

# A Little Big Cam

## Sony DCR-DVD301

by John Townley

**W**e have generally not been fond of the latest generation of super-small digicams for a variety of reasons: they accentuate camera shake, they have LCD screens so tiny you can't really see what's going on, and they don't have the variety of features of larger digicams. They're OK for point-and-shoot and hope for the best later, but not great for addressing the finer points of getting that once-in-a-lifetime scene recorded in a way that posterity will thank you for it. So, we were surprised when we picked up the new Sony DCR-DVD301 featherweight model that slips right into your pocket and yet handles and delivers like machines twice the size.

This new mini largely shares the technical features of its predecessor model 201, but it has an enlarged 3.5" LCD screen that really lets you see what's going on—that extra inch makes all the difference. And, because its screen's hybrid technology minimizes LCD washout even in sunlight and can rotate up to 270° for multiple viewing angles, you're immediately getting the kind of viewing you're used to in larger models, aided by an extremely mobile and extendable viewfinder as your alternative. Of all its features, this is the most obvious plus, although the camera also addresses one of our greatest personal needs, and that is optional manual focus (and lots of other manual options as well), something often direly missing even in larger cameras.

Its other plus is its recording medium. By recording on a mini-DVD it allows you instant access to any past shot without rewinding, and when you're done you can pop the disc out of the camera and into any regular DVD player to view it without hooking up your camera or transferring your material. Further, since it records to mini-DVD-RW as well as DVD-R (but not DVD-RAM), you can do selective re-shoots of a scene seamlessly right on the spot, thanks to in camera edit capabilities. This would seem to be the wave of the future (at least the near future) in our modest opinion.

Last, but not entirely least, it incorporates a one-megapixel imager to produce higher resolution video and still image resolution (1152x864) at its top setting (20 minutes to a disc), plus lower-res options (up to an hour on a disc). In Still mode, you can also get a burst of four quickie stills at hi-res or 12 at lo-res (640x480) to make sure you've caught just the right move or expression. Of course, it's no substitute for a real still digital camera, but it's handy, and thanks to the more addressable disc format it makes stills more accessible.

All in all, this little baby is a grownup in disguise, with an accessory shoe and all kinds of options you'd ask of a larger box, including an excellent picture stabilization system that helps minimize the innate instability of a tiny little thing subject to the vagaries of your moving hand and arm. Further, it comes with software that allows some in camera editing and a USB 2.0 interface that can transfer your material direct to your computer even if it doesn't have built-in DVD. For something you can hold in the palm of your hand, this digicam is a real handful—although you'll pay for the privilege, at a relatively hefty MRSP \$1100. ■



*With a smaller 2" screen, the earlier DCR-DVD301 was a little hard on the eye.*



*The new DCR-DVD301 has an extra bright 3" screen nearly as big as its body.*

### Sony DCR-DVD301 Quick Look

Featherweight

\$1100 (Street price)

3.5" LCD screen

### Further Information

Sony DCR-DVD301

[www.sony.com](http://www.sony.com)

### Contact

Sony Corporation Of America  
(800) 222-7669  
[www.sony.com](http://www.sony.com)