

Roxio – Easy VHS to DVD

and Roxio Creator 2011 with 3D

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This is actually a review of two programs, each reviewed separately. John reviews the conversion program *Roxio – Easy VHS to DVD* and Donna takes on the editing program *Roxio Creator 2011 with 3D* – with a fair amount of sharing and crossover.

Roxio – Easy VHS to DVD

Recommended

A simple, easy program to convert your VHS videos to DVDs.

I was looking for a way to convert my old VHS tapes to DVD. Roxio looked like my answer. The program has a number of features, from simply converting an entire tape without any editing, to breaking up a tape into segments you want and labeling them. Included is *Sound Editor*, which converts LPs and audio tapes to digital files.

The package contains the install disk, a USB connector and adapters to connect the computer to the VHS recorder's RCA cables, and a 27 quarter-page (English only) book of instructions – mostly white space, photos and screen shots. You need to supply the RCA cables – they're the connectors from the TV to the VHS machine you already have.

Installation looked like a breeze, certainly easy for someone who's been installing programs since DOS.

I decided to use my older laptop for the transfers. I made the cable connections and took a brief look at the instruction book.

It's easy, once you have the connections made. Just start the tape where you want to begin recording, then click **Record**. You can time the recording or simply record until the tape ends. I skipped to page 7 – Installation.



Here's where my frustrations started. *Mea culpa* – I should have read the system requirements on page 6 more closely. I inserted the installation disk and learned I needed to have *Windows XP – Service Pack 3*. This laptop lacked that upgrade. "Shoot!" and other such expletives. Looked around the internet, found Service Pack 3 and installed it. Fine.

Back to installation. The program loaded with nothing unusual – language selection, setup, accepting the contract, etc. One choice was to provide feedback to Roxio to improve the program which I decided to put off until I got a better idea of how it worked. It took about ten minutes to install. I removed the installation disc and rebooted the computer to complete installation.

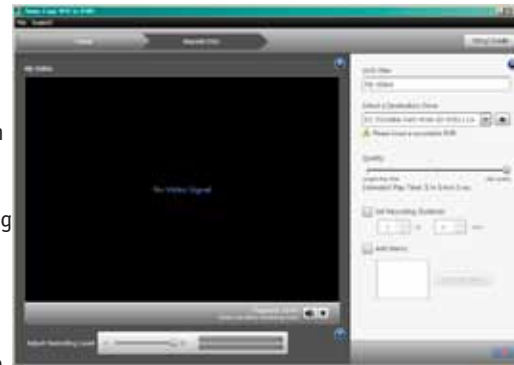
When the Desktop came back up, shortcuts for the program and *Sound Editor* were there, as promised. I inserted a DVD-R, double-clicked the shortcut for the program and it opened without a problem.

The first screen that comes up gives you the choice of either recording an entire tape to VD or "Record, Edit and Save to DVD." I clicked on "Record DVD."



A five-page Instruction Manual opened, the same as the printed version. I clicked the **Close** button at the bottom, the manual closed and the following screen appeared:

Nothing noticeable happened. I waited some more and then started examining the screen. There was a yellow warning sign saying "Please insert a recordable DVD." I popped the disk and examined it. It was recordable.



I popped it back in. Same message and nothing happened. Checked the message closer and saw "Toshiba DVD-ROM SD-R2512." Took a look at the Drive's Properties and found the drive was a "Read only" drive. As in: it doesn't record to DVDs. More "Shoots!" and even worse expletives.

Regroup. Boot up second laptop that runs *Windows 7*. Installed again. Rebooted. Opened the program. Clicked the **Record DVD** button. First got a "No Video Signal" message and then it was found. Filled out the items on the pane to the right (see previous screenshot), created a name, selected the write-to drive. I decided to run a test and just record 15 minutes. Clicked back on the Record DVD button at the top of the screen. Nothing happens. I start to examine the screen but don't notice the pale blue button with the red dot in the far right, lower corner of the screen – it didn't say "Start."



I check the manual again. It just says "click the record button" with a picture of the button, but not where the heck the darn (more expletives) thing is. As frustrated as I was at this point it seemed like it took me five minutes to find the stupid (more & worse expletives) thing.

Clicked it. Worked like a charm. The recording started, ended, wrote the recording to the disk. Took about two minutes to complete. Disc pops out. Got the message "Project completed successfully." Stopped the VHS player. Popped the disc into our DVD player. Pressed the Start Button. Played like a charm. Plugged the disc back in the laptop. Played like a charm.

I checked the disc. The file sizes for a 15 minute recording totaled 1G. The large files that actually play the recording are .vob files. ("...a container format in DVD-Video media. VOB can contain video, audio, subtitle, menu and navigation contents multiplexed together into a stream form." *Source: Wikipedia*) Other, much smaller files are in .bup or .ifo format.

Satisfied, I chose the second option, "Transfer multiple video clips to one DVD and create a menu." This selection allows you to record parts of tapes, from the same tape or even import video clips (there's an "Import Video" button) you may have saved previously. You simply start the tape, hit **Record**, and click the **Stop** button when you want to. The video clips appears in a video list.

Forward the tape to the next scene you want. Repeat the process. When you've recorded to your heart's content, click the **Ready to Export** button – what was the **Start** button has been miraculously transformed for you.

Next thing to investigate was the *Sound Editor* (shown below), touted as a program that "...converts LPs or audio tapes to digital music files."

If you examine the screen there are all kinds of buttons, symbols, Add to's and Export in the left pane.

At the top are a number of elements: Split clip, Cut, etc. Unfortunately there are no instructions for any of them or what they do.

I did manage to "Add Audio File" from my hard drive and "Burn Audio CD," just to try the program out. Its screen is shown at right. I'm not particularly interested in this feature so I didn't experiment further or try to find out more. When (if) I get to that point I can always click on **Help**.



Suggestions:

1. Before you begin, read the *System Requirements* page to make sure you can run the program.

2. Preview the videos/clips on a TV prior to setting up to record. Check the counter so you can line up the clips you want to record or edit.
3. Use the timer function so you don't have to sit around for hours hitting the **Start Recording/ Stop Recording** button.
4. Don't make the mistakes I made.

There was one annoying thing about the program. I was using it quite a bit to write this review. After opening and closing the program a few times, the shortcut on the Desktop didn't work. I looked for the .exe file but double-clicking that didn't open the program either. I had to shut down and reboot to get the program to reopen.

About: *Roxio – Easy VHS to DVD*

Vendor: Roxio
<http://www.roxio.com/enu/products/easy-vhs-to-dvd/standard/overview.html>

Price: \$59.99

Requires: <http://www.roxio.com/enu/products/easy-vhs-to-dvd/standard/requirements.html>

Roxio Creator 2011 with 3D

Recommended *(with caveats)*

Once you actually have a video (a movie you shot or otherwise acquired), you may want to edit it. You know, drop off the first few frames that show "Tracking..." or end it right after the action ends, not 20 minutes later when the "videographer" remembers to hit "Stop." That's where Roxio Creator 2011 with 3D comes in.

Having learned from John's fails, my installation on the Windows 7 laptop was simple and easy, leaving an icon on my desktop. Double-clicking the icon launched the program. The first screen is a menu from which you decide which function you want to use, shown top right on the next page.

One of the choices from the left-side menu is **Learning Center** (also shown there on the right side). I headed there first. I'm not a videographer and have only worked at the most basic level with a video program (*Camtasia*) so I knew I'd need help.

The first screen that opens has multiple choices down the left side. Each changes the larger right pane to display the options for that choice. At the bottom was **Learning Center**. Feeling quite the novice I clicked there, then clicked the *Video-Movies* button on left, then clicked the *Video-Movies* tab.



The Roxio website highly touts the videos and accompanying PDFs available from the Learning Center. Unfortunately, they weren't very useful for me. I wanted the basics – I certainly didn't want to begin with 3D. Besides, I can create all the 3D I want but without a 3D player, what's the point?



Of the 17 available videos, the most prominently displayed were those dealing with 3D (see comment above). Almost every video has an accompanying PDF. Scrolling down, I finally encountered *Editing a Movie with VideoWave* – the next-to-last video. This gave me a quick overview of the quickest way to create a movie with some editing and adding sound.

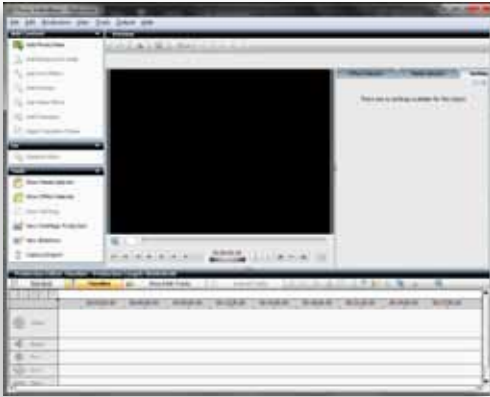
I'm not saying it wasn't useful. Without it I'd never have known to double-click on a video to launch the *Video Trimmer* to lop off parts from the clip's start or end. The companion PDF wasn't any more instructive.

Opening the PDF, however, launched it in *Internet Explorer*. No “Mother, may I,” no attempt to open *Acrobat*, *Acrobat Reader* or *Firefox*, which is my browser of choice. I really didn’t care for that.



I began by clicking the *Video–Movies* button on the left, then under *Edit–Transfer* I chose *Edit Video–Advanced*. This launched the Roxio Videowave video editor and its Welcome screen opened. Choosing “New Production” there and clicking OK gave me an entirely new window to marvel at. And very little to go on.

When *Creator* (see below) opened I could at least identify the various areas on the screen like the **Timeline**, a **Preview** pane and the menu bar, but that was about it. Following the basic steps from the video, I imported several of the clips John had saved. But the Roxio video didn’t give me enough information.



For instance, the text was added as an overlay directly on the first video clip. I wanted to place my opening text on a solid color or still photo, then transition into the first clip. I then wanted that clip to transition to a different color or image with a new title for the second clip, then show the second clip and so forth.

It took a lot of exploring through different menus (particularly the *Production* menu, shown at top right), and a lot more time than I’d wanted to spend, but in the end I achieved pretty much what I wanted as a final

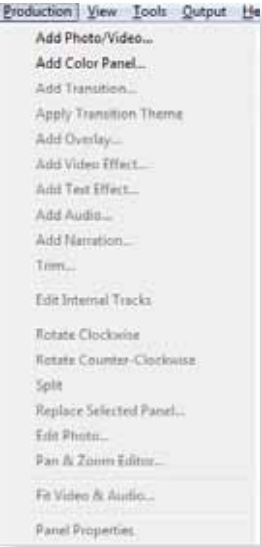
product. But when it came down to it, what would really have helped me was a step-by-step guide. I’d have been much happier with something just pointing out different elements on the screen and what they led to or did.

There are lots of options. For instance, there must be 30 transitions for use when moving from one video clip to another, but not one is a simple *Fade*. I finally settled on “Clouds” as the least intrusive. You can set each *Fade* individually or all at once, including timing.

As a trial I set up my little video-cam pointed at my hummingbird feeder and let it run. Once done, I wanted to *Split* it into several smaller clips, dumping the empty video between visits. Well, it can be done, but only in **Timeline** view. Nothing tells you that, it just isn’t available from the menu unless that’s where you are. Then when you try to split the clip, you’re told you can’t because one or the other end won’t be large enough. So just how large is enough?

Then I thought it’d be nice to zoom in on the birds. Six feet is quite a distance when you’re looking at something about 3-4” long. I did locate Pan and Zoom and finally figured out how to set it up, but then it insisted on zooming back out. I couldn’t get it to stick to the end of the clip. I’m sure it’s easy to fix but I couldn’t figure out how. It’s exactly this sort of minor detail that takes up so much time without instructions. I finally just gave up.

The program really isn’t that hard. In a way, it’s sort of like *PowerPoint* or *Photoshop Elements* for videos. It’s probably pretty simple and straightforward for someone with some video experience. For me, a little more guidance would have saved me a number of hours over several days, not to mention lowering my frustration level. And I might even have gotten exactly what I wanted instead of “settling” for what I could figure out.



There are neither books nor e-books available on these programs. The only videos I found were the same limited ones available on their website or from the **Learning Center** after installation. So if you decide to give the Roxio world a whirl, pack your lunch and your thinking cap – and take lots of time.

As I said at the start of this review, I recommend it – with caveats. The main one being you're pretty much on your own figuring out how to use this program. I can see it could be very rewarding for those with the patience (and maybe a little more background?) to work with it. I'll probably continue with it myself until the aggravation factor gets to be too much for me.

About: *Roxio Creator 2011*

Vendor: Roxio
<http://www.roxio.com/enu/products/creator/suite/overview.html>

Price: \$79.99

Requires: <http://www.roxio.com/enu/products/creator/suite/system-requirements.html>