SONY

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НЛПОУСЛП

The HDR-CX7 is the first Sony camcorder to record AVCHD video directly to Sony's Memory Stick PRO Duo. The CX7 is very small and fits in one hand easily. With a collection of other features, like its 1/2.9" ClearVid CMOS sensor and dual record mode, the HDR-CX7 unveils a new type of camcorder functionality.



#### Fly-by

The HDR-CX7 is a stealthy-looking Handycam that is not much bigger than a 12-oz. soda can. It has a solid enough weight to provide for some handheld shooting stability, and it takes 4.6-megapixel still images while simultaneously recording video. The CX7 is equipped with Sony's Super Steadyshot optical image stabilization system, which minimizes the unwanted vibrations of handheld shooting. Many of the CX7's features reside in the touch screen navigation menu on the 2.7" widescreen LCD. The LCD rotates 270 degrees for ease of viewing from varying angles, which is key, as there is no viewfinder on this camcorder. The LCD is large enough for viewing but it can potentially be cumbersome to users with clumsy or larger fingers. There are a number of recording modes such as beach, sports lesson, candle, fireworks and sunrise, to name a few, as well as a host of other features that are within the navigation screen menu options.

#### Instrumentation

A View Images playback button, located on the left side of the camcorder (with the LCD screen open) makes it simple to watch what has been recorded by pressing a button and navigating the thumbnails on the LCD screen. To play your videos, simply press Play on the touch screen, and your video clips automatically play back. The playback controls are embedded in the touch screen menu only. There is a film roll index button, located next to the View Images button, that takes you directly to the index. Additional features located on the left side of the camcorder are the Nightshot mode on/off switch that allows for low-light recording, the backlight feature and an Easy button that switches the camcorder to full auto mode.

### 2.7" TOUCH LCD SCREEN





The 10x optical zoom rocker is located on the top rear of the camcorder, right in front of the on/off switch, which also changes the camcorder from video to still mode. There is a Photo button present between the zoom rocker and the on/off dial. This button can capture a still image while the CX7 is recording video in either high definition or standard definition. The CX7 can capture a digital still image of 6.1 megapixels in photo mode. The images we captured turned out looking good, with nice color saturation and clarity, even while zoomed in and moving laterally. A hot shoe adapter located on the top-front of the lens barrel is useful for attaching an external microphone or light. Located on the back of the camcorder are the HDMI port, the A/V out, the DC in and the Record button. The dock included with the CX7 connects to the bottom of the camcorder. The docking station includes a one-step disc burn button (functional with appropriate software on your PC) and has numerous ports to connect to a computer, printer or television. The dock also acts as a battery-charging station while your camcorder is parked. While most docking stations for camcorders serve as an added accessory, the CX7 dock is a necessity. The docking station supplies the USB 2.0 and component connection to the HDR-CX7. This alone makes it an essential component, unless you plan to use only your HDMI output.

#### In Focus

There is a Smooth Slow record mode that is ideal for high-speed movement, such as a golf swing or aerial acrobatics. This mode is easily accessible on the LCD screen by selecting the home icon and then Smooth Slow record mode. We tested this feature on a number of golfers, and the CX7 displayed smooth images. However, the CX7 auto focus had a hard time getting a sharp focus on the subject. Once manual focus is selected using the touch screen navigation, focusing can be performed on the LCD screen.

#### **TECH SPECS**

Format	AVCHD(HD), MPEG2-PS (SD)
Number of CCDs	1
Size of CCDs	1/2.9" ClearVid CMOS sensor
Pixels on CCD	3200(k)
Video Effective Pixels	
	Full-range auto/manual (dial, touch panel)
Shutter Speed	Auto
Maximum Shutter Speed	1/500
Minimum Shutter Speed	1/2
Lens f-stop	
Program Exposure Modes	
Optical Zoom	
Focal Length	40_400mm
Image Stabilization	Super SteadyShot optical image stabilization system
Manual White Ralance	Auto, Indoor, One-push, Outdoor
Viewfinder	
	2.7" (211k pixels) wide (16:9) Touch Panel-Clear
LOD MOIIILOI	Photo LCD Plus
Progressive Scan	
••••••••••• <del>•</del> •••• <del>•</del> •••••••••	1080 (60i) AVCHD
Nidos Out	USB 2.0 (dock only), Component (dock only),
video out	HDMI, composite
Mana/Starga Pagarding	
Mono/Stereo Recording Microphone In	
VU Meters	
Manual Audio Level	NU
	No
Controls Headphone Jack	
Speaker Still Shot Media	
Memory Card included	
• • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
•••••••••	Yes
	Yes
External Battery	No comporder only
	No, camcorder only
Battery Type	IIIIULI I TIIUIVI
Tape Loading	NI/A
Configuration	
Onboard Video Light	
Accessory Shoe	Active interface shoe



#### **Audio**

The CX7 comes equipped with a built-in 5.1-channel onboard microphone. We tested the CX7's onboard microphone in a variety of sound scenarios, from a quiet golf course to a crowded baby shower party. We were pleased with the overall performance of this camcorder's built-in mic. Even at very close range, semi-loud voices were not very muffled or distorted. When we tested the microphone outdoors, again we were pleased with the microphone's performance in picking up both ambient noise and the sounds created by the golfer's swing and golf shot. We were not able to hear the camcorder motor while recording in a quiet setting. For picking up good-quality voice, the best results were from in front of the camcorder and about 4 to 6 feet away.

**Format**The AVCHD format's problems with motion artifacts seems to

be a thing of the past, and the HDR-CX7 is evidence of this new direction for Sony camcorders. Testing the CX7's motion compensation turned out great results with very few compression artifacts and little ghosting. Under daylight conditions, the CX7 showed very sharp and smooth images. We were very pleased with color reproduction. Under indoor lighting conditions, the

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CX7 still performed fairly well, with a slightly slower auto focus and increased digital noise. Low-light conditions will definitely be your biggest enemy in maintaining pristine images. Overall, we were pleased with the smooth motion of our recorded images under indoor conditions. We tested the CX7's image capabilities in a more difficult task with an ocean sunset, moving along a freeway, and found the motion to be very smooth with no visible artifacts, the auto focus quick and sharp and the color vivid and accurate



#### **Tapeless Revolution**

The HDR-CX7 is the first AVCHD camcorder to record to a Memory Stick. The Memory Sticks we used were each 1GB and stored 7 minutes of HD video. While the docking station makes it relatively easy to transfer and store video and images to a computer, changing tiny Memory Sticks becomes a bit cumbersome. The immediate option is to purchase a Memory Stick or two of a larger capacity. This seems to be the best option, unless you want to change Memory Sticks every few minutes or download your footage after each use. Recording to a Memory Stick saves time and money if you frequently purchase tapes and spend hours capturing your footage to your computer.

#### Conclusion

With a positive step in the tapeless direction, Sony has produced a good-looking and super-compact first-of-its kind consumer-level AVCHD camcorder that is relatively user-friendly and produces great-quality HD video. This would be a great camcorder for anyone who wants to do handheld video of almost any kind and great for a vacation or traveling where space is limited.

#### **STRENGTHS**

- Record AVCHD to memory stick
- Capture stills while recording video
- Smooth Slow Record mode
- Compact and lightweight
- High-quality HD video with accurate color

#### **WEAKNESSES**

- No viewfinder
- Manual controls embedded in touch screen navigation system

#### **SUMMARY**

 A sleek and compact AVCHD camera that records great-looking video/still images directly to Memory Stick, is relatively easy to use and includes features that will appeal to the consumer-level videographer.

#### **PRICE**

• \$1,200

Brandon Pinard is **Videomaker**'s video production assistant.

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