

ZOOM Q SERIES VIDEO RECORDERS

From £199 Need to get your fills on film? Zoom's trio of cameras aimed at musicians will get you there quickly

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Video has never been more important to, or prolific with drummers than it is right now. Whether you're attempting to teach online lessons, build your name as a gun for hire, or simply share your enjoyment with the world, plenty of the freshest faces in drumming have emerged via social media and video platforms like Facebook and Instagram. Now, the engaging angles, personality and raw talent are something you have to develop for yourself, but when it comes to video quality, there's no shortage of options from smartphones to action cams to DSLRs. It's a learning curve, each has its own distinct benefits and drawbacks, and none are cheap, but Zoom's range of video cameras throw an additional option into the mix: they're designed for musicians.

Build

A strange phenomenon has occurred with A/V technology since the advent of MP3s. We strive for better visual quality – from DVD to Blu-Ray, HD to 4K, we're obsessed with resolution to the point that when we buy a new phone, it's because it has a better camera. Along the way though, audio quality has become secondary. You barely need to scratch the surface of YouTube to find full HD videos with awful clipped, compressed, popping drum sounds. Let's face it, using the built-in mics on most phones, action cams and DSLR cameras sounds bad. Zoom's Q series has been around for a couple of years, starting with the flagship Q8, then followed by the Q4n, and now, the brand new Q2n.

All models draw on Zoom's reputation for broadcast field recorders and feature stereo condenser microphones onboard. Most importantly, they have proper trim controls to ensure that your audio remains intact, and when it does, it can be captured in uncompressed 24bit/96khz quality. Each model also includes a 160° wide angle lens, so you can fit your whole kit in shot easily, but with the option to zoom digitally (Q4n and Q8 only), and Zoom has taken the headache out of settings such as white balance and metering by including preset 'Scenes' based

EXPANDABLE MEMORY

The two bigger models both use SD cards, while the Q2n uses a micro SD. They don't come with any memory, but both kinds are widely available with plenty of capacity

Also try...



1 GOPRO HERO 5 BLACK

We say: "While there's less control over the audio, the new top-of-the-line GoPro will have you covered for high-quality video with simple operation."



2 RODE i-XY

We say: "These stereo condenser microphones from Rode will up your iPhone's game."

EDITING

The cameras all record in standard audio and video formats, so your editing software won't encounter any problems

on the typical lighting environment of common musical scenarios (rehearsal rooms, stage lighting etc). What's more, Zoom is clearly a company after the skin-tickler's pound, as they've enlisted the heavyweight names of messrs Gadd, Weckl and Robinson to provide testimonials on their website.

Hands On

The Q8 and Q4n take on the appearance of a more traditional camcorder, and are extremely lightweight. They're mounted

using a standard tripod thread, but also come with a GoPro-style adaptor, which allowed us to use our GoPro's mic stand mount on a typically battered rehearsal room mic stand without movement. Handy if you already own a GoPro and accessories.

Both cameras also feature flip-out rotating screens which we found particularly useful while recording solo in a practice room for framing the shot, plus metering the audio. The touchscreen operation is intuitive enough, if not a little slow to



THE Q8 CAN ACTUALLY RECORD FOUR AUDIO TRACKS AS WELL AS SHOOTING YOUR VIDEO ALL AT ONCE



AUDIO

The jewel in Zoom's camera crown is the built-in condenser mics and audio recording quality. Zoom's reputation is built on sound, so this is a welcome feature

FLIP-SCREENS

The Q8 and Q4n both feature flip-out LCD screens, making framing and audio monitoring a doddle on your own

SCENES

Each model is equipped with various 'scenes' ranging from practice room to stage lighting to help you get the visuals right

VIDEO QUALITY

You won't see any 4K boasts here, which might not make these cameras entirely future proof, but all models can shoot at 1080p (HD)

respond by today's standard.

While both have onboard condenser mics, the Q8's are interchangeable for optional configurations (not included), while the Q4n's are fixed, but can switch between the X/Y (crossed) or A/B (spaced) positions depending on the width of stereo image you're trying to capture. The Q8 has a masterstroke up its sleeve, though, and that's the two XLR sockets on the back. Yep, the Q8 can actually record four audio tracks as well as shooting your video all at once. This is great news for drum videos as you can use the onboard mics as overheads/room mics, while also capturing your bass drum and snare for further tweaking at the editing stage. The Q8 can also be used in 'audio only' mode if you want to.

The Q2n is the newborn of the family, and

Zoom has clearly taken on-board the best-loved functions of action cameras and applied it here - it's bigger than a GoPro, but still small enough to fit neatly in a spare pocket on your stick/cymbal bag. It's super lightweight at around 100 grams and, like the other two models here, features a fixed focus, mechanical trim pot for the audio and obvious 'record' buttons for speedy set-up and foolproof capture. If you do want to delve into the menus, they're nicely laid out around the screen, and everything makes complete sense. The Q2n can be attached to a tripod too, although the body design means it does a good job of supporting itself on a flat surface. It's a shame that Zoom hasn't included the optional MA2 mic stand adaptor (which resembles the handle part of an SM57 for holstering in a mic

clip), although with a street price of £8, it looks like an easy add-on and definitely worth investing at the time of purchase. **R**

VERDICT: Zoom has delivered a range of great products in the Q series. We'd argue that the extremities of the three serve their own purposes, leaving the Q4n a little high and dry. With the Q2n on shelves at well under the price of the entry-level GoPro Hero 5 Session, and way better audio, it could be a game changer.

BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★
PLAYABILITY ★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★
RHYTHM RATING ★★★★★

Essential spec

zoom

PRICES

Q2n: £199;
 Q4n: £299;
 Q8: £399

VIDEO

Q2n: 1080p/24/30fps,
 720p/24/30fps;
 Q4n: 3MHD 24/30fps,
 1080p/30/60fps,
 720p/30/60fps, WVGA
 30/60fps;
 Q8: 3MHD 30fps,
 1080/30fps, 720p
 30/60fps WVGA
 30/60fps

AUDIO

.wav, .AAC

MICS

Stereo condenser, X/Y
 pattern on Q8 and Q2n,
 X/Y, A/B on Q4n.
 Additional mics
 available for Q8

MEMORY

Q8/Q4n: SD/SDHC/
 SDXC;
 Q2n: MicroSD/SDHC/
 SDXC

POWER

Q8 and Q4n: Lithium ion
 batteries (charged via
 USB);
 Q2n: AA batteries

OTHER FEATURES

LCD touch screens,
 HDMI outputs, built-in
 speakers