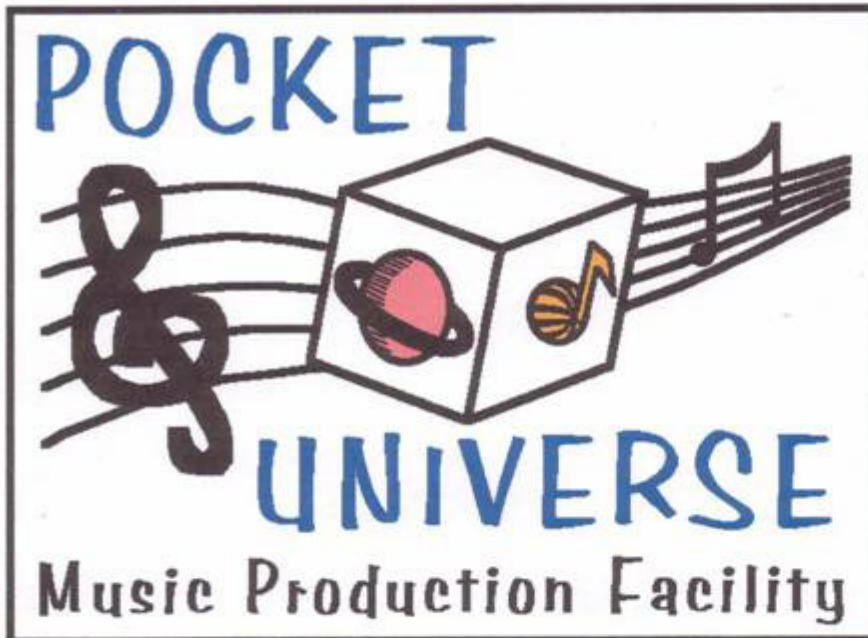


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If my trial microphone is anything to go by, the Feilo HA-101 comes with everything you need: shock mount, thread adapter, cable and even its own phantom power, all in a padded aluminium flight case. Very impressive!

Touted by the distributor as an alternative to a Neumann U-87, the first thing that struck me was that the HA-101 only has a cardioid pickup pattern. It's a single-sided microphone, whereas the U-87 is double-sided and allows omni and figure-eight patterns, which does add to the cost. This is a feature I would miss for instrumental use, as I'm a fan of M-S stereo, particularly for acoustic guitar (though you could still set up an X-Y stereo pair). For most applications, however, including its intended use as a vocal microphone, a single-sided microphone is all you need.

One cute feature on power-up: a red LED glows when receiving phantom power.

My comparison U-87 is an older model, so it was no surprise to find that the HA-101 had at least 10dB more gain, typical of high-end transformerless condenser microphones. This is a definite plus.

I must admit that I was skeptical. Almost every new medium-to-large condenser microphone claims to be the next U-87. Most don't even come close, but the moment I opened the HA-101's channel, I knew this was a serious contender. The sound really is modeled on the U-87, and the quality's all there. The overall character is slightly harder, with a little more in the 5 kHz to 8 kHz region, but surprisingly the bottom end around 100 Hz was also a little stronger.

On vocals and guitar alike I found the sound to be clear and full, with the added presence giving a sense of breadth (at the small cost of a little warmth). I also tried the microphones on violin, and here I actually preferred the HA-101's sound.

All in all, this is an excellent microphone worth considering on its own merit, and all the more for its under- \$1500 price tag. Congratulations, Feilo!

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