

## Mercury Elite-AL Pro Mini-Drive

by Scott Nicholas ( "Nick" ) Amendolare

The name of the game these days is drive space. In today's market there is no shortage of drives available to solve the multiple problems of those needing maximum storage while striving to satisfy the need for portability, versatility and most importantly durability.



While OWC's Mercury Pro line of hard drives can be considered among the fastest and most versatile on the market, they are now moving into the realm of maximum portability. This move forward birthed the [Mercury Elite-AL Pro Mini](#), their new portable quad-interface bus-powered external hard drive.

I am going to make this quick and painless. The Mercury Elite-AL Pro Mini is the Dodge Ram Truck of portable drives. Much like the Dodge Ram truck, it suffers from a form consumer / prosumer dichotomy trying to be all things to all users. While the company boasts that it is a small drive, quite honestly, not in comparison to other drives on the market. Coming in at 5.5 x 1.1 inches, it can fit in a suitcase while on the road, however, with all the cables needed for its' various functions, it's not prudent to carry this in a laptop carrying case. The good news that while it is not as small as some drives on the market, you get the same speed, versatility and durability as you would from their larger OWC products.

The positive attributes of this drive are fairly easy to ascertain. First: Incredible speed. The Mercury Elite-AL Pro mini utilizes a USB port, two FireWire 800 ports, and an eSATA port. Needless



to say, it is the fastest connection type widely found on external hard drives, The drawback is that requires both an eSATA card to be installed in your computer, and external power to operate eSATA. Incidentally, the eSATA card does not come with the drive and must be purchased separately.

So, much like the Dodge Ram, you need to purchase add-ons to get the benefits of what the company boasts are its selling point. Even without the eSATA usage, this reviewer was able to transfer 280 gigs worth of video data from hard drive to the mini in less than half an hour. For the average consumer this is decent rate of transfer, for the pro in the field, this may not cut it.

More to the point, this drive really would be more suited to a home studio situation attached to a desktop station as opposed to a laptop for the travelling professional. So while you have speed capability at home, you do sacrifice portability for a large number of prosumers and consumers who want that speed for their laptops. People want to plug and play, not sort out cables and add more features to get the maximum out of their product. Is that a lazy approach to technology? Maybe, but welcome to the real world.

It is a huge step in the right direction, however while there are some truly admirable qualities from this drive there are some drawbacks.



While the durability of this drive is unquestionable – the aluminum enclosure is shock resistant up to 1500 – the Elite-AL Pro Mini does not come with a travel case to protect that brushed aluminum. Also, the drive does not have an external power supply, which is not consistent to what the drive portends to deliver. While the lack of an external power supply may seem to increase its portability, it certainly impacts the potential stability of the drive and the system it is running with.

How you may ask? The drive relies on a FireWire connection to provide power. Yes, other drives do the very same thing, but the other drives do not rely on FireWire power to spin the drive while using its eSATA connection for data transfers. The Elite Mini does rely on FireWire power for this capability. For this reviewer, it seems that if one were able to use this in the field without AC capability, this is an enormous waste of laptop power as well a potential threat to the stability of your system down the road. This however, may be a moot point as most laptops are not eSATA port capable. Another drawback is the lack of a fan. This reviewer found that the drive heated up much too quickly and this is a huge concern if this drive is used as your main unit to store media.

In this reviewer's opinion, this is an outstanding drive to purchase and leave fixed to your desktop as a smaller storage for any number of file types. You really cannot go wrong, but this is not so much a travel drive as the features it boasts cannot be fully utilized in the field.

## PRODUCT OVERVIEW

### OWC Mercury Elite-AL Pro mini External Hard Drives

#### Features and Specs:

Consumer's choice of a 2.5" Serial ATA (SATA) hard drive OR Solid State Drive (SSD), the latest chipset, and a "Quad Interface" of FireWire 800/400/USB 2.0/eSATA connectivity, the Mercury Elite-AL Pro mini Portable Storage Solution delivers up to 300MB/s data transfer speeds for demanding data storage and backup needs. All that performance resides in an impact resistant, heat dissipating 5.5 in (L) x 3.8 in (W) x 1.1 in (H) brushed aluminum enclosure with super quiet operation. Units are stackable.



- "Quad Interface" FireWire 800/400, USB 2.0, and eSATA for flexible connectivity
- Supports bus powering via any interface\*
- Data transfer speeds up to 300MB/s

- Daisy chain multiple FireWire 800 devices
- Drive speeds of up to 7200RPM or Solid State
- A/V, Digital Photography, Professional Music, Graphics, General Data, and Time Machine ready.
- Solutions include all connecting cables, including FireWire 800 to 400, to work with all Macs and FireWire 400 devices
- Portable size at 5.5in(L) x 3.8in(W) x 1.1in(H)
- Brushed aluminum, impact resistant, heat dissipating, super quiet fanless enclosure
- Oxford High-Performance Chipset
- Three Year Solution Warranty

**PRODUCT CONTENTS:**

OWC Mercury Elite-AL Pro mini "Quad Interface" Hard Drive

- 18" High Quality eSATA connecting cable (eSATA - eSATA)
- 18" High Quality FireWire 800 connecting cable (9-9 Pin cable)
- 18" High Quality FireWire 800/400 converter cable (9-6 Pin cable)
- 18" High Quality USB 2.0/1.1 connecting cable
- Owner's Manual
- Backup and Utility software CD
  - Intech® SpeedTools Utilities™ OEM (For Mac OS 8.6 - X only)
  - Prosoft Engineering® Data Backup for Mac OS X v10.2.8 or later
  - NovaStor NovaBACKUP® for Windows 2000 or later
  - Carbon Copy Cloner© for Mac OS X 10.4 or later
- Over 2.0GB of Freeware/Shareware/Public domain software installed

Price: \$149.00 – 500 GB

[http://eshop.macsales.com/shop/firewire/EliteALmini/eSATA\\_FW800\\_FW400\\_USB](http://eshop.macsales.com/shop/firewire/EliteALmini/eSATA_FW800_FW400_USB)