



At a glance

AKG ARA
£75
AKG LYRA
£106

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BUILD QUALITY	8.0
EASE OF USE	9.0
FEATURES	8.0
VALUE FOR MONEY	9.0
SOUND QUALITY	8.0

Hype

Intuitive button layout, nice stand and good quality recording, with low latency listening.

Gripe

Could perhaps be lighter given that these are designed to be portable, and quite a bit of the weight is in the stand.

Summary

Hi-res vocal and instrumental recording mics for DJs and producers needing a high-quality portable microphone set-up, which can be placed on a table.

Verdict 8.5/10

Tech Essentials

For this month's Tech Essentials, we look at two desktop microphones for DJs, producers and podcasters — the AKG Ara and Lyra

AKG has released two entry-level microphones aimed at podcasters, producers and DJs. Both USB powered, with multi-directional recording, they are ideal for solo or group recordings of live vocals and instrumentals. We take a look to see what features make these mics stand out.

The mics have a warm and close sound on vocals, their high-quality recording stemming from AKG's legacy of decades of outstanding microphone production. Lyra, a condenser mic, was released a few years back, and is priced at £106, weighing approximately 1kg: not much, given the solid protective casing and desktop stand.

Despite its compact size, the Lyra's high-quality components deliver professional results. The mic features four capsules for audio capture: these are placed with two facing either side of the mic, so vocalists' voices can be captured from both sides. The mic can be put into four capture modes: 'front', 'front and back', 'tight stereo' and 'wide stereo'. Buttons on the front include mic gain control, headphone volume turn dial and microphone mute. The Lyra is compatible with Mac, Windows and Android devices. It can be used

with any DAW, and operates easily when plugged into a laptop. The USB-C output is on the base and the mic is also powered from here. The weighty desk-stand is a perfect addition for users who want a tabletop mic that looks sleek, but Lyra can also be used with any other studio mic-stand. On-board 'element overload protection' technology reduces unwanted noise by preventing overload from extreme sudden volume changes: useful if recording a take that is changing a lot in volume. Audio is 4K compatible, and 'ultra-HD', with a top end of 192kHz, meaning the mic can be used to soundtrack video and multi-media productions, as well as music and podcasts.

Ara, the second mic in AKG's collection, was also released a few years ago. It is also a condenser mic — however, this has two capsule array modes (instead of four); 'front' and 'front and back', and just like the Lyra, the Ara is mountable on any mic-stand. The 'front and back' mode can record sound from all directions, and is suitable for recording two musicians, while the 'front' mode is better for a single voice. The control buttons are similar to the Lyra, with mode selection, headphone

volume and mute options, but no mic gain control. Thanks to the two condenser mic capsules, the Ara records in 24-bit, 96kHz audio.

With a slightly different shape and dimensions, the Ara weighs in less than the Lyra; a benefit for those who want an even more portable set-up. Priced at around £75, the Ara is less expensive, but still offers a lot.

These mics are powered by USB, and can be connected directly to a laptop to give them some juice. A rather interesting feature of both mics is zero latency monitoring, meaning a podcast or vocal can be recorded without any annoying delays for a vocalist listening along as they record. Each mic comes with a USB-A to USB-C cable and a mount-stand included, as well as a free copy of Ableton Live 11 Lite.

Both mics look great for filming, adding a certain character, and the stand and multi-directional recording offer plenty to those who need versatile recording options that can be transported and used standalone with a laptop. There is lots to be excited about with these mics, and AKG shows it is able to deliver on what users want in an entry level microphone.

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