

Microboards debuts PrintWrite Mac Software (and it Rocks)

Reviewed by Jan Ozer

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CD/DVD/Blu-ray duplication and print systems have long been the province of wonderfully functional hardware and dog-ugly software. Last year, Microboards announced their own home-grown Windows software for their line of duplicators dubbed PrintWrite. And while it's a great improvement over the third party software that they used to ship with their disc publishers, it's more about workflow functionality and ease of use than sheer design brilliance.



I just saw their new Mac software, and as you can probably tell from the title, Mikey likes it. It merges a sexy, cover-flow based label selection function with a unique print preview function that should eliminate the most frustrating problem encountered with disc printers, which is tweaking the inner ring print diameter. If you've printed discs in the past, you either have a Mr. Spock-like focus or will know instantly what I'm talking about. If not, here's a brief description.

Recordable CD and DVD discs come with different sized inner hub print rings. Some have shiny silver inner rings that you don't want to print over, while others have printable white to the very inner edge. When printing, you have to match your print coverage to the actual disc; otherwise,

you'll print over the silver portion, which is very messy to clean off, or you'll leave a white area around the inner ring, which is unacceptable for client delivery, so you've wasted both a blank disc and the associated ink.

Seems like a pretty simple problem to avoid, and it is, unless you're creating a print job while talking on the phone with a client and checking on a render job on another computer. Under those circumstances, you're almost guaranteed to forget that you need to set the inner ring to a 23mm diameter (in that screen buried in the third tab to the right), and in no time flat you've got a white ring around the collar.

With the new Mac version of PrintWrite, when you load the print label, you get a WYSIWYG look at the inner ring setting, a reminder to quickly glance over at the printer/recorder unit to see if the setting matches the discs you've inserted. Again, sounds simple, but no other software program that I've used provides this preview. Otherwise, the software provides all the usual functionality in the typically spare clean Macintosh interface.

Also new is support for VideoWrite, a DVD copy protection scheme that's ideal for small disc runs like those produced by event and wedding videographers. In my own practice, I might sell 100 DVDs for a local ballet, but any family with a teenager can easily convert the one disc purchased into holiday presents for all their friends and relatives.

VideoWrite is completely transparent during normal playback, but does not allow the ripping techniques used by common disc copying programs, preventing copying. You buy licenses from a Microboards dealer, with pricing starting at \$225 for 100 licenses, and scaling to \$3750 for 5,000 licenses.