

# Sony's PCM-D1



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This portable  
digital field  
recorder offers  
high sonic  
sound quality,  
ease of use  
and durability.

The Sony PCM-D1 finally gives us the best of both worlds: Sonic quality and portability! The PCM-D1 is billed as a portable high-end digital audio field recorder featuring stereo condenser mics, analog and digital metering, adjustable sample rates and 4GB of internal memory holding over two hours of 24-bit/96kHz audio. Aimed at the broadcast market of audio field recording professionals, Sony packed on the features and benefits sparing no expense in the design and materials. Besides creating a solid titanium chassis, they've also preconfigured the electret condenser microphones in a classic X/Y pattern in order to capture the widest stereo image. The entire capsule section is adjustable as one unit either forward or backward to provide additional versatility when aiming the recorder. Add to this Sony's use of ultra low-noise Analog Devices' amplifier chips and you've got yourself one heck of an input stage.

## THE DETAILS

The face of the PCM-D1 looks like something straight out of your favorite sci-fi flick. It sports all of your traditional transport controls, peak indicators, record status, recording times, sample rate, file/folder locations and more. Not one important piece of information is missing. If you wish to use your own microphone or record directly into the PCM-D1 you can do so using the additional inputs and outputs located on either side of the unit.

Sony also provides all the necessary attachments to get you started: USB cable, 6V DC power adaptor, Four AA nickel rechargeable batteries with wall charger, wrist strap and a carrying case. The case actually has a spot for your additional microphone if you wish to use one. Bottom line, a well thought out presentation.

The file structure took a little getting used to. The internal memory automatically creates up to 10 folders, each

with a maximum of 99 .WAV files per folder. The files can be named once you import them onto a computer. The unit simply

## VITAL STATS

**PRODUCT:** Sony's PCM-D1

**WEBSITE:** [www.sony.com/pro](http://www.sony.com/pro)

**PRICE:** \$2,000 MSRP

- High-quality stereo condenser mics
- 24-bit/96kHz audio recording
- Rugged titanium chassis

shows up on your desktop as a removable drive. You cannot, however, name the folders. For the future, it would be nice if the user could hit a "shift" button allowing the transport buttons to be used as an alpha input keypad. *[Editor's note: Sony engineers felt text entry on the recorder itself would be compromised — with limited buttons — and it would add to operational complexity.]*

## THE USES

My biggest challenge with the PCM-D1 was deciding what to use it for first. I started out by capturing outdoor ambient effects: wind, rain, chimes, birds, Foley, you name it. The unit performed quite well. I used the included wind screen and it appeared quite transparent. I then recorded a host of room tones in several locations. Upon listening to the files, I noticed that the sounds were true, accurate and the depth of field was enormous. If need be, I could have placed the raw, unprocessed files instantly into a film bed. Fantastic. The PCM-D1 also came in handy during interviews; simply placing the unit on a table yielded very good results.

While tracking a nylon acoustic overdub session I placed the unit approximately two to three feet from the guitar body. Instantly I was able to get a warm, full tone without sacrificing any clarity. The recording captured the instrument true to nature. The untouched file worked brilliantly in

one of my latest music projects.

Using it on location for a piano recording also worked well, however, some of the



lower mids seemed to be slightly lacking. Changing the recording location of the unit did, however, alter the sound. In this case, experimentation was the key. With time running out I decided to use the recorder to do some "re-amping"; a process of re-broadcasting already recorded files through a sound system in an attempt to capture the rooms affect on the sounds. Specifically, I tried it out on a set of sequenced drums, looking to capture the warm natural reverb of our 20-foot ceilings. The result was interesting. The recorder captured the sound and the space amazingly well. Again, with a little experimentation regarding the location of the PCM-D1, I was able to create a very usable kit, all with absolutely no set-up time.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Ultimately, I found myself wanting to use the PCM-D1 for everything. At an MSRP of \$2K, it's easy to see that it is aimed at the broadcast professional. Although the price is steep, if you consider yourself a pro who strives for quality and is in the field daily, the PCM-D1 is a must have.

What if you are an audio pro that spends much of his time in the studio? Well, consider your workday. The unit has so much to offer and is so useful that any audio professional who needs to do quick, efficient high definition recordings with zero set-up time could benefit by using the PCM-D1.

Imagine no cables, stands, or paid assistants! The bottom-line is where else can a product be so easy to use and allow the user such stellar results without the headaches? I've seen all I need.

The toughest part about this review was returning the product.

■ POST

