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# TechZone Audio Products Stellar X2/X2 Vintage LDC Microphones

*Solid-sounding modern and vintage flavors at a great price*

## REVIEW BY ALEX HAWLEY

**T**echZone Audio Products is a small company based in Torrance, California. The Stellar X2 and Stellar X2 Vintage are its debut products—two fixed cardioid LDCs. While there are many similarities between the two microphones, the tone of each is unique. The Stellar X2 features a K67-style capsule, drawing inspiration from Neumann U 87 and U 67 designs. The capsule inside the Stellar X2 Vintage is based on a K47, pulling inspiration from the Neumann U 47. The result? Read on...

## Overview

Aesthetically, the two microphones are identical aside from grill color (black for X2, gray for X2 Vintage). I was surprised by the microphone's size—it's a bit smaller than what might be considered typical of an LDC, at six inches long and 1.725 inches wide, but feels solidly constructed nonetheless. The body is made of high-grade iron and is finished in a sleek powder-coated black. Each mic ships with an aluminum flight case, spring shock mount, foam wind screen, and a leather pouch. I found the shock mount to work quite well; it offers a secure fit and is easy to use. The only unpleasant experience I had during the unboxing was being greeted with an awful smell when opening both flight cases. Not sure precisely where the aroma originates from, but it smells strongly of epoxy. Getting past that, I'm appreciative of all the included accessories, especially given the price tag.

Both mics feature a custom-made transformerless JFET circuit with high-tolerance

German film capacitors and gold traces on the PCB for better conductivity. Both capsules are center-terminated, 34mm gold-sputtered brass, made with Japanese Mylar three microns thick to provide high sensitivity. Unlike many other Chinese-made K67-style capsules, TZ employs high-frequency attenuation in the design to avoid an overly bright response, thus maintaining a balanced and natural top end. The self noise is also respectably low for both models, measuring 10dB for the Stellar X2 Vintage and 13dB for the Stellar X2.

The Stellar X2 has a listed frequency range of 20 Hz – 20 kHz (+/- 1.5dB), with a high frequency rolloff hitting -6dB at around 20 kHz. The chart shows a very balanced response, with a 2-4 kHz bump followed by a slight attenuation from 5 kHz to 7 kHz, and then another bump at around 10 kHz. It rolls off gently beyond 12 kHz.

The frequency response of the Stellar X2 Vintage is also listed as 20 Hz-20

kHz, with a more pronounced bump starting around 2 kHz and extending through 7kHz (peaking at around +4dB @ 4 kHz). The vintage model sees a more rapid drop off beyond 10 kHz, ending up at around -10dB at 20 kHz.

TZ Audio Products does a fair amount of quality control testing as well, including a 14-hour burn-in, frequency sweep test in an anechoic chamber, noise floor test, visual inspection, and more.

## In Use

I tried both microphones on various sources and generally found that they both shine in different roles. I found the Stellar X2 to be somewhat of a utility microphone, sounding good on a broader range of sources as it's more evenly balanced and imparts less character. Of the many sources I put in front of it, the stand-out was vocals. It's uniquely voiced so that it doesn't get too sibilant, but it still has a lovely sheen and openness to the top end. That can be a hard line to walk, and I don't expect it to be the case for every voice (sibilance ranges can vary quite a bit from



singer to singer), but that 5-8 kHz range sounds smooth, and the 10 kHz bump adds plenty of clarity. It also does quite well with plosives, and thickens up nicely with proximity. The bottom end sounds full but not at all boomy. The midrange is an accurate reflection of the source, perhaps slightly overshadowed by the airiness of the top end. Other notable sources include acoustic guitar, piano, and percussion. Its transient response didn't stand out to me, but the tonality captured auxiliary drums accurately and with plenty of detail. The Stellar X2 is overall very natural, true to its source, and transparent.

The Stellar X2 Vintage adds a bit more color to its sources, and as a tradeoff, is less utilitarian than its sibling. The low-midrange has a nice thickness to it, reminiscent of the U 47 it was inspired by, and the top end is warm without venturing too dark. This mic is very much mid-forward, but not in a way that is too aggressive in a mix. I enjoyed miking up a guitar amp with it, whereas that was one of my least favorite applications for its sibling. For rock guitars, it captures the body of the tone nicely, with grit and thickness, while still providing

enough clarity up top to sit comfortably in the mix. I can see it being well suited for certain vocalists—definitely not for everyone, but in genres that may call for a bit of grit or roundedness. I also wouldn't hesitate to put a pair on a grand piano for a jazz session! The Stellar X2 Vintage tonality is vibey, warm, and mid-focused.

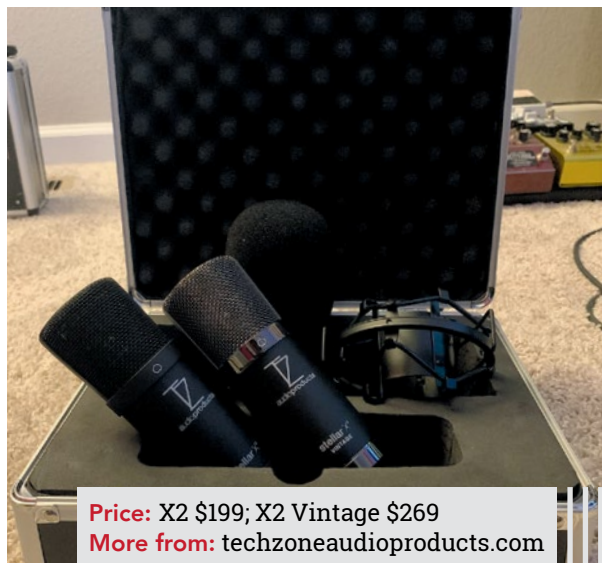
### Final Thoughts

Both microphones are impressive for the price. The Stellar X2 is a balanced Swiss Army Knife that can pinch hit on a variety of sources. Given its low noise floor (true for both mics), I wouldn't hesitate to use it as a voiceover or podcasting mic as well.

The slightly more colored Stellar X2 Vintage works wonders if you're looking to add some character to your source. Sources still sound very natural, but the warm top end and thick low mids lend themselves nicely to guitars, drums, strings, brass, and some vocalists.

The main things I'm left wishing for (on either model) are additional polar patterns and a pad on the mic body. I could see an omni version of the Vintage model becoming an excellent drum room option!

The Stellar series by TZ Audio Products is a commendable debut, and for the price, it's hard to find anything else to nit-pick. Two very musical, good sounding, highly affordable microphones! ➤



**Price:** X2 \$199; X2 Vintage \$269  
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