

# SOUNDROOM

## Roland R-05



BY JONATHAN HERRERA

**THE EMERGENCE OF HIGH-QUALITY** portable digital audio recorders over the last several years has been a major boon to musicians. Most of these devices boast seemingly infinite amounts of storage, stereo mics, and an array of enhancements that make capturing gigs, rehearsals, and, well, whatever, a breeze. The best part, of course, is their easy connectivity to computers. Unlike with DATs or minidisc recorders, which often required real-time playback to get the music on a computer, this new breed of digital recorder uses USB to transfer massive song files with incredible speed. The trend is so huge that the market is getting crowded with options, so I'm happy to help by deigning Roland's R-05 one of the grooviest of the big bunch.

The pocket-sized recorder is about the size of a cigarette pack, and its metallic exterior and overall fit-and-finish are confidence inspiring, especially considering it'll like live in gig bags and bar tables for much of its life. It allows for high-res 24-bit/96kHz recording in both WAV and MP3 formats to SD cards, with MP3 being the vastly more storage-space-friendly options (MP3 files are about a tenth the size of equivalent WAV files). Its screen is bright, legible, and intelligently laid out, conveying a lot of information without distracting clutter. All of the important buttons are big and on the front panel,

and I'm glad Roland went with a 4-way directional button to scroll through menus, rather than a wheel or some other, less intuitive design. In addition to the built-in stereo mics, there's an external mic input and a stereo line input for direct recording of outboard gear.

The feature-rich R-05 is blessed with some truly handy goodies. A built-in limiter helps tame nasty peaks, while the back-panel MIC GAIN switch works in conjunction with the input sensitivity control to prevent clipping, even at full-on rock volumes. Another big bonus is the R-05's groovy playback and practice tools. It works well as a portable WAV and MP3 player (*a la* iPod), but it's even cooler as a means of learning tunes and tough licks. Load in a compatible digital audio file and it will allow looping of a specific region and control over playback speed without changing pitch. Also among the Roland's killer features is its exceptional battery life. After fully charging it, I took it to a ton of gigs and rehearsals over the course of about 3 weeks without it needing a recharge.

But, most important, how does it sound? Incredible. It's stunning how much quality is available now for so little, and the Roland never ceased to impress. The biggest variable, really, is your awareness of proper microphone placement and room acoustics. The



back-panel tripod mount is a helpful aid in raising the recorder off the ground, and it should be utilized in most contexts to truly exploit the R-05's significant capabilities. If you've got an outdoor gig (or if you like to do a bit of field recording on the side), the included windscreens is must to prevent whooshing wind noise from intrusion.

There's very little to dislike about the R-05. It's well priced and loaded with handy features that are easy to get to, thanks to its thoughtful design. If you've been waiting to pull the trigger on a portable digital recorder, I highly recommend aiming at one of these. **BP**

### TECH SPECS

- Media** SD/SDHC memory card
- Signal processing** AD/DA conversion: 24 bits; 44.1, 44.8, 88.2, 96 kHz
- Bit depth** 16/24 bits
- Format** MP3, WAV
- Interface** Mini-USB 2.0
- Weight** 5 oz

### ROLAND R-05

- Street** \$249
- Pros** Durable, affordable, and hi-fi
- Cons** None

MORE ONLINE

Roland walks you through the nifty R-05.



Some pretty cool examples of ways to best use the R-05.



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