

PRODUCT NAME	Sony F900 R	FOR	Lighter than F900, less noise	REVIEW FILE
TYPE	HDCAM Camcorder	AGAINST	No optical viewfinder	
PROJECT	Rise of the Footsoldier	CONCLUSION	Worthwhile evolution	

SONY F900R

THE SONY F900R IS IN REALITY AN F900 IN AN IMPROVED F750 BODY BUT AS WELL AS LESS WEIGHT IS THERE LESS NOISE?



The original HDW-F900 model, part of Sony's CineAlta line, ushered in an era of 24P television production and helped to drive the conversion from 35mm film to digital video formats. The new HDW-F900R is designed as a replacement to this model, offering a number of enhancements.

This new camcorder features a more compact and lighter chassis, HD-SDI outputs and new accessory boards for slow shutter, image inversion and down conversion with 3:2 pull-down. The HDW-F900R model can also take advantage of the optional video cache feature of Sony's HDW-730/750 camcorder series.

The new camcorder features three 2.2 megapixel CCDs, 12-bit DSP, and has the same optical axis as its predecessor model with virtually identical image-making capabilities.

Sony's goal was to refine the camera, making it lighter while offering the modern HD interfaces that are now common to the production community but were not available at the inception of the CineAlta line.

For example, monitoring is now digital instead of Y/Pb/Pr, eliminating the need for adapters or other terminal gear used for HD-SDI monitoring. The new HDW-F900R also incorporates

a completely lead-free solder design.

You can now record four channels of AES/EBU digital audio without the use of the HDCA-901 camera adapter, and it can also record four channels of simultaneous analogue audio.

OPTIONS

There are two new option boards for the HDW-F900R. The HKDW-902R is a down-converter that enables 3:2 pull-down for on-set standard-definition monitoring and allows the unit to be used in 4:3 squeezed, letterbox or crop modes for SD viewing. The HKDW-905R is a slow-shutter/image inversion board that allows the use of image-inverting lenses such as ultra-telescopic lenses from Panavision, the Canon Anamorphic Lens Adaptor or Cinema lenses with 2/3-inch adapters.

ON-SET WITH THE RISE OF THE FOOT SOLDIER

Two fully loaded F900Rs from London rental company ICE are being used for the next film from BAFTA nominated Director Julian Gilbey (the nomination is for Rollin' With The Nines another HD film – Gilbey loves HD).

His new film, Rise Of The Footsoldier, follows the same violent 'street' storylines, but the production team were able

to get hold of some shiny new Sony F900Rs, not so shiny now after fake blood had been splattered all over them.

High Definition Magazine spent some time on-set in East London talking to DoP Ali Asad, and camera operator Michael Monteiro.

Ali Asad has had plenty of experience with the Sony 750 and not so much with the previous F900 although he sees this new camera as a kind of repackaged F750. Michael Monteiro has F900 experience and is glad there's now a colour viewfinder: "With the colour viewfinder its easier to judge focus but its still not as good as an optical viewfinder, if you want to judge focus you sometimes have to go to the monitor".

Ali Asad: "This is a very good camera, colour-wise and the look is absolutely amazing – but if they could change the front end of the camera so we could have more variety of lenses and an optical viewfinder, it would make it a more cinematographer's camera. This will get them in to the feature

film market with a much lighter scale camera. The Arri D20 is more of a cinematographers camera and the front end is basically a film camera but the F900R is a much more versatile camera, its much lighter than the previous 900".

RUN 'N GUN CAMERA

The style of Rise Of The Footsoldier is very 'run 'n' gun' and the weight of the new 900 is allowing the schedules – just six weeks – to become manageable.

Michael Monteiro: "The 900R is smaller and lighter which is great for handheld situations. Also if you go inside the camera and look at the menus you'll see that they've also used the structure of the 750 which is great for quick set-ups.

"I wanted to do some settings which I had used on the old 900 and I tried to put it in the 900R but it didn't work because the menu structure is completely different. Its good and it works because its more simplified – In the old 900 you could change

DoP Ali Asad and operator Michael Monteiro 'running 'n' gunning' with the new Sony F900R on-set for Rise Of The Foot Soldier

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PRODUCT NAME	Sony F900 R	FOR	Menu structure from 750	REVIEW FILE
TYPE	HD-CAM Camcorder	AGAINST	Not yet true movie camera	
PROJECT	Rise of the Footsoldier	CONCLUSION	Worthwhile evolution	

SONY F900R CONT'D

increments in percentages and now its just with numbers like little steps.

"I had to get used to the new settings but I like it now. For instance for the black gamma in the old 900 you would put in a percentage and now you've got settings like low, mid, high-mid and so on. I think its easier that way not just for us but for other people who are picking it up for the first time.

"This is also good because otherwise you'd have to do a huge course and read the whole manual, now you just go for the specific things, specific settings.

"When you're in the field you have to get your monitor set up right and from there we will change something in the gammas and you can do this quicker with the 900R. The camera also feels a lot more rigid than the previous one which I found a little delicate. It was heavy and if you were using it handheld and put it down you were then then worried about boards coming loose, stuff like that."

COMPETING WITH FILM?

Ali Asad: "Its more user friendly than the 750 definitely. The contrast ratio has improved a lot, it's far more forgiving in highlights by miles, the difference is enormous.

"I think the latitude with this camera is beginning to compete with film and I'm a film person. We're getting about 11 stops. The 900R is coping with the huge contrasts really well."

Ali and Mikey were shooting with available light the day that we visited the set. The scene was contrasty with a white van in full sunshine and really hard shadows, Mikey just stopped it down and still had details in the blacks inside the van. "You

need to get your aperture right and then push it in post, if you clip then it's gone. We've set the cameras up for a film-out so we've opened up a little bit more, it looks bright but afterwards you can do much more with it".

It seems that having what is a 750 body and menu with a F900 inside is a combination that works very well. For the purists the camera is never going to be a true cinematographers camera but has never really been described as one and has done most of its work in episodic television.

The director is taking DVCAM straight out the back of the camera through the downconverts so you're getting the best of the 750 and 900 in a camera body which gives the operator confidence.

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