Blackmagic designed its new Pocket Cinema Camera around 4K video

Blackmagic Design has unveiled a new version of its Pocket Cinema Camera, and this one comes with some major improvements for 4K video.

First and foremost, the new Pocket Cinema Camera 4K can actually shoot in 4K, unlike the original version, which was limited to 1080p. Like its predecessor, the new model can capture that footage in 10-bit ProRes or 12-bit RAW; but unlike its predecessor, it can record straight to external drives over USB-C, which is a huge advantage when recording immensely large 4K RAW files. The new version is supposed to launch later this year for $1,295 ($300 more than original).

While the camera is small for a cinema camera, it’s not exactly tiny – and it’s definitely larger than the old version. This new model makes room for a 5-inch display on the back, instead of a 3.5-inch display. And it includes a full-size Micro Four Thirds sensor, whereas the old model was closer to Super 16. That’ll be helpful for depth of field and low-light (which are already sore spots on Micro Four Thirds cameras), while still allowing it to use any of the lenses from the common lens mount used by Panasonic, Olympus, and others.

Image: Blackmagic Design

Blackmagic is known for creating pro video tools, from cameras, to broadcast equipment, to the industry standard color grading software. It’s been releasing smaller cinema cameras in the low-thousand-dollar price range for the past five or so years, which have gained a following among amateur and low-budget filmmakers.

The cameras all provide pro-grade tools and options at a dramatically lower price than what you’d have to pay for a true cinema-grade camera. While that’s increasingly less special as these features move down to cameras like Panasonic’s GH5, Blackmagic’s line continues to stand out by placing a clear focus on video and video-shooters’ needs.

The new Pocket Cinema Camera 4K has a ton of features that’ll appeal to that market — like a mini XLR connector, LUT support, and 4K recording at 60 fps — but it still has limitations that’ll keep the camera confined to a niche audience (which, to be fair, is kind of true of every camera). Basically, unless you’re a filmmaker who’s typically in control of lighting and the overall environment they’ll be filming in, this camera probably isn’t for you. It doesn’t have in-body stabilization, and the small sensor will struggle in low light and require adaptors to get the depth of field you’d get from full frame or even Super 35 cameras. That might not matter to some filmmakers, but it could be an issue for people on fast shoots or traveling to unfamiliar locations.

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