



February 26, 2009
Marshall Electronics USB Microphones
<http://www.mxlmics.com>

Marshall Electronics/MXL
1910 E. Maple Avenue
El Segundo, CA 90245
Phone: (310)333-0606 or 1-800-800-6608
Fax: (310)333-0688
E-mail: sales@marshall-usa.com

Marshall Electronics/MXL USB Microphones

Posted by Brian Chee

The hiss and crackle of the low quality analog audio connectors has been the bane of my existence as I've been trying to do screencasts, podcasts and voiceovers. The natural answer is go all digital, but the run of the mill USB mikes are either really cheap, setup for only a single program, or headsets. None of which do me any good when I have to mike a small conference room, a symposium or any number of events where I'd like to capture the conversation between a group of people. The compromise has traditionally been a small mixing board, a couple of mikes and convert it to unbalanced high impedance stereo mini-plug to get the audio into my pc. What I found at VoiceCon in San Francisco was a guy named Mike selling mikes...we had a great conversation about how Marshall Electronics actually is the original equipment manufacturer for several VERY familiar microphones and that a new series of USB mikes were just about ready. He had an engineering prototype with him and we did a Skype test with the two of us standing about 10 feet away from the table in the middle of a VERY noisy exhibit hall. The results were astounding and I told him so as I tried in vain to slip the prototype into my bag.



AC404.jpg

Specs -

- Frequency Response: 40Hz to 16kHz
- Sampling Rate: 44.1kHz and 48kHz
- Bus Powered
- USB 1.1 and 2.0 Compatible
- 16-bit Delta Sigma A/D Converter with THD+N - 0.01%
- Headphone/Speaker Jack
- Leatherette Travel Zipper Case
- Owners manual
- Applications guide
- No Special Drivers Required

MSRP: \$129.95

This mike has been available as a low impedance 3 capsule boundary design with 180-degree coverage with an XLR balanced connector; however, Marshall has integrated in their USB interface for recording small conference rooms, symposia, etc. In my case I'm hooking this mike up to a Mac laptop running Camtasia Studio so that I can record the speaker and the audience in sync with the power point presentation. The AC-404 is a screencaster's dream mike since I can place this mike at the end of a table and catch everyone in the 180 degree pickup pattern. Just for grins I recorded a meeting at a 20 foot conference table with about a dozen folks spread around it....crystal clear...all I can say is WOW...

Oh yeah, for grins and giggles I've also tried this mike on an HP DV9000 laptop running Windows 7 (yes it recognized the mike immediately, but a reboot before it actually worked but that's a Windows 7 issue not a Marshall problem) and then an Acer Veriton desktop running Windows XP Pro SP2. So other than the reboot issue on Windows 7, this mike worked flawlessly.

Mike Descher of Marshall Electronics did a bit of testing, click on each link to hear what he recorded:

- [AC-404 Guitar Recording up close \(MP4 780k\)](#)
- [AC-404 Guitar Recording with the mike 30 feet away \(MP4 1.2meg\)](#)

These are real, not edited or changed in any way, recorded on a MacBook Pro using QuickTime Pro with no modifications. Recorded by Mike Descher of MXL Mics at Normans Rare Guitars in Tarzana, CA.

I've been tinkering with various types of microphones since high school and these are by far some of the best area mikes I've ever used. My specific application for doing Camtasia Recordings of PowerPoint slide shows being presented at symposia is actually a nightmare to mike. In the past I've had to carry in a small mixer and setup both audience and speaker microphones. I'm pretty confident after tinkering with this mike, that I'll now be able to mike up a symposia with just the AC-404 sitting on the table next to the speaker AND still be able to catch the audience questions.

For the Skype aficionado Marshall has a different package called the AC-405 packaged as a ruggedized speaker and mike combo for Skype or other VoIP conference that calls for full duplex audio, with quality you'd expect in a dedicated speaker phone costing thousands of dollars. Don't let the retro look fool you, this is an awesome unit for a very modern problem.



AC-405.jpg

Specs -

- High clarity speaker
- Sensitive directional microphone
- Adjustable flip-up microphone
- Built-in USB cable
- Includes 6' USB extension cable
- Red LED status light
- Volume and mute controls
- No special drivers required
- Lightweight design

MSRP: \$89.95

So one last thing to bring up: how do you get a feed from an auditorium into your computer? While mike/line level USB audio interfaces have existed for quite a while, this is by far the most portable version I've ever seen. Marshall's MXL USB Mic Mate™ Pro allows you to take a microphone level feed and convert to a solid USB digital interface. If you're in need of a line level input then you can use the Marshall MXL USB Mic Mate™ Line Level.



I got a great piece of advice from Mike on which Line Level to use and this is what he had to say:

“As for the MicMates...remember they each have separate uses depending on the type of Mic. The Classic is for condenser mics only, Dynamic for Dynamic, Line for line level devices, and the Pro for those who have them all. The Benefit of the 3 “non Pro” ones is that they maintain a consistent true gain level, unlike the Centrance, Blue and even our Pro since those all have fluid gain control.”

For instance, if you are a podcaster you would not want the MicMate Pro or the Centrance or Blue Icicle as each podcast may have a different gain setting and that would sound bad to the listener.

MXL MicMate Basic MSRP \$79.95 USB adapter for plugging microphones requiring phantom power into a computer.

MXL Dynamic MicMate MSRP \$99.95 USB adapter for professional balanced dynamic microphones such as RE15 & SM58 (no 48V)

MXL MicMate Pro MSRP \$149.95 New MicMate with headphone jack, 48V, gain and volume controls

MXL MicMate Line Level MSRP \$179.95 New MicMate for line level out put devices like mixing consoles and tape decks.