



Violet GOLD FINGER

Violet continues to expand its product line with the medium-capsule Gold Finger. Huw Price puts it through its paces.

KEY FEATURES

- Transducer type: electrostatic
- Frequency range: 20Hz–20kHz
- Polar pattern: unidirectional cardioid
- Output impedance: 50Ω
- Rated load impedance: 1kΩ
- Suggested load impedance: >500Ω
- Maximum SPL for 0.5% THD at 1kΩ: 140dB
- Weight: 200g

MEASURING UP

The Violet Black Finger (£189) is apparently designed to sound warmer than the Gold Finger, but we detected no lack of warmth with it. Both are available as stereo pairs. Alternatively, check out the SE-3 (£149) with pad and HPF switches, or the evergreen Oktava MC-012 (£199), with three interchangeable capsules and removable pad.

GOLD FINGER

Manufacturer **Violet**

Price **£189**

Contact **Dolphin Music 0870 840 9060**

Web **www.violet-design.com**

As always with Violet microphones, the first thing that strikes you about the Gold Finger is the styling. Two-thirds of the body looks conventional enough, finished in Violet's trademark charcoal grey. But the final third is dramatically cut away to reveal a tapering tube of gold that converges to meet the capsule. Stand it on its end and it looks like a skyscraper from some Far Eastern tiger economy.

The capsule itself is 13mm in diameter – making it a medium. A mylar diaphragm is sputtered with a 'special-formula coating' and the benefits of the design are faster impulse transients, minimum sound colouration and improved low-frequency response, with higher SPL handling than regular large-capsule condensers.

A brass mesh protects the capsule and the pickup pattern is fixed cardioid. It's not a one-trick pony, though, because you can fit the Gold Finger with a specially designed ring that enables it to cater for a wider range of applications. More on that later.

Naturally, the onboard preamp is designed for linearity, low noise and low distortion, with Class-A fully discrete electronics and a transformerless output stage. There are two internal shockmounts for the capsule and electronics, but the Gold Finger is supplied with a simple plastic mic clip. Most of the time this will be fine, but Violet does supply an optional suspension mount for critical recording applications and Gold Fingers are available in factory-matched pairs for stereo recording.

No odd-jobber

The Gold Finger has a very wide angle of acceptance, so you can move a foot or so away from the centre without the sound changing dramatically, although you will hear a bit more ambience. However, rear rejection is very strong, so the pickup pattern can be described as 'wide cardioid'. This means that you will hear more acoustic contribution from your recording room than usual, but the plus side is that you get relatively little proximity effect. However, the Gold Finger is very susceptible to plosives, so if you want to use it for vocals, you will need an effective pop shield.

Obtaining a pop shield is worth the effort – our vocal tests revealed the Gold Finger to be a very natural-sounding microphone, with no sibilance-inducing exaggerated highs

and no shortage of body. However, we did find that the transformerless output stage created a smoother and warmer mid-range with transformerless mic amps than with old-fashioned, transformer-loaded valve pre's.

On reflection...

Violet sells an optional accessory called the Reflection Ring (£29). This is a doughnut-shaped piece of clear perspex that's designed to slide onto the Gold Finger to modify the pickup pattern and proximity response.

There were no clear directions on how to use it, so we were obliged to experiment. With the Reflection Ring set just behind the capsule the output level increased, but we noticed a ringing in the low mids at around 700Hz. This prompted us to try moving the Reflection Ring a bit further back.

After a bit of experimentation we discovered that the optimum placement was just behind the body cut-outs. Although the Reflection Ring's effect is subtle, it's certainly worthwhile spending the extra money. Without changing the sonic signature of the microphone, the cardioid response becomes narrower and more focused. Moving off to the side produces a drop in level, but the plus side is that the Gold Finger displays a little more proximity effect and the recordings we made were more intimate and less ambient.

On acoustic guitar, the sound was smoother and more open with the mic on its own, but the Reflection Ring did bump up the mids and added a little sparkle to the high frequencies, so it's horses for courses.

On the other hand, the Reflection Ring made the Gold Finger sound more like a large-capsule condenser, with an impressive, full-bodied tone and plenty of non-sibilant consonant detail. Together they make a very good combination. **MTM**

SUMMARY

WHY BUY

- Smooth, natural sound
- Fantastic looks
- Great build quality
- Low proximity effect
- Wide acceptance angle
- Remains detailed, even close up

WALK ON BY

- No attenuation pad
- No bass rolloff
- Suspension mount costs extra

VERDICT

A big thumbs-up for this natural-sounding, versatile and impressively detailed general-purpose condenser mic – just make sure you buy the Reflection Ring, too.



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