Record at Home on a Budget

By Chad Johnson

Learn to Record Your Music in the Comfort of Your Own Home!
The MXL Studio 24 USB is a USB-powered large diaphragm condenser mic designed for portability and ease of use. It features a cardioid pattern, 20Hz – 20 kHz response, and an attractive silver finish with a nickel grill cloth and trim. It’s housed in a very nice, protective travel bag that includes pockets holding the mic, a tabletop mic stand and base, a cleaning cloth, the USB cable, and a software CD. There’s a 1/8-inch headphone jack and gain dial built into the mic itself, making it a one-stop shop for the musician or podcaster on the move.

The software includes a GUI program with numerous features, including controls for input gain, phase reversal, an adjustable hi-pass filter, output, and headphone volume, as well as useful effects such as a noise gate and a four-knob leveler. You can save and recall presets quickly and easily for specific applications. The mic sets up on a desk and plugs into a laptop in no time at all (of course you can mount it on a full-sized mic stand, as well). It’s ideal for travel when you only want to bring a laptop or a tablet (you’ll need an adapter to use it with your tablet most likely, which is sold separately). It sounds clear and full with a well-rounded response and can certainly handle most situations.

Street price: $140

MXL Studio 24 USB large diaphragm condenser microphone
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Let’s listen to some more phrases sung into an MXL Studio 24 USB mic (see sidebar for details). Since we’re plugging straight into the USB port on the computer, we obviously won’t be running through the same signal chain.

- **193 MXL Studio 24 USB: Male vocal rock**
- **194 MXL Studio 24 USB: Female vocal rock**
- **195 MXL Studio 24 USB: Male vocal intimate**
- **196 MXL Studio 24 USB: Female vocal intimate**

**DYNAMIC MICROPHONES**

Though condenser mics get the lion’s share of vocal duties in the studio, dynamic mics are no slouches either. Generally speaking, dynamic mics are often employed in louder, more rock-oriented vocal tracks, but there are many exceptions to this. Thom Yorke, of Radiohead, prefers an Electro-Voice RE20 dynamic mic for nearly all of his vocals, simply because it works well with his voice. Another very common dynamic vocal mic in the studio is the Shure SM7B, which is used by Sheryl Crow and Wilco’s Jeff Tweedy, among many others. Oh, and you may have heard of a little album by Michael Jackson called *Thriller*? Yep—the King of Pop recorded his vocals with the SM7B.