

Make a Home DVD

I'm out enjoying this past holiday weekend with my family and friends, so here is an article about a subject that still gets many questions every week.

One of the most common questions I have gotten this year pertains to how to convert home VHS movies to DVD movies. Originally I had to tell many of my customers that I didn't know. Good news though, through the help of the Winter 2004 Maximum PC Guide and a little trial and error with the DVD Burner I received for Christmas, I now have some information that can help you.

If you don't think it's necessary to convert your VHS movies to DVD movies then you may want to read this carefully. VHS movies have a shelf life of only seven years. After that period of time the quality of both audio and video will disintegrate. As time goes by and the more you play the VHS tape the overall quality of the tape will degrade. At some point the VHS tape quality will be so poor that that the video will be un-playable. Lost will be years of family memories, don't let this happen to you!

Maximum PC suggests that your computer system have a 2 Ghz processor with 512 Meg ram in order to render real time DVD quality movies. Also the magazine suggests that you have a large 120 GB hard drive. DVD quality movies will occupy 3.6 MB's of hard drive space for every second of the movie. My own computer meets the specifications outlined above but I found that while copying the movies to the hard drive several frames would be lost every couple of minutes. The solution to my problem was the addition of a RAID controller.

A RAID controller allows you to combine the efforts of two hard drives so that your computers performance will increase. The term stripping indicates that two identical hard drives are tied together with a RAID card so that your computer will see one fast hard drive. In my computer I took two 80-gig Seagate hard drives and stripped them together to make a supper fast 160 gig hard drive. After making this modification I never once dropped another frame while copying the movies to the computer.

In order to transfer the VHS movies to DVD movies you first have to get the VHS tape copied to your computer. For this task your computer must also have some kind of analog to digital converter. Some computers come equipped with a video card that includes RCA or S-Video ports for video capture. If your computer does not have this type of video card then you should look at an external device that will plug into either a USB or Fire Wire port.

Once the old tape is copied to the hard drive the fun begins. This is where you become the producer of your own movie! The DVD editing software you choose will determine how much control you have over your movie. Most software will allow you to add titles, make menus, and create chapters. Before you know it your home DVD movies will be every bit exciting as the latest Tom Cruise movie. Once you have your home DVD movie finalized its time to copy it to a black piece of DVD media. Again, the type of DVD burner and software you use will determine how you go about this step.

In the future I hope to expand this article by exploring the abilities and differences of the DVD authoring software available. If you have any questions concerning your computers capabilities to work with DVD movies simply call Thomas, Roger, or Scott at the Computer Depot, 947-0749