

## Review: DJ gadget feature-filled, but not easy

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In this product image provided by Tonium, the Pacemaker portable DJ system is shown. (AP Photo/Tonium)

(AP) -- I've always secretly wanted to learn to DJ, so I was excited to develop my skills on the awkwardly named Pacemaker portable DJ system. After spending some time determining the difference between a crossfader and a cue point, I've found that it's not easy - at least, not on this device.

Made by Swedish company Tonium and currently available in the U.S. only through the [Pacemaker](#) Web site for \$600 or Amazon.com for \$500, the Pacemaker crams 60 gigabytes of storage space, tons of audio effects, two channels for listening to songs and a neat rounded touchpad

into a device that resembles a tiny set of turntables.

But while I had some fun mixing it up anywhere I wanted - at home, on the subway, and even in the office - this couldn't offset the hefty price on a product that was difficult for this DJ wannabe to master.

Out of the box, the Pacemaker is a cool-looking product that will have passers-by curious, probably because they're trying to figure out what it is.

It features two circular areas on its black face, one containing a display and the other the touchpad. Music playback is controlled by a bevy of buttons, the touchpad and what's known as a crossfader, which allows you to blend the music that's playing on each of the two audio channels. The Pacemaker's two channels allow you to manipulate two songs at once or play and mix one while lining up another to play next.

Usually, I find my way around a gadget by pressing different buttons and gauging results. Only as a last resort would I break out the product manual. With the Pacemaker, I quickly realized the manual was a necessity - and a chore to digest.

After reading many pages worth of instructions, I soaked up plenty of things I could do with the device (and then promptly forgot how to execute many of them).

A few cool ones: You can cue up a song while playing another (or the same one) and then fade one out and switch between them. You can match the speeds of two different songs, speeding one up or slowing one down so they have the same number of beats per minute. You can make and save mixes on the Pacemaker. You can also pause a track and then manually control the playback - backward or forward - creating sounds that are slow and muddy or swift and chipmunk-like, depending on how

fast you move your finger on the touchpad.

Since it controls so much of the action, it's no surprise that the touchpad is probably the Pacemaker's best feature. You use it to navigate around the device, swiping up, down, right or left to pick tracks, change settings, and choose preselected sets of songs.

Beyond that, you can swipe in a circular motion on the outer rim of the touchpad to control effects like bass and treble. If you manipulate a button on the side of the Pacemaker it will also control things like song tempos and echo.

I did like being able to massage my music every which way, but felt that should be easier to do on this device.

The Pacemaker comes with software for mixing and managing music, which anyone can download for free from the product's Web site. Though it's not as portable, the software has all the same features as the device. I didn't find it to be a great money-saving alternative, though, as it was more difficult to find my way around than the Pacemaker itself.

I did manage to use it to put together some mixes to play with on the device - you can also do this on the Pacemaker itself. I published one to the Web-based Pacemaker community, which Tonium hopes Pacemaker users (and anyone else who's interested) will use to connect and share their creations.

Despite our moments of fun, I'm just not cut out to be a Pacemaker DJ, at least not at its current price.

Even if the price eventually comes down, I may simply be a lost cause. I tried using it to DJ a party, but after a few songs I realized I lacked the patience to stand by it mixing songs all night.

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