



PHOTOGRAPHY BY PHILIP SOWELLS

## Tascam DP-004 Digital Pocketstudio £199

What do you call a Portastudio that fits into your pocket? It's a Pocketstudio and here's Tascam's latest version *by Trevor Curwen*

Computer-based recording has its place, but for portability and the convenience of instantaneous hands-on operation it's hard to beat hardware units such as Tascam's Portastudio range. The latest in that range is the DP-004 Pocketstudio, which offers four-track recording capability in a diminutive battery-powered package that you can hold easily in one hand. By contrast with the previous Pocketstudio 5, launched in 2002 and a much more

complicated proposition featuring an onboard tone generator to create full backing tracks, the new model is stripped down and devoid of any bells and whistles.

What you get is a back-to-basics four-track recorder for recording digitally to an SD or SDHC card of up to 32GB in size. You can record a single track or two tracks simultaneously through a pair of jack sockets for plugging in a guitar, microphone or line level source. Alternatively there are

two internal mics – one at either end of the front surface – to make stereo recordings, allowing gigs and band rehearsals to be captured easily, not to mention instant recording for acoustic guitar. Recording from one jack input

and one mic input at the same time is also possible.

To get recording it's simply a matter of choosing the inputs and assigning them to tracks, setting the level, arming the tracks and pressing record – an internal metronome is provided to help you keep time. For playback, each track has its own pan and level knobs but no EQ or effects. Set these to your satisfaction and you can use the bounce function that can bounce four recorded tracks down to one or two to free up tracks for overdubs, allowing you to add more parts to a song. When you've recorded all the tracks for your song you can then mix down to an internal stereo master track. The master track can be transferred to

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### The Rivals

Tascam has alternative products to the DP-004. If small size and go-anywhere stereo recording are what appeals then there's the **GT-R1** (£335), also with amp sims and phrase training facilities. If size isn't an issue and you'd like more tracks the eight-track **DP-02CF** (£287) or **DP-02** (£468) are options. If you fancy a pocket-sized four-track with onboard rhythm patterns and multi-FX you need to seek out the **BOSS Micro BR** (£175) with Roland's COSM amp modelling. Larger but still compact is the **Zoom MRS-8** eight-track (£299) sporting amp sims plus bass and drum programming.



computer via USB, that also enables you to back up track data.

### Sounds

With all its controls laid out neatly, the DP-004 is a doddle to use. If you have set your own default settings for the inputs you want to use with certain tracks, you can be recording in a matter of seconds, making the DP-004 ideal for capturing any ideas you come up with instantly – it fits that 'quick and dirty' musical sketchpad and arranger role really well, with four tracks available to work out parts that sit together.

In terms of more formal recordings, the DP-004 is capable of making decent live stereo recordings as the inbuilt mics are cleanly accurate and the audio is recorded at the CD standard of 16-bit, 44.1kHz. As

the lack of a reverb send and return effect and onboard EQ limits the possibilities of mixing down with a fully polished professional sound, the DP-004 is probably not the type of recorder you'd choose for turning out produced multitracked master recordings, but it will do the trick if you want to knock out a song demo to play to your band.

Considering that Tascam puts amp sims in its phrase trainer units, and that it obviously has guitarists in mind as potential users of the DP-004 (it has a tuner built-in), it is curious that there are none available here. In fact, with so many other multitrackers offering a wealth of facilities we were initially sceptical about the spartan nature of the DP-004. That scepticism,

### Bottom Line

**We like:** Quick and easy to use; onboard stereo microphone; computer connection

**We dislike:** No amp sims; power adaptor not included

**Guitarist says:** A portable and practical multitracker for capturing live performances, working out ideas and making demos

however, disappeared when we realised just how practical and versatile the unit actually is. It's all a matter of perception – the key may be to think of the DP-004 as being a portable stereo recorder with extra tracks rather than a facility-shy multitracker.

### Verdict

This unit can do all the things a portable stereo recorder would do, such as recording your gigs in stereo, but it offers much more. You could record rough band rehearsals and jams live and use the extra tracks to experiment – perhaps to overdub extra/alternative parts to see how they work. Then, of course, there are all the normal songwriting and demo-making functions that you would use a multitracker for. The DP-004 is no show pony – it's a real workhorse. **G**

### Tascam DP-004

**PRICE:** £199

**ORIGIN:** China

**TYPE:** Four-track digital personal studio recorder

**RECORDING MEDIA:** SD Card (1GB card supplied)

**SAMPLING FREQUENCY:** 44.1kHz

**QUANTIZATION:** 16-bit

**TRACKS:** Four playback, dedicated stereo mixdown track

**SIMULTANEOUS RECORDING:** Two tracks

**CONNECTIONS:** 1/4-inch unbalanced jack mic/line input x 2, stereo mini jack headphone/line out, USB 2.0 port

**EFFECTS:** None

**AUTOMATION:** None

**DIMENSIONS:** 155 (w) x 33.5 (h) x 107mm (d)

**WEIGHT (kg/oz):** 0.36/2.8 (without batteries)

**PHANTOM POWER:** No

**POWER REQUIREMENTS:** Four x AA batteries (eight hours recording, about 8.5 hours playback) or optional PS-P520 power adaptor

**OPTIONS:** Power Adaptor PS-P520 (£27)

**Tascam UK 01923 438888**

**www.tascam.co.uk**

### Test results

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

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★



The DP-004 is small enough to hold easily in one hand