



Ear Trumpet Labs

Edwina

The phrase 'hand-made' often implies a terrifying price tag. Is that the case with Edwina? **Mike Hillier** finds out.

Edwina

Manufacturer **Ear Trumpet Labs**

Price **£479**

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Web **www.eartrumpetlabs.com**

Key Features

- Swivel yoke capsule mount
- 1-inch cardioid capsule
- Metal case

Ear Trumpet Labs produces a range of unique hand-built microphones, with each distinctive design having a broad steampunk aesthetic. The latest in the range – Edwina – marries a slightly altered Schoeps FET circuit (voiced for vocals) with a TSB-2555a large-diaphragm cardioid electret capsule. The circuit is housed in a copper pipe, with an XLR connector at one end (in a brass end cap) and a brass nut at the other, through which passes a cable connecting the circuit to the capsule. The capsule is mounted in a copper ring, with a steel yoke passing through it that enables it to be angled by the user while keeping the body steady.

Looks-wise, Edwina is a good-looking gal. The copper and brass contrasts wonderfully with the steel, and Ear Trumpet Labs sometimes makes limited-edition runs with etched copper pipes (if the standard Edwina look isn't distinctive enough). Of course, this isn't just a work of art: it's a tool, and as such we have to judge Edwina on the quality of the audio it captures.

Beauty and the beast

Ear Trumpet Labs describes Edwina as being voiced for live vocal work, so we started testing by capturing some male leads. The TSB-2555a is a cardioid capsule, so we anticipated some proximity effect and left approximately 30cm between the mic and our vocalist. The result was a wonderfully rich, warm-sounding vocal. The bottom end

Measuring Up

The TSB capsule and Schoeps FET circuit schematic are available online, as is plenty of advice on how to go about building your own housing (there are also various kits available, such as the Scott Helmke Alice mic – a small-diaphragm design with a TSB-165a capsule). Scott also sells the Clara mic, which uses the same TSB-2555a capsule as the Edwina.



to fit into a mix. Of course, if you have a slightly duller guitar this mic is unlikely to do it any favours.

Brass tacks

Although developed as a live vocal mic, we've been very happy with Edwina in the studio. Onstage, the looks are going to appeal greatly to some and possibly repel others, but irrespective of audio qualities, the aesthetics of a gig are

A very characterful microphone with a distinctive but pleasingly musical tone

is smooth and natural, with a slight roll-off below around 200Hz controlling any boominess (if leaving the vocal perhaps a little tame). This isn't a switchable filter, but a characteristic of the voicing of the mic (switches are completely absent on this mic). The midrange is smooth and there is little in the way of smearing, right the way through to the upper-mids around 3–5kHz, where a presence lift gives the voice a musical clarity.

The top end, however, seems somewhat lacking for a condenser – more like the high-frequency roll-off of a ribbon mic. It isn't going to be perfect for all, but it's got a unique character that might be ideal for certain vocalists, especially sibilant ones.

Our next test was to place the mic in front of a bronze-strung acoustic guitar. Careful positioning enabled us to use the proximity effect and low-end roll-off to perfectly balance the low end, while the excellent side rejection enabled us to position the mic angled across the body towards the neck without getting too much boom from the sound hole. This setup also captured more of the guitar's tone without picking up too much unintentional sound from the fretting hand. The guitar was quite bright in the room, but the mic's high-frequency roll-off kept that in check, producing a tone that would need very little EQ'ing

arguably as important as the sound itself. In the studio, these same aesthetics can help to bring out a great performance, but even when they don't, Edwina will still find some uses – perhaps a pair as drum overheads, and on trumpet, when again, the high-frequency roll-off will help to reduce harshness in the top end while focusing on tonal detail through the mids.

Edwina is a very characterful mic with a distinctive but pleasingly musical tone. If you already have a few jack-of-all trades condensers and you're after something a little more unique it is certainly worth considering. However, we wouldn't recommend it to someone just starting to build up their mic cabinet as it isn't going to be as useful on as wide a range of sounds as a more conventional neutral-sounding large-diaphragm condenser. **MTM**

MTM Verdict

WHY BUY

- + Unique steampunk aesthetic
- + Great character

WALK ON BY

- Looks won't suit everyone
- Very flavoured tonal response

Edwina looks set to make a lot of friends thanks to her notable looks and distinctive tonal character.

