

# MIX<sup>®</sup>

## Brauner Valvet X Studio Microphone

### High-Quality, Versatile Single-Pattern Transducer

Brauner has earned an enviable reputation as one of the elite microphone manufacturers. The hand-crafted quality and dedication to excellence displayed in Dirk Brauner's limited productions have earned acclaim from engineers, artists and critics alike.

The Valvet X is a fixed-cardioid version of the Valvet, itself a descendant of the mighty VM1 tube mic. All Brauner models share the same diaphragm, but have different wiring, transformers and pattern options. Upon inspection, Brauner's craftsmanship is immediately apparent: The construction is solid, with uncommon precision. Every part of the mic is beautiful and exact—a work of art unto itself. Even the shock-mount is a marvel, easy to use yet elegant and effective. Although the microphone quickly impressed with aesthetics and construction, I was able to temper my reverence to find out what it actually sounded like.

### Hearing Is Believing

I first used the Valvet X to track male lead vocals on a pop-rock record. This singer had a wide dynamic range and a very nuanced voice, a fine test for this handcrafted beauty. The plan was to conduct a shoot-out between the Brauner and a well-known, diamond-adorned microphone. I began with the Brauner, and after three hours had forgotten about comparing the Valvet X to the other microphone.

The Brauner was a perfect match for this particular artist. Its detail and ability to capture every subtlety put it in its own league. The tone was warm and round, yet crisp and clean on the top end. Tracks were filled with a "vintage" vibe but didn't feel old. The sound was incredibly balanced. Lows were big and powerful

without being demonstrative. The top end was very present yet incredibly smooth. Proximity effect didn't seem to affect the Brauner in any significant way. During some of the more spirited takes, the singer was able to vary his distance from the mic without degrading the tone.

The mic's sensitivity was very noticeable; it is among the most sensitive microphones I've used. It picked up every footstep, door creak and mechanical noise. This sensitivity resulted in an unreal ability to capture every detail of a complicated vocal. However, it would also make the Valvet X very difficult to use in any environment that isn't fairly well-isolated.

I also used the Valvet X to track acoustic guitars for a Texas country act. The big Gibson Dreadnaught sounded simply amazing. The presence and detail of the instrument were unbelievable. Placed over the 12th fret, it grabbed every element of the instrument with impressive accuracy. As with the vocal, the Valvet X's sensitivity was key to capturing the essence of the guitar, but would also amplify any imperfection in the instrument or the player.

### Simply X'cellent

The Valvet X is a beautiful microphone that ranks among the elite vocal and instrument mics available today. It has enough guts to deal with powerful male vocals while the endless, but always smooth, top end would do wonders for female artists. In addition to vocals, the astonishing sensitivity of the Brauner makes it ideally suited for acoustic guitars, strings or other instruments that require uncompromising detail. It's a demanding transducer that excels when the quality of the performance approaches that of the mic itself. Although I didn't try it, I wouldn't see this microphone get-



The Valvet X is a fixed-cardioid condenser that exhibits great depth on vocals and instruments.

ting a lot of time in front of guitar amplifiers or kick drums.

It could be said that, at a retail price of more than \$3k, the Valvet X is an expensive microphone that lacks the bells and whistles available on less-expensive products. I would describe it as a world-class microphone that provides unparalleled results in its intended applications. The design compromises allow a lower price point and make top-tier tools available to a broader range of users. If you're looking for a premier-quality microphone and don't need multiple polar patterns, the Valvet X is a top contender. III

Matt Bishop is a staff engineer at Alford Media Services in Dallas.

### PRODUCT SUMMARY

**COMPANY:** BRAUNER  
**WEB:** [www.braunerusa.com](http://www.braunerusa.com)  
**PRODUCT:** Valvet X  
**PRICE:** \$3,150 (MSRP)

**PROS:** Top-quality construction; striking detail/depth on vocals and acoustic instruments.

**CONS:** Fixed polar pattern; extreme sensitivity demands an isolated environment.