

Cloud Microphones Cloudlifter Two-Channel Phantom-Powered (Pre) Preamplifier

It's simply about gain — the Cloudlifter (\$329 list) is a clever and useful solution that offers a clean 20 dB of gain for three distinct scenarios:

- ▶ Your preamp gets noisy at high gain settings
- ▶ You have a low output source — such as a ribbon mic — that needs a boost in gain
- ▶ You wish to minimize the line noise generated in a long cable run.

We've all been there: Our first console's cheap mic preamps were OK up to around 50 dB; above that and all at once, they kick in with a drastic increase in noise and change color in an unpleasant way.

The sturdy little Cloudlifter offers two channels of gain via JFET circuitry to avoid this, all in a simple steel chassis with Neutrik XLR I/O: no switches, no options. Its only requirement is that you must provide phantom power (per each

channel). Its limitation is that your transducer must not require phantom, as the Cloudlifter doesn't pass it.

I tried the Cloudlifter with a Shure SM58 dynamic and an AEA R92 passive ribbon via two channels of the Millennia Media HV-3R preamplifier. I received over 25 dB of gain per channel, and the noise floor was ever so slightly higher with the Cloudlifter in direct comparison to getting all the gain from the HV-3R. Next, substituting the Millennia preamp for a PreSonus Digimax preamp — wide at open at +60 dB for a voiceover — the same ribbon mic used much less gain with the Cloudlifter, which resulted in a considerable drop in noise floor.

I think the Cloudlifter could be especially useful for broadcast work where long cable runs with intruding EMF/RFI could use a little boost upfront. I used the Cloudlifter on a recent arena PA announc-



er job where (unfortunately) a switched desktop mic caused pops (with each “short” off), but line noise was noticeably dwarfed by cleaner signal; even the overall tonal balance seemed smoother and less “peaky.”

I highly recommend the Cloudlifter for its concept, proper design, and the simple solution it provides for common pro audio problems. It is ideal as an aid for those with passive ribbons and sub-par preamps, and it will excel in broadcast and general studio applications, maybe even in ways I haven't thought of yet.

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