



## M-Audio Sputnik Tube Microphone

Bold statements backed up by an amazing microphone.

To read the advertising on M-Audio's Sputnik microphone you may think that they've bitten off more than they can chew or are quite possibly delusional. "A microphone that can be compared to a Neumann U47 or AKG C12 for \$699?" Please. I've used these microphones before in many studio applications and those are some bold comparisons. Yet the Sputnik is more than up to the challenge, as I found it met and exceeded my needs and expectations.

The Sputnik arrives in a cool, retro "Maxwell Smart"-esque silver road case that holds the Sputnik itself (oooo, shiny), the power supply & cable, shock mount, cloth bag (to put the mic in should you decide to leave it on the stand) and a 7 pin connector cable.

The first thing you'll notice about the Sputnik (after staring at its shiny finish) is the heft this mic has; this is no cheap little knock off. After setting up the shock mount and connecting the IEC power cable (yes, it has a power supply, no phantom power needed for this baby, although if you accidentally have it on, there are electrolytic DC blocking caps in the power supply to protect the mic capsule and circuitry) I ran a good XLR cable to a Focusrite Red 8 solid state mic pre, chose the pattern (Cardioid, Figure 8 and Omni are available) and powered up the mic.

I had a session that day with Blue Note recording artist, saxophonist Eric Darius. We had previously recorded him with a Neumann TLM 103 and he had used everything from a Studio Electronics mic to the aforementioned C12 to record his horns with. After we played around with mic position and found the sweet spot, recording his alto and tenor saxes was an amazing experience. The Sputnik captured every little nuance and inflection with a rich, smooth full bodied tone. The full range of the horns was reproduced with a warmth and depth that was ... well, expensive sounding. It laid perfectly in the track, yet was full and present at the same time. At the end of that session when I was doing a rough mix, I found I didn't have to add any EQ to the sax tracks. I had added a little compression on the way in and some reverb, but that's all the processing it required. Eric said it was the "best my horns have sounded." Quite an endorsement.

The next day I was working with singer-songwriter Daniel Alan on one of the songs for his upcoming CD. This required recording acoustic guitar, flute, percussion and layers upon layers of background vocals. The Sputnik was once again up to any challenge presented it. The acoustic guitars were rich and sparkly

(although the larger bodied acoustics required use of the roll off (nicely set at 80Hz). The percussion had depth and space and flutes were sufficiently airy. As for the vocals, it delivered the full bodied tone and warmth that he had been looking for but hadn't been able to capture fully before. EQ was either not needed or just a little carving to fit in with the tracks. The sound of the mix was full and warm with a punch and presence that you wouldn't expect from a mic at this price.

The Sputnik is a winner all around in my book. It more than backs up M-Audios claims and delivers a spectacular sound that is sure to please even the most golden of ears. It almost sounds like the offspring of a U47 and a C12, delivering on its parent's lineage and adding a little something contemporary to go along with it.

My only complaint would be the finish shows EVERY finger print (they should include a cloth for wiping it off after you set it up). Other than that, the Sputnik is a real winner and would find a place at the front of most any mic collection.

A note to Road Dog, you're not getting this one back, my credit card number is.....

## **Michael Crain**

Composer/Producer  
Crainium Productions  
Orlando, Florida  
[www.michaelcrain.com](http://www.michaelcrain.com)

**Special thanks to Eric Darius ([www.ericdarius.com](http://www.ericdarius.com)) and  
Daniel Alan ([www.myspace.com/danielalan](http://www.myspace.com/danielalan))**