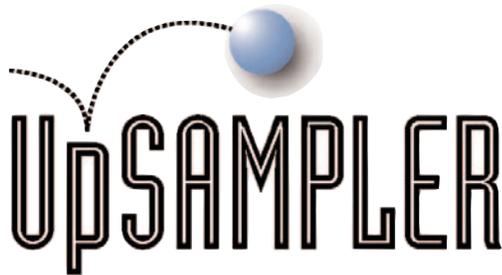


ProAudio Review

The Review Resource for Sound Professionals

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UPSAMPLER

Capsule Reviews and Product Review Updates

MXL USB.006

Price: \$129 Info: www.mxlms.com

Get ready, the USB microphones are coming. We reviewed the BLUE Snowball in August. Samson has its CO1U USB condenser mic and Rode just released its Podcaster USB dynamic microphone. Expect more models from other manufacturers in the future. USB microphones attach directly to your computer with no additional mixers, mic preamps or interfaces.

Marshall Electronics adds to the fray with its MXL USB.006. The microphone resembles a traditional long-bodied, vintage large diaphragm condenser. Unlike some of the other USB mics it is a true condenser with a gold-sputtered Mylar diaphragm. It is plug-and-play with most Mac and PC audio systems. Both GarageBand and Audio Companion recording software tested fine with no problems. As always, research your particular program for compatibility.

Sound-wise, the first thing I noticed was an

extended low midrange and true low end compared to the more clinical BLUE Snowball. This flattering frequency response soon had my thin voice sounding like a broadcast announcer. There is a dramatic proximity effect if you choose to mic up close. The cardioid-only USB.006's printed specs offer a 20 Hz – 20 kHz frequency response and sampling rates of 44.1 kHz and 48 kHz.

Setting recording levels with any USB microphone is an imprecise exercise. You must first choose the highest available setting without distortion and then fine-tune by adjusting microphone distance. The USB.006 has three sensitivity settings (neutral, -5 dB, -10 dB). This got me close to optimum levels for most things.

The mic should be able to accommodate any vocalist or reasonably loud solo instrument. At the extreme end of the spectrum, a loud rock band practice had to be recorded from a long distance (the next room) to eliminate overloads. Still, it captured the full-range of the rhythm section much better than expected. A -20 dB pad would be a useful addition to the design. I found the mic a bit too easy to distort with some highly amplified sources.

Sound samples of the USB.006 are available at my audio website:

<http://homepage.mac.com/daviswhite/Sites/soundcamera.htm>.

The MXL USB.006 proves that all USB mics do not sound the same. While other mics might accentuate the upper midrange for increased clarity, MXL has voiced this mic for more natural warmth and musicality. Now you have a choice. Included in the package is a padded carrying case, tripod table stand and 10-foot USB cable.

—Davis White

