So, even though the thing shapes up as the next generation of Porta-Pak, a major improvement is not as simple as it looks. In fact, this is a good deal more than you'd think.

**DESIGN INTELLIGENCE**: Sony is both so good and so bad it's hard to know where to begin.

In its history, Sony was the first manufacturer to come out with Porta-Paks (their CV series) and the first to make a quality leap with a second generation, self-contained system with record and playback. The CV series was record only through any TV set, losing a RF converter which changes the signal from standard, time division to color, to a brand new, 3M 995. Sony also has playback through the monitor eyepiece for on-the-scene previewing which can really turn on people you've just taped and help build an instant trust. (see Experience)

Next up in the Sony half-inch line is their color deck (AV5000) although camera eyepiece intact. They break off like crazy months or so and we've not gotten feedback yet. First reports are that it's pretty well-weighted. The pack is very cumbersome and can only be carried in a leather case which obscures visibility to the tape path so you can't run quick checks on whether or not it's running right. (see Experience)

**DESIGN INTELLIGENCE**: The configuration of the record deck is similar to that of the Panasonic-Concord and likewise the Shibaden/Panasico has no internal playback. Still not much of an improvement over the Sony.

**SUPPORT**: Shibaden has a good reputation, most of their equipment is made for professional use (although they've just been bought out by Hitachi), a Japanese electronics conglomerate, and they just make video equipment for appliances. An on-shoot of a Midwestern collateral which their main pro office-copying equipment. Neither one seems to have a high access marketing and sales system.

**EXPERIENCE**: None.

**DESIGN INTELLIGENCE**: The Craig has one, and one sort of nice thing about it. First, there are two microphones, one front, one back. This means that whoever is talking can also talk into the soundtrack. The other thing is that the Craig has playback but only with a manual rewind. This offers the convenience of a total system without the extra weight that a rewind motor means. Like Sony and Ampex, it also has playback through the camera eyepiece as well as any TV set.

**SUPPORT**: The Craig is not Type One standard although there is one model in the support line that is. But it's pretty hard to find a dealer.

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**DESIGN INTELLIGENCE**: There's the first total system Porta-Pak, Instavideo (it used to be called Instanton but Ampex changed it because someone else had that copyright) all of Sony and many more.

This is because the pack itself sets into a more stationary (weight 6.5 lbs.) service pod. The deck of the pod is a regular patchboard with standard coax and audio-in-and-out jacks. (Of course, it interfaces with a regular TV set through the antennae plugs, like the Sony). This means you don't have to hassle (modifications to avoiding)

**EXPERIENCE**: We had a chance to see the Ampex one in practice in the Consumer Reports test lab, and we've also been able to take a look at the Ampex one in the studio. The Ampex one is being used by a Midwest consumer testing group and is a whole lot better than the Sony. In fact, the Ampex one is so good it makes you want to go out and buy a whole new system. We're not sure if this is the best machine for everyone, but it's a darn good one.

**SUPPORT**: Ampex has a generally good reputation, but their TV set is a little too small for our taste. We've been unable to find a dealer for this machine yet, and we've heard that the Ampex one is expensive. (see Experience)

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