

Product: Mercury Pro External FireWire SuperDrive
Vendor: Other World Computing/MacSales
MSRP: 225.99 **Street price:** 225.99
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Review by Daniel M. East, President
The Mid-Atlantic Macintosh User Groups Team (MaMUGs)
info@mamugs.com • <http://www.mamugs.org>



DESCRIPTION (what's it do, what's it got?):

Pioneer DVR-106 4x DVD +/- R/RW, CD-R/RW 'SuperDrive' Oxford911 FireWire & USB 2 Combo Solution. Includes Dantz Retrospect Express, NTI DragonBurn Complete for OS 9/OS X, 5 Pieces DVD-R 4X Media in Jewel, 25 Pieces 80Min CD-R Media. 1yr OWC Warranty.

MIN. SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: Macintosh with FireWire Interface and OS 8.6 and above or PC with FireWire interface and Windows 98 or other OS with FireWire Support. USB 2.0 requires Windows 2000 or later, or Mac OS X.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS: So, as a frustrated Titanium PowerBook user without a SuperDrive, my never-ending search for the best way to burn ANYTHING has led me to the Mercury Pro from OWC. It's really everything you need for storage, backup, iLife apps and more. There are a lot of enclosures for the Pioneer AOx drives and this is not just reliable and fast, but also designed in a clean, simple package. Great for all levels of experience...

WHAT I FOUND: I like the lucite housing lines and style. Again, there are only so many ways to package these drives and OWC has created a nice look and feel along with all the cabling and media you need to get things started right out of the box. Compact and unobtrusive for a drive that requires a fair amount of desktop real estate.

LIKES? : I love the look and feel of this drive. OWC has housed the drive in a solid package and the connectors (unlike other brands I've tried) are all smooth and snug. The dual FW400 ports lock in tight, but not too tight. Burn times are accurate and I've really had fun making my iTunes CDs and DVDs. Apple's DiskBurn worked like a champ so no additional software was actually needed for CD-Rs. The burning software that is included does have one nice feature that I really like; Dragon Burn allows for "live to CDR" recording and this is just great for anything from taking audio from broadcasts to recording live music from the mixing console or mic input.

DISLIKES? : The MacSales website shows this drive as an AO5 drive; however, it is, in fact, an AO6. A good thing really. It includes the new standards for DVD R/RW + and - like Sony has done in their drives. Aside from the live feature above, Toast is really the standard. Since iDVD is not an option externally, and given that DVD Studio Pro 2 is a hefty, although worthwhile investment; Toast's DVD creation provides much better results when played on a commercial/home DVD player over Dragon Burn. Maybe a bundle or add-on option? Although I understand the OEM issues of housing a Pioneer drive, it would be great to be able to come up with something other than the antiquated beige drive door. This is not an OWC issue, however, and something I hope will change in the newer internals. One other note is that the buffer overrun correction is a "must" on most SuperDrives. This one is no exception.

HOW DOES THIS PRODUCT COMPARE? : Performance of the drives is pretty much the same across the board. The throughput of the OWC seems more reliable and the connections more solid over the Formac and EZquest versions. The LaCie d2 comes with Toast 6 for 269.00 and the LaCie Porche Design DVD RW +/- comes with Toast Lite for 229.00 which gives it a slight edge over the OWC; however, the Lacie's seem a little larger in size (esp. for use with a PowerBook).

RECOMMEND TO A FRIEND?: Absolutely an excellent choice for anyone with a Mac without a SuperDrive or CD-R drive and looking for an affordable solution that will grow with you and provide reliable, consistent results.

TEST SYSTEM:

Apple Titanium PowerBook G4 500 - 1Gb RAM - 10.3.1

FINAL THOUGHTS: I can't wait to see what OWC comes up with for the next generation of these drives. FW800, larger buffer, audio over FW; all would be terrific from the internal drive manufacturers. Given that most new Macs come with a SuperDrive option, it would be great to see these drives offer something that the internals might not. Be that speed or media type, the future of these formats is bright and changing so it will be important to make these third party add on hardware items more than an alternative; I'd like them to be a 'better' choice. In this case, and for my burning needs, OWC really IS.

OVERALL RATING: 5 out of 5 stars EXCELLENT

For more information, visit:

<http://www.macsales.com/> or visit this product page

<http://eshop.macsales.com/AddToBasket.cfm?ID=6195&Item=OWCMRFWU2D106>

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