



## But Who Picks The Mic? Holly Palmer and the Neumann KMS 150

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You've seen the ads: famous singer and microphone with a simple headline linking the two. The impression you're supposed to get? "Big Star uses Brand X mic--it must be good." But did the singer even select the mic? For those in the know, the answer is "rarely." Though it's unthinkable for a guitar, keyboard or drum tech to choose an instrument for virtually any instrumentalist, mic selection is often left to the "pro-in-the-know:" . . . the soundguy. But if artists like Sarah McLachlan, Tori Amos, Phish, Rush's Geddy Lee, and Holly Palmer are any indication, singers are increasingly taking matters into their own hands. The mic of choice? The little known Neumann KMS 150. Why? A new breed of audio-savvy singers. A great example of such savvy is newly-signed Reprise artist, singer-songwriter Holly Palmer. With a double degree from the Berklee School of Music in vocal performance and audio engineering, Palmer obviously brings an unusually high-degree of audio knowledge to her craft.

That knowledge comes in handy. "When you're doing a club tour to promote an album, the typically lackluster cheapo PA's can really work against you" says Palmer. In a lot of smaller venues, the singer says, soundmen often refuse to alter a basic setup, or re-EQ a system to fit a singer's preference. "The great advantage of having a Neumann KMS 150 in those circumstances is being able to dramatically raise the quality of the signal chain by having the highest possible quality at the source." But what difference does that make in performance? The improvement the KMS 150 brought was significant according to Holly. "Every other mic I tried seemed to lack something--a certain sparkle" claims Palmer. The difference seems to boil down to what the singer considers is the vastly greater capacity of the Neumann KMS 150 to deliver what she calls the "full spectrum" of vocal technique. "I model my vocal technique on horn players. Techniques like using different amounts of air, for example. Using everything from full head voice down to soft whispers are sort of like different colors in a painter's palette. With every other mic I tried, a lot of colors just didn't get on the canvas--it was real frustrating." Comments from her manager, record industry pros and audience members have reinforced Palmer's instincts about the improvement in her live sound since adopting the Neumann KMS 150. A sample: "On the first gig I used it (a New York club gig opening for Paula Cole) I was told by someone in the audience that it sounded almost like I'd been singing softly right next to their ear--like no microphone was being used." To me, that's the ultimate compliment for a mic." Before rushing off to conclude a recording session, Palmer offered a final anecdote about reaction to her KMS 150 which may indicate her career is evolving from the small stage to the small screen: "I just did some TV gigs in Canada and the control room dudes came out of the booth to say they loved the sound I'm getting."

