

ROXIO EASY CD & DVD CREATOR 6

By Louis Calden **Product Review** **Editor**

By now almost all of us PC users have CD burners and many of us have recognized the trend to DVD's and are acquiring DVD burners. Some of us who started early remember the days of 1X and 2X burners and the seemingly interminable wait to see if we really made a good copy or just created another Frisbee. At \$5 a pop for recordable CD disks, it was an expensive experience. Things have changed, now you can get recordable CD disks for pennies and even free if you play the rebate game. Speeds of the recorders have increased to 48X cutting the production time to mere minutes. The mechanical portions of the CD creation process have become quite fast and reliable. The CD burner sales business is now quite competitive and one of the corners being cut to keep the prices down is to bundle "light" or reduced capability software with the hardware. The user quickly discovers, that he must go out and buy a full capability software product to use the hardware to its potential. The other aspect is that the software is the interface that the user sees all the time and "friendliness" is as important as capability. Roxio has taken over Easy CD Creator, highly capable, easy to use software for backup and CD making. This latest version is ROXIO Easy CD & DVD Creator 6 Version 6 Platinum. This is a

full suite with all the related capabilities of creating just about any type of CD/DVD. It even prompts you to make a label and Jewel Case insert upon completion of a burn.

This product has all the functionality that a power user would want as well as the ease of use that a novice can be comfortable with. It can be a simple process that virtually leads you by the hand to make your CD< be it data, audio or mixed. It can be used to copy a CD from one drive to another, copy a CD from a one drive system and make image files for subsequent burning or multiple copies. For the more experienced, there are more sophisticated compilation, format converting and burning techniques.

The home screen gives mouse click access to the five main utilities of the suite; Disc Copier, Audio Central, DVD Builder, Photosuite and Creator Classic. Disc Copier is as its name suggests, the means to readily copy directly from a CD. Audio Central includes: Player (typical audio playback controls with a visualization window), Media Explorer (manages your audio library) and Sound Editor (various effects and transitions). Creator can rip music from many sources and formats into MP3 and WMA formats. I found it to be quite fast, stable and reliable.

DVD Builder can convert DV tape to DVD and retain the audio synchronization. It uses the common two-window approach for editing and can bring in effects such as menus, fades, audio and the usual array. Of course, you can make slide shows with voice-overs. Photosuite, is an image editing package that does the types of corrections that the typical snapshot taker would use. It is no Photoshop, but it is very easy to use, being controlled by clickable icons. It will handle just about all the non-professionals needs. Creator Classic is the latest version of the mainstay product, recognizable from the Adaptec days. For those looking for the DirectCD function, it appears in a new form and is called Drag-to-Disk, where discs readable by any windows

PC are created by drag and drop techniques.

One item often overlooked by the inexperienced is the fact that not all burner software supports all burner hardware. Roxio's product is compatible with a huge number of drives and formats including internal and external CD-R, CD-RW, DVD+R, DVD+RW, DVD-R and DVD-RW drives. It will also support many of the older CD/DVD devices. I tried it on systems using a Philips 1X, a Samsung 48X, a Plextor 8/20 CD-RW, a Memorex CRW-1622 and a Sony 120A DVD. All worked just fine. There are many nice features for those who wish to create custom audio CD's. I know I do, since I have a 6 CD changer in my car. One feature I really like is the ability to record anything from my sound card directly to CD or wave file on my hard drive. Once in wave format on my hard drive, it is a cinch to burn it to a CD. The audio function even includes automatic audio track balancing, so that selection of tracks from different sources will all play at the same level when you create the custom CD. Of course, you may record in MP3 format since this software will automatically convert wav, cda and wma files to MP3.

Videophiles are not forgotten. You can create VCD or SVCD movies from AVI files. If your media player can play it ROXIO can convert it to MPEG-1 or MPEG-2 format. Slide show video can also be created and you may even add audio tracks, which is ideal for presentations. With your sales presentation on a CD you may avoid airport hassles by not having to take your laptop on each business trip. ROXIO has also included the ability to create a finished product with the Jewel Case Maker that has a large repertoire of background templates for CD labels and Jewel case insertion.

There are many more features for the more sophisticated user and ROXIO has kept them all quite simple to use. The product lists for \$99.99 and will earn its keep both in its performance and ease of use.