



Capital Apple, Mac
Performa User
Group



Gardiner, Maine
www.campug.org

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Plop, plop, fizz, fizz— Tell us, Sue, what IS Pzizz?

To find out, be sure to come to the final CAMP meeting of the school year at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 13, at the Gardiner Area Regional High School. In addition to Pzizz, Sue Westlake will also run us through Microsoft Excel functions. To help reduce the amount of junk mail in your inbox, Adam Tomash will wrap up with an overview of SpamSieve. You can read reviews of SpamSieve on MacWorld and the apple blog.

We will take our customary siesta in July (i.e., no meeting), and will reconvene on August 8 for our summer potluck dinner at Rob Darby's house in Winthrop. [Note: A very complimentary article about Ann Darby, Rob's wife, appeared in the June 10 *Kennebec Journal Sunday*.]

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I'm proud to report that I took a calculated risk that worked out successfully. Consumer electronics and my wife have, shall we say, a rocky relationship. Cell phones, pagers, digital watches — even oven timers — don't exactly bring joy to her heart. But last month I threw caution to the winds and bought her a Nano. To my immense relief, she not only likes it but can actually operate it. *Whew!* Like me, Carol uses her iPod primarily for audiobooks and secondarily for music. For an excellent electronic book club, check out Audible.com. Have a great summer, everybody!

Quick Take:

Discus CD Labeling Software
Magic Mouse Productions
\$45 direct purchase + \$2 shipping

CD labeling programs are nothing new and don't exactly strike me as a growth segment of the home software market. What with iPod playlists and on line photo sites, who bothers to burn CDs any more, much less make labels for them?

Well, I do. Maybe I'm just an old-fashioned kind of guy, but I like to make holiday CDs and DVDs to give to family members.

Discus has been around for quite a while. My first version of the program was a freebie that came with Sonic Toast Titanium (back in the Roxio days). In version 4, Magic Mouse added a feature that I've been wanting to try: photo collages.

The screenshot below shows the wealth of options available for collages. The default configuration will display portions of six photos on your label. The two rows of collage style icons in the lefthand portion of the window and the configuration sliders underneath give lots of design flexibility.

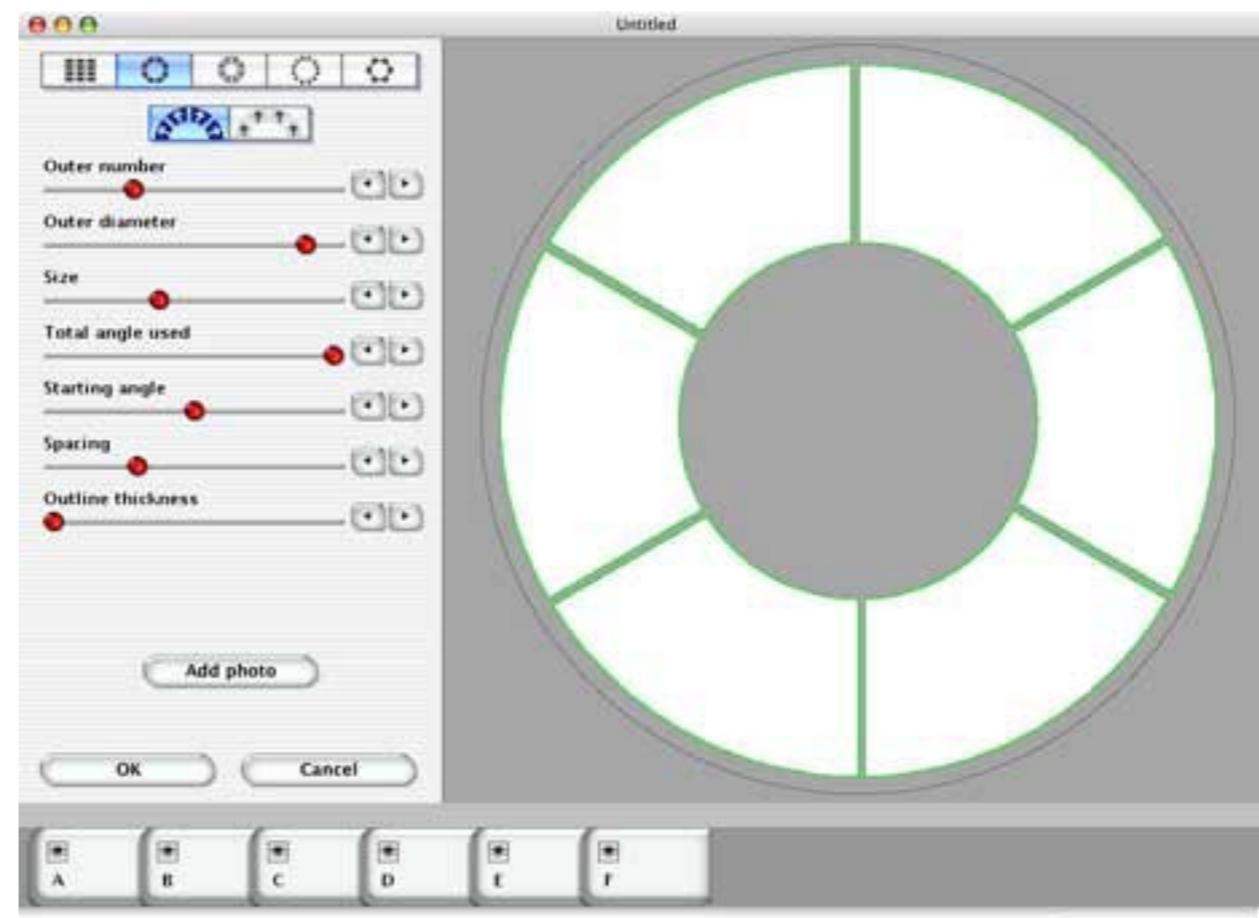


Fig. 1. Discus' photo collage window

Instead of having photos wrap around the entire disk, you might instead string a collage around the top half only, reserving the bottom half for other design elements:

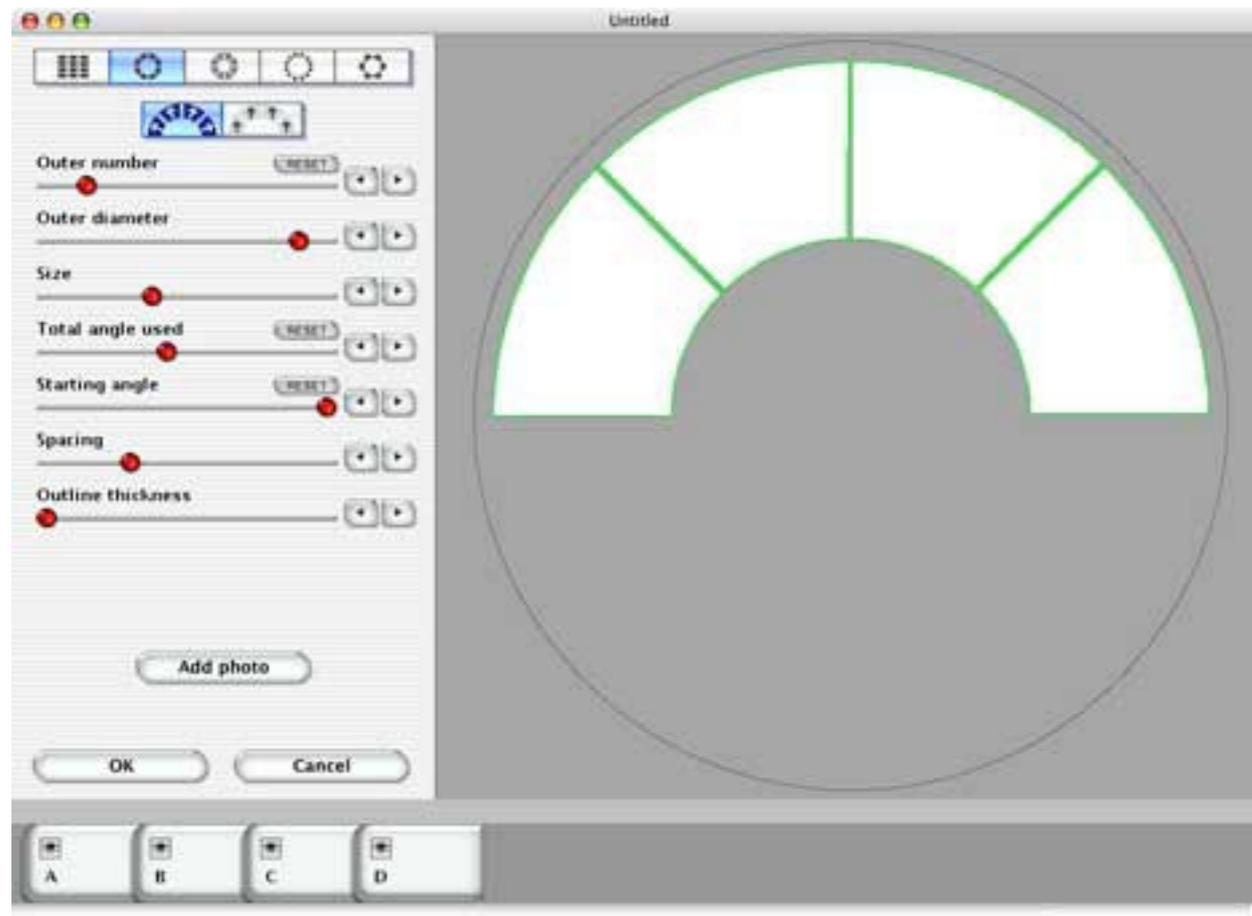


Fig. 2. Choosing a collage design

The wraparound concept of the default design appealed to me, but six panels struck me as overly ambitious for my first try. I decided that four would be plenty for my purposes.

You add photos via a standard open file dialog box. You can resize the pix and drag them around the segment cutout to display them to their best advantage. When you've got it right, you can move on to other design elements, such as a background canvas, paint layer and text.

Designing the collage was easy in some respects, but frustrating in others. My biggest uncertainty was choosing how much center area to leave free. The default value struck me as very large, but there was no easy way to determine the minimum from the collage design window. To my chagrin, I learned that once you leave the collage design window, your design is fixed and cannot be subsequently edited. I was unable to find a way to go back and fix a mistake, or perhaps change my initial choice of pictures. The program manual hasn't been updated with any information about photo collag-

es, and I didn't allow myself enough time before writing this article to email Magic Mouse for help. So, to correct an error I was forced to delete my first collage and repeat the whole process. Grrr..

Figure 3 shows my completed design, ready for 2-up printing on precut label stock. The collage layer shows my four photos tastefully arranged around the disc. The background canvas below is a solid pink shade that shows inside the ring of photos, around the rim of the disk, and in the divider lines that separate the photos. Finally, I added some text on top of the pink background inside the ring of photos.

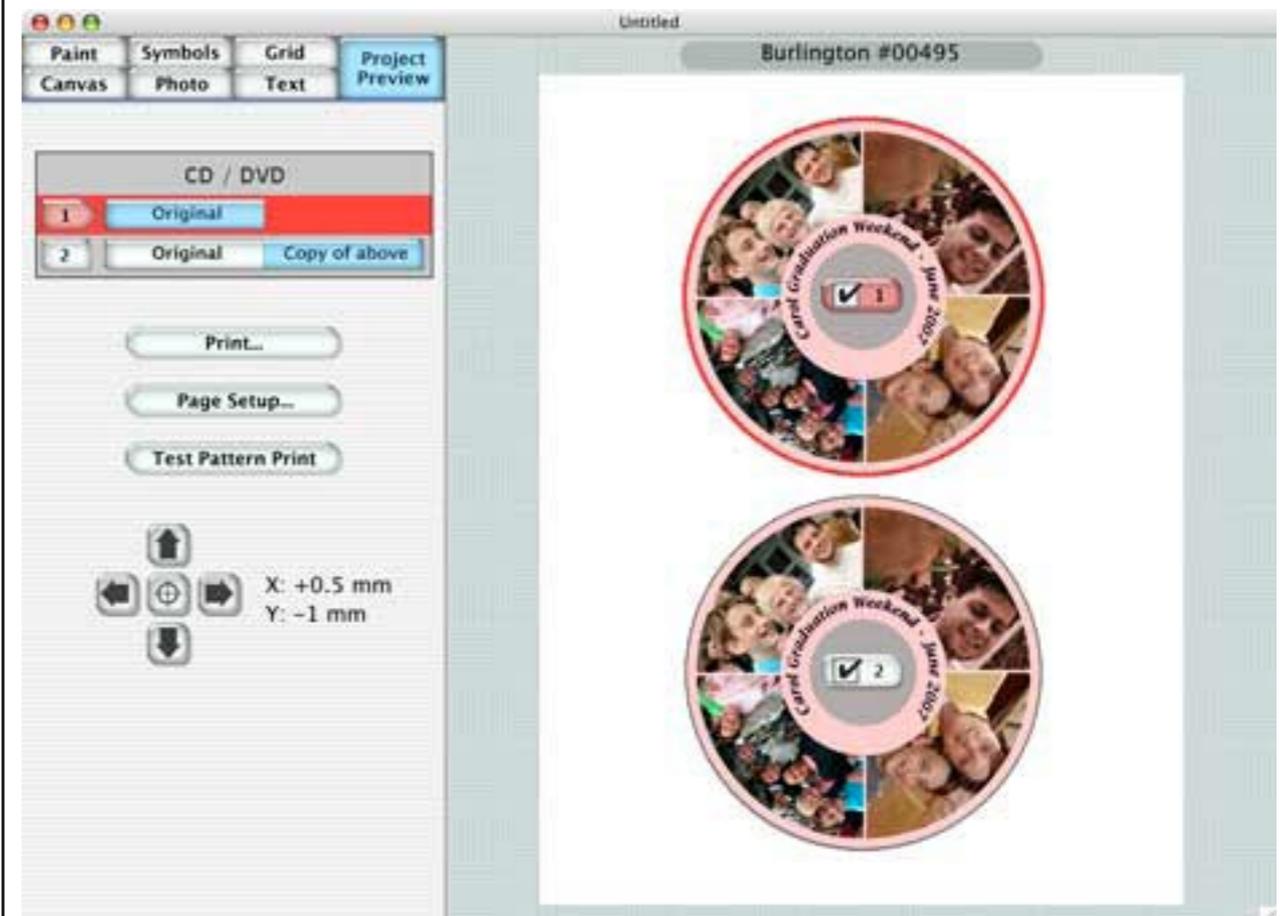


Fig. 3. Collage labels ready for printing

Print setup has always been a Discus strong point. You can match your label stock to a list of products that is hundreds of items long, much like choosing the proper label type in a word processing, contacts or database program. The four x and y adjustment buttons let you center your designs to precisely match the die cuts on your label stock, and the Test Pattern Print button prints an outline of your design on plain paper so you can test your alignment without wasting ink.

Turn the page (I mean, click the mouse) to see how I did!



Fig. 4. The final product

Not too shabby, and pretty nice for a family gift (although I should have lined up the text differently). With experience, I'm sure the collage-ing will go smoother.

If you're still burning music CDs, Discus can generate track lists directly from iTunes, Toast, MP3 tags, file names or a tab-delineated text file.

The Discus interface is totally idiosyncratic. Neither Mac nor Windows users (the program is cross-platform) will find any tool or function where they might expect it to be. But just *wait* until you hear the manic sounds Discus generates when you click its buttons! ☀

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