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[Asunder - Can I Rip Your CDs?](#)

A small, simple CD ripping/encoding tool



I think everyone has heard by now about what the CD Ripping/Encoding tools can do. For those who haven't, here's something that might give them a clue about what these applications are made for. Ripping is the process of copying the audio data from a CD to a hard disk. To preserve storage space on a hard drive, the copied data will be encoded in formats like MP3, FLAC, Ogg Vorbis etc. Ripping and encoding have been controversial issues from a legal point of view, since this is considered illegal in many countries, when it's done without the consent of the copyright holder. Despite these legal problems, ripping and encoding software continue, and are very useful for those who want their favorite music on their portable players and sometimes even for artists. An application that comes from the big family of CD-Ripping software is Asunder: a small, graphical Audio CD ripping and encoding tool for Linux, created under the GPLv2 license. It attracted my attention mainly because it's fast and on the producer's site you can find packages for the most important Linux distributions like Ubuntu and Debian, SUSE, Gentoo etc. Because I've been using Ubuntu Linux with KDE installed for quite some time now, I downloaded the package for this Linux distribution and the installation was very simple. I only right-clicked on the package and went to the *Kubuntu Package menu* -> *Install package*. But you can also find the source code on the developer's website, if you are a console freak and you want to compile the application by yourself. Asunder starts very quickly, with a complete track list, content taken from the Audio-CD you'll insert. Its main interface is simple, and it invites the user to click the "Rip" button and start the ripping process. In the list of files, you'll see the main menu that has only two parts: Preferences and About. The "Preferences" category is composed of three tabs: "General", "Filenames" and "Encode", all of them giving the user a feel of simplicity. With small steps we'll go through these sections, so let's start with "General". This part of the "Preferences" menu has a few options, like "Eject CD", a drop-down menu where you can select the location of the ripped files, your CD-ROM device (default is `/dev/cdrom`), or create an M3U playlist. This last option is very useful if you want to quickly add the music you ripped in a music player. This part of "Preferences" is very simple, isn't it? So let's move on to "Filenames". It comprises a box named "Filename formats" where the user can edit how the files will look like: the music file, the playlist and the album directory. It has a short legend in the left part of the window, telling you what "%A", "%T", "%N" and "%L" mean. I can tell you from now what these things mean: "%A" is for the artist's name, "%T" for the song title, "%N" is the track number (it can only be two-digit) and "%L" is the album. Under this box, you'll find a small field named "Invalid characters". I don't see its purpose; it's very clear you can't use the "/" character in an album or filename on Linux. It's useful only if you want to add more invalid characters to the blacklist. I malevolently added a "/" in the "Filename formats" box, and the program didn't respond with anything to my intention of spoiling it, or even my filesystem. That's a black ball for the developer. Maybe a Linux newbie would want to make his filenames look "cooler", by adding that invalid character to them. The app shouldn't allow that! It doesn't even give a warning to the user! Maybe in a future release, the developer will think about this thing too. Let's see what's in the next tab, in "Encode". There are five checkboxes, four of them refer to the file formats the program can encode: WAV (this one actually won't be encoded, the music will just be ripped from the Audio-CD), MP3, Ogg Vorbis and FLAC. In the MP3 part of this menu, you should keep the "Variable bit rate" checkbox checked; this way, it will produce better sound quality at the cost of some extra hard-disk space. Be sure you have the *lame* package installed on your system. If you have Ubuntu Linux, you can install it by launching a terminal and typing in

`sudo apt-get install lame`. After that, Asunder will encode in MP3 too. Also, you should know that it will encode in all formats if you don't tick any of the checkboxes. The maximum bitrate at which Asunder can encode is 320kbps, the best quality for this format. But the author has some surprises for us: for the Ogg Vorbis filetype you will have a maximum quality of 10, and I found out this number is actually the quality equivalent of an mp3 at a 500 kbps bitrate. That's really, really good stuff! But FLAC (Free Lossless Audio Codec) is even better: it has a maximum quality coefficient of 8, more than 800 kbps. I like the developer's choice in audio codecs; I actually think he chose them pretty well! I discovered that the sliders are a little bit jumpy: if you try to drag them, they will just go in the opposite direction, a very annoying thing when you want to do something quickly and not click on the position you want a slider to go to. This was the Preferences menu, the next part we'll move on to will be the ripping and encoding processes. I started selecting files so the program can do its job: I found out it has problems when you select one or more files, it won't show the exact number after it does its work. For example, I selected one file in two formats, ogg and mp3, but it appeared in the status as only one file was created, and in the folder there were two files with the extensions .ogg and .mp3; after that, I selected two songs in its interface, which in the status appeared as four, together with the following message: "*All 4 files were created successfully.*". This thing is confusing, it seems that it can change its mind... Another thing this program doesn't do right: it doesn't ask you if you really want to overwrite a file! Well, there's still much, much work to be done until Asunder will be complete and these problems fixed. They are not major ones but they can be quite annoying, and I really think there's place for more good stuff from Asunder's developer. **The Good**Asunder is very small, a good option for those who really care for their space, and it has a nice GTK+ based interface, it's well organized and it moves very fast. A big advantage is the fact that you can find packages for almost all well-known Linux distributions. **The Bad**The main thing it lacks is a better warning system. The user can make some mistakes, without even knowing it. Also, it should've had a "*What's this?*" option when you right-clicked on something. The bug fixing should be done faster, but I think I'm a little bit harsh, considering this is a one-man project. **The Truth**Asunder is another CD-Ripping tool, but it comes with something I haven't seen in others: it can simultaneously rip and encode the songs you want. It has some translations, in German, Greek, Spanish, French etc., but they aren't completed. The author is very open to suggestions and bug reports so don't hesitate! If you find something, let him know!*Here are some screenshots of Asunder in action:*