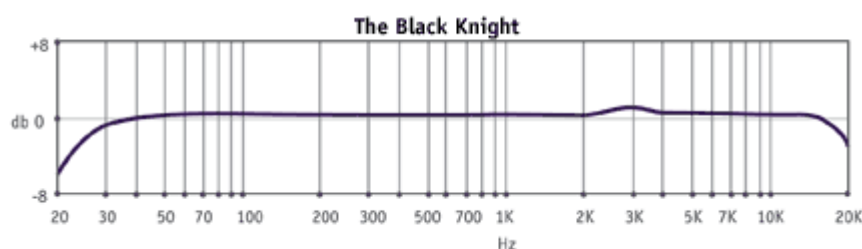


Violet Design microphones Review from The Studio Files *by ConnorSmith*

Violet Design sent to The Studio Files three microphones for review: the Black Knight, the Finger, and the Flamingo Jr. All three of these microphones are a great buy for the home or project studio. I will talk about each microphone individually, and then at the bottom you will find all the audio examples I recorded with the mics.

Except where otherwise indicated, all recordings were tracked with a True Systems preamp into the line inputs of a Digidesign 003Rack, recorded into Pro Tools at 44.1/24. The guitar recordings were on a 4×12 cabinet of a Peavey XXL with a Les Paul. The piano is an early 90's Young Chang, and the mics were placed just outside the lid (open), aimed towards the center of the strings, just behind the dampers. Click the links on the names of the mics to go to violetusa.com for full technical specifications.

The Black Knight (Street price: \$399)



This was the first mic I tested out, and it ended up being my favorite. I actually started by using it as a voiceover mic for a few of our videos on the front page, but obviously, the conversion to an online streaming format undermines the great quality of this mic. The swiveling head is a really useful feature. For example, when I'm setting up a vocal mic, I always end up having to make small adjustments (which requires tweaking the stand, moving the pop filter, adjusting the mic clip....). With the Black Knight, these small adjustments can be made with relative ease. That being said, there is the potential with any moving or adjustable parts that they could wear out or otherwise malfunction with a lot of use. The swivel bearing on the BK seems pretty solid, though, and ought to stand the test of time.

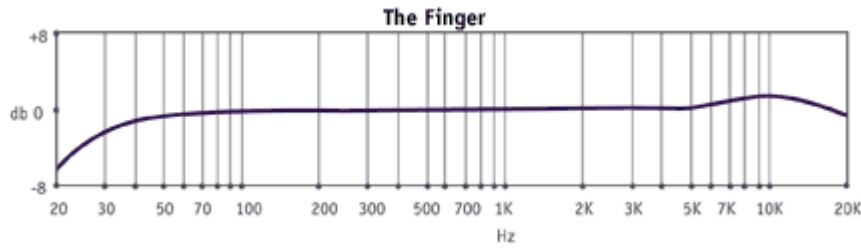
The Black Knight is a great vocal mic; its subtle boost around 3k brought out the best in my voice. It also seemed to capture the lower midrange frequencies very well, not coloring them (or cutting them) like some mics can.

The swiveling head was also perfect for making adjustments while recording my guitar cab. In the audio examples below, there are 4 different guitar recordings. These were all done on axis, with the mic put very close to the speaker. I would encourage you to compare the recordings to the other mics (including the Shure SM57 I used as a "reference" point). On most of those guitar recordings, I prefer the Black Knight. It had a way of capturing the tone of the guitar (even the more distorted examples), without sounding harsh. Again, the midrange seemed very accurate and smooth.

The Black Knight had very interesting results on the piano. (I compared all the piano recordings to an AKG414) While it wasn't quite as open and "airy" up top as the 414, it seemed to have more definition in the upper mids (likely caused by the mic's boost around 3k). Although it wouldn't be my first choice for a classical piano recording, I think it would help define a piano in a rock or alternative mix. It's fairly accurate to the original sound of the piano, but the nice mids presence would help it cut through.

The Black Knight could definitely be a "workhorse" mic for any studio. It sounded great on anything I put it in front of. The swiveling head is the most convenient feature I've ever seen on a mic.

[The Finger](#) (Street Price: \$325)



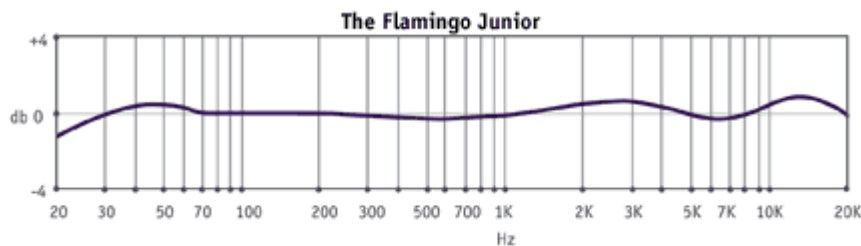
I chose to test out the Finger without the reflection ring (although I wish I had more time to delve into that). Overall, the Finger had a very unique “sonic footprint”. While I didn’t like it on every source I put it on, it was that “perfect” sound on certain sources, especially when trying to get something to cut through a mix.

Violet’s website didn’t list “guitar cabs” as one of its recommended applications, but with its touted ability to handle 140 dB SPL, I decided to try it in front of my guitar cab as well. While I usually preferred the 57 or Black Knight to the Finger, it did have its own, distinctive character. I think the mic’s wide boost above 5k sometimes made the electric guitar a little too bright. But, in front of an acoustic guitar, this mic could really do the trick.

To me, the Finger performed most admirably on the piano. It captured the clarity of the piano better than the other mics. Compared to the 414, I thought the Finger was more exciting and brought out the attack of each note a little better. Since I was recording a Young Chang, it may have been a little bright. But, on a “better” piano, like a Bosendorfer or Steinway D (which also would end up being fuller and darker pianos), the Finger would be even better for pop and commercial applications. Although I only had one Finger for the review, I am anxious to try a stereo pair of Fingers on a piano; I think it would be a great fit.

The Finger is a great mic for acoustic instruments, but also definitely has its applications on guitar cabs and the like. While it was not my first choice on those sources, it does produce a distinctive, highly “present” sound. In many situations, that could be just what you are looking for. If you are looking for a small diaphragm condenser with character, this mic could definitely fit the bill.

[The Flamingo Jr.](#) (Street Price: \$835)



This mic is a little more expensive than the Black Knight and Finger, but its definitely worth it. The Flamingo Jr. is the workhorse of the collection. It sounded good on everything I recorded.

Like the Black Knight, I also recorded some voice-overs with the Flamingo Jr. The response of this mic seems very tailored to vocal applications (with the slight bass boost, the slight cut in the mids, and then the boosts up top). Vocals track very clean and distinct with this unit. Make sure you use a good pop filter (as with almost any mic in this league), the mic is very sensitive.

When I recorded the guitar tracks with the Flamingo Jr., it was like I was putting my ear up to the cabinet. The mic translated the sound very well. The boost in the low end was great for distorted and clean guitars alike. Although this mic has a boost at around 3k and above 10k, the guitar didn’t seem harsh at all. I don’t think it was quite as sonically interesting as the Black Knight, but it was very pleasing and accurate.

The Flamingo Jr. also made a nice piano mic (although in stereo it probably would be even better). Like the Finger, I thought it may have been just a tad bright. But, if we were recording a little darker (and longer) piano, this would be an excellent mic. Given that this mic can handle almost 140 dB SPL, it would probably sound great in stereo much closer to the strings.

I'd love to pick up a Flamingo Jr. or two for my studio. The fact that it sounds great on any source makes it a perfect addition to the mic cabinet. If you own a home or project studio, this would be a great choice for your primary vocal mic (but you'd get the added bonus of it being great on almost any source).

Overall, I think Violet Designs has some extremely useful and correctly priced microphones here. At their prices, I think these mics meet or beat the performance of any other mics. If you are looking to purchase a Violet mic, I might suggest the Black Knight. For the quality and features of this mic, the \$399 price tag is an excellent deal. All the Violet mics perform above their price tags. On top of that, their unique and intentional character will add a new flair to your mic closet.

Here's an excerpt from a note that Damon sent to the folks at Violet Designs:

Overall, we liked the mics for the price—they have varying degrees of frequency enhancement that can work quite well for certain applications. I liked the high mid “zip” on the Flamingo as a second mic on the frets of an acoustic guitar. Pleasingly crunchy (through a TL valve pre) without sounding brittle. Have to be careful about plugin sweetening presets with this mic, because they often make a little boost just where the mic is already shining!

Connor put them all through the paces on his Peavey and liked the BK the best for that application. All compared to an SM57 for reference, but the BK provided some nice punch & sizzle without sacrificing a basically smooth response. Very nice for the price again. The only thing I worry about is that project recordists, who will certainly be able to afford these mics, might easily overdo it in the 3-5KHz range .

Below are some audio examples that could give a comparative feel for the sound of the microphones in different applications:

- [Distorted Guitar - SM57](#)
- [Distorted Guitar - Black Knight](#)
- [Distorted Guitar - Finger](#)
- [Distorted Guitar - Flamingo Jr.](#)

- [Distorted Guitar2 - SM57](#)
- [Distorted Guitar2 - Black Knight](#)
- [Distorted Guitar2 - Finger](#)
- [Distorted Guitar2 - Flamingo Jr.](#)

- [Overdriven Guitar - SM57](#)
- [Overdriven Guitar - Black Knight](#)
- [Overdriven Guitar - Finger](#)
- [Overdriven Guitar - Flamingo Jr.](#)

- [Clean Guitar - SM57](#)
- [Clean Guitar - Black Knight](#)
- [Clean Guitar - Finger](#)

- [Clean Guitar - Flamingo Jr.](#)
- [Piano \(pop\) - 414](#)
- [Piano \(pop\) - Black Knight](#)
- [Piano \(pop\) - Finger](#)
- [Piano \(pop\) - Flamingo Jr.](#)
- [Piano \(Chopin\) - 414](#)
- [Piano \(Chopin\) - Black Knight](#)
- [Piano \(Chopin\) - Finger](#)
- [Piano \(Chopin\) - Flamingo Jr.](#)
- [Piano \(Debussy\) - 414](#)
- [Piano \(Debussy\) - Black Knight](#)
- [Piano \(Debussy\) - Finger](#)
- [Piano \(Debussy\) - Flamingo Jr.](#)