

3 April 2008

By: Luca Oprea, Video news editor



The HDR-TG1
camcorder
Sony

[Sony's "World's Smallest Full HD Cam" Has Miniature Sensor](#)

The HDR-TG1's WOW factor tainted by MemoryStick format

Sony's diminutive new heir to the newly minted "world's smallest Full HD camcorder" throne is the travel-ready, silver titanium frame HDR-TG1. While Full HD (1920x1080, also known as 1080P) with a 1.3 x 4.7 x 2.5 inch body and \$900 price tag would have seemed like fantasy just a short while ago, Sony made it real and gave it a horror twist that, just one day after the launch, has potential customers already complaining. The problem is that the TG1, supposed to be a full-bloodied flash memory camcorder, can only use Sony's unsuccessful proprietary MemoryStick format. Despite the fact that it ships with a 4GB PRO Duo Mark 2 card, using it in its most attractive role - as a travel/vacation cam - would most likely force you to buy extra MemoryStick cards, which just happen to be more almost twice as expensive as normal ones. With this camcorder joining the pile of Sony products being boycotted by savvy gadgeteers who are dissatisfied with the lack of memory card flexibility, stealthy voyeurism in HD may have to wait a while more. The 1/5 inch, 2 megapixel ClearVid CMOS sensor is coupled with a 10X Carl Zeiss zoom lens. The sensor's Exmor technology should reduce some of the noise originated in the really small sensor. The highest possible compression quality here is 16Mbps in MPEG-4 AVC/H.264 (an improvement over similar miniature models), for a recording time of 25 minutes on a 4GB card. In the Japanese press release, a slow-motion mode is mentioned, but at the moment it is not clear what its exact specs are. Surprisingly, the HDR-TG1 takes 4 megapixel photos, presumably through interpolation. Stills can be taken while recording. The face-detection system can identify up to eight faces, and allocates extra encoding space to the detected areas. Control is exerted through a joystick located on the back of the camera. A small zoom ring surrounds the joystick, within quick access distance of the camera holding hand's thumb. The ring has, as can be deduced from the Sony launch video linked below, quite a bit of response lag. A built-in zoom microphone records 5.1-channel surround sound. Sometime last year, Germany's Fraunhofer Institute released a decidedly less handsome Full HD camera. While not exactly up to the standards of consumer cams (it can only be controlled through a web interface, as it has no actual buttons), it is smaller than the TG1, has a huge 2/3" sensor, and advertises 9 stops of dynamic range. The Fraunhofer MicroHDTV is the real "world's smallest full HD camcorder", despite not having an official price. The HDR-TH1 will cost \$900 in May, and pre-order sales have already started.