

## SAMSON C01U

► to the software installation. Samson tell me they have succeeded in running multiple C01Us via a USB hub, which opens up some interesting possibilities for the future.

Mechanically, the microphone is finished to a very high standard and feels reassuringly solid. It uses a 19mm cardioid back-electret capsule with a three-micron diaphragm, suspended on an internal shockmount. The design follows that of a typical 'classic' side-entry vocal mic and the frequency response is quoted as being flat within 1dB over the audio range. Its maximum SPL is quoted as a perfectly adequate 136dB, but there are no noise specs and, as I recall, one of my concerns with the original C01 was that it was a little noisy by comparison with more costly studio mics unless used for close-miking fairly loud sounds. There are no pad or low-cut switches on the mic, although the applet does provide a very effective low-cut filter with variable cutoff frequency. A green LED on the mic confirms that USB power is being received.

## In Use

Once I'd connected the mic, I found there was a slightly higher latency than I expected for the chosen buffer size, and at 44.1kHz, I could still perceive a hint of delay when *Logic's* Audio Devices and Drivers page was set to 128 samples, although I think most singers would find this within acceptable limits. This may well have been an attribute of the Aggregate driver, but as long as you can work with buffer sizes of 128 samples or under, the latency is fine.



The downloadable *Soft Pre* applet allows software control over the C01U's gain cell and other attributes.

Like the original C01, this mic does produce a low background hiss from its integral circuitry, although not enough to worry about when close-miking loud instruments or strong vocals. The noise is more evident on quieter instruments or voiceover work, but for typical studio applications the C01U can give good, clean results. Far more worrying, however, was a significant level of digital background clutter riding above the hiss when I tested the mic on a dual-processor Mac G5. I asked Samson's UK distributors, Sound Technology, about this and they found they could replicate the problem on some (but not all) tower G5s, whereas all other Macs seemed quite happy. Switching to my G4 iBook confirmed that the digital noise was gone.

Tonally, the mic is fairly neutral, translating transient details rather better than a similarly priced dynamic mic would. It could certainly be used to record a very respectable vocal track, albeit without the transparency and shimmer of a top-class microphone.

## Universal Appeal?

Although unashamedly entry-level, the C01U is quiet and clean enough to record vocals and instruments to a very acceptable standard, provided that they are close-miked, and its performance is well above that of any multimedia mics I've tested. As far as I can tell, the subjective performance

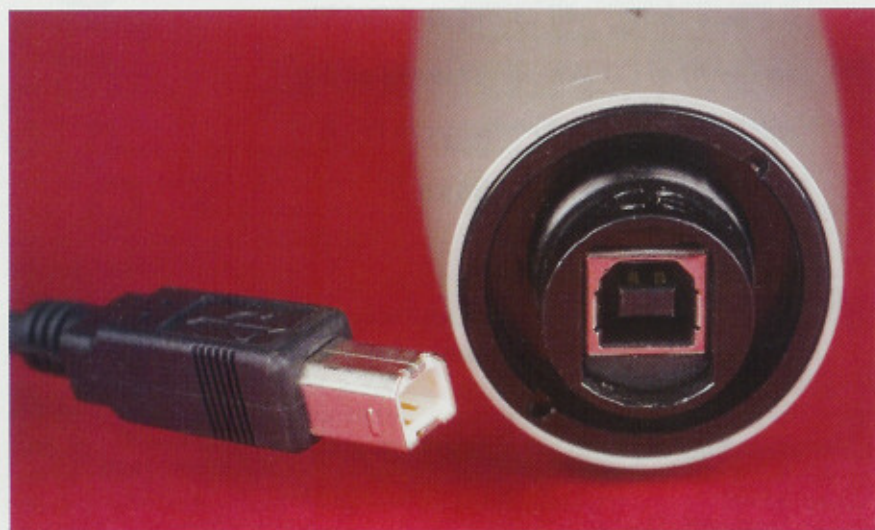
## Alternatives

Currently, there are only a couple of other USB-equipped condenser microphones, although this may well prove to be a growth area. SE Electronics' D01 and Blue's Snowball are both rather more expensive than the C01U, but they also offer additional features such as the D01's headphone socket.



of this mic is essentially the same as that of its wired counterpart, and that model has sold well for Samson. The digital noise issue will be a concern if you have a G5 tower-based studio system, but it could be argued that anyone with such a deluxe computer should be looking for a more sophisticated mic anyway!

I'm sure we'll be seeing a lot more USB mics in the future, but in my view, if they're going to approach the performance of a wired mic, they need to follow Samson's lead in providing some form of gain control or at least a choice of switchable gain settings prior to conversion. More serious models will also need a 24-bit output to provide adequate resolution at typical operating levels while still leaving some safety headroom. As it stands, the C01U is a very practical solution for entry-level users who don't have an audio interface and, if used carefully, it can produce commendable results in a wide range of applications provided that the source being recorded isn't too quiet or distant. **EOS**



## Information

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