Sony ICD-PX333 recorder review

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I realize that I have written nothing on this blog for eight updates and ten spam comments. Thought I'd better post something. So I decided to review a recent purchase.

I recently purchased a Sony ICD-PX333 recorder from Wal-Mart. I cannot find the receipt, but I believe it was around $65. That was not what I set out to do, but the model I went back to purchase was sold out.

I needed to replace an Olympus VN-7100 that I found in a local thrift store. I have been writing mostly news, lately. But I wanted to be prepared when that great American novel popped into my head. My Olympus still works and I can use it for some things. I needed something, however, that had a more clear sound for dictating. The older Olympus does not have a computer port, but I can connect it through the headset with a minijack plug and record the information that way.

As an aside, I did give my Olympus a torture test. I did not intend to. But when I removed some clothes from the washing

machine, I found it inside. After making sure it thoroughly dried out, I tested it and found it still worked just fine. ***I would not recommend this test on any device on purpose***.

There were two Sony models on display. I do not recall the other, but I chose the PX333 because it had more recording time built in and had a port for a mini-SD card. The other model did not—as far as I could tell.

One of the complaints I read concerning this model is that the SD card was not included. You can get an 8-GB SD card for about $11 at Family Dollar (if they are in stock). That is double the internal memory which is just under 4-GB due because some of the internal memory is used for file management. Wal-Mart had a 32-GB SD card for about $17. With over 1000-hours of recording time, however, this is hardly an issue. If you plan to attend a week-long seminar, of some sort, or recording the speech of a politician, a mini-SD card might be a good idea.

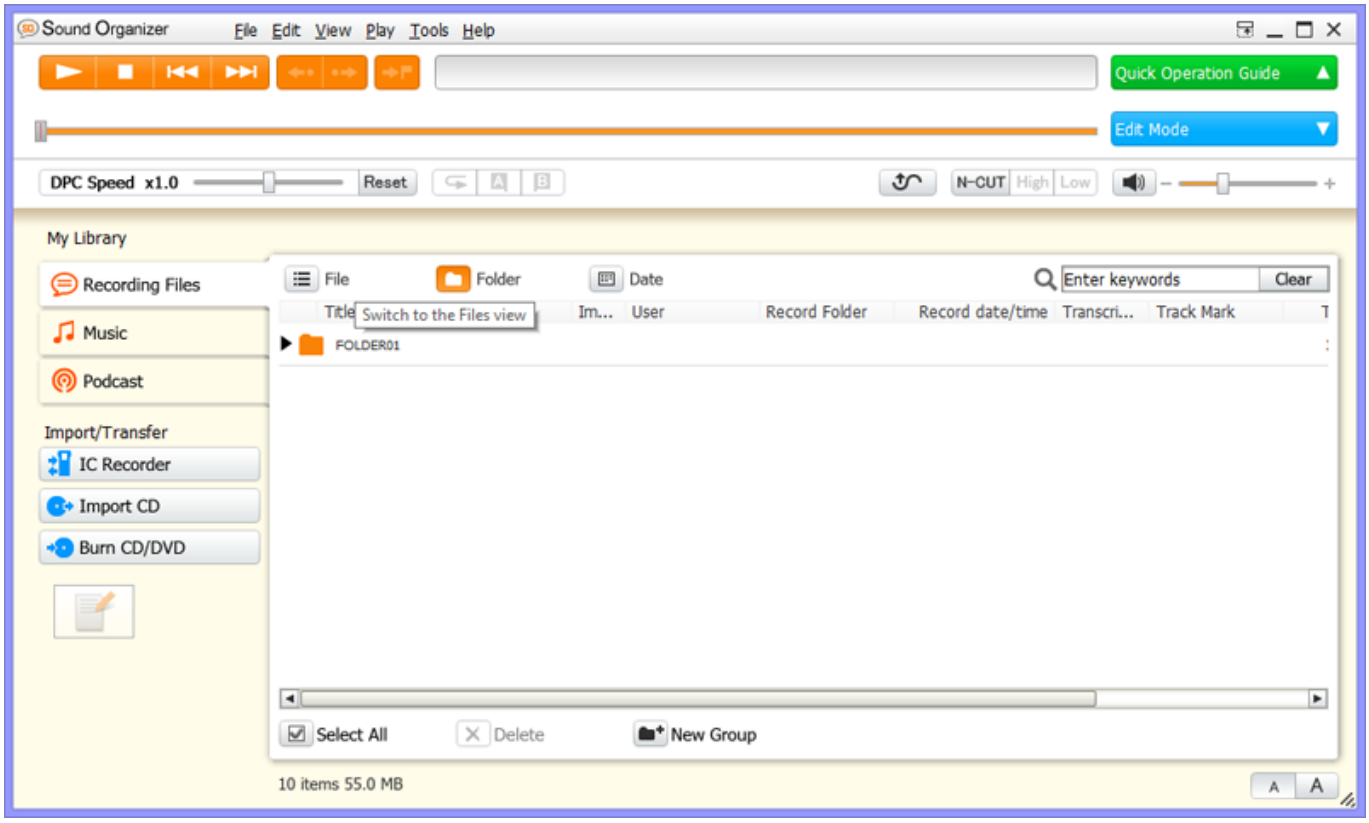
I immediately opened the box and found inside two AAA batteries, a USB plug and the PX333, of course. What I was disappointed in NOT finding was a carrying case and a DVD-ROM with *Dragon NaturallySpeaking*. I did not really expect to find a microphone or headphones even though they were on the list. There was an asterisk beside these items and that means I did not buy the higher priced model. Apparently these Items come with the PX333F model. In fact there were no disks and that was somewhat of a disappointment. Until I realized that the software may have been included on the device itself.

It took a little playing around to figure out how to move around the menu to set the time and date and figure out how to set up other things for the device (Who needs instructions?).

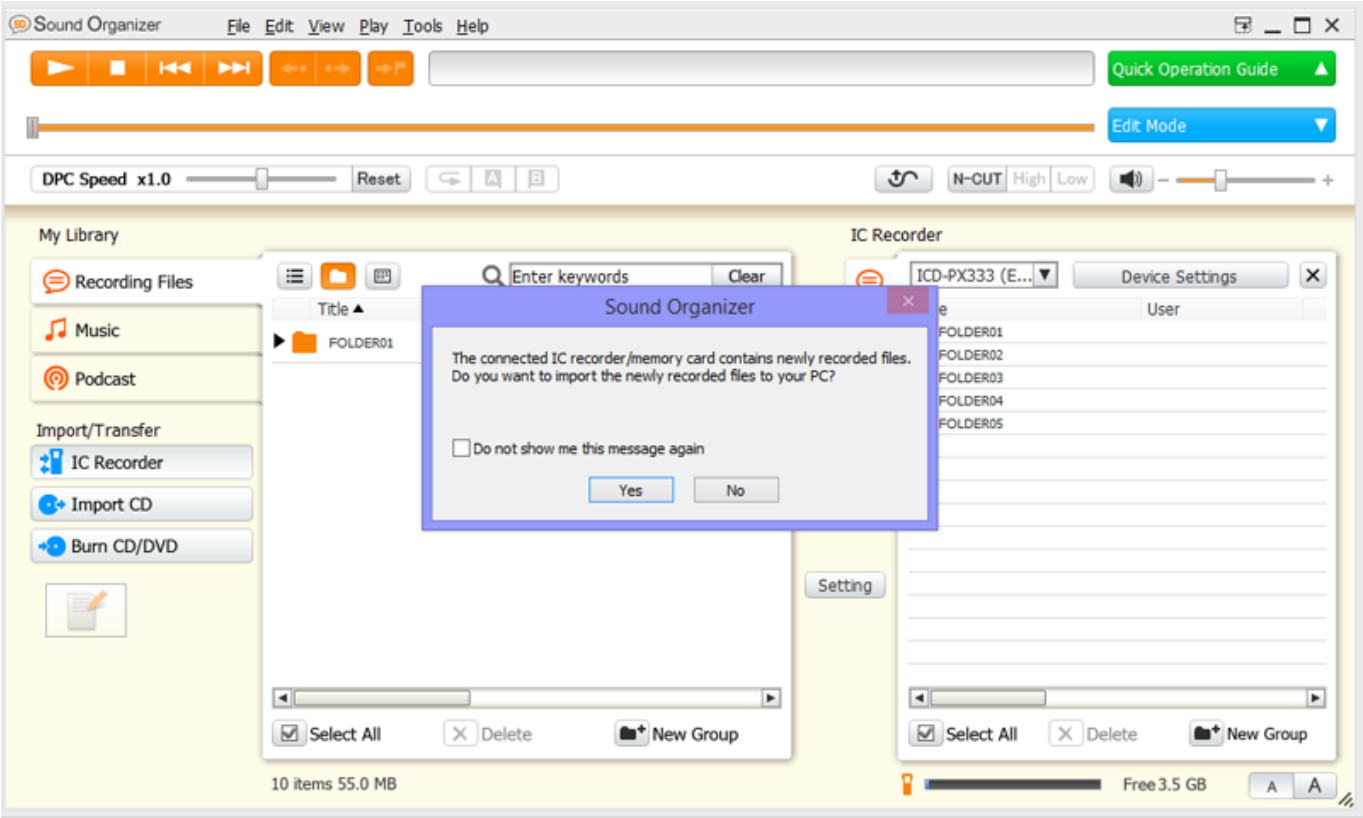
When I got it home, I plugged it in with the USB plug. I had already made a few test recordings to play with. I was pleased to find that Sony had added a software called Sound Organizer

on the device and I installed it. It did give me some weird errors but continued to install okay. There was an update to the software already available, and it, too, gave me an error, but updated okay.

The one bad thing about the software—at least for Mac enthusiasts—is that the Sound Organizer software is available only for Windows. You can still access the PX333 from Mac or Windows like any other MP3 device when attached by the USB cord.



The nice thing is that when there is a new recording on the device, the Sound Organizer, or SO, recognized that immediately and asked if I want to transfer the new files. Right away I did. As a habit I turn off devices before I plug them into the computer. Once it recognizes it, it will turn it on for you.



You will notice that when you plug in the recorder, you will get a menu for both the library on your computer and the IC Recorder. You can erase the files on your recorder or transfer back and forth. This is why the SD card is really a moot point. You can transfer recorded files back-and-forth to any device you desire and even burn them to CD or DVD.

With the device plugged in, you can do many things. You can make new folders on your device. By pressing the DEVICE SETTINGS button, you can access all of the menu items instead of fumbling with the MENU button on the device. It also accesses the date and time through your computer and automatically sets it. The PX333 does not display the time and date on the device which is kind of disappointing.

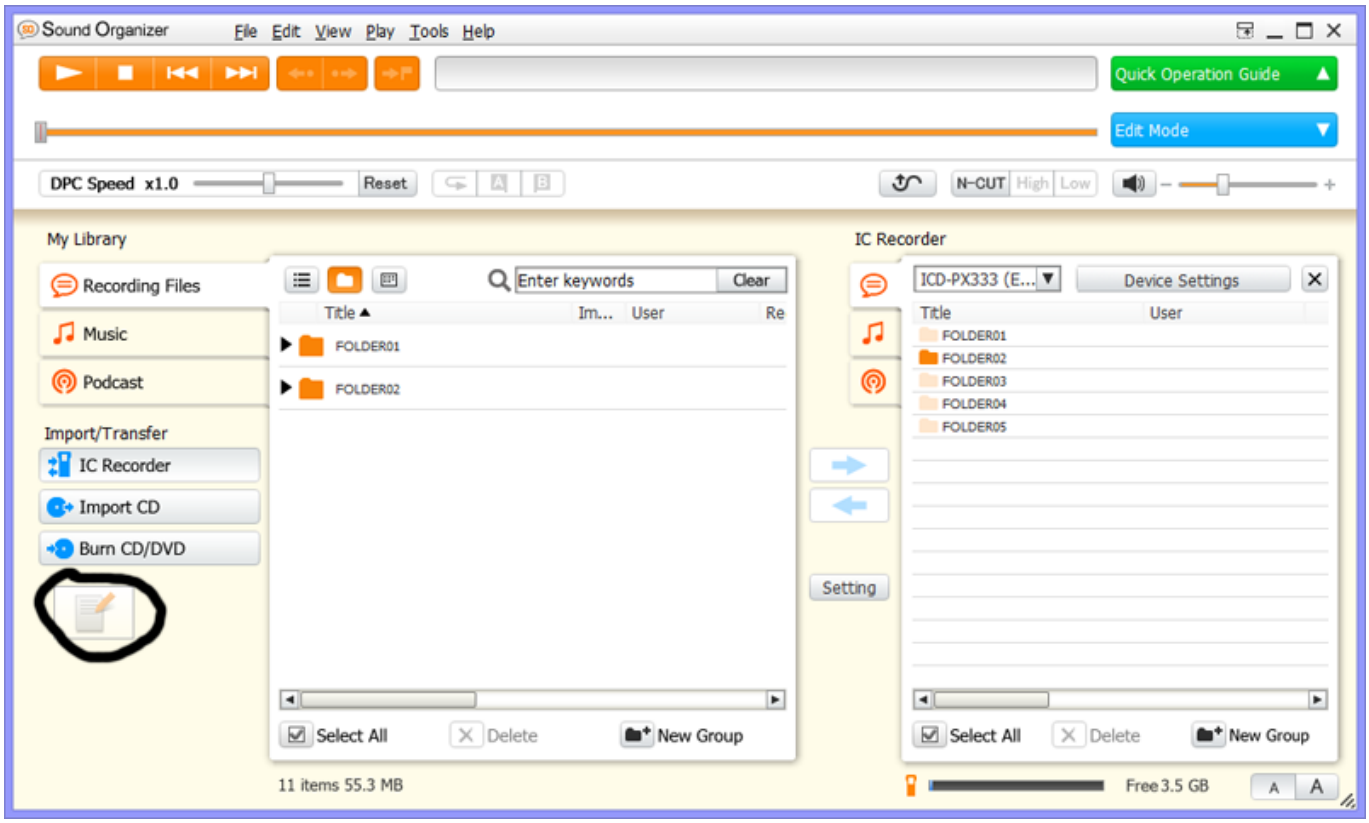
Interestingly, you can also add music and podcast to your device which might be useful if you have a stereo headset. This takes from your recording time, of course. If you are in the habit of waiting around for interviews, though, this might be nice.

The SO software allows you to edit the files so that you can

save distinct quotes. You can burn them to a CD or DVD which might be very useful for a radio news host. If you can plug in the device at the station, you can probably even run the quotes off of the device without having to waste a CD or DVD.

One review complained that the device can only record in MP3. I am not sure of the advantage of any other format except, perhaps, that it might extend the recording time. MP3 is a standard and almost all other software recognizes it. I find that makes it easier to add audio from the PX333 into my video editing software.

The one function I was really excited about was the little "notepad" icon all the way to the left and to the bottom. It is highlighted when you have a file selected. That is the transcription icon. I pressed it and hoped that it would transcribe the audio into an editable document. It did not. All it did was set up a page with the information about the file and I had to type in the quotes.



Apparently this feature is meant to work with the *Dragon NaturallySpeaking* program; not provided with this model. I have tried to get it to work with the speech recognition

software on Windows 8.1, but with no success. If I figure out how to do it, I will let you know. The SO does provide support for *Dragon*, so I presume it will work if you have a copy to install.

Another disappointment of this feature is file naming. If you go to transcribe a file, the name of the recorded file is automatically entered as the document file name. This is all right. If you go to create a second file—for whatever purpose—it keeps the recorded file name and does not let you change it. This is a minor inconvenience. You just have to remember to change the file name the first time you transcribe each document.

You can use the DPC Speed to adjust the speed of the speech to match your typing skills.

The other feature I am happy with is the T-MARK button. As you record, you can use this to “flag” certain segments. Say, for example, you are doing an interview. You can press T-MARK before each question and you can then go straight to specific questions that you decide to use in the interview.

Even without the “goodies” provided in the higher-end models, I have to say that I am okay with the purchase, overall. I still have not gone through all of the functionality of the device, so I do not know what I am missing. If I find any really neat stuff, I’ll let you know.