



The

# Broadcasters' Desktop Resource

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... edited by Barry Mishkind – the Eclectic Engineer

## Microphone Talk

### New iOS Microphone Pre-Amp Gives Broadcast Quality Results On The Road



*by Mark Shander*

*[January 2013] Smart phones allow almost anyone the capability to record audio and video virtually anywhere. While these mobile products continue to improve audio and video performance broadcasters often desire even better sound.*

When it comes to reviewing broadcast equipment, I am not the fastest to form an opinion.

My deliberate pace comes from the fact that I know literally millions of dollars' worth of purchases and “spend” potentially depend on my recommendations – or are spent elsewhere as a result of me not being able to recommend certain products.

Furthermore, a long-term outlook is essential. Although something appears to be a good solution from a business standpoint, it may not be a good solution in the long run.

Therefore, I know I cannot afford to jump to conclusions. Neither should you.

#### A MOBILE PRE-AMP

A significant number of videos on YouTube – and even whole television programs – are being created using HD video recording capabilities of mobile devices. These devices can provide very good-looking video.

Yet nowhere has the jump from good to very good been as apparent as with the still and video camera improvements from the iPhone 4 to the iPhone 4S, and now with the iPhone 5.

Among the improvements, Apple added additional microphones and noise cancelling technologies.

I was rather excited to learn that IK Multimedia was in the process of developing a recording-quality [pre-amp for iOS devices](#) that would allow broadcasters, announcers, reporters and even musicians (really the target demographic for the device) to use their favorite microphone with their iOS devices in the field.



While recording video with the iPhone is not quite the same as with the Zoom Q2HD, the new IK Multimedia PRE does more than bridge the gap when it comes to bringing incredible recording quality to music or voice audio with video production capability to an already multi-functioning device: the iPhone.

Using a 9 Volt battery, the iRig PRE will run 9 to 10 hours with the +48 Volt phantom power on for a condenser microphone, or 30+ hours with a dynamic microphone attached.

The iRig PRE does use the hybrid 1/8" I/O port on iOS devices rather than the Lightning Port found on the newest iOS devices or the multi-pin port that has been popular on iOS devices for a number of years.

Because of this, there is a potential for a bit more noise than you would normally expect to creep in to a voice recording, but that is easily dealt with in post by sampling the noise and removing it as the final step in preparing a track for broadcast. The free iRig Recorder app enables you to take recorded tracks and instantly send them through email, iTunes File Sharing, Wi-Fi, FTP uploading or even SoundCloud.

**READY TO ROLL**

The fact that the iRig PRE is a light-weight plastic unit is a real benefit, as it is more likely to find its way into a briefcase or purse than a competitive heavy metal piece of equipment would.

### READY TO ROLL

And being able to use your preferred microphone with your preferred mobile device means you are ready to generate broadcast-quality,

ready-to-air packages in the field using the existing equipment reporters always have with them.

Of course, some tenured engineers will consider this to have the feel of an elaborate toy – and I mean that with all due respect both to the product and to the tenured engineers.

This product really performs like a high-end piece of equipment, but as with many other inexpensive products, it does not have quite the same “feel” as often found on a hardcore piece of equipment put into service in a broadcast environment.

That having been said, the iRig PRE has many of the same engineering and manufacturing benefits broadcast and mobile recording equipment has, including strain reliefs on cables, and under normal conditions should last quite a while.

The worst-case scenario: if someone stomps on your iRig PRE and crushes it (which would require a lot of excessive force), you just pick up another one – it costs less than a tank of gas.

### A GOOD MATCH

In the past few years, I have checked out several IK Multimedia devices for their potential use as remote broadcast tools.

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One of my favorite accessories, which I have with me at all times, is [the iRig Microphone](#). As I become more proficient with the free recording apps available from IK Multimedia, I have been able to get excellent audio for commercials, live events, and video production done using iOS devices.

The iRig PRE lets you take it to the next level by using your favorite condenser or dynamic microphone, whether it needs +48V phantom power or not.

Setting levels is an easy process, and the frequency response of the unit is essentially the same 20 Hz to 20 kHz that many competitive recording preamps sport. The dynamic range and low noise floor is exceptional, and the low distortion rating (0.025% THD) shows that iRig PRE provides a recording-quality audio channel, which translates well to broadcast use.

### FREE APPS

Two free apps round out the exceptional value this workhorse preamp provides. Both provide for extended functionality via “in-app” purchases. That means the app is free, but you pay for additional features like extra audio channels added to a mixer or additional effects added to post-production mixers and compressors. Registering and completing in-app purchases removes restrictions and adds the features to the apps.

The apps are VocaLive FREE and iRig RecorderFREE, which enable voice recording and voice effects from compression to chorus and doubling effects.

The iRig PRE sells for less than \$40, which includes the preamp, a 9 Volt battery, a Velcro™

strap to help you mount the preamp on a microphone stand, and the iRig Recorder app.



I consider this to be a tremendous value that helps keep engineers with tight budgetary concerns able to provide tools to keep their stations sounding competitive, by using the broadcast-quality microphones they prefer with the newest technology in mobile devices.

In the final analysis, it is up to you to decide how important “built for broadcasting” is regarding your purchasing decisions – the iRig PRE is certainly an incredible value that is just too good to pass up. Try a few in the field yourself, to see what audio packages can sound like when reporters get back after using their favorite workhorse microphones.

I definitely recommend the iRig PRE.

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