

DIGITAL\_CAMERAS\_&gt; BRAND: Sony, Olympus, Canon, Fuji, Kodak, Panasonic, Nikon, More... MEGAPIXELS: Over 8, 8 to 7, 7 1



Home

**FREE!** Subscribe  
to Loud!

DMO microPortals  
tutorial finder  
review seeker

Career Center

Search  
Forums  
view posts  
forum list

**NEWS**  
**STORIES**

**MOST VIEWED**  
**RECOMMENDED**  
**FEATURES**  
**TUTORIALS**  
**REVIEWS**  
**OPINION**

MY DMN  
Sound Clips

Consumer Electronics  
DMN Newswire  
HotLinks for Vendors  
DMN Links

Supplements  
animation  
presentation  
production

Classifieds  
Shopper  
Media Kit  
Contact  
Webmaster



**PRODUCT REVIEW:** PAGE (1) OF 1 - 03/31/06

EMAIL ARTICLE

PRINT PAGE

## The Snowball

*Blue Microphones introduces a novel USB-powered mic that sounds terrific*

By Frank Moldstad



Blue Microphones, creator of such noteworthy professional recording microphones as the Dragonfly, Bottle and Kiwi, has now introduced an entry-level mic so cute that my wife wants one. I should add that she's not normally interested in such things.

But this one, called the Snowball (MSRP \$159), is a small white orb that plugs straight into a computer with a USB cable. This makes it ideal for field recording on a laptop, and it works with either [OS X](#) or [Windows XP](#). I tried it on both platforms,

using [GarageBand](#) on a Mac and [Sound Forge](#) on a PC.

I didn't know quite what to make of the Snowball at first, to be honest. Given Blue's reputation, was this a radical departure into a cheap Fisher-Price-style product? I've never used a [microphone](#) with a USB cable, and the mic's novel appearance had me wondering. But once I plugged it in, I found the quality to be remarkably good – clear, present and full-bodied.

The Snowball is a condenser mic, a design often preferred for recording because of its smooth ability to pick up transient sounds. But unlike most condenser mics, the Snowball does not require power, being bus-powered from either a USB 1.1 or 2.0 connection. The Snowball also handles fixed at the 44.1 kHz /16-bit CD standard.



The Snowball has several other features that increase its included tripod, which makes the Snowball look a bit like "Lost in Space." But it's invaluable for positioning the mic without it the Snowball would roll away. The tripod holds the microphone at desktop speaking height. Although the tripod height is not able to pivot up and down to find a good angle.

Another noteworthy feature is a three-position switch on the side that allows the user to select either cardioid mode, cardioid mode with a -10 dB pad, or omnidirectional mode (sound clips below). This gives it flexibility for multiple mil



Cardioid, the first position, is the standard front-address mode found in most microphones, used levels. The second position is cardioid with a -10 dB pad, which allows the mic to handle higher without distorting. This is useful for recording amplified instruments -- or screaming people. Finally, the omnidirectional switch position, which allows the mic to capture a 360 degree sound field. This is useful for recording a choir, a group of people speaking or an acoustic trio, although the level is still strong.

No drivers were necessary to connect the Snowball on either the Mac or PC platforms. But once connected, you can make the Snowball the preferred audio input -- or you won't hear anything.

In [Mac OS X](#), this is done by opening System Preferences from the Apple menu and double-clicking on the little speaker under Hardware). On the Input tab, the Snowball should be highlighted as the input device. If you have multiple sound cards or the Mac's Line In port. Once I'd done this, I launched [GarageBand](#), opened the Audio menu and selected the Snowball as the preferred input device for Track One. It was instantly ready to record. Levels were adjustable in System Preferences. I recorded a sample narration in [GarageBand](#) using the mic's -10 dB pad in action, below.



To play a [QuickTime](#) file demonstrating the Snowball's -10 pad, recorded in [GarageBand](#), click on this link: [sno\\_pad.mp3](#)

I tried to enable the Snowball in Apple's [Logic Pro 7](#) but was unsuccessful in selecting the Snowball as the input device apparently because I was using a computer with OS 10.3.9. Apple's new Tiger OS (10.4) and above introduced a feature called the Aggregate Device Editor. The explanation for this, according to the Tiger documentation, is that "not all devices that offer only an input, and therefore cannot use the digital input. On systems running Tiger or later, you can work around the issue by creating an aggregate device that uses the I/O from both the Snowball and another device on your system."

Then it was on to the PC, where I successfully recorded into [Sound Forge 8](#) with the Snowball. – open Sounds and Audio device in the Control Panel, select the Audio tab, and click on the Sno recording device. Levels could be set via the Volume tab. In [Sound Forge's](#) Audio Preferences Microsoft Sound Mapper as the preferred recording device (didn't see any reference to the Sno just the same. I recorded a clip in [Sound Forge](#) to demonstrate the Snowball's Omnidirectional r



To hear a file recorded in [Sound Forge](#) demonstrating the Snowball's Omni mic link: [sno\\_omni.mp3](#)

I was also able to record with [Cakewalk's SONAR 5](#) using the Snowball, by selecting "USB Audi from an audio track in [SONAR](#).

The Snowball produces a detailed and high-quality sound, and is a great choice for desktop pod It is built like a tank of strong plastic with a metal grill, and should be able to withstand a lot of at

The Snowball's sound is infinitely better than most Lavelier or handheld field mics, and it has a r dynamic range than is typically found on those types of mics. In addition to the tripod that comes screw right into most mic stands, or even a boom. Although I didn't try the Snowball out on instr manual even suggests trying a pair of Snowballs out as drum overheads. With specs that range wouldn't doubt that with the -10 dB pad engaged, the Snowball could hold its own on drums, gui instruments. It certainly has the clarity.

With all its attributes, the Snowball is a great little mic. The odd shape has a 50's retro appeal th and its utilitarian nature and smooth sound quality make it a winner in a category where it really the caveat that on the Mac, you'd be advised to upgrade to Tiger for maximum flexibility, this co

For more information, go to [www.bluemic.com](http://www.bluemic.com).

★ [If you liked this article click here to reco](#)

**Related Sites:** [Creative Mac](#) , [Digital Producer](#) , [Digital Webcast](#) , [Audio Video Producer](#) , [Digital Post Production](#) , [Digital Pro Sound](#) , [Presentation Master](#) , [Oceania](#) , [MacAudioPro](#)

**Related Newsletter:** [DMN Newsletter](#) , [Waveform Newsletter](#) , [Timeline Newsletter](#) , [Mac A Newsletter](#) , [Streamline Newsletter](#) , [KNews Newsletter](#) , [Digital Media Net](#) , [DMNForums](#) ,

**To Comment on This Article, Click [HERE](#)**

**Most Recent Reader Comments:**

- [The Snowball](#) by DMN Editorial at Apr. 01, 2006 1:50 am gmt

[Click Here To Read All Posts](#)

Must be Registered to Respond (Free Registration!!!, [CLICK HERE](#))

Source:Digital Media Online. All Rights Reserved

ADVERTISEMENT



Adobe® Creative Suite  
Production Studio

▶ Learn more.



## 500 GB HARD DRIVES



### Maxtor OneTouch II FireWire and USB - hard drive - 500 GB -

★★★★★ (Rated by 0 users)

The Maxtor OneTouch II - simple backup and storage with Maxtor DriveLock to protect the contents of your drive if lost or stolen.

**Price Range \$354 to \$450** • [View Details](#) • [Related Items](#)



### Maxtor Shared Storage 500GB Ethernet, USB 16MB buffer

★★★★★ (Rated by 0 users)

The Maxtor Shared Storage Plus drive lets users easily centralize, organize, share and back up family photos, music and data on a home or small office network.

**Price Range \$409 to \$500** • [View Details](#) • [Related Items](#)



### LaCie USB 500GB 7.2K HARD DRIVE RED

★★★★★ (Rated by 0 users)

Brick Desktop 500GB USB 2.0 External Hard Drive - 7200rpm - Red Computer Hardware - Desktop Drives LaCie's Brick Desktop 500GB USB 2.0 External Hard Drive - 7200 rpm - Blue is a ...

**Price Range \$328 to \$390** • [View Details](#) • [Related Items](#)



### HP 500GB serial ATA hard drive, universal carrier

★★★★★ (Rated by 0 users)

HP hard drives offer the flexibility and expandability to meet your growing storage capacity requirements.

**Price Range \$662 to \$740** • [View Details](#) • [Related Items](#)



### Maxtor DiamondMax 11 - hard drive - 500 GB - SATA-300

★★★★★ (Rated by 0 users)

"Diamondmax 11/Grizzly 500GB SATA 16mb Serial ATA 7200RPM IDE"

**Price Range \$299 to \$360** • [View Details](#) • [Related Items](#)



### Seagate Barracuda 7200.9 500GB 3.5' SATA 3.0Gb/s Hard Drive

★★★★★ (Rated by 0 users)

Seagate Barracuda 7200.9 ST3500641AS 500GB 7200 RPM 16MB Cache SATA 3.0Gb/s Hard Drive

**Price Range \$289 to \$407** • [View Details](#) • [Related Items](#)

## HOT THREADS on DMN Forums

[DVD and xpress pro capture and copyright protection \(5\)](#) • by Carolyn D on the on the [Avid](#)

[Disappearing Markers \(2\)](#) • by frankjr90 on the on the [Sony Sound Forge](#) forum

[Can someone help me to understand tempo \(2\)](#) • by Allie on the on the [Sony Acid](#) forum

[DLT8000 joining .img files for playback... \(1\)](#) • by nik on the on the [Creative Mac](#) forum

[Optimal RAM requirements \(1\)](#) • by frankjr90 on the on the [Sony Sound Forge](#) forum

[keeping a logo square on a 16x9 monitor. \(1\)](#) • by Joe G on the on the [Avid Professional](#) fo



## Consumer Electronics Net - Tools And Toys For Your Digit

• Camcorders • Audio/Video Software • Digital Photography • Desktop Computers •  
• Personal DVD • Notebooks • Home Office • PDAs & Handhelds • Computer Add-C  
• Phones • Digital Toys • Home Theater • TVs • Music • Movies • Gadgets

## MARKETPLACE

### [FULL SAIL SCHOOL OF RECORDING ARTS](#)

Earn a degree in Recording Arts. Learn recording, mixing, music production and sound design. Our gr Outkast, Madonna, the Dave Matthews Band and Norah ...

### [DO YOU HAVE TIME TO LISTEN TO 200 VOICEOVER DEMOS?](#)

Sure you do. You don't? Well then, save yourself a lot of time and aggravation. Work with an Int'l Awa website, PowerPoint, corporate, point-of-sal...

### [#1 VOICE-OVER MARKETPLACE](#)

Post a Job & See Immediate Results. Get MP3 Voice Over Demos and Price Quotes Today!

### [AUDIO VIDEO EQUIPMENT & INSTALLATION- FREE QUOTE](#)

Audio Visual Innovations is a national leader in custom audio visual design, equipment and installati one of our Audio Visual experts and receive a...

### [AUDIO SCHOOLS NEAR YOU](#)

Find the perfect Audio school near you. Search our listings for programs and degrees near you in audi more.

### [AUDIO/VIDEO EQUIPMENT STENCILS](#)

Design professional documentation, presentations, and proposals of your system layout with exact rep shapes. Free shape requests.

[Buy a Link Now!](#)

### [Condenser Microphones](#)

Electret condenser Microphones , miniature sizes, SMD and boots

### [High End Microphones](#)

Surface Mount Microphones, Electret Condenser microphones.

### [Free Shure Microphone](#)

Shure Wireless Microphone System. Get It Free By Completing Survey!

### [Condenser Mic](#)

Find Exactly What You N Contact Suppliers & Sear Catalogs

Ads by Goooooogle

[Advertise](#)

© Copyright, 2006 Digital Media Online, All Rights Reserved