

# REVIEW

## American DJ SDJ-1 (MSRP £199)

Over the past couple of years we have seen an array of 'multi media' players - a shift away from the comfort zone of CDs into the digital world of MP3. De Ja Vu. It's like the vinyl versus CD battle we all went through about 15 years ago!

Many DJs have already moved on to the new technology but thousands still haven't. When do you finally make the leap of MP3 faith, what piece of equipment will you buy?

The MP3 DJ players on the market so far have mostly been quite complex, some with more buttons than the Starship Enterprise. All have been well received, are generally reliable and do the job very well. So when designing a unit to compete with these ground-breaking machines American DJ decided to break the rules and turn the MP3 battle on its head. Instead of looking at making a competitor with more buttons, more features, bigger, faster... they decided to strip it back to basics and make it the most cost effective player by over £100!

The American Audio SDJ-1 is a DJ MP3 player like no other; it's simple!

The best way to describe this is a 'good old twin player'. It has every feature you would expect from a modern dual CD player, it only uses 2 rack spaces and weighs a mere 1.8kg!

In addition it has master tempo, seamless

looping and variable pitch ranges, so is by no means a 'no frills' player. Unlike all its competitors there is no playlist functionality, music crates and other fancy features, just load the track and press play.

When I first found out about this player the first thing that caught my attention was the pair of slots on the front of the unit which I had not seen anywhere else. The SDJ-1 features two integrated SD card slots allowing you to carry your music library around on an SD card the size of a postage stamp. At first I thought this was a real negative, SD cards are for cameras not for DJs! However, the more and more I played with the SDJ-1 and learnt about it, the more I understood it.

I think sometimes engineers are trying to be too clever when designing things, 'it must have this, it must have that'. I think a prime example of this is with DJ MP3 players and PC based software, it's all over-engineered and actually misses the point of what a DJ really requires.

SD cards should have been the first thing after CDs to be considered. There are many advantages to using SD cards as the DJs storage medium of choice. They provide an unbeatably fast reading time, they are inexpensive to buy, totally shockproof (anti shock guaranteed!) and totally maintenance free as, unlike hard-drives, they have no moving parts. After researching this article I



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[www.americandj.eu](http://www.americandj.eu)

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find that SD is fast becoming a standard in the professional audio and broadcast business too.

Each slot takes an SD card up to 4GB. Don't let the card's small size fool you, each card stores approximately 800 tracks in an explicit quality (5MB/MP3) file. 1600 tracks will be at your fingertips and with each SD card assignable to either player, or both, you can play all night without the need to change a disc.

The two front loading SD slots make disc loading really simple. No more USB hubs and USB pen drives that you cannot get to or that stick out from the front panel.

Putting your music onto an SD card is really simple too; you won't need an advanced engineering degree. The SDJ-1 comes with a USB to SD adapter - plug this into a USB port on your computer and the computer will automatically recognise it as an external hard drive, copy and paste your music onto it and bobs your uncle!

After inserting a card into the slot it takes a fraction of a second for the track information such as Title, Artist, Album etc. (ID-tag) to be clearly displayed. Selecting your track couldn't be simpler; the "Folder-Search-Function" allows the user to search MP3 titles according to categories such as style, alphabetical or genre.

There is a great promo video on the American DJ website which shows off the benefits of using a SDJ-1. One of the things that caught my eye is that from powering up to playing a track takes only 6 seconds! Imagine the scenario of working in one of those nightmare venues with a sound meter, the red light shines and your power goes off. If you were on a laptop or using a hard drive player you could be waiting for over a minute before normal sound resumed. I can see the SDJ-1 being a blessing in this situation.

So who is going to buy this and where does it fit in the current marketplace? American DJ have done a brave thing with the SDJ-1, they have bucked the trend and not gone for the hard drive or USB route. The machine itself is brilliant and does exactly what a DJ requires, it is well built and retails at only £199.00. I think for a DJ who is still deciding which way to turn regarding MP3 this is the perfect choice for getting started and it won't break the bank. For a DJ who has already moved on to laptop or MP3 player you need to be ditching the spare CD player and replacing it with this.

Providing you can get your head around using SD cards this player is an all round winner. When the SDJ-1 was first announced many thought it was foolish and backward step but it actually could be a stroke of genius.



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