

"The Studio Projects C1 Mic – A Response/Review"

by: Ted Perlman

I, along with the rest of you, just read our editor Rip Rowan's review of the new Studio Projects' C1 Mic. Now, I have to say I was surprised by the review. I totally expected Rip to trash the mic, especially considering Rip's past opinions regarding Chinese-made mics. Rip's review gave the C1 a thumb's up at its' conclusion, but I still feel the magnificence of this mic has not been fully described. So I present a sort of "response and expand upon" column here.

Last January I got a frantic call from Pete Leoni. He was with Joel Braverman (another ProRec writer). *"You've got to get over here to NAMM and hear this mic! It's only \$299.00 and it's exactly like a U87"*. I was intrigued, so I made plans to meet Pete at NAMM here in Los Angeles. Just to make sure the mic was all Pete said, I brought along my wife Peggi Blu, an internationally known "diva" singer with a few major label albums to her credit. Peggi can truly "sang". When we got there Pete dragged us to PMI Audio's booth, where we met the owner of PMI, Alan Hyatt. *Another Nu Yawker!* We hit it off immediately. *"Where's this amazing mic?"* I asked, eager to finally hear the thing. There it was, next to a Neumann U87. Peggi, Pete, Alan, and myself put on the headphones and Peggi started singing into the 87. Awesome, that classic Neumann sound that is heard on probably 90% of the records ever made. She then moved over to the C1 and sang into that. EXACTLY the same, no difference. We were all amazed. Peggi looked up at me, smiled, and said *"you've got to get this mic"*. I bought one on the spot, as did Pete, Randy Hammon (a great musician & singer), and everybody else who happened to be standing around and heard the impromptu demonstration. On the way home Peggi asked me why I didn't buy 2 of the mics. *"Well, maybe it won't sound good in the mix"*, I answered. Hah, was I in for a big surprise.

I tried the mic the very next day. The vocalist was an 18 year old Christina Aguilera-type, big voice, wide range, and many dynamic subtleties to her vocal performances. She didn't get through a verse and chorus before she stopped singing and asked *me "what kind of mic is this - I sound awesome on this"*. She did. I immediately called Alan Hyatt and played a little of the just finished recording into his answering machine. *"This mic is unbelievable!"* I screamed and hung up. Over the next week I tried the mic on male singers, female singers, young singers, old singers, singers who could really sing, singers who couldn't sing very good – everybody. We did country, pop, rock, rap, hip-hop, R&B, everything. The mic just killed! It didn't sound like a U87 – it actually sounded better! You didn't have to eq it in the mix. The vocal performances sat in the mixes as if they had been compressed and limited and mastered already. How could a \$299.00 mic sound this good? I had to tell the world. I started writing

A properly sourced mic was on the table & payment, but nothing could be further from the truth. I would have paid \$1,000.00 for this mic. My clients were all thrilled. Even friends of singers would lean over in the control room while we were recording vocals and ask me “*what kind of mic is that, it sounds awesome!*”. And we were not even using a big deal mic pre-amp. For the first month I had the C1, we used a Presonus MP20 mic pre. The MP20 is a great sounding preamp, but definitely not “*top of the line*” by any means. It is just a good, clean, mid-priced unit that colours the sound very minimally. The next month I got a Joe Meek VC1Q, which sent the sound of the C1 “over the hill”. This was about as close to orgasmic as the recording process gets.

Does the C1 “*change the world*”? Actually, I think the answer is a resounding “yes”. For the first time, home studio recordists can afford to have a microphone that will give them world class sound. Obviously, the quality of the vocal performances will determine what the recordings really sound like, but they now have the same level of tools as the ‘*big boys*’. The advent of fast PC’s changed the way recordings were done, and I feel this mic is the next step in the process.

PMI also makes 2 other mic models – the C3, a multi pattern version of the C1, and the T3, an 8 pattern tube mic that sounds as close to an AKG C12 as the C1 sounds to the U87. They are all spectacular. I have used the T3 on every background session I’ve recorded since it came into my studio. Alan Hyatt must have filled his answering machine up with my nighttime calls raving about his mics.

Last year I got into a bit of trouble with my friends at Neumann for writing at the Cakewalk Newsgroup that I preferred a Rode NT2 over their mics in some cases. They had been kind enough to let me borrow a few of their high end mics for a few weeks, and felt “betrayed” by my endorsing the Rode. I didn’t mean any disrespect to Neumann, who everybody knows are one of the best mic manufacturers ever. I again hope my writings here about the C1 don’t offend them again. I agree with Rip that it is time for the big German and Austrian mic manufacturers to bring their prices more into line with what they actually cost to manufacture. For too long, these Neumann’s have been out of reach except for the wealthy and the big studio owners. Well, the C1 is here and hopefully, in the not-too-distant future, the potential purchaser will have a choice when they go into a store to purchase a new mic – the Studio Projects line, the Neumann line, or the AKG, Burberry, Groove Tubes, or other mic brands. And that customer will not have to give up their entire monthly mortgage or ½ year’s worth of car payments to get it, either. They will have the option of getting a mic with a brand name that their clients will recognize immediately, or a mic that simply *sounds great*. And that will be a great day for all of us.