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APPLE WARES

iVCD Turns Up Heat on Disc-Burning Features



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Mireth Technology's iVCD has outgrown its namesake, the now hard-to-find VCD format, the product itself has remained a sharp disc-burning utility fully capable of creating DVDs. For its latest release, iVCD has improved its handling of AVI files, buffed up its handling of MPEG conversions and eliminated a small problem for those who test out the software before buying.

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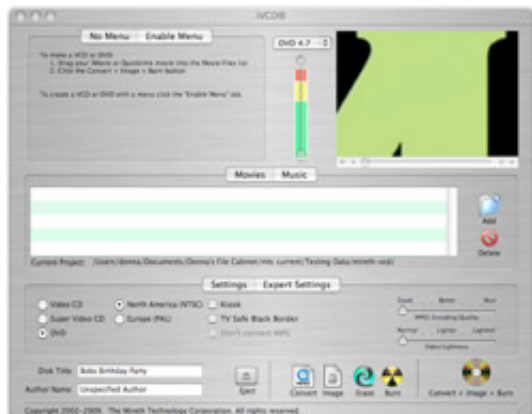
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When [Mireth Technology](#) began business, the price of optical drives that could burn [DVDs](#) hovered around US\$1,000. That's changed over the years, and so has the company's flagship product, [iVCD](#).

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Mireth Technology's iVCD (click image to enlarge)

Originally designed to create video CDs (VCDs) on a Mac, the application has evolved into an all-purpose DVD, VCD and SVCD authoring and burning program with support for a broad range of video formats -- AVI, DIVX, WMV, MPEG, MOV, iMovie and QuickTime -- and North American NTSC and European PAL standards.

It has an easy to use drag and drop interface, as well as the ability to convert a file into an image for burning and burn the image to disc in a single step. It will also allow a user to control the amount of processing power consumed by iVCD when converting files for burning, and it will erase CD-RW discs.

Auto Removal of Watermarks

The latest version of the software, released earlier this month, included a number of features recommended by its stalwarts.

For example, Mireth improved the program's handling of AVI files. On some occasions, when playing those files, video is displayed, but the sound disappears. That's usually because the audio is in WMA format. "It's because of the way the AVI is encoded," Mireth Marketing Manager Donna Johnson explained to MacNewsWorld. "So we fixed that."

Error checking for MPEG conversions was also meliorated. Problems were occurring in the conversion of smaller MPEG files.

The application's watermarking feature was also altered. When using a trial version of the software, everything created with it is watermarked. That means that if a tester buys the program, he or she is stuck with a bunch of branded clips that either must be recreated or have their watermarks removed manually. In this latest version of the software, all those clips will be automatically reconverted and the watermarks removed when the application is purchased.

Infinite Loops

Some winning features from past versions of the program are preserved in its latest incarnation. For instance, it has a "Rescue" feature. It allows a video editor to alter the brightness of a clip, as well as identify the "safe area" for TV viewing.

"The aspect ratio on a computer screen is different than on a TV so you have to stay away from the edges of the computer screen when you're encoding video," Johnson said. "If you don't, you're going to end up with your video being cropped. If that happens, you can use iVCD to reencode it. It will take your video and move it out of the area it shouldn't have been in in the first place."

The software also automatically organizes video projects into project folders to make them easier to duplicate or reedit.

In addition, "looping" discs can be created with the program. Looping discs allow a video to continually play without any user intervention. "They're primarily used in kiosks," Johnson noted. "You can play the same one or two minute demo over and over and over again in an infinite loop."

Marketing Suicide

Although it lacks the robust authoring power found in a program like iDVD, iVCD does have the advantage of supporting a broader array of disc types.

When Mireth launched iVCD in 2003, there was a real demand for a low-cost alternative to expensive DVD burners. VCDs, which used the MPEG-1 standard, had roughly VHS quality. That wasn't that much of a drawback in a world where VCRs were still king.

Now, with DVD burners standard fare in many computers and DVD players as common as toasters in the home, VCDs have lost their appeal in many, but not all places. "People do still use VCDs because you can use them anywhere," Johnson maintained. "If you were going to the Third World to show something, you may not have the hardware to show DVDs. There's also a lot of use of VCDs in Asia."

Although the Mireth software has evolved to encompass DVD and other formats, it still carries the VCD label, which may puzzle some consumers.

"We have debates about the name all the time," Johnson confessed. "Unfortunately, we primarily sell over the Internet, and in Internet marketing 🛒, changing your name is suicide." **ECT**

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[Samson's Q2U: A Combo Kit for the Intrepid Podcaster](#)

January 18, 2010



Samson's new Q2U kit offers several features that enterprising podcasters may find useful. For one, its microphone has both USB and XLR jacks, making it as easy to hook up directly to a computer as it is to connect with high-end audio equipment. Also, the mic has a direct headphone jack, eliminating latency. Headphones, a mic stand and software are all included in the kit.

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