



Violet GLOBAL PRE

MusicTech
RECOMMENDED
★★★★★★★

Assembling a collection of quality mics used to be a particularly expensive business... Huw Price plays mix and match.

KEY FEATURES

- Frequency range: 5Hz–50kHz
- Output impedance: 50Ω
- Rated load impedance: 1kΩ
- Phantom power: +48V
- Weight: 250g

MEASURING UP

We were impressed when we tried the Red Type B preamp (\$449 plus import duty and carriage), but on balance we found the Global Pre a little more even in the upper mids and sonically neutral. If you prefer classic tube tones, a CMV 563 preamp (around £1,200 with a capsule or two) still wins – but not by much. The Global Pre and the Type B also give you phantom power, so you don't have to rely on vintage power supplies. Despite the high initial outlay, modular microphone systems are very cost-effective.

GLOBAL PRE

Manufacturer **Violet**
Price **£349 (shockmount included), VIN-67 £499, VIN-55 £449**
Contact **Dolphin Music 0870 840 9060**
Web **www.violet-design.com**

Why is it that the majority of condenser microphones are so big and heavy? There was good reason when they were stuffed full of valves and transformers, but have you ever looked inside a transformerless solid-state mic? It's mostly just air.

Many musicians and engineers no doubt feel reassured by big mics, but some of the more sophisticated manufacturers such as Schoeps, Gefell, DPA and others, have been downsizing for years.

The Violet Global Pre is one such example of a downsized mic, but it looks tremendous. Even the dedicated shockmount, with its violet rubber spacers, hardly adds any bulk. But it starts to look more conventional when you attach a lollipop capsule, because the Global Pre is the core of a modular mic system.

Violet provides a range of capsules that are voiced to sound like iconic microphones, but you can also use Blue and vintage Neumann capsules. Since the electronics are Class A discrete and there's no transformer, it's also cheaper than equivalent valve-based modular systems.

One cap fits all

Our main object of interest in this review is actually the Global Pre itself rather than the two Latvian-made capsules that were supplied for testing (a VIN-67 Neumann U67/U87 soundalike, and a VIN-55 Neumann Gefell M55K soundalike). We therefore had to determine a method to identify its sonic characteristics.

We decided to test the Global Pre against other similar preamps using a variety of capsules. Picked for the task were a Red Type B preamp and Blue cardioid capsule along with a Neumann Gefell CMV 563 with an M7, M8, M9 and even an M55K capsule. We tested all three preamps with all the capsules (except the M55K, which fits only the CMV 563 because it has a screw attachment).

We started our test of the Global Pre with the VIN-67 capsule – and were immediately impressed. A silky smoothness and velvety midrange that we'd associate with a Neumann U67

were definitely audible – but mostly with the Global Pre and the CMV 563. In fact, they sounded very similar.

The Global Pre produced a slightly drier and more clinical sound, whereas the CMV 563 was just a bit sweeter with, perhaps surprisingly, a little more sparkle in the high frequencies and extra depth in the bass. The Global Pre was also fatter in the mids, but a little less clear. In comparison, the Red Type B sounded similar to the Neumann in the top end, but without the depth and body in the low mids.

It was a similar story with the VIN-55 capsule, but any differences between the three preamps were even less apparent. The Type B was the brightest, while the high frequencies were softest with the Neumann. Although our M55K capsule is only one isolated example, the Violet version nails its extremely bright, head-on character. The VIN-55 is far less bright if you record into the rear of the capsule and, like the M55K, it has a much more even frequency response if you address it from the side.

Swapping over to a vintage M7 capsule, the Type B's leaner and brighter response proved useful for cleaning up the enhanced midrange. Once again, the CMV 563 sounded tremendous, and the Global Pre was fatter of all.

Solid state

The theme continued with a Neumann M9 and a Blue capsule – but we can report that the Neumann and Violet capsules were easier to interchange than the slightly too-tight Blue.

Some recordists might prefer the brighter tonal characteristic of the Type B preamp, but our tests suggested that the neutral circuitry of the Global Pre enables the characters of the various capsules to shine through more distinctly and with a touch of extra refinement. If you can't afford a Neumann CMV 563, this is the closest solid-state alternative we have tried so far. **MTM**

SUMMARY

WHY BUY

- Refined sound
- High build quality
- Shockmount included
- Smart wooden cases
- Sonic flexibility

WALK ON BY

- No attenuation pad
- No bass rolloff

VERDICT

A refined-sounding and beautifully made preamp that will bring out the best in any bayonet capsule.

★★★★★★★

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