

SHURE

55 Deluxe Microphone

Recapture the evocative look and feel of the '50s with this stunning retro microphone from Shure...

Words: D.P. Wilson



Whether we are playing live or recording at home the humble microphone is something that we all take pretty much for granted. Without a microphone feeding a PA or recording system we'd still be yelling through metal cones to be heard over the drummer or attempting to cut grooves into a wax cylinder! Therefore, we at Playmusic often devote our precious column inches to these unsung heroes of our craft. However one aspect of microphones that normally goes unmentioned is their cunning ability to double up as a fashion accessory. One look at the TV music channels will reveal loads of image conscious artists that have chosen a microphone on looks alone. This

is nothing new, indeed the late great Freddie Mercury made his mic (and sawn-off mic stand) an integral part of the Queen stage show, and who can forget all those images of Elvis Presley singing into those classic RCA ribbon mics. Unfortunately, with the exception of the aforementioned RCA most of these glitzy-looking old mics share a rather unfortunate trait...

they normally sound pretty lousy! Microphone design has improved greatly over the last 40 years, and some of the old ribbon mics such as the Reslo and the original Shure 55 can look absolutely great in the right context but sound somewhat honky by today's standards.

This is where the new Shure Super 55 Deluxe comes in. Cosmetically based on the vintage Shure 55SH but

featuring vastly improved sonics this new mic promises much for the more sartorially aware singers out there. The original Shure 55SH is probably best known for its supporting role in the movie *Good Morning Vietnam* and since then it has become considered the archetypal vintage mic. This has led to a market for cheaply made 'stage prop' copies to come flooding in from Asia and ▶

SHURE 55 Deluxe

SRP £182.12

All prices include VAT

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A user writes...

Professional singer and entertainer Jacen Bruce recreates the evocative sound and image of 1950s music and musicians including Elvis Presley and Buddy Holly. Jacen is exactly the type of musician that the Shure Classic 55 is designed for and so he kindly road-tested the Shure 55 Deluxe for a week or two and offered a few sage observations...

"The Shure Super 55 retro style mic is beautifully constructed, attractive and very robust. The blue foam lining between the fins is a really nice touch; it makes a cool colour contrast with the smooth finish of the alloy casing and also works as a very effective anti-pop shield.

The mic is nicely packaged but maybe it would benefit from a protective bag or case being included, as you would normally get with other Shure mics. I really like the sound, which is very impressive, crystal clear but just a tad grainy, just like the warm 1950s recordings that I love. The cheap copies of 1950s retro mics are usually associated with feedback problems but I tested the Shure Super 55 at several loud gigs without any feedback problems and I am generally very impressed by it."



In the studio the 55 Deluxe put in a strong and authoritative rendition... close mic'ing delivers a clear and articulate but deep voice... Elvis impersonators take note!



► over the years I have had the misfortune to use some seriously dodgy Far Eastern manufactured copies made from chromed plastic and featuring a sound that could only be fairly described as a bit naff!

It's a Shure thing, baby...

This new retro-style mic from Shure is certainly a completely different prospect to the cheapo wannabes. For starters we find a chunky metal construction, albeit with the addition of a blue sponge internal pop shield which adds a real subtle elegance to the whole package whilst keeping those unwanted peaks at bay. The

metal chassis feels very authentic in that it's solid and well made in an old school industrial kind of way, almost like it was hewn from a solid billet of metal. Unlike modern mics the 55 Deluxe screws straight to the mic stand and features a very heavy-duty tilt adjustment. As you would expect the 55 is side address – which means that you sing into the front instead of directing your vocals into the end; and yes, I have seen a major artist making this mistake on MTV in recent months!

Once inside the microphone the vintage shenanigans cease and the electronics are totally focused on

delivering a polished modern sound. The super Cardioid dynamic capsule has a tight pickup pattern, which offers excellent feedback rejection and the overall sensitivity and frequency response is every bit what you'd expect from a high quality modern, dynamic microphone.

I tried this mic out on a couple of gigs where I found that once I'd got used to singing into something head on (rather than end on) the Deluxe 55 behaved every bit like a high quality live vocal mic. Feedback rejection was excellent, the vocal tone seemed to cut through without being harsh and the microphone

reacted exactly as expected to my usual mic distance technique. The sound was solid but clear and didn't need a ton of EQ to make it work.

Back in the studio where I could be even more rigorous and subjective the 55 Deluxe certainly sounded like it had been tailored for vocal reproduction, putting in a strong and authoritative rendition of the voices I put through it. I also found the 55 Deluxe put in a very strong and soulful performance on spoken voice and getting up close gave a clear and articulate but deep 'DJ' voice. Elvis impersonators should also take note! **PM**

Live, the 55 Deluxe behaved every bit like a high quality vocal mic should... excellent feedback rejection, the vocals cut through and the microphone reacted exactly as expected...



The King: A cool cat who knew how to rock the mic right!

WHAT MAKES THE SHURE CLASSIC 55 SO COOL?

Shure first introduced the original Unidyne model 55 microphone in 1939 and it was an instant classic. The evocative period styling makes a very powerful statement on stage and the retro-image means that musicians into classic 50s rock and roll can look the part whilst enjoying the superior performance and tone of the modern Shure Classic 55 Deluxe.

Check out these specs for a quick overview...

- **Rock-a-roller-tastic classic appearance**
- **Frequency response 50Hz - 15kHz; tailored for speech, vocals and rockin' music**
- **Cardioid directional pattern - perfect for quiff riffs!**
- **Stage-ready shock-mounted cartridge and rugged die cast case**
- **Self-tensioning swivel mount, permits tilting through 45 degrees forward and 80 degrees backward...just like those swivelling hips!**

WHY SHOULD I WANT ONE?

Looking at what the new Shure 55 Deluxe sets out to do, you'd have to describe it as a major success. Modern sound and function with Shure's reputation for almost indestructible reliability matched with the sublime, even improved look and feel of the original 55 makes the Deluxe 55 a real winner. You will know without me telling you whether this is a microphone that appeals to you and if you don't need the bling factor you will probably be better off with a Shure Beta 58 or similar, but any retro-style rock 'n' Roll bands or even aspiring boy bands embarking on personal appearances will absolutely love this Shure... It's a gem!