

Lawson L-47MP Gold Microphone

It may not be an Olympic year, but you can still go for the Gold

BY STEVE LA CERRA

Produced by a relative newcomer to the pro audio market, the Lawson L-47MP Gold microphone is not your average bear. Housed in a 24-karat-gold, machined-brass body, the L47MP's 1-inch capsule is a reproduction of the famous M7 capsule used in the Neumann U47 and M49 microphones. Designer Gene Lawson uses a 3-micron diaphragm instead of the M7's original 7-micron diaphragm to improve resolution of transients and to extend the high-frequency response.

Pattern selection for the L-47MP is made from the outboard power unit. Lawson provides this unit, AC cable, 6-pin Mogami mic cable, and mic holder in a Pelican® case — which feels like it can easily protect the mic from just about any kind of impact. Workmanship of the mic and power unit is absolutely first-rate: premium components include MIT Multicaps and Jensen transformers, controls are high quality, and you'll even find Gene Lawson's signature inside the capsule. Obviously, Lawson takes huge pride in its product.

Our first session using the L-47MP was with a Roy Orbison-style crooner, and it didn't take long to fall in love with the mic. Set to cardioid, the top end was open, effortless, and dynamics were unconstrained. The lowest octave occasionally got a bit "floppy" from breath pops, so we added a windscreen and backed the pattern control toward 11 o'clock (slightly wider cardioid) to tame the proximity effect. In spite of the fact that the mic does not use an external shock mount, the L-47MP's capsule is internally shock-mounted and well-isolated from stand-transmitted vibration.

The L-47MP's response may be continuously varied by using the pattern control. We placed the power supply in the control room and varied it while the vocalist worked out. With the control at about 10 o'clock, the mic seemed to be flattest; moved towards 12 o'clock (cardioid), the bottom-end and high-mids

bumped up a bit. In general, varying the pattern control from 10 o'clock (wide cardioid) to 2 o'clock (supercardioid) yielded an increase in presence. The power supply takes a few seconds to stabilize the new pattern, so the change is not instantaneously audible. A startling difference in timbre was noticeable when the pattern was moved to the 1 to 2 o'clock area: the mic was considerably brighter, as if someone had opened up an EQ control by a few dB in the 4- to 5-kHz region. Gene Lawson confirmed our findings: in the 4-6 kHz range, there's a 4-5 dB dip in omni, a 4-dB rise in cardioid, and a 7-8 dB rise in figure eight. Depending on the pattern setting, the L-47MP's character could say "tube" or not say much at all. We found this "tune-ability" a valuable feature.

We then tried the L-47MP for a series of finger-picked and strummed acoustic guitar overdubs. On the finger-picked Martin D-28 we got a nice balance of attack and resonance. Tone on this instrument was excellent, and a three o'clock pattern control setting seemed to be where "presence" was greatest. At figure-eight, we could add a bit of room tone — by using the pattern control and close miking the instrument, we could vary the amount of ambience.

After a while, it seems we tried miking everything on the L-47MP and there wasn't much we didn't

like. For an electric guitar solo, we placed the L-47MP close-in on one of the 12-inch speakers and tuned the pattern to beef up the amp's timbre. Used as a drum overhead, we set the mic to cardioid and placed it 18 inches above the rack toms, pointing down toward the snare. The results were wonderful. Toms were full and round with a fast attack, cymbals were well-articulated, pattern control was good.

With the assistance of engineers Joe Conoscenti and Tony Ungaro of Tube Bar Studios (Brooklyn, NY), we A/B'd the L-47MP to a stock Neumann tube U47. As expected, the L-47MP is much more quiet (and more sensitive) than the 50-year old tube U47. Lawson's 3-micron diaphragm does audibly improve resolution of transients and extend the high-frequency response over the original M7 capsule. In cardioid, the U47 was more colored in the lower mids (some might say "fatter"), and the L-47MP was brighter. In omni, timbre of the two mics was much closer, but the U47 was still fatter in the lower-mids. On drums, we felt that the L-47MP had better stick definition. (Readers should consider the sonic inconsistencies of vintage mics, and factor that in with the above comments.)

The Lawson L-47MP is a heavyweight contender in the ring of multi-pattern tube mics. It's well-designed, well-constructed, and sounds great. It ain't cheap, but considering what Lawson gives you, it's a bargain. Most definitely recommended.

MANUFACTURER'S SPECIFICATIONS:

Frequency Range: 20 Hz to 20,000 Hz

Sensitivity @ 1 kHz: 11.7 millivolts@

1 Pascal

Maximum SPL (1 kHz,

3% distortion): 127 dB

Tube: 6072 select

Rated Impedance: 150 ohms



Price is \$1995 (manufacturer-direct). For more information, contact Lawson, Inc., 2741 Larmon Drive, Nashville, TN 37204. Tel: 615-269-5542. Web: www.lawsonmicrophones.com