

## SOYUZ

### SU-023 Bomblet Handmade Condenser Microphone

Studio Connections | studioconnections.com.au  
Expect To Pay: \$1455

Ah Mother Russia, what strange, terrifying and wondrous secrets are hidden behind your borders? We in the western world are snuck glimpses of your treasures every now and then, and truly and more often than not they change the way we think about so many things. Your Big Muffs are thicker and more intimidating than our measly Yankee ones, your vodka more potent and life affirming, and now, with this Soyuz Bomblet SU-023 on a mic stand in front of me, you might just have changed what I expect from a large diaphragm condenser mic.

Early on in the course of my research into this odd looking metal artifact, I stumbled across an intimidating list of artists who have used Soyuz mics on recent recordings. Suffice to say if it's good enough for Radiohead to use on *A Moon Shaped Pool*, it's good enough for just about any recordist on the planet. The Bomblet is 100 percent hand tooled by some of Europe's finest master builders in a facility deep in the heart of Russia, and it is abundantly clear just from holding it that every care has been taken to produce an honest to goodness rarity. The capsule comprises two 33mm membranes, one of which is gold flecked, and it is propelled into absolute clarity by the magic of FET.

There are a number of demos of varying quality of these mics available on the internet, and I must say that I was impressed enough just watching those. At the risk of sounding like I'm some sort of double agent, I was nothing short of dumbfounded when I actually breathed into the thing. I already anticipated greatness, but I was blown away by the subtlety, crispness and detail inherent in even the slightest whisper in the direction of this mic. Now, my rig is by no means up to speed; my humble Focusrite Saffire 6 is a long way from Abbey Road. In spite of this limitation though, I could hear every falling leaf outside my window, every creak in the back of my throat and every glistening harmonic I wrestled out of my acoustic guitar with a musicality and sensitivity I am barely worthy of. There is no question in my mind that the SU-023 is fit to stand in the pantheon of sound capturing devices alongside names like Neumann and Sennheiser.

Bear in mind, Dear Reader, that I am but a modest, low-level serf when it comes to the

mic world. My knowledge and experience of most mics is limited to the graces of those that have been kind enough to put me in front of their vintage gear. I may not know the ins and outs of the history of ribbon mic crimpers and all of the physics at play, but by God do I know a next level mic when I hear it. With its charming, wooden box, Sputnik-like construction, and absolute sonic purity, the Bomblet SU-023 by Soyuz is just that: a gold standard sound capture device whose only limitation is the ear that plugs it in.

#### BY LUKE SHIELDS

#### HITS

- Its crispness and clarity is only bettered by its original sense of musicality

#### MISSES

- None



## FOCUSRITE

### Clarett 4Pre USB

Innovative Music | innovativemusic.com.au  
Expect to Pay: \$1049

The Focusrite Clarett range focuses on tour audio interfaces designed to offer the kind of quality and features found in units costing twice the price. The series goes from the desktop Clarett 2Pre (10-in, 4-out) and Clarett 4Pre reviewed here (18-in, 8-out) to the single-rackmount Clarett 8Pre (18-in, 20-out) up to the Thunderbolt-only Clarett 8PreX, with a very respectable 26-in, 28-out. Aside from the consistent visual presentation, the line is also held together by its reliance on Focusrite's decades of analogue design experience, along with Air-enabled preamps that reproduce the input impedance, clarity, and frequency response curve of the company's original ISA mic preamp.

Available in Thunderbolt and USB versions, the Clarett 4Pre has four high performance, low-noise (-128dB EIN) mic preamps with a low distortion, ultra-linear design that guarantees a clean, open and transparent sound, giving accurate representation of the original performance. There are 18 inputs including the four mic/line inputs (two of which are also high-impedance instrument inputs), four fixed line inputs, and an ADAT input which supports an additional eight channels when combined with multi-channel mic preamps like Clarett OctoPre. There are two monitor outputs with anti-thump technology, a headphone

output with volume control, and two line outputs - and MIDI I/O is also included, of course. You can use the Focusrite Control app on Mac, PC, iPad, iPhone, or iPod Touch to easily configure your routing and monitor mixes, while other bundled software includes XLN Audio Addictive Keys, Focusrite Red Plug-in Suite and Plug-in Collective, Softube Time and Tone Bundle with four of Softube's world-class reverb, delay, mastering and distortion plug-ins, Ableton Live Lite, and Loopmasters with 2GB of royalty-free sample libraries.

Supported operating systems are Mac OSX 10.11 El Capitan, 10.12 Sierra or 10.13 High Sierra, and Windows 7, Windows 8.1, Windows 10, while supported sample rates are 44.1 kHz, 48 kHz, 88.2 kHz, 96 kHz, 176.4 kHz and 192 kHz.

The key to the Clarett 4Pre's success is that Air mode, which boosts the high end significantly up to 35kHz. It's an effect that you feel as much as hear, bringing more intimacy to vocals, more sparkle to guitars, and more swish to hi-hats. It doesn't work for everything though; if you use it on every track you record, you're going to have so much treble content to contend with that your mix will start to sound harsh, but use it selectively and it's like a magic wand for your overall mix. Focusrite also nails it with a very helpful manual that explains the myriad ways to connect this bad boy up. It's such a potentially complex system that it helps to have a little extra help in planning your signal routing.

#### BY PETER HODGSON

#### HITS

- Input gain LEDs handily integrated around the gain controls
- Flexible routing options
- Great-sounding Air mode on all four mic channels

#### MISSES

- A few USB ports for connecting other devices would be nice

