

# Top-of-the-Line Handheld Condenser Microphones

By George Petersen

One of the great mysteries of live sound production is that, given the importance of the lead vocal, why vocalists often shy away from investing in a high performance mic, often settling for something that costs less than what the drummer spent on a kick drum pedal. This is not to infer that there's anything wrong with a dynamic mic — in fact, on certain vocalists, that may be exactly the right transducer to match a particular vocal style or timbre.

However, if you're looking for extended bandwidth and fast transient response, a condenser mic is just the ticket. And with that in mind, we present this

look at top of the line condenser models. All models listed require phantom powering. No frequency response data is given; simply stating that a mic has a 20 Hz to 20 kHz spec is fairly meaningless and many models include LF or upper mid presence boosts to add character or intelligibility, so a "flat" response is rarely desirable. Weight is included, as this is often a factor, particularly when using a handheld mic over extended periods with certain vocalists. And MSRP list pricing is listed; microphones are sometimes (not always) greatly discounted and "street" pricing can vary dramatically.

## Apex Electronics 515



**MSRP:** \$130  
**Pattern:** cardioid/omni/supercardioid  
**Max SPL:** 134 dB  
**Sensitivity:** 13.8 mV/Pa  
**Self-Noise:** 17 dB (A)  
**Weight:** n/a  
**Notes:** Includes three interchangeable capsules

apexelectronics.com

## Audio-Technica AE5400



**MSRP:** \$529  
**Pattern:** cardioid  
**Max SPL:** 157/147 dB (pad in/out)  
**Sensitivity:** 10.0 mV/Pa  
**Self-Noise:** 14 dB (A)  
**Weight:** 11.6 oz  
**Notes:** Same capsule as AT4050 studio mic; 10 dB pad; LF roll-off

audio-technica.com

## Audix VX5



**MSRP:** \$299  
**Pattern:** supercardioid  
**Max SPL:** 140dB (with pad)  
**Sensitivity:** 5 mV/Pa  
**Self-Noise:** 26 dB (A)  
**Weight:** 8 ounces  
**Notes:** -10 dB pad and LF roll-off switches

audixusa.com

## Peavey CM1



**MSRP:** \$199  
**Pattern:** cardioid  
**Max SPL:** 136 dB  
**Sensitivity:** 7.1 mV/Pa  
**Self-Noise:** 24 dB (A)  
**Weight:** 11.2 ounces

peavey.com

## RØDE 51



**MSRP:** \$599  
**Pattern:** supercardioid  
**Max SPL:** 151 dB SPL  
**Sensitivity:** 5.00mV/Pa  
**Self-Noise:** 18 dB (A)  
**Weight:** 10.9 ounces  
**Notes:** Available in black or nickel finish

rodemic.com

## Samson CL5



**MSRP:** \$198  
**Pattern:** cardioid  
**Max SPL:** 148 dB  
**Sensitivity:** 14.1mV/Pa  
**Self-Noise:** 19 dB (A)  
**Weight:** 8.8 ounces  
**Notes:** Available in black or nickel finish

samsontech.com

## beyerdynamic TG V96c



**MSRP:** \$799  
**Pattern:** cardioid  
**Max SPL:** 150 dB  
**Sensitivity:** 4 mV/Pa  
**Self-Noise:** 20 dB (A)  
**Weight:** 11.6 ounces

beyerdynamic.com

## Blue enCORE 300



**MSRP:** \$279  
**Pattern:** cardioid  
**Max SPL:** 146 dB  
**Sensitivity:** 11 mV/Pa  
**Self-Noise:** n/a  
**Weight:** 13.4 ounces

bluemic.com

## CAD Microphones C195



**MSRP:** \$199  
**Pattern:** cardioid  
**Max SPL:** 132 dB  
**Sensitivity:** 18 mV/Pa  
**Self-Noise:** 22 dB (A)  
**Weight:** n/a

cadaudio.com

## Schoeps CMH 641 U



**MSRP:** \$1,980  
**Pattern:** supercardioid  
**Max SPL:** 132 dB  
**Sensitivity:** 13 mV/Pa  
**Self-Noise:** 24 dB  
**Weight:** 6.7 ounces  
**Notes:** Available in matte gray or nickel

schoeps.de

## Sennheiser e 965



**MSRP:** \$1,050  
**Pattern:** cardioid/supercardioid (switchable)  
**Max SPL:** 152/142 dB (pad in/out)  
**Sensitivity:** 7 mV/Pa  
**Self-Noise:** 21 dB (A)  
**Weight:** 13.9 ounces  
**Notes:** Switchable low-cut filter and 10dB pad

sennheiserusa.com

## Shure KSM9



**MSRP:** \$874  
**Pattern:** cardioid/supercardioid (switchable)  
**Max SPL:** 152 dB  
**Sensitivity:** 2.81 mV/Pa  
**Self-Noise:** 22 dB (A)  
**Weight:** 10.6 ounces  
**Notes:** Class-A preamp circuitry; available in gray or champagne finish

shure.com

## DPA d:facto



**MSRP:** \$900  
**Pattern:** supercardioid  
**Max SPL:** 157 dB  
**Sensitivity:** 5 mV/Pa  
**Self-Noise:** 19 dB (A)  
**Weight:** 8.6 ounces

dpamicrophones.com

## Earthworks SR40V



**MSRP:** \$1,499  
**Pattern:** hypercardioid  
**Max SPL:** 145 dB  
**Sensitivity:** 10 mV/Pa  
**Self-Noise:** 22 dB (A)  
**Weight:** 12.8 ounces

earthworksaudio.com

## Electro-Voice RE510



**MSRP:** \$322  
**Pattern:** supercardioid  
**Max SPL:** 146 dB  
**Sensitivity:** 3.2 mV/Pa  
**Self-Noise:** 22 dB (A)  
**Weight:** 9.2 ounces  
**Notes:** LF roll-off switch

electrovoice.com

## Sontronics STC-6



**MSRP:** \$249  
**Pattern:** cardioid  
**Max SPL:** 140 dB  
**Sensitivity:** 8 mV/Pa  
**Self-Noise:** 14 dB (A)  
**Weight:** n/a  
**Notes:** Switchable low-cut filter and 10 dB pad

sontronics.com

## Superlux PRO-238MKII



**MSRP:** \$198  
**Pattern:** cardioid  
**Max SPL:** 136 dB  
**Sensitivity:** 10 mV/Pa  
**Self-Noise:** 16 dB (A)  
**Weight:** 13.8 ounces  
**Notes:** 100 Hz low-cut filter

superlux.us

## Violet Design Grand Pearl



**MSRP:** \$1,051  
**Pattern:** cardioid  
**Max SPL:** 136 dB  
**Sensitivity:** 20 mV/Pa  
**Self-Noise:** 8 dB (A)  
**Weight:** 12.3 ounces  
**Notes:** Class-A discrete electronics

violet-design.com