

# DISCS ON DEMAND

A HEAVYWEIGHT IN IN-HOUSE DVD DUPLICATION.

BY J.R. BOOKWALTER

In-house CD/DVD duplication has come a long way in a relatively short amount of time and Epson has a great new solution with its Discproducer PP-100. Boasting up to 30 CDs per hour or up to 15 DVDs per hour using Epson-specified media, the it is designed for unattended duplication and printing. Three publishing modes give you a variety of options depending on your needs, topping out at a whopping 100 discs at a time — load it, start your job and go get some other work done.

Discproducer connects to your PC using a single USB 2.0 cable (included). Inside are two Pioneer burners at the upper rear of the unit, capable of 40x max for CDs and 12x max on DVD-R or DVD+R (8x for dual-layer). I found the speed to be a little disappointing since 50x/16x discs are readily available in today's market, but this is offset by the fact that you can utilize two burners at once to cut down on the manufacturing time.

Underneath the twin burners, Epson has included an excellent dye inkjet single-disc printer capable of up to 1440x1440 dpi in Quality mode (1440x720 dpi in Speed mode) on 120mm discs only. A set of six ink cartridges — cyan, magenta, yellow, light cyan, light magenta and black — yields 1,000 or more discs, depending on your design. Before you can get started, you'll have to open the ink cartridge cover on the left side of the unit's face and load the six cartridges. Installation is a cinch — the cartridges are all marked accordingly, and you simply slide them into their corresponding slot until they snap into place. Even the ink cartridges feel sturdy on this unit! Replacement cartridges will run about \$45 each, bringing the cost per disc to somewhere around 27¢ — at the higher end of the scale compared to low-cost printers, but if quality counts, it's well worth the price.

At the front of the unit are two removable stackers where discs are fed (printable side up), each capable of holding 50 discs. To the left are stackers 3 and 4 — stacker 3 is a removable cup-



shaped bin with a handle that is used only as a repository for completed discs in batch mode. The slide-out stacker 4 tray below it is for small quantities of discs in standard or external output mode.

Discproducer uses an automated arm similar to that found in competing products from Primera and others; the arm grabs a disc and inserts it into the burner, then moves it to the printer when finished and, finally, to an output tray. In my daily

use, the AcuGrip technology implemented here was extremely accurate and behaved exactly as expected, and it seemed quicker and better constructed than competing units I have used in the past.

Of course, even the best hardware has to have equally well-made software in order to make a complete package. Epson has included a proprietary software package called Total Disc Maker, which also includes a Monitor and a Setup program. Mac users need not apply — this software is only for Windows XP (SP2 or later) or Windows 2000 (SP4 or later). As I discovered, Windows Vista users are also left in the lurch for now. When I tried to install the software on my Vista box, I was immediately greeted with the terse message, "This OS is not supported."

In my tests, I ran two DVD-Rs from an ISO disc image without verify in just a hair over 18 minutes, including printing on the disc in Quality mode. Total Disc Monitor estimated 10 minutes for burning, but it was more like 15 minutes using my own 16x media (remember, Discproducer maxes out at 12x speed for DVD-R). The final discs played flawlessly on multiple DVD players, and the disc label looked beautiful and smudge-free.

Using Epson-supplied CD-Rs, a single disc took about six minutes to burn and seven minutes 20 seconds including printing. Their media is glossier than what I used for DVD-R, and the printing looks even better, especially using the color profiles that were provided to me. Discproducer does not disappoint in the final output. To get the most out of Discproducer, I'd recommend sticking with their disc media for the fastest, highest-quality results, especially if you want to get anywhere near their boasts of 30 CD-R/15 DVD-R per hour.

Being a Mac guy at heart, my main disappointment was the lack of compatible software, but Discproducer functioned flawlessly using my MacBook Pro with Windows XP, which I consider a sign that it will work equally well on a "true" Windows box. **DV**

## SCORE

### EPSON DISCPRODUCER PP-100



**PROS:** Solid, well-built unit for volume disc duplication and printing, excellent print quality, fast hands-off disc production. **CONS:** Limited to Windows XP or 2000 software, slower burn speed than competing units, limited graphics format import options. **BOTTOM LINE:** Good value and great quality for mid-range users who need to produce a lot of discs. **MSRP:** \$3,495 **CONTACT:** [www.discproducer.epson.com](http://www.discproducer.epson.com)



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