



Austrian Audio CC8 Cardioid True Condenser Microphone

*A beautifully focused
Viennese pencil condenser*



REVIEW BY PAUL VNUK JR.

In October 2019, we took a look at the freshly launched OC818, a large diaphragm condenser mic designed and hand-built in Vienna by a brand new company with the bold name of Austrian Audio. The company's goal is to both carry on and carry forward the rich heritage of microphone design and craftsmanship that has existed in Austria since the late 1940s. Today we are looking at the fifth microphone in the company's roster and its first pencil condenser, the CC8.

A new old friend

The CC8 is a small diaphragm 'true condenser' microphone designed around the newly developed OCC7 cardioid capsule. While the capsule's inspiration dates back to the classic, long discontinued Austrian-made CK-1, the OCC7 is not a clone or a copy. It features a three-micron thick gold-coated polyethylene naphthalate diaphragm that, according to Austrian Audio, is much more robust than conventional Mylar alternatives. The capsule is hand-built, measured and tuned in the company's in-house anechoic chamber to a tolerance of max. +/-0.5 dB sensitivity at 1 kHz. This allows Austrian Audio to offer precisely matched pairs, whether purchased together or separately over time. As such, the CC8 is available on its own

with a mic clip, windscreens and thick vinyl pouch, or in a stereo set with two of everything as well as a custom stereo bar, all in a slim metal briefcase.

Modern class

Like previous mics in the line, there is nothing visually retro about the CC8. The mic features a 5.51" x 0.90" all-metal body finished in beautiful dark metallic bronze with a red badge and accents. Interestingly, the classic silver-encased capsule, which would have been exposed in the past, is sealed behind an additional head basket and silver mesh.

A pair of recessed switches on the rear of the body provide a three-position 2nd order highpass filter (0, 60, 120 Hz) and a three-position pad (0, -10, -20dB).

The CC8 has a flat and even frequency



response from 30 Hz (with a gentle bass rolloff) up to 3 kHz, followed by a broad 1-2dB rise up to 7 kHz. Then there's a steeper 4dB peak from 10 to 12 kHz. The mic has tight off-axis rejection and a bold proximity effect, but you need to be right up on the grille to exploit it.

Sound

Sonically, the CC8 is a rich and natural sounding mic with a bold upper mid-range push and presence that, coupled with its tight off-axis rejection, gives the mic an almost laser-like focus. The top end, despite its 12 kHz clarity, is silky smooth. It's also a very quiet mic. While not designed as a vintage-flavored specimen, it does lean toward a classic neutral and full tonality reminiscent of decades past but with an infinitely cleaner

capture. Also, the CC8 does not have a modern crisp or clinical bone in its body. I find all of the above surprising, as the one detail I left out so far is that the CC8 is a transformerless design.

Take it to the stage

I was sent the stereo CC8 set, and my first use was as a spaced pair of drum overheads in a live house of worship setting, recording a variety of drummers (including myself). Here I very much enjoyed the tight control and side rejection offered by these mics. They offered a very complete, full snapshot of the kit, from the lows of the kick and toms all the way up to the cymbals. Focused as they are, these are not mics that highlight the sound of the space *around* the kit. A telling moment came as I kept trying to turn down an aggressively loud snare drum in the mix, only to discover that it was coming through the overheads—the natural sonics of the CC8 on full display. The kit blended impeccably, with the cymbals showing a lovely satin sheen vs. a crisp bite. In the player's position, I was impressed by the detail and nuance

I could hear through my in-ears and how easily I could dial in the perfect ride tone with the CC8 pair just by listening while moving them into their ideal positions.

The studio

Back at my studio, I tried to get my hands on a vintage AKG 451 body with a CK-1 capsule, and I got close, but my friend's old vintage mic was having issues so I settled for some side-by-side comparisons with a pair of vintage Neumann KM84 mics. Tonally they both exhibited a similar low and midrange fullness and neutrality, but the upper mid push of the CC8 made the KM84 sound a touch pushed back and less forward-focused. The CC8 was also much cleaner, with a more substantial output. Getting down to work, the CC8 did a great job on acoustic guitars, auxiliary percussion, and mandolin. The CC8 also made a nice electric guitar amp mic for clean jazz and smooth R&B tones—think honesty, focus and a lovely and silky top end.

The CC8 with its included windscreen did an impressive job on vocals as well.

Note, as with most small diaphragm mics, the windscreen is vital as the capsule is easily stressed by not only plosives but blasts of breath and air.

A future Austrian classic

I sincerely hope the CC8 becomes one of those rare modern mics that we'll still be using and talking about in 30 years. The Austrian Audio CC8 is that well-built and sounds that good on just about anywhere you crave a clean, silky, natural, focused capture. To use a now-exhausted yet popular internet meme: The price might shock you! As such, take my advice and pick up a pair. ➡

Frequency Range: 20 Hz - 20 kHz
Impedance: 275 Ω (symmetrical)
Sensitivity: 15mV/Pa
Equivalent... Noise Level: 16dB SPL
Max SPL: 156dB
Self Noise: 16dB (A weighted)

Price: \$479 (single); \$949 (pair)
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