

HOW TO USE A MICROPHONE - 2024

Vocal technique will help you to be a better singer.

However, if you don't know how to use stage sound and equipment correctly, it can make it seem as though you have no vocal technique and that your voice is not as good as it really is. If you've been up to the mic at BUG, we'll have that on video. Take a look at yourself and where you are in position to the mic throughout the song. Take a look at me, if I'm up with you and see where I am in position to the mic throughout the song. Compare how we use the mic and how we use our bodies.

If you're savvy about each of the important elements that go into performance – including the equipment you use – you'll feel more confident and sound better. And the better you sound, the more inspired and confident you'll feel which will in turn elevate your performance.

How do you perceive the microphone and the monitor?

Is it your best friend or are you slightly wary of it? We want to give you some ideas about how you can get the most out of the sound equipment when you come up on stage. How can you make the microphone and monitors work for you and not against you?

You may think that technology is simply there to amplify the sound we're making but the microphones and monitors we use really can enhance the sound we produce.

Learn How to Use the Microphone The Right Way

Imagine a microphone as an extension of your voice and you'll have an easy time working with it. Let the microphone do the projection while you work on your emotions, delivery, and pitch. **But that doesn't mean you shouldn't project. In order to sing most naturally and with expression you should still aim your voice at the back of the room. This is extremely important!**

The distance and placement of the microphone affects the sound and tone of the voice as heard by the listener. The first thing you will have to get use to is that the your voice does not sound the same way you hear it, as it does to someone listening to you.

The greatest shock to most new singers is when they step up to a mic and hear something totally different from the monitors then what they hear when they don't

use a mic. This has a tendency to mess with your mind if you are not accustomed to hearing your voice from an external source. To most people it's a bit unnerving and they tend to shy away from the microphone thinking that it is not doing a very good job of reproducing your voice. But the mic is doing an excellent job of reproducing your voice, and the way you hear your voice through the monitors is how other people hear you, and you need to embrace that fact. The best way to get over this shock to record yourself singing and listen to it. This is what everyone else hears when you sing. When you are comfortable with how your voice sounds to others, you become more confident and are no longer afraid to use the microphone.

Confident singers are able to project their feelings through their music, and it is then that a microphone can be your best friend not your enemy. So now you have come to love your voice as others do, it is time to learn how to allow your body, voice and microphone become one instrument.

As you sing you produce sound waves that move through the air and hit the microphone's diaphragm and cause it to move back and forth creating an electrical current that is sent to the sound board.

If you sing very loudly and really close to the mic you could cause the diaphragm to bottom out and cause distortion within the sound, but if you sing too softly and the mic is too far away, then you may not get the diaphragm to move properly or at all. As you sing quietly, but still projecting to the back of the room, move closer to the mic. When you don't sing directly into the microphone, the higher frequencies are lost giving an unmusical muddy sound.

If you speak before or in between songs, it's a good idea to move a couple of inches back when you do this as it will make speech more intelligible.

The mics we use at BUG reject sounds coming behind the mic, like room sounds. They only pick up sound from a certain radius and they're definitely going to pick up more coming from in front of them than they do from the sides. The condenser microphone we use at the guest spot has a much wider radius and can pick up two or more singers, as long as they sing out! It's more forgiving for people who aren't used to using microphones than the dynamic microphone that's in the center spot. The dynamic microphone at the center spot has a much smaller radius, so you have to stick closer to the mic and use good vocal technique.

Don't Be a Drifter

This is the singer who randomly moves on and off mic – swaying their whole body side to side as they're singing or stepping back because they're hearing the monitor and think they're singing too loud or they're surprised by the sound. It's distracting for the listener to hear a voice sporadically booming and then fading. The vocal quality will be uneven and the lyrics will be difficult to follow. It also makes it extremely challenging for the sound engineer if you have one, to mix a consistent sound.

Proximity Effect

Proximity effect is how the mic responds to the nearness of your mouth to the mic. A singer who is mic-technique-savvy and has practised extensively with a microphone can use proximity effect as a “tone-control”.

Putting the mic closer enhances your lower frequency. However, you can move it a bit if you realize that your vocals are becoming “boomy.” Most of the microphones we use for live vocals are subject to what's called the proximity effect. Put simply, if you sing or speak very close to the microphone some of the lower frequencies will be enhanced. This is a sound that we're used to and a lot of us like the sound of our voices when we have the microphone almost touching our lips. The proximity effect is often quite pleasing for singing but if the sound you're getting is slightly too boomy you might consider moving a couple of inches away from the mic which should make a big difference.

When you speak before or in between songs, it's a good idea to move a couple of inches further back than when you sing as this will make your speech more intelligible.

Mic Technique Makes a Difference

- The microphone should be thought of as part of your instrument – the voice. The key to good microphone technique lies in distance and direction.
- The best direction for your mic is straight in front of your mouth or slightly below or above and angled towards your mouth.
- Learning to sing into the middle of the microphone will have you sounding your best, and clearest. This is the spot that will pick up the brightness in your voice.

- Generally, keeping a dynamic microphone around two finger widths away from your mouth will help to capture the full tone of your voice. If you're experienced and have had an opportunity to practice with a mic, when you sing considerably louder, for example on a rousing chorus, you can move your head slightly back from the mic or a little to the right or left. As you reduce your dynamics, move back to your usual closer position.
- It's very unlikely the sound engineer will ever have too much volume coming from the singer. It's easy for them to turn it down if it's too loud. Problems arise when the singer is not loud enough - which is what happens when you're not close enough to the microphone!
- If you're singing loud, fast songs it can help to back off a bit. Again, as long as you are projecting your voice into the microphone this should keep the basic level similar and having less proximity effect can also make the words a little clearer when they're faster moving.
- **Beware: if you move away from the mic too far or you sing way off to the side or across the top, your voice will drop out of the mix or lose quality.**

When it comes time for sound check make sure you put your all into the sound check, and don't lay back in projecting your voice. This is the time the sound person is setting the gain control for the mic. If you just project your voice at $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{3}{4}$ of your normal volume, when it comes time for the real thing you will overload the board and cause the signal to distort or be clipped off. So that's why, when we have a sound engineer, we give them the real thing at sound check. Pick your loudest vocal song and sing out! Take the time to learn to use mic well and it will make the difference between a good performance and an excellent one.

HAVE FUN!