

Pioneer DDJ-T1 | £899

Pioneer's first dedicated Traktor controller is a big one. *Declan McGlynn* gets to grips with the T1

WHAT IS IT?

Pioneer controller for Traktor with two jog wheels and four faders

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Familiar interface
- 2 Simple layout
- 3 Needle Search ribbon controller to search through a track

Despite the CDJ-2000s offering full Traktor control over HID, and Traktor Scratch allowing you to get

your hands on Native's pride-and-joy using the industry standard DJ booth regular, it was almost inevitable that Pioneer would join the dedicated controller party. Over the past year we've been graced with a shift in the approach to DJ controllers and more and more companies are opting for the large, bespoke software specific units, either mimicking what you see on screen or sticking to a traditional layout.

The excellent Glanzmann Digital DJ Solutions 4midiloop has its feet planted firmly in the former category while NI's flagship Kontrol S4 gives you clear control of a specially made software version. Pioneer's DDJ-T1 falls

somewhere in between with a classic layout and familiar components joining forces with Traktor-specific features.

Familiar interfaces

Familiarity is in fact the strongest aspect Pioneer have got going for them

with the DDJ-T1. The jogs, cue and play buttons and general design replicate that of their industry standard booth equipment. Though it might seem odd that Pioneer are pitching this as a bedroom or house party device, it actually makes sense as what you learn on at home will be familiar if you have to make the move to CDs or USB sticks in the club. The result is instant comfort for anyone who's used CDJs coming to the controller new and vice versa.

In fact, I roped in some friends who had never used Traktor before but were CDJ veterans and they got it within seconds. This kind of fluency is absolutely vital when it comes to performance controllers, and is definitely the strongest advantage the T1 has over NI's S4.

Speaking of the S4, I think it's fair to say, despite Pioneer's claims that the T1 is for home use, a lot of potential buyers will be directly comparing the T1

Traktor Pioneer Edition

Bundled with the DDJ-T1 is a special edition of Traktor Pro developed for and by Pioneer. It's pretty much the same as Traktor Pro LE except it includes the Record function – although Broadcast is still out of the picture. The effects section differs

in that, it's not possible to switch to Advanced mode and some are missing. Chained is the only option, but if you already own the full version of Traktor Pro, there is an option to switch to Advanced on the controller. It also allows

four-deck control, unlike LE. There is an upgrade path to Pro for 120 Euro. Furthermore, if you already own Pro, installing Traktor Pioneer Edition will simply add the DDJ-T1 to the list of Pioneer controller in the controller Setup Wizard.



Needle Search

Use the ribbon controller to search through a track

Mixer

Assign FX channels, adjust EQ and gain using the mixer



I/O Connections

TRS and aux out with a switchable aux and microphone in

USB

The T1 can be USB-powered, but the inputs are disabled

and Native's flagship controller. To cut a long story short, it really comes down to what you need. With no Sample Deck or Loop Recorder control on the T1, now available to all Traktor users through Pro 2, you're limited to Cue Points, which we'll get to later. On the other hand, the CDJ-2000's Needle Search has found its way on to the T1, so quick searching and cueing is possible via the ribbon controller, something the S4 lacks, though it's not really a deal-breaker. What is nifty is pressing the Function button activates five hotspots on the ribbon, which are unmapped by default

mixer range and Traktor's features such as hot cues, effects and sync functions. In fact, the jogs are lifted straight from the 350s and feel rather plasticky and, despite being slightly bigger, don't have the torque of the S4 equivalents. There is no way you're going to be scratching on these. There's two master outputs – phono and TRS – though they operate on a single channel. Like the S4 there is no dedicated Booth Out, though the second output can be used if you have a passive volume controller. Another oversight is the lack of LED meter levels. Sure Traktor offers auto gain but

Loop has also found its way onto the T1 too. Another thing I really love about the T1 is a simple one – one knob filter with an on/off button. That button is sorely missing on the S4.

The T1 tackles Traktor's Hot Cues in a fairly tasteful manner. Switch to Hot Cue mode and the loop size adjustment and seek buttons become cues one through four. Press shift and they're five through eight. It's simple, and it works well. That's kind of the mantra for the whole controller. It tames some of Traktor's complicated functions, presents them in a familiar format and

takes away the learning curve in the process.

Any DJ coming to Traktor from CDJs would do well to take a serious look at the T1. So we come

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but could become your Sample Deck controls or whatever you can think of.

Lay it out

As I've already said, the T1 is somewhat of a hybrid of Pioneer's CDJ-350s, DJM

you lose that reference and the mixer section feels less like an actual mixer and you don't need me to tell you the less you look at the screen, the better.

The familiar yellow In Out buttons controls loops and the much-loved Auto

back to Pioneer's emphasis that this is aimed at the bedroom DJ market. Saying as very few beginner or amateur DJs will buy CDJ-2000s for their homes, let alone have enough money left over to pick up Traktor Scratch Pro, it makes sense that the T1 with Traktor Pioneer Edition is the logical choice, if you're dedicated to the Pioneer range.

Price wars

So what of the price? £900 is a lot of money for a beginner, especially if you need to add the price of a laptop. Then there's the size – we dissed the S4 for its large footprint, and this is even bigger – 18cm bigger to be exact. However, Pioneer have saved space by incorporating a slot for your laptop's keyboard to rest under the controller, which is a nice idea, but a USB slot for a mouse on the controller would have sealed the deal – I found myself having to lift the controller to access the trackpad more than once, though if you're prepared, it won't be an issue.

Furthermore, there's only one phono input versus the S4's two, meaning you couldn't run two CDJs or turntables alongside the T1. There is a mic input but it's switchable with the aux in so you can't run them at the same time.

FX Control

Simple and effective control with Advanced mode for Pro users



SPECS

Frequency Range: 20 – 20kHz
Harmonic Distortion: 0.005% or less
Channels: 4
Effects control: 6
Jog Wheel: 115 mm
Dimensions: 680 x 95 x 318mm
Weight: 5kg

