

1 Samson G-Track Pro £156

2 M-Audio Uber £100

3 Blue Raspberry £170

USB Mics

Whether you're podcasting, recording on the move or even gaming, a USB mic/interface is now a legitimate and quality item for your toolbox. These come in many shapes and sizes, and to prove the point, our four test mics include two large bruisers and a couple of pocket sized compacts. Let's find out which comes out on top.

Apogee MiC Plus £239

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1 Samson's G-Track Pro delivers a considerable uplift on their original G-Track mic. With multiple pickup patterns (cardioid, omni and figure 8), 24-bit 96kHz operation, dedicated 1/4" instrument input and newly-designed desktop stand, this mic and instrument interface combo really looks and feels the business.

Mic and instrument input and headphone output levels get dedicated on-body knobs alongside a handy microphone mute button. The twin channel interface can also send mic and instrument signals to individual DAW tracks or blend them to mono at source, which is a nice touch. Meanwhile, the direct monitoring option provides zero latency monitoring. The real drawback though is that it requires too much power for use with an iOS device.

www.samsontech.com

VERDICT 8.6

2 M-Audio's Uber Mic is the cheapest of our four mics and also the only one that includes a stereo mode as well as three regular mono polar patterns (omni, cardioid, figure 8). On-body controls for mic gain, mic mute, headphone level, zero latency blend and polar pattern selection, alongside a handy miniature LCD display, make operation totally self explanatory, and the U-shaped mic mount works equally well screwed into the included desktop stand or attached to a mic stand.

Slightly frustratingly iOS use requires Apple's camera kit, and audio operation only goes up to 16-bit/48kHz. Nevertheless, if this doesn't bother you, the Uber can certainly deliver some awesome value for money.

www.m-audio.com

VERDICT 9.2

3 The Raspberry is one of many mics in Blue's extensive USB range.

Offering one input/two output DAW and iOS integration via the included USB or lightning cable, the compact grey and red body is flanked by handy headphone level and mic level knobs, with the latter also providing push-button mic muting.

Designed for regular stand mount or desktop positioning using its foldaway isolating stand, the cardioid capsule performance is enhanced by their own Integrated Acoustic Diffuser (IAD), which helps reduce ambience.

Audio operation is only up to 24-bit 48kHz and there's no way to balance the headphone mix other than by changing the mic gain, but the Raspberry is simple to set up and delivers the most focused sound of our four test mics.

www.bluedesigns.com

VERDICT 8.8

4 MiC Plus is the latest version of Apogee's iOS and USB cardioid condenser mic with integrated audio interfacing. As you'd expect from Apogee, 24-bit 96kHz support and super-quiet PureDigital preamp mean audio fidelity is excellent. What's more, the desktop tripod stand and front-mounted controls make this no style slouch either. Zero latency monitoring can be adjusted via the five-position blend button, but alas there's no independent headphone gain. For metering there are three red/green LEDs and pushing the digital gain encoder mutes the mic.

MiC works well both in desktop and regular configurations, and the simple compact design is easy and fun to use.

www.apogeedigital.com

VERDICT 8.8

FM VERDICT



OVERALL WINNER M-Audio's Uber Mic is featureful, a cinch to use and with the addition of Apple's Camera Kit also works with iOS. Oh, and it's super affordable too.



COMPACT WINNER Both the Apogee MiC Plus and Blue Raspberry scored equally in our test. But we loved the foldaway design and focused sound of the latter.