TASCAM CD-01U, CD-01U PRO CD Players

by Barry Rudolph

FIELD TEST

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Tascam's CD-01U and CD-01U Pro are single-rackspace, slot-loading CD players designed for broadcast or recording studio use. They will play commercial CDs, CD-R/RW (12cm and 8cm sizes) and MP3 discs. The two machines differ only in terms of I/O and control ports: The Pro model has XLR balanced outputs with +20dBu into 150 ohms max level while the CD-01U has unbalanced RCA jack outputs capable of +6dBV into 1kOhm load impedance. Both have S/PDIF optical outputs and serial RS-232 control for AMX and Crestron system programming. The Pro adds an AES/EBU digital output and a parallel control port.

Both machines include 20 seconds of RAM buffering for shock protection and relay I/O jacks for chaining multiple units together. In chained or relay playback mode, the second machine will start playing its disc as soon as the disc on the first deck ends. The relay-in jack can also trigger "fader start" used in radio broadcast.

Other broadcast-related features include up to 10 seconds of programmable fade-in/out in 0.5-second increments; switchable mono output from the analog and digital outputs; auto-cue (where the machine pauses at the first sound and not the actual beginning of the recording); and auto-ready, which puts the unit into standby mode after playing a track.

Desirable recording studio features are: A to B repeat playback or loop between two designated points in the program; ±12.5% pitch control; the Key Original mode allows you to change the speed without changing the pitch; Programmed playback lets you program up to 100 tracks in any order; and the infrared wireless remote control duplicates all front panel controls from across the control room.

The CD-01U Pro found a good niche in the last space available at the top of the outboard rack in the studio. Slot loading means no worries about ever leaving a tray opened and exposed. The large LCD display is visible at a

distant and provides useful information like: running or elapsed times, all of the aforementioned play modes, pitch and time settings, and whether you're playing a MP3 disc. The headphone jack provides plenty of level (20mW per channel into 32ohms) to cue up selections while the studio monitors are otherwise busy. I found the programmed playback to be a great tool in auditioning different album sequences painlessly. Producers and songwriters love changing playback speed without altering pitch when working on new song ideas.

Because this machine will only play properly "finalized" CD-R/RW discs--it provides a good quality check for insuring you're burning CDs that'll play everywhere in the world. You may have trouble playing discs burned at super high speeds and/or using suspect blank media--i.e. any disc that is not a kosher CD-DA music CD.

In these Internet days, the MP3 play function is a useful bonus. MP3 files must be recorded in ISO 9660 format (most newer burners and software already do this automatically) and play from the top-level directories downward as long as all files are in the first session--if you burn multi-session discs.

The rugged construction and advanced features of the Tascam CD-01U and CD-01U Pro are far superior to light-duty consumer decks. At $599 and $699, respectively, these are great additions to any pro studio.

Tascam, 323/726-0303, www.tascam.com.

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