

OKI

A better way to get a better printer.



TECHNOLOGY ADVICE YOU CAN TRUST

M

PCWORLD[HOME](#) | [NEWS](#) | [REVIEWS](#) | [HOW-TO](#) | [DOWNLOADS](#)[TOOLS](#) | [PRODUCT FINDER](#) | [MAGAZINE](#)

SEARCH

USE FIND.PCWORLD.COM

BROW

PRODUCT GUIDES[Cameras](#)[Notebooks](#)[Desktops](#)[Printers](#)[Monitors](#)[Home Networks](#)**RELATED ARTICLES**[How to Buy a CD-RW](#)[Top 10 DVD Drives](#)[The Joy of Labeling](#)[1GB CD-RW Drives:
Take a Pass](#)[Plextor Drive Boosts
Security, Capacity](#)[See all related items](#)**PRODUCT FINDER**

Find the best prices on the technology products you want.



Select Product

[See all categories](#)**FREE NEWSLETTERS**

Get our weekly news recap or daily downloads digest.

 [Weekly Brief](#) [Daily Downloads](#)

Enter your e-mail:

Submit

[See all newsletters](#)[Topics](#) > [Peripherals](#) > [Storage](#) > [CD-R/CD-RW Drives & Media](#) >

Burning Questions

Associate Editor Melissa J. Perenson delves into the world of optical storage, offering re practical tips.



Is Labeling Software Worth the Hassle? Test drives of four CD/DVD labeling kits.

Melissa J. Perenson, PC World

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

I burn CDs and DVDs all the time, but I'm rarely motivated to use software kits to generate labels. Depending upon the task at hand, using such software is frustrating at best. The programs never seem to do what I want them to.

For example, how difficult would it be for a burning package to fully integrate the labeling process with the copying process, so that key information about the data you just transferred to disc--be it track titles, video chapter points, or file and folder names--automatically prints out on case inserts? Only Ahead's Nero 6 Ultra Edition and Pinnacle Instant CD/DVD do this to any extent. Both do it for audio CDs; Ahead can also do it for some data discs. Pinnacle's Expression video-burning app can do it for video discs.

As for third-party labeling packages, I've been a doubting Thomas. After all, labels are a pain to print and tough to apply to discs. Sometimes you need to waste a minute to calibrate your printer's alignment. The ones I've tried have invariably come out cockeyed, with the printed text not quite aligned with the label itself. Appl

Advertisement

DELL™ s



is another headache altogether--even with the advent of applicators that help. It takes a very steady hand to get it *just right*.

This isn't a purely esthetic issue, either. If the label isn't centered precisely smoothly without wrinkles, experts say the disc's balance can be thrown off by a high-speed drive, causing the disc to shatter. And some readers have men with disc rot after using adhesive labels (look for more on this in a future column).

Still, I'm regularly bombarded with announcements from vendors touting new versions of their disc-labeling software. So I decided to give a few of these a try to see if the state of labeling has improved much with the passage of time. I looked at Meritline's EZ Label Xpress 2.0, Verbatim's DVD/CD Label Kit, Maxell's CreateIt CD Label Kit, and LabelWhiz' 3-in-1 Label Kit, all of which included software for creating labels and inserts.

Meritline's DVD Entourage



Private labeling has hit the disc-labeling market at the hands of retailer [Meritline](#), which offers an attractive self-branded kit for CDs and DVDs.

What I liked most about Meritline's \$20 [DVD Labeling Kit](#) bundles the company's EZ Label Xpress 2.0 software, 20 size DVD jewel cases (like the ones that Hollywood studios use), 10 case inserts, and 20 face labels for the surface of DVDs or CDs. The software has a very clean interface, one that makes it a pleasure to handle (rotating text and images, for example), and makes it simple to add image backgrounds.

It's the only package of the four I looked at that I'd consider returning to--despite a few limitations. For one, the software only handles the label configuration of Meritline's own sheets of stick-on labels, which makes it difficult to use with the stock you may find at the local office store (there are many variances in the way labels are laid out on pages). For another, the choices for patterned backgrounds are limited. Other oversights: There's no way to add bulleted lists, and no easy way to align different elements.

But I like how easy it is to create a label, with minimal fuss and muss beyond simply entering the data. The software is especially friendly for creating the labels I desperately need to make my growing collection of movie and television DVD/DVDs right at home on my shelf with all of those store-bought movie DVDs.

Media-Vendor Labeling Kits



The \$10 [Maxell CreateIt](#) CD Label Kit includes a package of 10 CD/DVD disc labels, assorted spine and jewel case labels, software, and a disc applicator. (Another Maxell stationery kit includes a greater variety of labels.)

The \$15 [Verbatim](#) DVD/CD Label Kit includes Verbatim Design Software Version 3.0, plus 30 CD/DVD face labels, 10 corresponding spine labels, as well as one DVD case insert and 10 CD jewel case inserts, and a disc applicator identical to the one in Maxell's kit.

The label sheets supplied by both vendors look similar, but the Maxell sheets

convenient side flaps to assist when using the applicator. Figuring out how sheets into your printer is a bit tricky; the kit's documentation says nothing. The Verbatim sheets lack flaps, but include some printed instructions on the label page in your printer. (Unfortunately, the instructions didn't say where the sheet should face up, so I initially printed on the wrong side.)

Both packages can print DVD/CD face labels, standard jewel case spine labels, and CD case inserts; the Verbatim kit can also print full, movie inserts. As with my past experiences, the disc applicators didn't help much in attempts to apply a wrinkle-free, properly aligned label.

The software provided with each kit is based on MicroVision Development's CD/DVD Labeler software. The limited versions are tailored in each case to only the vendor's labeling stock. Rotating text is easier in Verbatim's version software. However, in both cases, there are almost too many design options and tasks are counterintuitive (applying text styles, for example, requires too many clicks). Any software that requires the user to know about "merge fields," or assumes that users know they need to set text-wrap margins, has a way to go in usability.

Not surprisingly, the SureThing software included in these kits is a limited full package. The downloadable upgrade to SureThing 4 is available from [the Web site](#) for \$15. This is a worthwhile investment considering that the full version has support for importing playlists from audio players like MusicMatch or Windows Media Player, and for looking up track title information via an Internet database. SureThing 4 also has full support for creating CD and DVD case inserts, adds label templates for a broader variety of label manufacturers, and adds support for transferring designs between projects. SureThing 4 includes a huge, if not overwhelming clip art library--and you can download more clip art from the Web site.

Not Much of a Whiz

[LabelWhiz](#) has several starter kits, but the most complete is the company's Label Kit, since it includes full-size DVD inserts. The kit provides 15 sheets of labels, five jewel case inserts, and three label/sleeve combo sheets, plus a CD-ROM. Two software programs round out the package: LabelWhiz's LabelCreator and the shareware version of Jasc Software's Paint Shop Pro 4.1 image-editing software.

Although the LabelWhiz package is billed as a CD and DVD labeling kit, the software covers much more ground than just optical media. You can also create audio and video cassette labels, a variety of address and office labels, and labels for storage media like DATs, Jaz and Zip disks, and 3.5-inch floppies. Sadly, there's nothing for newer media such as USB flash drives, CompactFlash cards, or Digital cards. While the software doesn't support all competitors' label templates, it does work with some, including those from Avery and SureThing.

Once I got past the preliminaries of choosing a label type, I found the software inflexible and frustrating to use, with a poor user interface and an unsophisticated design that seems to be in desperate need of updating. Counter to what you might expect, you can't simply drag a text or graphics box to resize it, for example. And to position a clip art image, you have to position and size the new image from scratch. Elements that expect text have placeholders of the "Click Here to Add Text" variety, and if you don't remove that text it appears on your printout. It's not the most sensible treatment I've seen in other desktop publishing software.

Next month: The quest for the perfect labeling method continues.

Have a question or comment? Drop a line to [Melissa J. Perenson](#).

Related Topics: [DVD Drives & Media](#)

More Burning Questions Columns

[CD-R/CD-RW Drives & Media](#) > [The Joy of Labeling](#)

Disc labeling is a necessary chore. Here's the first of two columns exploring ways of labeling DVDs. (27-Jan-2004)

[Storage](#) > [External Burners With a Spin](#)

New DVD burners can also handle flash media. Are they the answer to peripheral clutter? (2003)

[DVD-R, DVD-RW & DVD+RW](#) > [Burning Questions: Ten Tips for Durable DVDs](#)

Your home-burned DVDs can last for decades if you treat them right. Here are some do's and don'ts for DVD care. (04-Dec-2003)

[See All Burning Questions](#)

[Printer Friendly Version](#)



**Special
Bonus: Free
Software
CD-ROM!**

[Digital
Subscriptions](#)

Receive 2 RISK-FREE Issues of PC World and 15 FREE Power Guides

Enter your trial subscription and you'll receive 2 Risk-Free Issues plus 15 FREE Instant Power Guides and Bonus CD-ROM. If you like PC World, pay just \$19.97 for 10 more issues (12 in all). Otherwise, write "cancel" on the bill, return it, and owe nothing.

BONUS ISSUES

Pay now and get **2 EXTRA ISSUES FREE!** That's 14 issues for the same low price! [click here](#)

Try PC World Risk-Free, just fill in the form and click

Name	City	
Address 1	State	Zip Code
Address 2	E-Mail	

Canadian residents, [click here](#) | All other foreign residents, [click here](#)
Customer service, [click here](#)

[XML](#)

[RSS Feeds](#)

[About Us](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Corrections](#) | [Member Services](#)
[Site Map](#) | [Terms of Service Agreement](#) | [ASME Guidelines](#) | [Privacy Statement](#)