

CONSUMER RECORDERS

Please note - this is a brief resumé and is no substitute for the much fuller information in section 15 of "Understanding Audio."

Before buying, you might like to consider the following points:

- * Does the machine feel solid, or flimsy and plasticy?
- * There are many dictation machines, iPods etc. with rudimentary recording features. I don't regard these as "serious." If it will record in 44/16 pcm .wav uncompressed format (*&***), it is probably a serious recorder. If it will only record in compressed format, it is probably a glorified dictation machine.
- ** All machines will have AGC – can the recording level also be controlled manually?
Is the manual option easy to locate (not buried deep in menus.)
Is it easy to set and adjust whilst recording?
Is the display readable in sunlight?
- Do the controls fall easily to hand?
- * Is it adequately difficult to press the wrong button?
eg separate "record" and "stop" buttons reduce accidents.
eg if "stop" button only acts after being held for 2-3 secs, accidental operation is unlikely.
- * How quickly can you start recording from "completely off"?
Is battery life adequate to allow carrying recorder for long periods in "record ready"?
Do the "power saving shutdown" features have sensible setting options (including "disabled")?
- * Does machine use easy-to-obtain standard batteries (usually AA)?
Will it accept the lower voltage of NiMH rechargeable batteries?
- * Has money been wasted on features you don't need (reverb, metronome etc?)
Claims like "simulates the sound of well-known professional mics" suggest kidology. You can't "add quality" to an indifferent signal. Beware of other claims from this manufacturer.
- * Higher sampling rates than 44.1kHz (or 48kHz) are a waste of money.
- * Bit depths greater than 16 are a waste of money.
- ** Does mic input have a switchable high-pass filter?
- **&* How wide is the USEFUL, UNDISTORTED range of gain adjustment?
- * Are there switchable sensitivity ranges to maximise the total range of adjustment?
- ** How tolerant of wind is the built-in mic?
Is the built-in mic resistant to handling noise?
- ** Make a trial voice recording to assess if wind tolerance has been achieved by reducing the low frequency response to an excessive degree.
Can you plug in an external mic & is the input sensitive enough? **
- ** Is "plug-in power" available?
- * Is memory removable or built in?

These points are discussed in more detail on:

- * "Understanding Audio"
- ** "All About Microphones"
- *** "Better Soundtracks"

All available from Howard Gregory, 64 Mill Lane, Heatley, Lymm, Cheshire, WA13 9SQ.

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