

Primacoustic VoxGuard ambient noise attenuator

Primacoustic, respected for a large range of studio acoustic products, has turned its attention to a solution for studio and location vocal recording. **Phil Harding** takes a look

Primacoustic, a well-known name in the world of studio acoustic solutions for its products aimed at project or self-run studios and live events, now offers a new set of Iso-Tools that includes the VoxGuard.

Designed to combat the vocal recording problems that often occur in acoustically untreated rooms, the VoxGuard pitches itself squarely at the competition, the sE Electronics Reflexion Filter. The VoxGuard features high-density open-cell acoustic foam for maximum absorption

Price and Availability

£94.59 (€ 108.13)
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plus an extra-large, high-impact ABS outer shell to keep out unwanted noise. It can use the same mic stand as the vocal mic being using for the session.

I was told by some UK producer colleagues that it would never sound as good as the original design launched some time ago by sE. So it was with some trepidation that I agreed to test and review the Primacoustic VoxGuard. And, of course, it made sense to A/B the VoxGuard against its rival.

The tests were carried out with the assistance of Gary Kelly, who runs a music technology degree at The West Suffolk College in Bury St Edmunds,



The VoxGuard behind a KSM313 mic, which was not tested as part of this review

where they have a good, large recording space. The first thing we noticed was how light the Primacoustic VoxGuard was in comparison to the sE model. It was actually feasible to use the same mic stand as the Neumann U 87, whereas trying to do the same for the sE was destined for instant mic stand collapse – one up to Primacoustic straightaway.

Next were the slightly strange but vital fittings that come with the VoxGuard. Initially you might look at these and think, 'Why do I need both of those fittings?' (1 x threaded adaptor/ 1 x knurled ring). However, you soon realise the ingenious and simple design that allows you to secure the base of the VoxGuard to the stand. All I can say is make sure you don't lose either of them because they are crucial for successful operation.

So, finally we are all set for our comparison. Our vocalist, Lizzie, is installed behind the mic and we do our first take with the sE product in place. The vocal sounds tight and fairly dead, much as I expected. Then we tried the same vocal lines with no product, just the open mic in the room. Immediately the vocal sounded brighter and with a more pleasant space around it. Finally we try the same vocal lines, same mic, same singer, with the VoxGuard. The resounding view in the control room was that it sounded wonderful, really tight, brighter than version one and basically delivering exactly what is says on the box – controls ambient space around the mic, creates an intimate soundfield and delivers a cleaner voice track.

My only negative feeling about these types of products is that they don't necessarily help the creative process because they create a physical barrier between producer and singer, which can lead to communication and creative problems.

I also tested the VoxGuard in my own studio and again it sounded

excellent, tight and clean, helping to cut out the background fans from my various hard drives and computers, a common problem in many home and project studios, where vocals are recorded in the same room as other equipment. This time I had a perspective of what it was like being the singer behind the VoxGuard and although it does create a warm feeling that you are in your own space, it also caused some discomfort as I like to see my computer screens while recording, to be sure that everything is looking okay technically.

In both studio sessions I also tested the VoxGuard with two other vocal microphones, the new Royer 101 ribbon and the AKG Perception 420 with similar successful results. In conclusion I would say that in my role as producer, often recording vocals in other peoples properties, I would purchase the VoxGuard to guarantee a clean, tight and separated vocal sound. I would recommend the VoxGuard to anyone recording vocals on location or in an acoustically untreated environment. Q

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

- f Platform: any standard and sturdy microphone stand
- f Size: 18" x 15" x 8" (464mm x 381mm x 203mm)
- f Weight: 3lbs (1.4kg)

PROS AND CONS

Pros

- f Ease of use straight out of the box
- f Excellent tight and bright sound
- f Will help you to record a great vocal sound in the most diverse of situations, especially in a room with no soundproofing
- f Very effective at blocking reflections

Cons

- f While the VoxGuard does everything it says on the box, if you're studio is high end enough, you won't need it
- f Will block the view of you to vocalist/vocalist to you, in a control room/recording area scenario. Position the vocalist side-on as a compromise