

7 Pros that use the Avalon 737

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The Avalon 737sp preamp is a staple in the studio, yet is not without controversy. You can regularly find engineers bashing it on forums, or as we have heard one tech call it, “A wire with gain”.

We use it in our studio and love it. If you want to hear it in action, you can check out an in-depth Avalon 737 Demo (</avalon-737sp-review/>) with audio samples we did some time ago.

So, we know what a lot of unknown engineers on the audio forums think. But we set out to find out **what the Pros think**. So after a full day of research and about 7 pots of coffee, we came up with this list of **7 Pros that use the Avalon 737**.



Dave Pensado (<http://www.pensadosplace.tv/>)

@pensadosplace

CREDITS: MICHAEL JACKSON – EARTH, WIND & FIRE – MARIAH CAREY – P!NK – BEYONCÉ – SHAKIRA – USHER – WILL SMITH

Back in 2004, a guest user on Gearslutz (<https://www.gearslutz.com/board/q-dave-pensado/20626-dave-what-outboard-do-u-consider-mandatory.html>) asked Dave a pretty straightforward question.

“Dave what outboard do u consider mandatory?”

See screenshot below:

Dave what outboard do u consider mandatory?

Well that is pretty damn direct! I myself would love to know what gear Dave friggen Pensado considers not only a must have, but mandatory! Thankfully, Dave responded to the post and not only mentioned the Avalon 737, but made sure to put in parenthesis **“a great all in one”**.

Dave Pensado
Guest Moderator - September 08



good question...

I would say in the analog world:
[1176LN](#)
1073Neve with Pre
Avalon 737 (a great all in one) ←
[Distressor](#)
API550A and 560A
[Eventide 2016](#) reverb
[Eventide H3000](#)
Lexicon 480/960
TC2290 delay
Pultec [EQP1A](#)
DBX160x
In the digital world:
[Waves Platinum Bundle](#)
[McDSP Filterbank](#) and [Compressorbank](#)
Bomb factory stuff
Eventide stuff
If you can't make a great record with this stuff, you suck!
(Did you ever tell CE hello?)

Dave's Avalon preamp can be seen in his rack in many of his videos on Pensado's Place, and heard on many records he produced.



Chad Kroeger

@Nickelback

CREDITS: AVRIL LAVIGNE – SANTANA – MY DARKEST DAYS – THORNLEY – BO BICE- NICKELBACK – THEORY OF A DEADMAN

Chad Kroeger is mostly known for being the lead singer of Nickelback, but he is actually an accomplished producer as well. When Nickelback set out to make **The Long Road**, Chad (being aggravated with studio delays), hired a contractor to build a studio in his barn in 30 days, and recording commenced.

In a Mixonline interview back in 2003, Chad was asked what vocal chain he used on the "barn recorded" followup to **Silver Side Up**. Surprisingly, his response included a Rode NTK as the mic, along with an Avalon 737 at the end of the chain.

Here is a quote from the Mixonline article: (<http://www.mixonline.com/news/profiles/studio-nickelback/364996#sthash.sV5VP18W.dpuf>)

Vocals were recorded in the upstairs vocal booth with a simple setup of a RØDE NTK tube mic running through a Neve 1084 preamp, UREI1176 compressor and Avalon 737 SP mic processor.

Seeing as the Avalon preamp was last in the chain, we are assuming that it was primarily used for EQ. Also, in case you were wondering why he used an NTK when he probably had access to a plethora of microphones, Chad said:

If I'm screaming, we need to be able to have a diaphragm that's going to be able to handle the screaming and is not going to gut out some of the stuff

Kroeger's vocal sound has become extremely sought after and is considered by some to be the holy grail of the "big rock" sound.

So if you are looking for that huge rock vocal sound, you may want to consider throwing the Avalon preamp in your chain.



Mike Mangini

@manginimike

CREDITS: JOSS STONE – TOM JONES – DREAM THEATER – DONNY OSMOND- JOAN OSBORNE – DISNEY – JONAS BROTHERS – BAHA MEN

Mike Mangini is yet another well know musician (drummer of Dream Theater) that also excels in engineering and producing. Blair Jackson from Mixonline did an interview with Mike (<http://www.mixonline.com/news/facilities/recording-vocals/371958#sthash.FBc46bfz.dpuf>), asking questions about his vocal micing on Joss Stone's "**Mind Body and Soul**".

Mike said that because Joss's voice is so inherently dark, he wanted to capture it as is, without color. Mike chose the Sony C-800 to mic Joss's voice, explaining that is was the most transparent mic available and really let her voice shine unaltered.

Obviously, his preamp choice was next, and staying in line with the "unaltered" approach, he chose the Avalon 737 to keep the path as clear and transparent as possible.

Here's a quote from Mike:

We went with the C-800, which seemed totally transparent. So that was the mic we used primarily on both records, and then we'd also go through an Avalon 737.

Seeing that Mike took such care to find a totally transparent mic to preserve Stone's voice, we believe this is a testament to the clarity of the Avalon preamp, as Mike chose it to match the transparency of the Sony C-800.



Young Guru

@young_guru

CREDITS: METHOD MAN – MARIAH CAREY – JAY-Z – LUDACRIS – T.I. – PETE ROCK – GHOSTFACE KILLAH – FABOLOUS

Young Guru certainly lives up to his name, as he is considered one of the top recording and mixing engineers in Hip Hop. He has mixed 8 Jay-Z records, 2 Mariah Carey records, and a host of top Hip Hop albums.

Specifically talking about Jay-Z's vocals, here's a quote from Young Guru on the Avalon 737:

My signal chain is normally a Neumann 87 or 67 going into an Avalon 737. I love the way the Avalon preamp sounds with his voice. It's a perfect match. I use the 737 compressor as well as the preamp.

This quote can be found in this SoundonSound Interview (https://www.soundonsound.com/sos/dec09/articles/it_1209.htm) from December of 2009.



Johnny K

@thegroovestudio

CREDITS: ALIEN ANT FARM – NONPOINT – DISTURBED – MEGADETH – STAINED – SEVENDUST – 3 DOORS DOWN – DROWNING POOL

Johnny K (*John Karkazis*) owns Groovemaster Recording Studios in Chicago, IL. The K man has also engineered some of metals top artists, such as Disturbed and Mushroomhead.

So how does Mr. K feel about the Avalon 737?

Here is a quote from this 2003 Mixonline Interview (<http://www.mixonline.com/news/profiles/disturbed/365183>):

We changed mic pre and compression settings to bring out the depth of David's vocals. We overdrove the compressor. We used a Distressor on the vocals occasionally when we tracked, but it was not always engaged. The vocal mic pre was an Avalon 737, and I used a Neumann tube as a vocal mic

Well he feels good enough about it to use it on David Draiman of Disturbed's vocals, specifically on their debut album "*The Sickness*". Great album, great sound!



Billy Howerdel

@billyhowerdel

CREDITS: A PERFECT CIRCLE – GUNS N' ROSES – HOLLYWOOD UNDEAD – TRUST COMPANY – MELVINS – ASHES DIVIDE- SECONDHAND SERENADE

Billy Howerdel started out as a studio engineer / road tech, and wound up forming one of the worlds most eclectic hard rock bands, A Perfect Circle.

It wasn't easy though, as APC's front man Maynard James Keenan is also the lead singer of the legendary Tool.

This forced Howerdel to write and even track a lot of APC's record on the road.

In this 2001 Mixonline Interview (<http://www.mixonline.com/news/profiles/disturbed/365183>), Robert Hanson asks Billy what gear he takes with him on the road to record tracks:

I've got a big 20-space rack with a Marathon 9600 with a Pro Tools MIXPlus system, an Avalon 737 and the new Apogee 2-track, a little Mackie mixer, a tube mic, a basic guitar and an acoustic, and I pretty much do everything.

We are assuming the Avalon preamp was used mostly for DI and probably a bit of compression. It is said that Maynard may even have tracked some vocals in Howerdel's hotel room, but Billy explains he mostly did it at home and they sent tracks back and forth.



Steve Hodge

CREDITS: JAM AND LEWIS – BOYZ II MEN – MICHAEL JACKSON – MARY J. BLIGE – TONI BRAXTON – JANET JACKSON – SPICE GIRLS

If you are scratching your head wondering if you have heard of Steve Hodge, don't feel bad. Steve has intentionally tried to stay out of the spotlight all these years, but the man has engineered more top R&B records than you can shake a stick at.

Steve is probably best known for mixing literally every Jam and Lewis record, but he also worked with Michael Jackson on vocal tracking several times.

We found this SoundonSound article (<http://www.soundonsound.com/sos/nov06/articles/stevehodge.htm>) where Steve talks about what gear he used to track Michael's vocals. His quote not only reveals his use of the Avalon 737 as both preamp and EQ, but offers some insight into the magic that occurred while recording the King of Pop.

I ran it into the Avalon 737 preamp with the EQ and compressor built in. With Michael, you set the mic and stand back. He moves around incredibly when singing, just like he does on stage. But he has this remarkable knack for getting back precisely on mic in time for the line. He could circle the room and never miss a line. The problem was that the mic would pick up all of the noises he made — finger-snapping, mouth-popping and so on; he's a huge foot-stomper. A lot of the percussion you hear on his records is actually him. What you have to do is build new percussion tracks around his vocal later. You have to augment it rather than try to cover it up.

Well we learned two things we didn't know.

- The most iconic voice in Pop went through an Avalon 737.
- Michael Jackson created music with every inch of his body!

If you want to take the plunge and add the Avalon 737 to your chain, you can buy from Guitar Center [↗](#)

(<http://www.jdoqocy.com/click-7364593-10449560-1401985652000?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.guitarcenter.com%2FAvalon-VT-737sp-Class-A-Mono-Tube-Channel-Strip-Limited-Edition-105310502-i1437608.gc&cjsku=105310502>) or for faster shipping, you can buy from Amazon [↗](#).

(http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0002GL02Y/ref=as_li_tl?

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So what do YOU think about the Avalon 737?

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