

Teenage Engineering CM-15 £1,049

This portable studio mic has a few tricks up its sleeve, but is it a victory for minimal design? **Chris Corfield** finds out

CONTACT WHO: Teenage Engineering **WEB:** teenage.engineering **KEY FEATURES** 1" large diaphragm capsule, 10-hour rechargeable battery, mini XLR output, USB-C class compliant, supercardioid polar pattern, switchable onboard gain **WEIGHT:** 132g **DIMENSIONS:** 90 x 65.5 x 19mm



There was a noticeable switch, relatively recently, whereby musicians and producers sought a path away from their laptops. Portability became as coveted a feature as any other, with battery power and smaller form factors helping people travel out of their darkened studios and out onto mountaintops and into forests. Or, at least, into the back garden.

Teenage Engineering has contributed hugely to this growth in on-the-move production thanks to its classic OP-1 music machine. With the release of last year's iterative upgrade, the OP-1 Field, came the launch of a broader product family including a portable recorder and a compact mixer, under the same Field branding. Each product was designed to work with the others harmoniously, essentially creating an entirely portable, high-spec music and audio production studio.

Today we're looking at the latest addition to the family, the CM-15 portable large diaphragm condenser microphone, which demonstrates those classic TE hallmarks of slick, minimal design, quirky features and – yes – premium price tag. Straight out of the box, you can see the same visual cues as the aforementioned mixer and recorder, with its machined aluminium housing and minimal branding giving the impression that if this is a toy – as is sometimes levelled at Teenage Engineering – then it's a very grown-up one.

It has some cool features, like the way it can be powered in three ways. Being a condenser mic, it'll require phantom power to operate and you can choose between the internal battery, a USB-C connection or power via the mini-XLR connection. This can then go toward an audio interface, directly into a laptop or tablet, or into the OP-1 Field's USB-C slot for direct sampling capability.

The battery can offer up to ten hours of operation, which is ideal for out-of-studio use, although this will depend on how much of the mic's onboard three-stage gain you employ. We liked this feature because it meant we could move from recording vocals to acoustic instruments to raging guitar amps, all within a simple switch on the mic and all with a lovely sonic transparency and plenty of headroom.



So who exactly is the CM-15 for? Straight away, its price point puts it out of reach for many, yet there's still an argument to be made for the fact it does represent decent value for money. Yes, there's evidently a 'cool tax' on some TE gear, but to write it off as overpriced or overhyped is missing the point. Don't forget TE also offers a range of Pocket Operator synths, drum machines and samplers for under £/\$100.

What the CM-15, and its stablemates in the Field family, do is provide the answer to a question people maybe just hadn't yet asked. When you see the combination of the compact form factor, versatility and superb design, you might find yourself imagining new and

interesting ways to make, record and produce music, in exciting new places. The freedom it affords may well make it worth every penny. **FM**

FM VERDICT

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It ain't cheap, but the versatility, sound quality and freedom the CM-15 gives you make it well worth a closer look

THE PROS & CONS



It's a versatile mic; both in how you power it and in its interconnectivity

A total design triumph. The built-in kickstand means it can be used without a regular stand

There's plenty of headroom available, meaning clean audio regardless of what you're capturing thanks to its built-in preamp and on-mic gain control



Not sure about you, but my cable box isn't chock full of mini-XLRs, meaning another cable format to potentially not have with you at the crucial moment