



Computer DJ 00DJ

www.computerdj.net



Computer DJ, launched at PLASA last year, is a UK company dedicated to utilising digital technology for professional DJing. The 00DJ is the company's flagship, a truly unique product, purpose built for DJing from digital media. As Computer DJ have recently become the UK distributor of PCDJ, which is probably the most widely used DJ software on the market, the 00DJ is shipped ready to go and is certainly worth considering if you are serious about 'going digital'.

Before looking at the 00DJ in detail, I will

attempt to quickly explain the concept of 'digital DJing' for the uninitiated. Basically, instead of playing music from CDs or vinyl (remember them?) music is stored on a computer's hard disk drive. Generally music is stored on a computer as mp3 files, thousands of which will fit onto the size of hard disk found in modern home PCs. A number of dedicated pieces of DJ software are currently available, which offer two separate 'virtual' music players with all of the features of a twin CD player (and in many cases, lots more!) which can be used to play these mp3 music files at a gig. The main advantages of digital DJing are that thousands of tracks can easily be carried to

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every gig and that using simply software, any one of these tracks can be found and played in an instant. This means that requests can be found more quickly, from a vast music collection, that doesn't break your back when carrying it to a function room up three flights of stairs! Sounds good doesn't it?

So what do you need to make the move to digital DJing? Well simply, you need a computer and some DJ software. The choice of computer is important, as it needs to be fast and reliable and have enough storage space for your ever expanding collection of music. It also needs to be portable and protected from the perils often affecting a DJ's gear.

Although most DJ software, including PCDJ, features a digital mixer, most DJs find that controlling both the players and mixer with a mouse is not practical. This means a sound card with at least two separate stereo outputs is required, so that each virtual player can be connected to a separate channel on a regular mixer. If you are using a laptop, this will generally mean an extra piece of external hardware.

So back to the 00DJ, it's just an expensive laptop, right? No, although at first glance it may look that way, with closer inspection it becomes apparent that this is a dedicated DJ tool. Firstly there is the case, which as well as being very stylish, has been designed for the rigors of the road and constructed from light weight, but extremely strong materials. In fact the machine is built into the case, so it is protected even when in use. In transit the unit can be secured by tough case clips and a sturdy carry handle is built in. Even the screen surround, which is contained within the main case, has a steel construction. Every aspect of the 00DJ is made for the demanding life of gear on the

road with a mobile jock.

Inside the case, the sleek, stylish look is continued and complimented by blue LEDs. These illuminate the back of the case, the fan and most importantly the keyboard, allowing easy use in a dark disco environment. Equally, if not more useful, is the touch screen display. This removes the need for a mouse, which is impractical when DJing; or the touchpad usually found on laptops, which can become unreliable when used with sweaty fingers!

The connections provided on the 00DJ are minimal and DJ oriented. An IEC socket is used to supply power, which is much more suitable than the separate power supply required by laptops. A total of four, high quality, stereo phono outputs are provided for connecting the unit to a sound system. The only other connections are two USB ports and a VGA monitor output, keeping the machine simple and functional.

Inside the 00DJ is an Intel Centrino 1.8Ghz processor, together with an impressive 1 GB of RAM (memory). Two separate 80 GB hard disk drives are provided for storing program data and digital music. This means that software and music can be stored on separate drives, and a collection of tens of thousands of tracks can be backed up to the second drive for extra piece of mind.

An inbuilt Gigaport AG 24-bit soundcard supports 4 separate stereo audio outputs. This means that through the options within PCDJ, the 4 sets of phono connectors on the front of the unit can be configured in many different ways. If the 00DJ is to be simply connected directly to a sound system, one stereo output can be used as a master output, and the digital mixer provided by PCDJ can be used to fade between the



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two digital players. PCDJ also supports a separate 'cue' output which can be assigned to one of the sets of phonos and used like the selectable cue function of a regular mixer. Alternatively each digital player can be connected via a separate set of phonos to separate channels of a mixer, offering a more conventional approach.

It is widely agreed that for reliable digital DJing, a dedicated computer should be used for that sole purpose. Therefore, as a specifically designed digital DJ module, the 00DJ has no modem, network port or other peripheral connections. There is also no CD or floppy disk drive, although an external CD drive could be connected via the USB ports for loading music. Alternatively, the unit can be connected to a regular PC in order to copy music to the hard drives.

Computers generate a lot of heat, which can be a problem in the often already hot environment in which a mobile jock is often expected to work. This issue has been addressed in the design of the 00DJ, with a forced fan cooling system. A fan at the top left corner of the machine sucks cool air in, which is passed through and then pushed back out by a second fan at the bottom right corner.

Another feature of the 00DJ is a biometric finger print scanner. This allows the owner to scan their finger print and then 'lock' the machine so that it won't boot up without the same finger print being scanned again. Although this will probably do little to deter a thief, it could be useful to prevent curious punters 'having a go'.

So to summarise, the 00DJ is built to last, has been designed especially for use with digital DJing software and includes a powerful computer complete with plenty of storage

space and memory. So what's the catch? Well it's more of a concession than a catch, the extensive features and specialised design come at a cost. £1999 + VAT to be exact, which is a fair amount of cash for any lowly DJ to stump up. However, it is worth considering that this is really the only digital DJing machine on the market. You could use a laptop, with extras like a separate sound card. But will probably find that it would need replacing much more quickly, as laptops are simply not designed for mobile DJing. On the other hand, you could use a rack mountable PC, but you would then need a separate keyboard, monitor and pointing device.

In closing, I think anyone contemplating the move to digital DJing for the first time should look past the price tag and consider the long term. This 00DJ was designed and manufactured especially for the digital DJ and provides the features and reliability that are essential to keep a mobile show on the road.

PROS

- + Extremely tough construction, designed for the DJ on the road
- + Sleek and stylish design
- + Backlit keyboard
- + Touch screen display
- + 4 stereo phono outputs
- + Two separate 80Gb hard disk drives
- + Fast Intel Centrino 1.8Ghz processor and 1 GB of RAM

CONS

- Quality comes at a price!