Record at Home on a Budget

By Chad Johnson

Learn to Record Your Music in the Comfort of Your Own Home!
The MXL CR89 is a large diaphragm condenser mic with a cardioid pattern. Based on the well-respected V89 from MXL, the CR89 is a stunning beauty with a matte black finish covering its brass body and black chrome grill and trim. At less than 2 pounds, the mic is a bit lighter than its size would suggest, but the build quality on the mic is quite impressive. It comes with a well-made aluminum case with ample foam lining, a heavy duty shockmount, and a cleaning cloth. The CR89’s frequency response is 20 Hz to 20 kHz, and it features a 6-micron gold-sputtered diaphragm inside a tuned grill cavity. The microphone was named “Best in Show” by ProSound Network magazine at the 2013 NAMM show.

The best news is that the CR89 sounds even better than it looks, and it looks really nice. Warm, high-end sparkle, full-bodied, and rich are just some of the words that spring to mind when trying to define its character. It shines on vocals for sure, but it’ll do a beautiful job with just about everything you throw at it. I’ve loved it on acoustic guitar, piano, electric guitar, mandolin, percussion, and more. It’s become my go-to mic in my studio, and if it were stolen, I’d get my hands on another one as quickly as possible (after filing a police report, of course). How this microphone costs less than $1,000 is beyond me. But in this case, ignorance is bliss.

Street price: $349

MXL CR89 large diaphragm condenser microphone
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As you can probably hear, the differences between different mics can range from extremely subtle to more noticeable, but all of the mics produce very useable sounds. Generally speaking, the more expensive you get, the more subtle the difference becomes. In other words, the difference between a $100 mic and a $1,000 mic is more noticeable than the difference between a $1,000 mic and a $2,000 mic.

Let’s listen to these mics again with some phrases in different styles to see how they react. Again, the signal chains will be the same for each mic within a specific phrase.

177 CAD GXL3000BP: Male vocal rock
178 CAD GXL3000BP: Female vocal rock
179 Sterling Audio ST55: Male vocal rock
180 Sterling Audio ST55: Female vocal rock
181 MXL CR89: Male vocal rock
182 MXL CR89: Female vocal rock
183 CAD GXL3000BP: Male vocal intimate