

Shure KSM8 £429

Playing on the heritage of the most popular vocal mics ever, can Shure update the old SMs and justify the new price tag? **Jon Musgrave** steps up for a mic check

CONTACT WHO: Shure Distribution UK TEL: 01992 703058 WEB: www.shure.co.uk
KEY FEATURES LENGTH: 187.9mm, DIAMETER: 48.3mm, WEIGHT: 330g, FREQUENCY RANGE: 40Hz to 16kHz, TYPE: Dynamic, POLAR PATTERN: Cardioid, SENSITIVITY: 2.66mV/Pa



THE PROS & CONS



Dual diaphragm design delivers minimal proximity effect and a large sweet spot

Off-axis frequency response is very smooth

Internal shock mount and capsule stabilisation mean minimal handling noise

Premium construction and finish



For a vocal dynamic mic, this is expensive

Not as much of an all rounder as Shure's SM series

The Shure KSM8 is a dual-diaphragm cardioid dynamic mic designed primarily for vocal performance. Taking its inspiration from Shure's classic Unidyne III capsule (that's the one used in the SM57, SM58 and others), this newly developed capsule aims to reduce the proximity effect, improve off-axis frequency response and rejection, and deliver a more consistent polar pattern. The dual diaphragm design gives it one active and one passive diaphragm, so it's also inspired, to an extent, by some of the classic fixed-pattern twin-diaphragm condensers.

Shure's Dualdyne capsule is housed in a brand new aluminium handle, which is similar in shape and size to their KSM9 condenser stage mic. Technical features include two ultrathin diaphragms, a neodymium magnet, a dent-resistant carbon steel grille, a new internal pneumatic shock mount and diaphragm stabilisation system, and integrated hydrophobic wind protection. The kit includes a regular mic clip and a stiffened soft carry pouch, and there's a choice of finishes – black or brushed nickel.

As mics go, Shure's SM series are about as reliable and predictable as it gets, and so I was expecting a similar sound and behaviour from the KSM8. But aside from the minimal handling noise, this really is a different experience. Gone is the quite substantial midrange and high-mid

You're getting a much more predictable, consistent sound in a variety of positions

boost, replaced by a much smoother and dare I say it more natural response, and although this seems lacking at first, what's missing is the borderline sibilance that an SM can easily exhibit.

The low frequency behaviour is considerably more forgiving, providing a much bigger 'sweet spot'. On vocals and speech, although the level changes, you get very similar frequency response from a couple of inches up to about a foot. There's still a noticeable proximity when you're right on the grille, and here plosives still creep in, but nevertheless, for terms of ease of use, you're getting a much more predictable, consistent sound in a variety of positions. The overall off-axis response is very smooth, and although the pick-up pattern is at the broader end of cardioid, there's pretty good rear rejection, particularly noticeable in the midrange frequencies.

So, are there any downsides? Well, at £429, this mic doesn't come cheap. Then – and rather predictably – I had to try the mic on a snare drum and guitar cab (both of which can be successfully enhanced with a regular

SM mic). Here I really missed the added proximity oomph, particularly for the guitar. And although the smooth midrange suited the guitar cab, on snare drum I really missed the boost in brightness that an SM57 brings.

Overall, the KSM8 is excellent for vocals but not quite the allrounder that the SM-series mics are. Nevertheless, I don't think this should detract from what is a beautifully made and classy performer from mic giants Shure. **FM**

FM VERDICT

8.4

It's priced for pro users, but the KSM8 is a beauty of a mic that ditches the all-rounder status in favour of vocal live performance and reinforcement duties