

Pioneer CDJ-2000 | £1,500

They've tagged it as the dawn of a new species but will it save the CDJ? **Chris Barker** takes it for a spin

WHAT IS IT?

Pioneer's new flagship CDJ with advanced, multi-format support

CONTACT

Who: Pioneer UK
Tel: +44 (0)870 600 1539
Web: pioneerdj.com

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 New 6.1" screen
- 2 Touch-sensitive needle search function
- 3 Rekordbox software

Pioneer made their first major stamp on the club industry in 2001 with the CDJ-1000, and steadily the 1000's have become the industry standard DJ device. There have been the updates to the CDJ-1000 design with the MkI and MkII versions, but with laptops becoming more and more popular in the

clubs, it seemed that Pioneer were in need of something special to keep them on top. So this is their answer – a fully-fledged digital media player, retaining the robust looks and feel of the original CDJ while providing all the connectivity and modern features that the new generation of DJs demand.

The first thing that strikes you when

you take the CDJ-2000 out of its packaging is the sheer size of the unit – it's more comparable to larger Pioneer's DVJ device. The size increase is mainly due to the huge WQVGA screen (480x234) which has been included without compromising on standard button sizes, or indeed, the size of the platter. Inside, the unit has been improved with a brand new Wolfson DAC processor that when hooked up digitally to a mixer, does sound better at high volume levels that the CDJ-1000.

Lights and music

Switching on the unit, there's the usual backlit buttons but with the added benefit of a back-lit jogwheel and huge glowing screen – you're not going to have any problems navigating your way around the unit in a dark club. Plus, if the screens or the jogwheel glow too bright for your taste you can tweak the brightness in the settings page very easily. So, when it comes to the more exciting new features, the CDJ-2000's



Browse With Ease

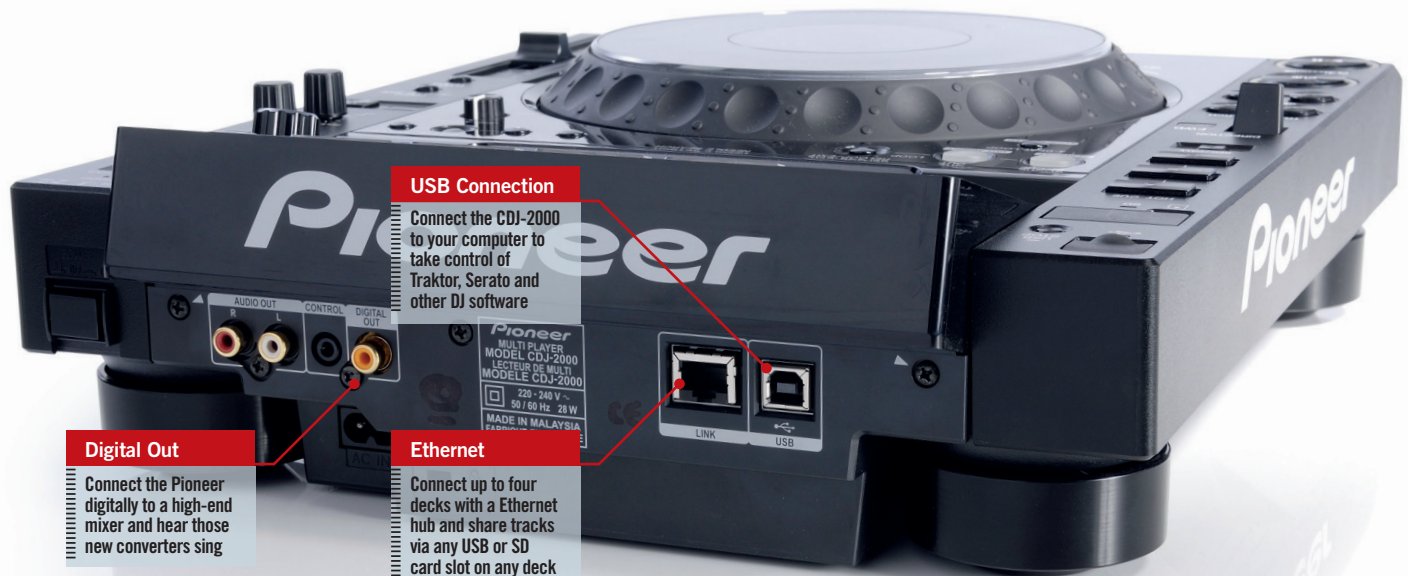
Navigate massive digital music libraries using the bright 6.1" screen and rotary push-button controls

Instant Loop

Hit this button to set an instant four-beat loop, that can be halved in size with every press

Backlit

The edge of the jog wheels are now back lit with adjustable brightness control in the settings page



USB Connection

Connect the CDJ-2000 to your computer to take control of Traktor, Serato and other DJ software

Digital Out

Connect the Pioneer digitally to a high-end mixer and hear those new converters sing

Ethernet

Connect up to four decks with a Ethernet hub and share tracks via any USB or SD card slot on any deck

main focus is managing your digital music library and integrating seamlessly with laptops, MIDI and other new technologies making their way into the DJ booth. The backbone of this is the included Rekordbox software collaboration between Pioneer and MixVibes – a sort of an iTunes for DJs.

tag it, set cue and loops points and analyse and prepare your music similarly to when you import tracks into Traktor or other DJ software.

This is a breeze, simply dragging tracks into Rekordbox starts the analysing, works out the BPM and allows you to tag tracks and rate your

recalling the tracks easier. At the top of the software, you can view the analysed waveform and click it to set hot cue and loop points, which again are saved on export to USB key or SD card, allowing any CDJ-2000 or 900 to be able to recall them. In use, this is quite special as it also works in reverse, enabling you

to record cue points made when playing live and recall them in Rekordbox later. If you quantise within the CDJ-2000 then the Rekordbox

Even without Rekordbox, you can happily show up with a hard drive and navigate around its folders

Once installed on your Mac or PC the software enables you to import your MP3 collection (either manually or existing iTunes Libraries and playlists),

music collection for recall on the CDJ-2000 later. You can colour code your music and add all the ID3 information you might need to help

makes loop and cue points snap to the nearest transient, making beat-perfect loops and drops becomes easy. Working with Rekordbox also means that when tracks are exported to a USB key or SD card, they will load much faster on the CDJ-2000 than if the key was loaded with MP3s that were drag and dropped. That said, I was able to plug a 120GB hard drive full of MP3s that had not been through the Rekordbox software and it worked perfectly well too.

SPECS

Compatible Media: Music CD, CD-R, CD-RW, USB Devices

Compatible Files: MP3, AAC, WAV, AIFF

File Systems Compatible with USB Storage: FAT12, FAT16, FAT32, HFS+

Frequency Range: 4Hz - 20kHz

Signal-to-Noise Ratio: 115dB or higher

Total Harmonic Distortion: 0.0003%

Audio Output Terminals: AUDIO OUT (RCA) x1, DIGITAL OUT (COAXIAL) x1

Other Terminals: CONTROL (3.5mm mini plug) x1

Audio Output Voltage: 2.0Vrms

Dimensions: 320 x 405 x 106mm

Weight: 4.7kg

Traktor Compatibility

One way Pioneer have made sure that they are not pushed out of the DJ booth by laptops and controllers is to embrace the software revolution. The CDJ-2000s work with Traktor, Serato and MixVibes Cross2 using the HID protocol. This means that these applications can be controlled without any extra equipment. Testing this feature out with Traktor was fantastic with the Pioneer jumping into link mode at the push of a rotary controller and Traktor quickly finding the CDJ-2000 as an interface and HID controller. Once connected, you are able to assign the CDJ-2000 to a



deck in Traktor. The mapping controls are obvious and the 'feel' of DJing like this is exactly the same as when using CDs. Probably the coolest feature is that track information is pulled from Traktor onto the screen

and you can navigate around your Traktor browser, selecting new tracks using the controls on the CDJ. It did make me wonder if we'll see more information being pulled from Traktor through in future updates.

Hard drive way

One thing that is worth mentioning though is that once the drive has been through Rekordbox, you're unable to access other folders that have been drag and dropped onto the same key, so, a hybrid key isn't possible. Finding your tracks from the USB or SD card is simple, using a simple rotary button that can be pressed to navigate between folders and tracks with a back button above. Overall the usability is pretty foolproof and even without the advanced work in Rekordbox, you can happily show up with a hard drive and navigate around its folders easily.

ALTERNATIVES



Numark iCDX
£595

The bang-for-buck ratio on the iCDX is excellent, with easy to use built-in effects and easy to master scratching tools. The major drawback being that the plastic casing and buttons aren't something you'd want to rely on outside the bedroom or house party.

numark.com



DN-S3700
£899

This is the closet competitor to the Pioneer flagship. The Denon also sports music management software and comes with the added bonus of fully motorised platter and a stack of extra features compared to the 2000. But, the Pioneers are more likely to be found in your local club which makes the DN-S3700 a slightly more niche purchase.

denondj.com

Other new performance features include a Needle Search function [see the *Needle Search* boxout below] and a one button four-beat loop, similar to the one found on the CDJ-400. Tapping this initially sets up a four-beat loop, while further taps shorten the loop by half and half again. Initially, it was difficult to figure out how to increase the loop from a shortened two beat loop back to the original four beat loop again. A trip to the manual explained that by holding the yellow loop out button and tapping the four-beat loop button, the reverse could be achieved, if a little clumsily.

Connectivity

The addition of an Ethernet port and Pioneers Pro DJ Link technology means that now up to four CDJ-2000s (using an Ethernet hub) can be connected together and will share a connected USB key, hard drive or inserted SD card. This means one large USB key can serve all four decks and DJs would be able to show up to gigs with nothing more than a keyring and some



Rekordbox, the new DJ library organiser software from Pioneer and MixVibes

headphones. It's a shame the new link up technology doesn't extend to being able to physically sync tracks like Ableton or Traktor can, but it's likely that software and firmware updates for the CDJ-2000 might allow for enhanced communication over Ethernet and USB. As far as pushing the boundaries of traditional track-to-track DJing goes, the

CDJ-2000 has clearly been designed by DJs for DJs and it's very hard to fault. The price is high and with the majority of club DJs still using CDs it will probably take a while before we see these is the smaller venues. One thing is for sure – if the future of DJing lies in devices like the CDJ-2000, DJs will have to do much more work organising and preparing their music. But with 10,000 tracks in your pocket, it's something to do on the plane, eh? **FM**

Needle Search

A simple but fantastically useful feature is the addition of a new needle search feature. This is a touch sensitive strip that runs below the screen, similar to a ribbon controller on a synth.

Touching this strip lets you instantly drop on different parts of the loaded track, with real time feedback on the screen. This makes quickly finding cue points so much easier and a

clever needle lock feature during playback ensures that there are no accidents. Once you're used to this method, navigating around your waveform is as easy as it is with any DJ software.

FutureMusic VERDICT

STABILITY [Progress bar]

VALUE [Progress bar]

EASE OF USE [Progress bar]

VERSATILITY [Progress bar]

RESULTS [Progress bar]

A brilliant leap forward and undoubtedly the next industry standard, whether you like it or not.



Tag Track
Tag Track helps you keep on top of what you played in your set in both the Rekordbox software and on the CDJ itself

Wave Information
Wave, track and time data is displayed accurately on-screen all at the same time

Needle Search
Jump to anywhere in your track with a touch using this virtual needle-drop style ribbon strip