

## Cloud JRS-34 Active Ribbon Mic

### Smooth Top, Prominent Midrange, Plenty of Gain

About a year ago, a new microphone company based in Tucson, Ariz., released its first product: the Cloud JRS-34 ribbon. The mic is made entirely in the United States and owes its engine to Stephen Sank, the son of Jon R. Sank, who designed ribbon mics for RCA from the late 1950s to the early '70s. The JRS-34 features the same ribbon used to refurbish countless RCA 44s, and promises high-quality, smooth performance. The mic is also available in a passive version for \$300 less.

#### Into the Studio

Out of the box, it took me a minute to get used to the mic. It was exceptionally lightweight, and although well-constructed, it felt unsubstantial as compared to what I'm used to in a transducer of this size and type. I noticed right away that the integral mount was very limited in range, making me question how I'd get the JRS-34 into tight spots without breaking it or going through some "interesting" mic-stand scenarios. However, the mic proved itself sonically and the manufacturer promised me that it is working on a new mount.

I first heard the mic placed closely in front of a Marshall cabinet while recording both clean and dirty guitars. I was immediately aware of the mic's substantial output, which negated the need for a lot of gain at the preamp. Next to a passive Royer R-101, the Cloud JRS-34 had a more prominent, up-front midrange that provided the track with some good edge. Used in combination, both the R-101 and JRS-34 were phenomenal, with the Royer bringing up the bottom end and the Cloud pushing the clacky edge of a cleanly played Strat right where it needed to be: in your face without being harsh. The JRS-34 excelled in a number of guitar ses-

sions, both on its own and partnered with other dynamic mics, but it proved a bit too dark for use with an acoustic guitar. However, in a situation where you have a guitar that is especially bright and lacking in personality, the JRS-34 could be an excellent choice. For me, this is what ribbons do best: tame harsh transients and offer a richness that no condenser can offer.

I recorded various hand percussion instruments with the JRS-34, getting great results. Its naturally rolled-off top range took the edge off of shakers and a Vibratone, while the instruments' midrange frequencies were still prominent. No matter how hard or softly they were played, the mic offered natural tones from peak to valley.

Placed in front of the outside of a kick drum with a pop filter in place to protect the ribbon, the JRS-34 offered the perfect amount of chest-hitting, low-end thud. When mixed with a Beta 52 placed inside the drum, the pair gave both the "point" and bottom needed for a kick sound that was just right in the overall drum mix.

As a quick aside, I was able to use the company's Cloudfilter interface (\$289), which is designed for use with passive microphones. Cloudfilter is a simple, 2-channel in/out box with XLRs that gives any ribbon a clean +20dB boost and eliminates all worries of phantom power accidentally ruining a precious ribbon. I used it on several passive ribbons with great results. It is super-clean and brought the mics



The JRS-34 features the same replacement ribbon used for original RCA 44 ribbon mics.

up to the level of an active ribbon, allowing me to use less gain at the preamp, thus keeping the noise floor down. Highly recommended.

#### Is My Head in the Cloud?

I liked the Cloud JRS-34 across a number of applications; however, the mount left room for improvement and the price may exclude the buyer on a tight budget. The company argues that the U.S. build, sonic proximity to the 44 and BK-11 and two-year ribbon replacement warranty merit the price. I'll let you be the judge. For me, the JRS-34 uniquely offered a useable, edgy midrange that I've not found in other active ribbons. It has the personality to stand toe-to-toe with other mics in its category and would be a nice addition to any collection. III

Kevin Becka is Mix's technical editor.

#### PRODUCT SUMMARY

**COMPANY:** Cloud Microphones  
**PRODUCT:** JRS-34  
**WEBSITE:** cloudmicrophones.com  
**PRICE:** \$1,799 MSRP (\$1,699 street)

**PROS:** Forward midrange, smooth top and good low end.

**CONS:** Integral mount offers only limited motion. Priced a bit high.