-only mode – still impressive to say the least, yet not as warm and musical as their tube counterpart. Of course, The FET configuration offers an ease-of-setup advantage in that it operates on 48-volt phantom power and does not require an external power supply or special cable.

## **SUMMARY**

The finest compliment I can pay to the Lawson Tube/FET combo package is that it proved to be so versatile and near-limitless in its applications that I bought it. The only negative I can come up with is that there is no way to create a matched pair for stereo recording. I guess I'll just have to save up for another combo!