# Pioneer DVR-A04 Recorder

*by Jack and Sue Drafahl*

Until recently, DVD recorders were commercial devices used by the motion picture industry to copy and distribute the films we enjoy as evening entertainment. Hollywood has understandably been concerned about the release of consumer DVD burners because of copyright issues. After considerable discussion and several proposed formats, the industry finally settled upon a solution: manufacturers would create a different DVD format that would enable consumers to record computer data and video, but not reproduce copyrighted DVDs.

This new format, called General DVD, was made available to the public in mid-2001 with the unveiling of the Pioneer DVR-A03. The introductory price was just under $1500, but was quickly reduced to less than $500. The unit was upgraded in 2002 to the DVR-A04, still with a price tag of about $500. Blank DVD writable media can be found for less than $3, and DVD re-writables cost about $5. The re-writables can be reused up to 1000 times, and can store

The Pioneer DVR-A04 DVD recorder enables you to store 4.7 gigabytes of data on one removable disk; the same amount of data that would fit on seven CDs. Both writable and rewritable blank DVD media are available.

DVD disks are a great way to share and archive images in a digital format. DVD-R disks are said to have a 100-year life expectancy. When purchasing blank media, don't purchase "DVD Authoring" blanks; these are not compatible with the Pioneer DVR-A04.

the same amount of data as seven CDs (4.7 gigabytes).

The most amazing thing about the DVR-A04 is its versatility. You can use this recorder to back up your computer data or to archive more than 5000 high-quality digital images per DVD. With this unit you can combine both still images and video into a presentation that can be viewed on your home DVD player or computer. As computer programs and clip-art files are expanding, they are becoming too large for CD storage. Instead of supplying multiple CDs, more companies are relying on DVDs to present the data to the public.

The new Pioneer unit is fully compatible with both CD and DVD and will read and write both writable and re-writable media using two separate lasers. CDs write at up to 8X speeds, DVDs write at 2X. Re-writable CD media are recorded at at 4X, while re-writable DVDs are burned at 1X. Although these speeds may seem slow, keep in mind that DVD speeds are different than CD speeds; you can write an entire 4.7-gigabyte DVD in less than 30 minutes.

To get you started, Pioneer has included Veritas PrimoDVD software enabling you to write data to both CD and DVD. Merely drag and drop the data onto the DVD menu until the disc is full. Then press the Writer button and you are on your way. When finished, the DVD data can be read by any computer DVD-ROM drive. When writing CDs, you can add data a little at a time using the multi-session mode. With DVD you add data at different times using Veritas DLA (Drive Letter Access) software also

included with the recorder. The process is quite simple: Load a blank DVD and select Drive Properties to display a DLA format command. In a few seconds the DVD is ready. Then you can drag and drop files onto the DVD and they are written in the data portion of the DVD.

If you have been writing CDs with Easy CD Creator (PC) or Toast (Mac) from Roxio, then you might want to update to the latest version which supports DVD writing. This software is compatible with the Pioneer DVR-A04 and allows you to work with video, audio and data files. It reads and writes to both CD and DVD, and actually converts your DVD unit into a valuable additional hard disk.

For those interested in presentations, Pioneer has also included Sonic's MyDVD program which allows you to create your own DVD videos. Simply select a menu background for your show, and thumbnail images are created as you add video files from your hard disk or video camera. You can then test the program before burning a DVD that can be played on your computer or home DVD player using the menu screen to select different videos.

Other software companies have recently introduced (or updated) programs that are compatible with the Pioneer DVR-A04 recorder. DVD PictureShow from Ulead Systems enables you to create a DVD slide show from your digital images or scanned film images. If you want to mix still and motion video images together, you can use the Ulead Media Studio Pro to import both and create files that will record on the DVR-A04 Recorder.

If you have a video capture board you have even more options when using a program like Adobe Premiere, which has been updated to create MPEG video files that can be transferred to the DVR-A04 as final video projects. This program mixes both still and video images into a final video file that can be played on a DVD player.

One note of caution: When purchasing media for use with the DVR-A04, do not buy DVD Authoring blanks. These are intended for use with professional DVD recorders and will not work on the DVR-A04.

With a 100-year life expectancy for recorded DVD-R discs, the DVR-A04 is a great way to archive your images in a digital format. We appreciate the ability to share both still and video images with friends on our DVD player and home theater system. Whether you use the recorder for data storage or image presentation, the Pioneer DVR-A04 is a great addition to any digital darkroom.

For more information visit Pioneer's website at www.pioneerelectronics.com. ■

Pioneer bundles a variety of useful software with the DVD-A04, including Sonic's easy-to-use MyDVD program which enables you to create your own DVD video presentations. Another popular program, sold separately, is DVD PictureShow from Ulead Systems, which lets you produce attractive slide shows from your digital images.