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HARD DISK RECORDER

Focus Enhancements FireStore DR-DV5000

by Stephen Murphy

Focus Enhancements continues to advance its line of "Direct To Edit" (DTE) digital video products with the introduction of the FireStore DR-DV5000 DV Disk Recorder. This is a hard drive-based DV recorder that mounts directly on JVC GY-DV5000-series camcorders and other full-size JVC Professional DV cameras. The DR-DV5000 records the camera's DV output in real time and in a variety of NLE timeline-ready formats.

A companion to its DV disk recorders is Focus Enhancements' suite of intelligent software-based DV broadcast standard and file format conversion utilities, DV Standards Converter and DV File Converter that further simplify editing chores.

FEATURES

Although the DR-DV5000 can be used with other full-size JVC DV camcorders such as the DV500, DV550 and DV700, the recorder is designed mainly to integrate with JVC GY-DV5000-series professional DV camcorders. Cameras in this series include the GY-DV5000U, GY-DV5000E and GY-DV5001E.

Note that some differences exist in functionality depending on which exact camcorder model/revision is used. Additionally, a firmware update ("A") is available for older

revisions of DV5000 models that greatly improves operation with the DR-DV5000; check with Focus Enhancements or JVC for information specific to your model.

The DR-DV5000 is typically used as a simultaneous acquisition medium, running in tandem with the camcorder's internal tape drive. In this mode,



The DR-DV5000 is a FireWire hard drive that plugs into the side of a JVC GY-DV5000 camcorder.

the DR-DV5000 records an exact copy of the tape footage, mirroring the tape's video, audio and timecode information. Footage can then be quickly reviewed and logged through the camcorder without disturbing (or possibly damaging) the tape.

The DR-DV5000 physical system is comprised of a rugged aluminum housing/drive receptacle that resembles a heatsink on steroids. The locking drive bay, located on the top of the unit, accepts Focus Enhancements' FSHDD-1 hard drive enclosures. FSHDD-1 40 GB and 80 GB drives are

available from Focus Enhancements, providing roughly 180 and 360 minutes of recording time, respectively.

Up to four external FireWire hard drives can be daisy-chained to the DR-DV5000 to extend the total uninterrupted recording time available in the field. Customer-purchased hard drives can be formatted for use in the DR-DV5000 via the unit's built-in operating system and menu-driven user interface.

The recorder's transport operations and configuration settings are made using the DR-DV5000's backlit LCD and series of dedicated transport buttons plus three menu-dependent "soft" buttons. This user interface is located on the side of the DR-DV5000 that coincides with the "control side" of the JVC camera (opposite the tape transport mechanism).

The DR-DV5000 can record DV standard clips in a range of NLE-native formats, providing nearly instant timeline access to the files in your application of choice. The DR-DV5000's DV recording formats include RawDV, AVI Type I, AVI Type II, Canopus AVI, Matrox AVI, QuickTime and Avid OMF.

IN USE

With the introduction of the DR-DV5000, Focus Enhancements has brought its "Direct To Edit" concept to maturity. The

recorder, when used with the JVC GY-DV5000 camera, integrated in a near-seamless manner and provided such immediate value that it is hard to imagine returning to tape-only acquisition again.

The joy of shooting with the integrated GY-DV5000/DR-DV5000 combo and having the clips—with the best takes already marked as “keepers”—instantly available for editing is hard to understate. And during shooting, I never gave a second thought to the integrity of the hard disk recordings, knowing that a taped confidence copy would also be available.

The most essential functions of the Focus Enhancements DR-DV5000 system—recording DV clips through the DV camera and making those clips available for editing via computer—were easily. I had no trouble doing these basic things without cracking the user’s manual or even the included Quick Start Guide, a clear testament to the system’s efficient design.

In addition to its basic DV recording functions, Focus Enhancements includes a variety of advanced recording/playback modes and

several useful file-handling utilities.

Although I mostly stuck to Normal Record mode, the DR-DV5000 also offers Retro Disk (video is constantly buffered to hard disk, limited only by disk size) and Retro Cache (buffered to a 10-second memory cache) modes. Additional recording functions include a user-definable time-lapse mode and automatic tape-to-disk and disk-to-tape dump modes.

Besides its standard clip playback functions, the DR-DV5000 sports Loop Clip, Loop All and Play All playback modes.

Two functions that I found particularly useful during on-site footage reviewing and edit prep were Clip Preview, which displays the first frame of each clip when navigating through the files, and Organize Keep, which organizes each clip that I marked as “keeper” into an isolated folder.

Although I was very impressed with the design and operation of the DR-DV5000, I had a few minor quibbles with the user interface. A dedicated set of cursor buttons would greatly simplify menu navigation, for one. As implemented, a set of three “soft buttons” change functionality depending upon the menu page, making for tricky navigation through some pages.

Another slightly confusing aspect of the interface is that there is no correlation between the file-naming conventions used for identifying onboard clips versus the exact same clips (on the same drive) when connected to a computer. The DR-DV5000 menu system identifies recorded clips by Volume (Disk) and Track (Clip) number; for example, 1-025 indicates Disk 1, Clip 25.

That same clip, when viewed on a computer, is identified by the time and date the recording was initiated. For example, the clip referenced above as 1-025 on the DR-DV5000 was labeled 20040312-201525 (for March 12, 2004, at 8:15:25p.m.) when

accessed from my computer—a minor inconvenience, to be sure, but one that offers the potential for communication problems.

Another problem not necessarily related directly to the DR-DV5000, but worth pointing out, was that on more than one occasion the short DV cable provided to connect the camera’s output with the DR-DV5000 popped out of the evaluation camera’s DV-Out jack during use, rendering the disk files empty. The apparent culprit in this case was that the strain on the cable had, over time, widened the camera’s DV-Out jack enough to loosen its grip. Thankfully, shooting in tape/disk confidence mode meant nothing was lost, and a little gaffer’s tape prevented any further cable gaffes.

I also had the opportunity to test out Focus Enhancements’ suite of format and broadcast standard conversion utilities, which came in handy when assembling clips shot with the DR-DV5000 and material from various other sources.

SUMMARY

For some, the security and reduction of stress while shooting with the Focus Enhancements FireStore DR-DV5000 in simultaneous disk/tape confidence mode is worth the price of admission. For others, the ease of use and instant availability of the files for direct-to-timeline editing justifies the purchase.

I found that the immediate and tangible value realized from the core functionality of the DR-DV5000, combined with its useful set of file transfer and utility features makes returning to traditional tape-only acquisition quite the loathsome prospect. ■

Stephen Murphy, contributing studio editor of Pro Audio Review, is a multimedia producer and audio engineer with Grammy-winning and platinum-selling credits.

FAST FACTS

Application

ENG and EFP

Key Features

FireWire hard disk DV recorder; integrates with JVC full-size professional DV cameras; includes 40 GB FSHDD-1 FireWire drive

Price

\$1,895

Contact

Focus Enhancements
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