



Fast and Furious

ON TEST SANHO Digital CompactDrive PD6A

BY NG CHONG SENG

For cash-strapped digital photo or video enthusiasts, a portable media reader/hard disk storage device seems to make more economic sense than expensive, high capacity CF cards. The latest such device to hit our shores (after the immensely successful X-Drives and Nixvue) is SANHO Digital's CompactDrive PD6A. First off, it is a card reader that supports six of the current popular memory formats (see specs). Slap a 2.5-inch hard disk into its solidly constructed aluminum chassis, and it becomes a portable storage device. However, we did not like its separate (and rather loose fitting) cover for the unattractive looking card slots that users run the risk of losing. This risk is exacerbated by the four easily breakable protrusions that are used to hold the cover down. Instead of using an internal rechargeable lithium-ion battery, four AA-type batteries are used. The PD6A is also a battery charger that charges at a rate of 800mAh. It took us about nine hours to fully charge four Sanyo 2300mAh NIMH rechargeable batteries, and the casing became rather hot during charging. This is certainly not a "quick" charger by current standards, pretty useful if time is not a constraint.

Due to the four AA batteries, the PD6A feels slightly heavier than the X-Drive. The power switch and the card slots are housed on the right side of the unit. A battery level indicator, and the remaining capacity of the HDD are displayed on the screen. A few seconds are needed for it to detect the amount of free space left. With a

memory card inserted and the power switch at the "Card" position, you would see its capacity on the LCD as well. A minor quirk we discovered is you have to restart the unit whenever a new card is inserted. Pressing the "OK" button on the front of the unit would commence the copying process. PC connection is done via USB with the power switch at the "HDD" position. Unfortunately, the text on the LCD is displayed in Chinese, but don't worry; an English manual is provided.

In our tests, we are delighted to find that its transfer speed and battery life beats the X-Drive II hands-down. Using our Lexar 40x 1GB CompactFlash card, we were able to achieve a transfer speed of about 3.5MB per second. It took us only 4 minutes 45 seconds to complete copying about 1GB worth of files as opposed to 20 minutes and 52 seconds we got from our X-Drive II*. And with the Sanyo 2300mAh NIMH batteries, even after repeating the process about eight times, the battery indicator was still at two out of three bars!

If you are purely looking for a fast portable media reader/storage device with neck-breaking transfer speed and incredible battery life, and are willing to do without the bells and whistles such as MP3 playability found in other devices, the CompactDrive PD6A is hard to beat.

*Timings may vary according to speed of memory card, and the number of files copied.

SPECIFICATIONS

6-in-1 media reader/HDD	Interface	Battery	Price
40 GB	USB 2.0	4xAA	\$5399

Memory Card Supported: CF/MD/SM/MS/SD/MMC
File System: FAT16/FAT32
External Power: DC 7V, 1.5A Max
Additional Functions: Battery Charger
Hard disk type: Hitachi, 4200 RPM, 2MB Cache
Supported OS: Windows ME/2000/XP
Dimensions: 135 x 83 x 33mm
Price without HDD: \$5249, with 40GB HDD: \$5399
Website: www.3ndigital.com
Distributor: www.eastgear.com

HWM's Rating

Physique: **7.5**
 Features: **7.0**
 User-friendliness: **8.0**
 Performance: **9.0**
 Value: **8.0**



Blazingly fast and tremendous battery life; leaving other similar products in their wake.

8.0

Overall Score Out of 10