

SPECS

Type: Aluminium ribbon
Power Supply: 48v phantom power only
Element: Active pressure gradient electro-magnetic transducer
Diaphragm: Aluminium ribbon of 2.5 microns
Max. SPL: >140dB
Magnet: Strong ND
Polar pattern: Fig-8
Frequency response: 20–15,000Hz
Sensitivity: -40dBV/Pa (10 mV/Pa) at 1,000Hz
Output impedance: 250 20% at 1,000Hz
Rated load impedance: >1,000 Ohms
Equivalent noise level: <20dB
Dimension: 57 x 37 x 195mm
Weight: 500g



Superlux R-102 Ribbon mic | £99

Another budget ribbon mic hits the market. Does it cut the mustard? *Dan 'JD73' Goldman* finds out...

WHAT IS IT?

A phantom-powered, Taiwanese-made Ribbon mic, utilising a modular aluminium ribbon.

CONTACT

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Very cheap for a ribbon
- 2 Well built
- 3 Sounds great on piano, brass and guitar amps

Recently there has been an influx of foreign-made cheap ribbon mics hitting the market. Those made by

Octava are particularly popular and there are also several third parties modifying them to give improved frequency response and noise floor. Ribbon mics are often chosen for their smooth and rounded sound and fast transient response and many love the ribbon sound on acoustic guitar and horns in particular.

I was eager to try out the R-102 and put it up against my trusty Neumann TLM103 to see if it could get close to the sound/sensitivity of a condenser mic, as claimed in the R-102's literature. Build quality seems very good

for such a cheap microphone and it not only looks the part, it feels it as well. The R-102 comes in a sturdy moulded plastic suitcase, with a fully adjustable cradle mount and a black L-shaped XLR. A full shock mount is optional at extra cost.

Ribbon control

The R-102 utilises a modular (and so, user-replaceable) aluminium ribbon which is supposed to reproduce instrumental and vocal transients very faithfully – according to the literature – ‘a precise reproduction of the original sound’. It's worth noting this mic operates in a figure-of-eight pattern only, picking up equally from either side of the mic.

Setting up the mic was a breeze and I immediately set about trying it on several familiar sources in my studio, while checking it against my Neumann TLM103, which I regard to be a very high quality, and versatile microphone for many different sources (particularly those with snappy transients such as toms, percussion and drums). While the TLM is a much more expensive condenser mic, many claim that cheap ribbon mics can sound very close to more expensive mics such as this, so I felt this to be a worthwhile comparison.

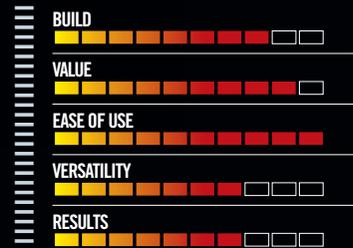
First, I tested the mic on congas. Contrary to the accompanying manual, the sound of the congas was not a precise reproduction of the original sound! While ribbons often present a slight high-end roll-off, the R-102 seemed to zap far too much high end and attack from the congas, especially when compared to the TLM103. The sound also seemed to suffer from a narrow soundstage and also sounded boxy and a little lifeless.

Budget brightness

Next up, I tested the mic on female vocals and again the results while acceptable, proved to be disappointing. The sound was far too lo-fi for my tastes and again sounded small, dull and lifeless when compared to my TLM103. EQing the high end for brightness just made the mic sound harsher. However, the mic did sound great on super-loud, amped-up electric guitar, trumpet and acoustic piano so these seem like the best applications.

While I commend Superlux for making a well-built ribbon at a very cheap price, a ribbon is by no means a golden ticket and while the R-102 is a decent, cheap mic it can't compare with pricey alternatives. However, it does have its applications, and sounded great on acoustic piano, trumpet and guitar amps, so it's definitely worth a punt at this price. **FM**

FutureMusic VERDICT



This is a decent mic for the money but doesn't work on everything, so get one and experiment with it.