To Maxine, Pete, and Bob,

First of all, I appreciate very much the prompt and helpful advice each of you have given me with my DVD problem/s. Each of your suggestions/actions has helped me to better understand the complexities of working with DVDs. Therefore, I want to share what I have learned with all three of you.

Maxine: The DVD-RW versus DVD+RW formats aren't the problem since both my original DVD and my DVD blanks are DVD-R. Circuit City wants $30 to reformat and copy my DVD. I don't want to be like your "hungry man buying a fish" so I probably won't pursue this option. The manager at Circuit City thought I could purchase either Roxio Easy Media 11 Plus or Nero 7 Edition Enhanced and do the reformating and copying myself. He thought Nero was more user friendly. He also said that he has had many people come to him and ask about copying (and reformatting) DVDs from Japan and Europe. Thanks for forwarding my e-mail to Pete Rosendahl.

Pete: You were correct in that the extension for my DVD (digitally produced in PAL) was not compatible with Window Media Player, Roxio 7, Nero 6, or any other software program I had, other than AVS (a downloaded freebie from England). My DVD was indeed created with an AVS acceptable format. I did go to the AVS site and downloaded their "free" video converter/burner. After a few hours of fiddling around with the AVS reformatting feature, I discovered that all of my DVD readers would now play my DVD with sound. I then reformatted the DVD data that I had copied to my hard drive and used the AVS reformatting feature (it took 90 minutes to reformat this 20 minute DVD) to convert it to a "wmv" extension (compatible with Windows Media Player). Thinking I was now "home free," suddenly an AVS menu popped up to inform me that my copied DVD would have a watermark in the center of it if I failed to "register" with AVS ($69 for an unlimited subscription or $29 for a one-year subscription). I now know that the reformatting process works, but the watermark appears in the center of my copied video every 5 seconds (not nice). Therefore, there is no point in trying to copy it to another DVD. The good news is that the AVS reformatter works, but it's not really "free."

Bob Petrilak: The 8X burning speed of my original DVD didn't seem to be a problem. Dell was not helpful--no firmware update was available and I was told to check with the manufacturer of my drives (Samsung and Liteon). Neither had updates. By the way, my speaker icon was not muted.

Next action: Dominic Salvino thinks his DVD player/recorder will be able to reformat and burn my DVD on his system. I will give it a try sometime this week. Since I have an interest in editing some home movies and copying photos to DVDs, I probably will invest in some video editing software anyway. The confusing part about purchasing such software is that PCWorld often rates them at four stars or more, while those who purchase them (though Amazon.com) often have all kinds of complaints. These are the ones I have reviewed so far: Cyberlink PowerDirector 6, Pinnacle Studio Ultimate 11, Roxio Easy Media Creator Suite 9, Ulead VideoStudies 11 Plus, AVS Video Tools 5.6, and Nero 7 Edition Enhanced. I'm leaning toward Nero for cost ($55), features, and user-friendliness. Any recommendations?

I do wish the VCC would devote more time to the interface between computers and (video) photography like it used to when Chris Lipp was onboard. This topic seems to have disappeared from our agendas.

Thanks again.

Bill Thuemmel