

MICPORT PRO

Manufacturer **CEntrance**

Price **£110**

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USB microphones are ideal if you need to get a musical idea straight into your computer with the minimum of fuss, but they are usually sonically inferior to traditional microphones. SE Electronics' USB2200a gives you an optional analogue output and, like the Samson G-Track, it offers onboard monitoring. But all of these products do tie you to the one microphone.

The MicPort Pro plugs into any analogue microphone with an XLR socket, digitally converts the signal, then sends it down a USB cable. There's an onboard preamp, and condenser mics are no problem because the MicPort Pro draws its juice from the computer and bumps it up for switchable phantom powering. The aluminium chassis has individual volume controls for the mic preamp and headphones, plus it's compatible with 24-bit/96kHz systems.

We tested the MicPort Pro with a Beyerdynamic 201 moving coil, an Oktava MC012 and a Red Type B. Some USB microphones struggle to generate a decent signal level unless you're right on top of the mic, while others have

issues with unacceptably high noise floors. We did hear a bit of background noise with the moving-coil mic, but higher-output condensers suited the MicPort Pro extremely well. The signal-to-noise ratio is impressive and the unit itself provides more than enough gain to record acoustic instruments at typical studio distances.

We also tested the MicPort Pro's sonic performance against a MOTU 828MkII preamp. The MOTU was brighter and slightly more detailed, but any recording made with the MicPort Pro should be good enough to keep in the final mix. **HP**

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VERDICT

A well-made and practical product that's reassuringly simple to use. Easily the best USB recording solution we have seen to date.

