

▼ Tried and Tested

T-EYE DRIVE RECORDER

▼ Intro

IN-CAR VIDEO RECORDERS ARE NOT NEW, BUT THIS NEW CONTRAPTION CERTAINLY HAS A BAG OF NEW TRICKS UP ITS SLEEVE.

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▼ **The T-eye Drive Recorder** is an in-car video recorder that captures footage both inside and out. It has two CMOS VGA (640x480) cameras that each offer 170 degree viewing angle (making for a total 340 degrees). Video is recorded in Motion JPEG at 16 frames per second. With the supplied 2GB SD card it can record up to 60 minutes, or 90 minutes at lower resolution. The unit can also support 8GB and 16GB cards, which equates to 12 hours of footage on the 16GB.

The 3-axis G-sensor means it can measure lateral (side to side), longitudinal (front to back) and vertical (up and down) movements. Add to that there's the GPS system that continually logs vehicle speed, trajectory and location co-ordinates. An infrared light module can be plugged in for taking in-cabin footage at night and a discrete panic button can be installed. On top of all this, there's a built in microphone for audio recording. +

“**THE T-EYE DRIVE RECORDER IS AN IN-CAR VIDEO RECORDER THAT CAPTURES FOOTAGE BOTH INSIDE AND OUT.**”



Assessment

There are two mounting options - mirror or fixed type. The mirror mount is a large, adjustable sliding clip that fastens the T-eye to the mirror. The fixed type mounts one end to the dash, via double sided adhesive. The mirror mount gets our preference vote because it's easily removable; while the fixed type lets keen eyed thieves know there's a gadget in the car.

When mounted, one camera faces out to record what's happening at the front of the vehicle, while the inside camera captures the car's occupants. Both cameras are simultaneously recording so it can record what is exactly happening both inside and out.

The Drive Recorder automatically switches on when receiving power from the cigarette lighter (or it can be hard wired). Stop the engine or remove power and the T-eye stops recording. In an ideal world it can be left on the dash, but it would no doubt be too tempting for opportunists looking for an easy pickings. So unless you can park your car in secure spots everywhere you go, it's going to have to be mounted and dismounted suitably.

The unit comes supplied with a 2GB SD card, already updated with the latest firmware and software. The 2GB card is more than adequate for generic, everyday use but if you need more, say for covering the whole day's action for a track day, it can also make use of 4GB, 8GB and 16GB cards.

The unit has a 25 minute buffer, so you can't completely fill the unit with events. It will always continually record at least 25 minutes and once the memory card's capacity has been reached, older files are overwritten in a round robin fashion.

One of its highly marketed uses is for accident recording. When a predetermined g limit is triggered by the g sensor, or the emergency record button is hit, data is recorded, locked in and saved as an 'event'. It wouldn't do much good if you're in an accident and it only records once you get hit, so the T-eye creates the event up to 1, 2 or 3 minutes (determined in the configuration) before the accident and 1 minute afterwards. The unit is continually recording, but the creation of an event simply stores a file that only allows authorised parties to delete. This means in the case of a not-at-fault accident it's your witness on the stand if you ever needed it.

But its uses just continue to flow from there. The most striking aspect of the T-eye is its wide scope of applications. Think about it - capturing track day footage, monitoring trade and fleet vehicles, concerned parents nosing around to see where

the kids really go or even helping you fight that speeding fine with recorded GPS evidence.

So what can you actually do with all this data? Remember, there's GPS, three axis of gs all recording with the video. So after we had our initial test run, opening the files for the first time in the viewing program, the voyeuristic, techno geek inside us went to town. Outside video, cabin footage, audio, gs, vehicle speed, coordinates, direction of travel, vehicle location - all this information readily available in front of us.

Our biggest use will be to see how we really fare on the track. The data offers so much insight into your own performance that was previously only had by expensive equipment. It is this post-analysis that will ultimately make you a better driver.

While playing footage, click on a button and the route is displayed via Google Maps in realtime. Say, you're in charge of a field team and need to see if they're taking the most efficient route to jobs. Whack the device in the vehicle, record it for a day and presto, instant Big Brother.

There's also one other key element to the program. If you want to upload the footage, be it when you were at the track or perhaps even presenting evidence to the courts, hit the export button and it'll convert it to AVI. Absolutely brilliant.

When playing files, we found the viewing program needed to be run as Administrator, causing us some inconvenience when initialising it on our network PCs (no Apple support as of yet). Though, our biggest gripe is the frame rate. For some uses it's fine, but the 16fps proves to be too choppy to fully relive and analyse track footage. We're told at just 18fps the footage will be noticeably smoother, so this would be ideal.

At close to a grand retail, it is by no means cheap, but for what it does the asking price is reasonable. Hey, if it proves that you were not at fault in an accident, lets you off the hook with a traffic fine, records the licence plate of a road rager, or shows you're more than just a keyboard warrior at your forum's track day, it probably paid for itself already.

For future firmware updates, it's slated to incorporate GPS speed camera locations. Once this is done, it'll truly be the Swiss Army Knife of automotive gadgets. Even as it stands now; it's another invaluable device that is going to become a mainstay in our cache of tools.

THE MOST STRIKING ASPECT OF THE T-EYE IS ITS WIDE SCOPE OF APPLICATIONS.

Quick Contacts

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Up Close

WHAT: T-eye Drive Recorder
FOR: All cars
FROM: TCG Industrial
PRICE: \$995

Score

PRICE:
81%
EFFECTIVENESS:
93%
QUALITY:
80%

Overall

92%

FOR: So many applications, records inside and out, invaluable GPS and g data
AGAINST: Only 16fps