

MXL CR89 Large Diaphragm Condenser Microphone

The cardioid MXL CR89 provides exceptional performance equivalent to microphones typically costing three to four times more.

Though MXL has been manufacturing microphones for some time now (since 1995 actually), it's only in the past few years that it has been taken seriously by top producers and engineers. Meanwhile, the company recently rebranded its well-received V89 large diaphragm condenser (LDC) as the MXL CR89, a fixed-cardioid microphone that performs well beyond its street value and can easily adapt to most any studio recording requirement.

Features

Less than two lbs., the brass-bodied CR89 measures 2.5 inches by 7.25 inches and features a 1 1/4-inch diameter, 6-micron gold-sputtered diaphragm behind its tuned grill cavity. It has 20 Hz - 20 kHz frequency response specs with a signal/noise ratio of 80 dB, a maximum SPL of 138 dB and 124 dB dynamic range.

The mic features impressive build quality, both inside and out, and has a lovely, sleek, flat black finish. The mic's FET design incorporates a transformerless output. Included with the CR89 is a wooden storage box, a cleaning cloth, and a heavy-duty shockmount that attaches to the mic via a threaded shaft at the base of the microphone.

In Use

Full disclosure, I've used MXL

microphones from time to time and, while they've always worked fine, I've never left a session with the feeling that I needed one. When approached with the opportunity to put the new CR89 to work, I anticipated that I would find that this mic would fall into the same category. How wrong I was.

Its first test was with a Gordon mic pre and a Tube-Tech CL1B compressor recording a Taylor 514CE guitar. I had wonderful results; the mic has a beautiful top end sparkle—wonderfully smooth and natural—and a nice and warm low frequency response. It worked equally well on quiet finger-picking and with hard strumming.

I used the mic to record an electric guitar through a Vox AC-30; again, it performed wonderfully. I placed the mic halfway between the center and the rim of the speak-



Russ Long, a Nashville producer, engineer and mixer, is *PAF*'s Senior Contributor.

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er, about a foot off the grill; it captured the warm body and the amp's high frequency chime.

Several weeks later, I was recording vocals with a male artist that I had previously recorded with a Sony C-800G. Both the artist and myself had been pleased with the performance of the C-800G, but I was curious to see how the CR89 would sound compared to the Sony. I was surprised when we both selected the CR89 as our preferred mic. At this point, I was still unaware of the mic's list price; based on its performance, I assumed it was in the \$1,000-1,500 range and felt it was worth it. Since this session, I've used the mic to record several male and female lead vocals; in every situation, the mic has performed wonderfully.

My only criticism is that the CR89 tends to accentuate the edginess of overly bright female vocals, though I've been able to resolve it with some slight equalization. The mic's proximity effect is nice, not overbearing; by placing a female vocalist closer to the microphone, I was able to successfully capture a fuller, richer sound without negative artifacts. I also had success using the mic to record various configurations of backing vocals (between three and eight vocalists).

The CR89 also works well on percussion. I've successfully used it to record tambourine, shaker and hi-hat, even as a mono drum overhead. I had wonderful results using the mic to record violin and I anticipate that it would work equally well recording other acoustic stringed instruments.

I only had one CR89 for the review period so I wasn't able to do any stereo recording, but based on my use, I anticipate that the mic would shine on drum overheads, room and piano.

Summary

The CR89's high performance capabilities and overall flexibility make it a no-brainer purchase for any commercial studio wanting to inexpensively expand their mic vault, or for the project studio where its low price point may be just as important as its superb sound quality. The CR89 may be your LDC solution. I know I'll be using it for years to come.

Photo: J. Lee

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