



HOT POCKET

Tascam GT-R1 portable guitar and bass recorder

BY CHRIS GILL

IT SEEMS that the smaller handheld devices become these days, the more designers try to cram into them. From the iPhone, which lets you pay bills and track live weather reports, to GPS units that provide movie listings and let you listen to audio books, portable electronics are becoming all-in-one tools for your information and entertainment needs.

The new Tascam GT-R1 Portable Guitar Recorder is a perfect example of this trend. Unlike other compact handheld recorders, the GT-R1 does more than allow you to simply record pristine stereo digital audio in the untamed wilderness (like the New York City subway). With the GT-R1, you can pretty much make an entire demo. The recorder has multieffects and rhythm patterns, and includes several “guitar trainer” functions found on products like Tascam’s MP-GT1. While the GT-R1 doesn’t have the multitracking functionality of Tascam’s Portastudio recorders, its guitar-oriented features make it an all-in-one demo and practice powerhouse.

FEATURES

LIKE MOST DIGITAL handheld recorders these days, the GT-R1 features built-in stereo condenser microphones. The mics rotate 90 degrees for optimal positioning, no matter if the GT-R1 is vertical or horizontal. Recording formats include WAV (48/44.1kHz, 24/16 bits) and MP3 (48/44.1kHz, 320-32kbps), and audio is recorded directly to an SD card, which can range in size from 64 MB to 32GB (a 1GB card is included to get you started). You can also transfer audio files directly to your computer via the GT-R1’s USB port, which is also used to recharge the unit’s lithium-ion battery. Inputs include a 1/4-inch guitar input and mini mic and line inputs.

Although the GT-R1 is not a multitrack recorder, it has a convenient overdubbing feature that lets you record a new live performance over a prerecorded track in one pass, with



The loop function lets you repeat a specified section of a prerecorded song.



TASCAM GT-R1

LIST PRICE: \$469.00

MANUFACTURER:

Tascam, tascam.com

AUDIO FORMAT:

WAV (48/44.1kHz,

24- or 16-bit), MP3

(48/44.1kHz, 320-

32kbps)

RECORDING MEDIUM:

SD (64MB-2GB) or SD

HC (4GB-32GB) card

INPUTS: Guitar (1/4

inch), mic (mini), line

(mini)

OUTPUTS: Headphone/

line (mini)

BATTERY: Rechargeable

lithium ion, seven hours

per charge

OTHER: Built-in effect

processor (55 presets, 5

banks), Rhythm mode

(88 patterns), tuner,

loop function, VSA

(changes speed without

affecting pitch, changes

pitch without affecting

speed), Guitar or Bass

Part Cancel function

COMPUTER: USB

connection; supports

Windows (2000, XP and

Vista) and Mac OS X

(10.2 or later)

both parts mixed to a new track (time to hone those track-bouncing skills). Lacking editing and punch in/out features, the GT-R1 is better for laying down ideas and rough demos than for crafting finished songs. The rhythm machine section has 88 preset patterns and basic functions like tempo control and a count-in function. You can’t program songs or create your own patterns, but the rhythm sounds can be changed by processing the whole kit with the GT-R1’s effect section, which has 55 presets that can feature up to three effects at once. The effects can also be used to process the guitar input and entire recordings. Effects include amp models, compres-

The built-in stereo condenser mics rotate 90 degrees for vertical or horizontal positioning.

sion, chorus, reverb, delay, flanger, phaser, auto wah, pitch shifting, tremolo and an enhancer, and multiple parameter settings allow you to edit effects to your preference.

In addition to the drum patterns, the GT-R1 has several features that make the unit a helpful practice tool. After transferring an MP3 track to the GT-R1, you can loop individual sections of a song and decrease the speed of playback without changing pitch. The Part Cancel function lets you reduce the level of pre-recorded guitar or bass tracks so you can hear how your own performance sounds in its place. A built-in tuner helps you tune your instrument or adjust the pitch of a pre-recorded track to concert pitch.

PERFORMANCE

THE GT-R1 IS exceptionally easy to use, with most basic functions accessible from buttons on the unit’s front panel. The built-in stereo mics provide excellent detail, with minimal noise leakage from the unit’s mic preamps. However, the effects can add noise, which becomes noticeable if you’ve overdubbed several tracks that have processing.

The sound quality of the effects is good, although many of the distorted guitar presets have an artificial-sounding midrange that’s about what you would expect from a low-cost digital effect processor. The drum presets are nice and punchy, but the rhythm section’s patterns aren’t going to fool anyone into thinking a real drummer performed them. Still, these are useful extras to have in a handheld recorder, and if you want to lay down demos before your inspiration evaporates, the GT-R1 is hard to beat when it comes to choosing patterns and tones quickly.

THE BOTTOM LINE

IT MAY NOT be as full featured as Tascam’s Portastudio line, but the GT-R1 is still much more than the average handheld recorder. It’s a helpful tool that can let you capture your ideas quickly, build basic demos and improve your playing chops—and let you do it all wherever, and whenever you choose.



PRO	CON
GUITAR-ORIENTED PORTABLE RECORDER; GREAT SOUND QUALITY; BUILT-IN EFFECTS AND DRUM PATTERNS	DISTORTION EFFECTS SOUND ARTIFICIAL; NO MULTITRACK FUNCTION