

Ulead VideoStudio 10 Plus

by John C. Lee

VideoStudio 10 Plus is the latest release of Ulead's popular video-editing and DVD-authoring software. It has a number of new advanced features. What impresses me most are the enhancements Ulead incorporated in the basic tools and functions that makes the capturing and editing jobs much easier and faster. VideoStudio 10 Plus now offers three program options: the VideoStudio Editor designed for advanced users; the Movie Wizard for beginners; and the new DV-to-DVD Wizard with the capability of burning a DVD directly from an entire tape without scanning or capturing to the hard drive.

The new Editor's interface has a large preview window on one side, and the Library and Option Panels conveniently placed on the other. It offers four different interface layouts for the viewer to choose from. Ulead has greatly improved the processing speed. Now you can start playing the clip or the project on the preview window almost instantly with one click of the play button. Ulead has added a scrolling Timeline ruler and tracking indicator as I suggested in my version 8 review. But the indicator re-scrolls repeatedly from the middle of the ruler. I would prefer to see the indicator stay put with the ruler scrolling.

The Timeline scale slider is a much-improved tool to adjust the ruler scale. By adjusting the ruler to the frame-size scale, you can identify accurately the frames you want to trim from the video clip. The Timeline ruler bar also has a provision to set (or remove) chapter markers, which is much more convenient than setting the markers while previewing the project. Rip Editing is another convenient feature. Once enabled, the positions of the media files you inserted in all the tracks are locked to the clips in the video track. Hence, you do not have to reposition these files if you drag and drop new clips into the video track or remove unwanted ones from it.

VideoStudio 10 Plus now offers 6 overlay tracks. You can resize, reposition or apply animations, masks or video effects to the clips in the overlay tracks. In addition, you can use the Chroma Key function to create Alpha channel clips or images with a transparent background (only from those with a solid color background). With 6 overlay tracks, you can produce multiple-pictures-in-picture video clips or still images.

The Audio functions have not changed much from the previous versions except the new added 5.1 Dolby Digital support and the Pitch Shift filter that raises or lowers the pitch of the audio clips.

Two other noteworthy features are the Ad-Zapper and the DV Quick Scan. Ad-Zapper automatically detects commercials in TV programs for easy removal. The DV Quick Scan function allows you to scan the DV tape at speeds up to 6X and select the scenes you want to keep in your movie for later batch capture.

A new advanced feature introduced in VideoStudio 10 Plus is high-definition support. It allows you to work with high-definition videos just as you would with DV. You can capture clips from a HDV camcorder; edit and preview clips using low resolution Smart Proxy files; and output full-resolution native HD movies and discs.

VideoStudio 10 Plus provides an online User's manual. The Content CD contains an audio/video tutorial, which covers an overview of the tasks that can be performed in the program.

VideoStudio 10 is an excellent program and easy to work with, once you have spent enough time to work through each of the multitudinous options and dialog boxes. Ulead does not follow the common industry practice of providing a Help button in each dialog box that automatically links to help tips for all the options in the dialog box. This not only slows the process of learning the program, especially for new users, but also gives rise to discrepancies between some dialog boxes and the online manual. The following lists a few specific examples of such discrepancies:

1. In the Share step, I do not see the necessity of adding an extra Disc Template Manager dialog box, when all of its options are already covered in the Video Save Options dialog box.
2. The Video Save Options dialog box shows a Compression tab. But nowhere in the online manual can I find help tips for the Compression tab. The dialog box also contains a Quality-Speed adjustment slider. I cannot find what this slider is used for? It does not seem to affect the video or audio bit rate.
3. The dialog box also has an option to choose an audio type of Mono, Stereo or Joint stereo. Since Joint stereo is not a common audio format, the manual should provide some tips on the difference between Stereo and Joint stereo and where Joint stereo would be best used. Joint stereo encoding allows the transfer of relatively low bit rate, acceptable-quality audio with modest Internet access speeds. I guess that the best place to use it would be Share Video Online.
4. The buttons and sliders in the Pan & Zoom dialog box do not have any tool tips, and the online manual does not show these buttons. Hence, the user has to spend time to figure out what each button does.
5. The Burn Options in the help manual shows the option of Do Not Close Disc. But this option does not exist in the actual Burn Options dialog box. Apparently, Ulead forgot to delete it from the help manual.
6. The procedure used to create a disc in the Share step is unnecessarily involved and confusing. You have to click 5 buttons and work through 6 dialog boxes before you can start the burning process. I believe the procedure can be simplified. If the output file size is less than the capacity of the disc chosen by the user, there is really no need to lower the recording quality and to show a confusing list of 15 compression levels. If the file size exceeds the disc capacity, **then**, the program should prompt the user to pick one of the three options- (1) Lower the recording quality and show only the required compression level to fit the output file in the selected disc; (2) Change to a higher capacity (e.g. from a single-layer to a dual-layer disc) disc; or (3) Rework the project by splitting it into manageable file sizes.

System Requirements

- Intel® Pentium® 4, Intel® Pentium® M, Intel® Pentium® D, or Intel® Pentium® 4 Extreme Edition processors or AMD Athlon™ 64 or higher recommended
- Microsoft® Windows® 2000 SP4, XP SP2 Home Edition/Professional, XP Media Center Edition, XP Professional x64 Edition
- 256 MB of RAM (512 MB or more recommended)
- 1 GB of available hard disk space for program installation
- 4 GB+ hard drive space for video capture and editing
- Windows-compatible sound card (multi-channel sound card for surround sound support recommended)

- Windows-compatible CD-ROM for installation
- ***Non-Proxy HDV editing requires:***
- Intel® Pentium® 4 3.0 GHz or higher with Hyper-Threading technology
- Microsoft® Windows® XP (Service Pack2 for HDV camcorder support recommended)
- 1 GB of RAM (2GB or more recommended)
- 7200 RPM IDE hard disk or above
- 16X PCI Express™ display adapter

Ulead Systems Inc.'s website is <http://www.ulead.com> and its support URL is <http://www.ulead.com/tech>. Ulead does not provide any telephone or e-mail technical support except the self-support from online learning center.

The price of the full version of VideoStudeo 10 Plus is \$99.95, and that of the update from previous versions is \$49.95.