

Tascam DP-008 Digital Portastudio £305

Tascam releases an eight-track version of its Pocketstudio multitracker. We plug in... *by Trevor Curwen*

Last year, Tascam released its four-track DP-004 Pocketstudio and has now added an eight-track version, the DP-008, to the range. The DP-008 is more sophisticated than its predecessor, in addition to the extra four tracks, it adds dedicated mic inputs with phantom power, four-band EQ and send/return stereo reverb.

Running off four AA batteries and recording to either an SD or SDHC card of up to 32GB, the unit is portable and suitable for location recording at a gig or in a rehearsal room. It'll fit in a large pocket and is easily held in one hand. Batteries last around five and a half hours, so it's worth investing in Tascam's PSU to run it off the mains.

Up to two tracks can be recorded simultaneously through a choice of inputs. The XLR sockets are the obvious choice if you have decent mics, but you can also use the jack sockets for mic or line sources – a rear panel switch allows one of these to be set to Hi-Z mode so you can plug a guitar or bass straight in. For easy stereo recording, there are two electret condenser mics built into the unit's front edge.

In Use

There's nothing difficult about using the DP-008, choosing the input(s), setting the level and

getting recording takes a matter of seconds. And if you leave it set with the onboard mics defaulting to tracks one and two, you can capture any idea that pops into your head pronto. When sitting down to make a more structured recording, there's a metronome for timing reference and two-band EQ that can be applied to inputs one and two to get your sound just right. Sadly, Tascam hasn't included any amp simulation insert effects, so any guitar tone other than clean DI'd will have to be dialled-in externally. There is, though, a built-in tuner and you can carry out hands-free recording by setting automatic punch in and out points or by using a footswitch.

Audio is recorded at 16-bit/44.1kHz, the same as a CD, and the quality of the onboard preamps and converters should ensure that you get pretty good recordings from decent mics/line sources. Likewise, the onboard mics will give you a decent reproduction of what's in front of them, providing you don't overload them – a pair of red peak lights and the graphical display will aid you in this. A variety of cut and paste editing functions let you tidy up and arrange your audio, plus there's a track bouncing facility to help with making complex recordings

that use more than just the eight tracks.

For monitoring what you've recorded and for mixing down, there's no messing about, as each track has its own row of knobs for level, pan and reverb, allowing you to instantly tweak the overall sound. There are six different types of reverb to choose from and all are capable of putting a realistic sense of depth and space into your mix. EQ is another important parameter for tweaking and that's accessed using a menu and the large data wheel – something that, with a clearly-backlit display, is still a relatively easy task.

Mixing down takes place on a dedicated stereo track and audio (a finished mix, or even individual tracks) can easily be transferred to computer via USB as a wav or mp3 file.

Verdict

Like the DP-004, the DP-008 is great as portable stereo recorder – something you can just slip into your gigbag and use for capturing rehearsals and gigs with the in-built mics – and as an instant musical sketch pad for songwriting ideas. However, it goes further than that, as the eight tracks give you plenty of scope for building up songs with larger arrangements while the onboard reverb and EQ should allow you to mix down a fairly polished master recording. **G**



The Rivals

Other eight-tracks available include the **Tascam DP-02CF** (£288) and **DP-02** (£468). **Fostex** claims that its **MR-8 Mk II** (£320) is the easiest to use digital multitrack ever. It runs off a mains power adaptor and has amp sims and onboard digital effects. The **BOSS BR-600** (£289) also offers amp sims, but adds a drum machine with velocity-sensitive pads. Then there's **Zoom's MRS-8** (£289) that has amp sims plus bass and drum programming.

Tascam DP-008 Digital Portastudio

PRICE: £305

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Eight-track digital personal studio recording

RECORDING MEDIA: SD Card (2GB Card supplied) up to 32GB supported

SAMPLING FREQUENCY: 44.1kHz

QUANTIZATION: 16-bit

TRACKS: Eight playback, dedicated stereo mixdown track

SIMULTANEOUS RECORDING:

Two tracks

CONNECTIONS: XLR mic input x 2, 6.4mm unbalanced line/guitar input, 6.4mm unbalanced line input, RCA phono line outputs (L&R), stereo mini jack headphone output, USB 2.0 port, footswitch socket

PHANTOM POWER: Yes

EFFECTS: Stereo reverb

AUTOMATION: None

OTHER FEATURES: Built-in microphones, metronome, chromatic tuner

DIMENSIONS: 221 (w) x 36 (h) x 126.5mm (d)

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 0.61/1.34 (without batteries)

POWER REQUIREMENTS: 4 x AA batteries (included) or optional PS-P520 power adaptor (£28)

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The Bottom Line

We like: Onboard microphones; ease of use; easy portability

We dislike: No amp sims; power adaptor not included

Guitarist says: A versatile portable unit capable of a variety of recording tasks

Test results

Build quality ★★★★★
Features ★★★★★
Sound ★★★★★
Value for money ★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★