



Lite-On iHAS524 Super AllWrite

Disc burning reaches a whole new level

Lite-On makes good quality burners, of that I have no doubt. In many of my DVD-RW group tests I've used its drives to assess the burns of other makers, because Lite-On has the best facilities for profiling errors and error rates.

On the face of it, the iHAS524 is typical of the sorts of optical drives the company has made in the past couple of years. It's quick, tipping 24 for both plus and minus single-sided DVD media, and 12x for dual-layer burns. But then you can

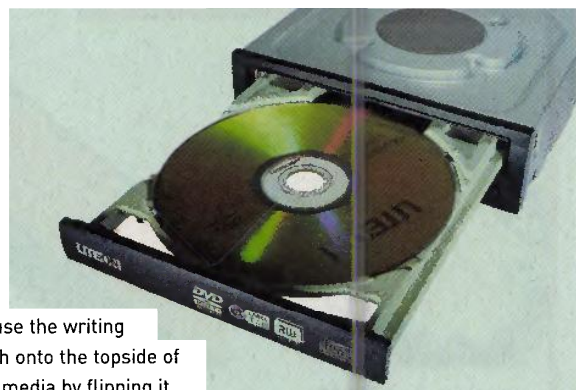
get a drive for £25 that can achieve that, so what makes this worth another £19?

Well, it's got SmartErase, which enables you to scramble a disc with sensitive data written to it in a way that makes it very unlikely it's retrievable, and it memorises writing sessions for further reference. However, there's only one feature that makes it remotely worth that extra and it's called LabelTag.

In some respects this is a very similar technology to LightScribe,

which can use the writing laser to etch onto the topside of compatible media by flipping it over and then using LightScribe compatible software to fix your design. The problems with LightScribe are that you need special discs, the results aren't especially wonderful and currently monochrome, and it takes ages to do this trick.

So how does LabelTag address those issues? Well, it works on any media for starters, although it doesn't actually mark the



▲ Lite-On is one of the first drive makers to offer LabelTag technology in its DVD-RW burners

upper surface of the disk but the underside. What it can do is write a design or label to any concentric strip of the disc after the first block of data is written, and you can write multiple label stripes in between the data. It does this at the same time as the main burn and it doesn't take long.



It's still monochrome, but Lite-On gives you a copy of Nero 8 Essentials that has LabelTag feature built in, so you're ready to go from the outset. The snag, if you didn't guess already, is that the space taken up by the label can't also hold data, so the larger

the label, the less space you have for whatever it was you wanted to put on the disc.

The best use for this then would be a simple way to track backups and mark them so that you can establish what's on the media with just a glance. Like



LightScribe, it's not a technology that everyone will want or need, but the ease of use and the ability to use any media is actually rather refreshing. The debate about whether LabelTag makes this drive worth the extra money is one you can have if you haven't got an immediate use but think it sounds like something you might fancy using. I liked this drive, but I might be swayed by having two units of this speed without LabelTag for roughly the same money.
mm Mark Pickavance



Details

Price: £44
 Manufacturer: Lite-On
 Website: www.liteonit.eu
 Required space: Pentium 4 1.3GHz or higher CPU, 650MB HDD space for CD or 9GB for DVD, 128MB RAM, Microsoft Windows 2000 or later, SATA port, SATA power

Ratings

Quality: ★★★★★
 Value: ★★★★★

A good drive with the very latest DVD writing technology

OVERALL
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