Project: Create a CD Cover with Writer

Writer isn't a desktop publishing application, but it does a very good job at pretending to be one – create a CD inlay booklet you can use for your own CDs.

Writer is far more than a mere word processor – it's also pretty good at desktop publishing: knock out the odd newsletter, one-off print job, posh menu and even occasional birthday card without breaking into a sweat. To prove the point, we're going to create an inlay for an audio CD. This can then be printed on a local printer, or even sent to a printing company if you happen to want a hundred copies or more. It's a good illustration of what *Writer*'s capabilities, as we'll use features you're not likely to come across while using *Writer* as an ordinary word processor.
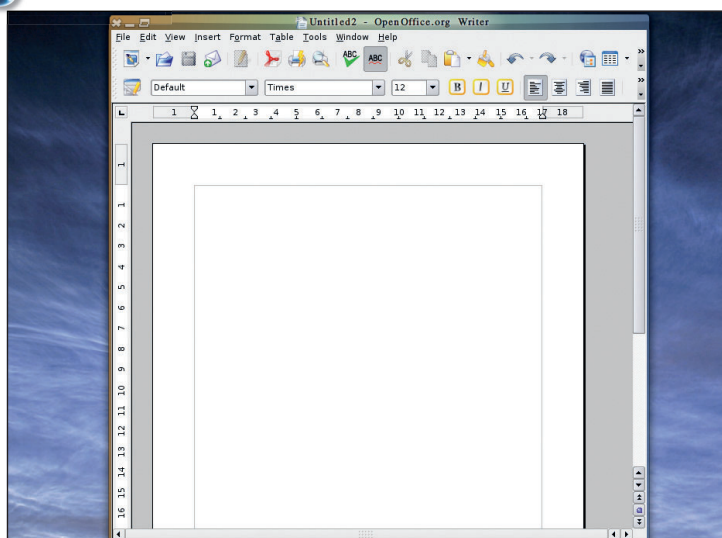
The only thing to bear in mind is that *Writer* is still primarily designed to process words. If you're planning on building a career out of design and layout, it's not going to be the application to earn you a living, although it might be the tool to spark an interest in the subject. For serious desktop

publishing work, you're much better off using another free piece of software called *Scribus*, although this has a considerably tougher learning curve. *Writer* is ideal for smaller projects, and anything that includes a great deal of text – just as you'd expect. This is only because *Writer* is lacking the alignment and ruler markings, as well as some of the transformation tools you'd expect in a piece of design or desktop publishing software. But it

does offer some great font manipulation tools. The most important thing to remember is that you should work out your design before you start. For a CD inlay, for example, that means knowing the dimension of the booklet so that you can use precise measurements within your document. This makes things much easier, and you'll need to do the same for the card insert if you want to add to the inlay we're about to design.
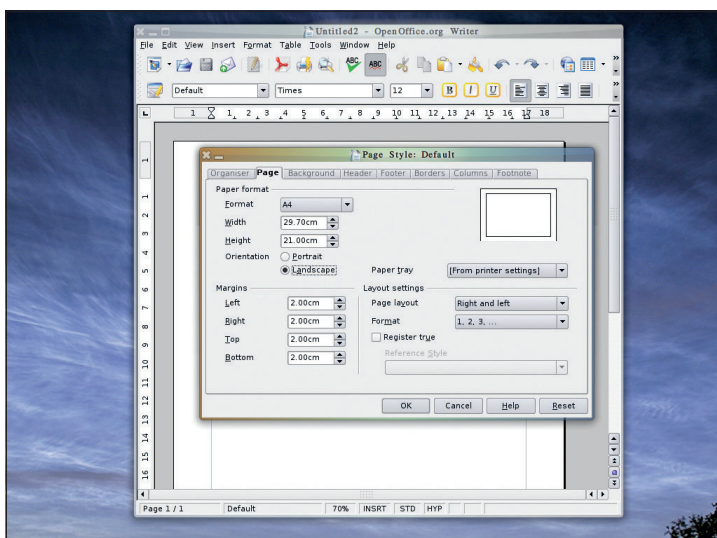
> **"Enjoyed this project? Check out Scribus for Windows, Mac OS X or Linux at www.scribus.net – its DTP capabilities are equal to Adobe InDesign or QuarkXPress, but it's open source and completely Free!"**

Writer: create a CD inlay
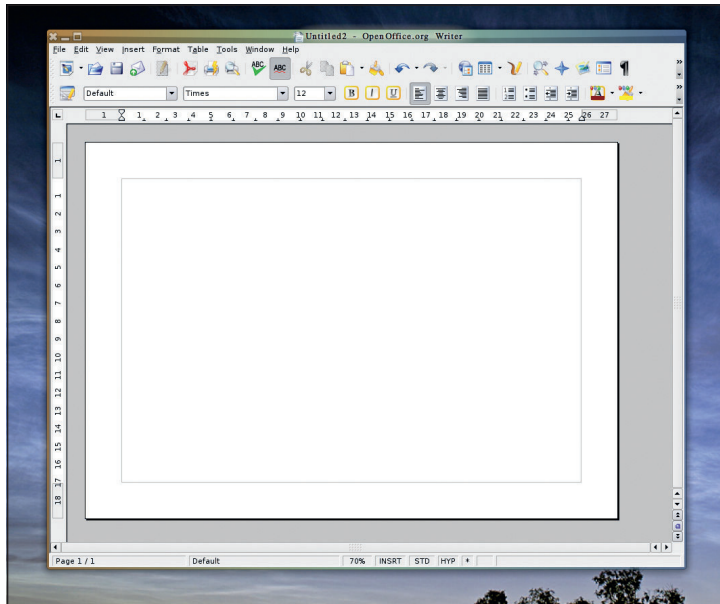

1 Desktop publishing

The *Writer* document is dominated by the layout of the words; it's designed to let you just start typing, hence the ruler and tab marks at the top and side, as well as font control in the toolbar. In this project, we're hardly going to touch text editing. Instead, we're going to use graphical objects that can be moved around the editing window much easier than using simple text and tab points.
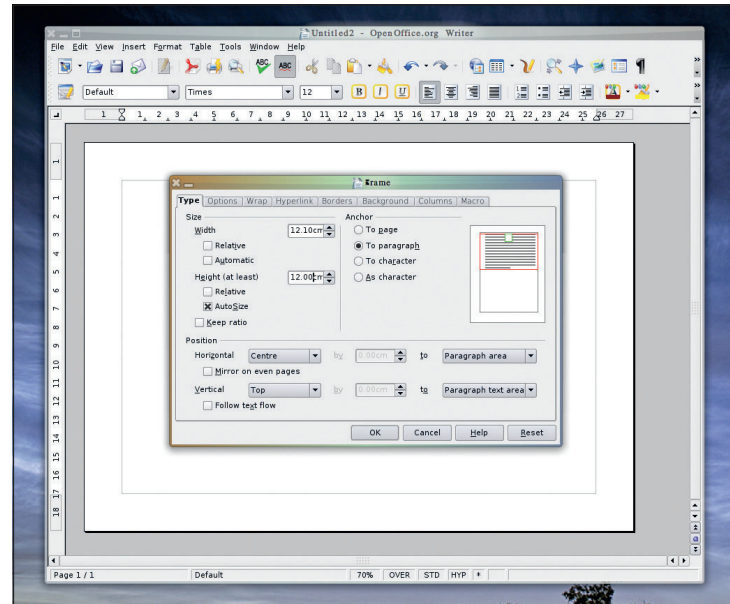

2 Landscape

Change the page orientation from the default portrait to the wide aspect of a landscape orientation from the Page Style window, by selecting Page from the Format menu. Here you can change things like the page border as well as the printing format; we want to switch from Portrait to Landscape in the switch boxes beneath the Paper Format section in the top right of the window.
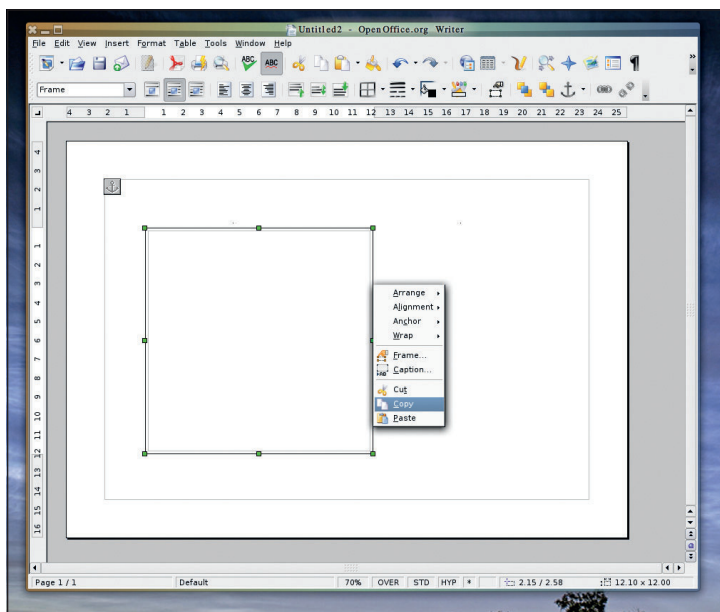
3 Landscape view

Your page layout within *Writer* will now rotate 90 degrees to show the landscape view. This is the only way a CD inlay will fit onto a single page, and this is a common problem with many printed layout that are intended to fold in half. Birthday cards are a good example, and if you find yourself changing the orientation of the page often enough, you should consider saving the layout as a template for future use.
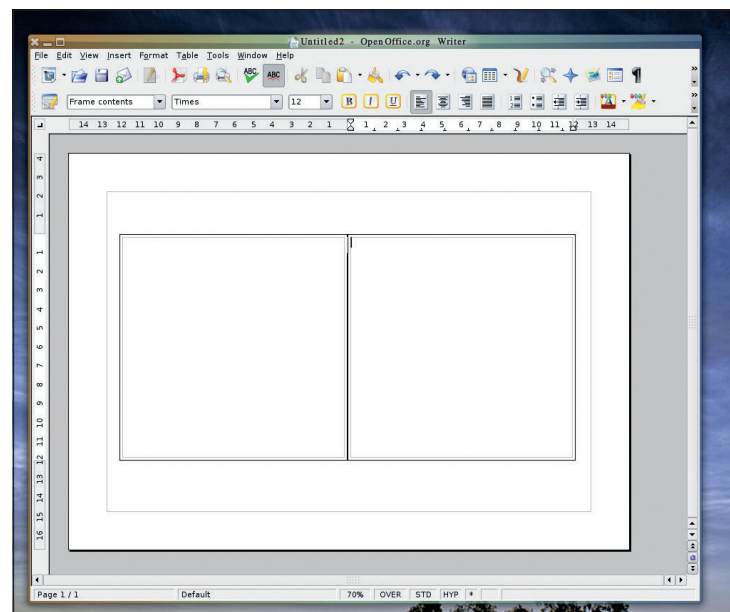
4 Add frames

At this stage, we now want to add two frames into the document. A frame is a self-contained area that acts somewhat like a cell in a table, only you can move it anywhere within the page. We're going to use two identical frames for the outline for the CD inlay. Select Insert > Frame from the menu, and type the size of the inlay into the width and height fields – 121mm wide and 120mm high, then click on OK.

5 Choose Data

The frame will appear within your document as a scalable square. Be careful not to change its size though, as this needs to be kept precisely at the size we defined in the previous step. We now want to Copy and Paste the single frame to create both sides of the folded CD inlay. You can do this by right-clicking on the frame border, selecting copy, and then using paste from the Edit menu to insert the copy.
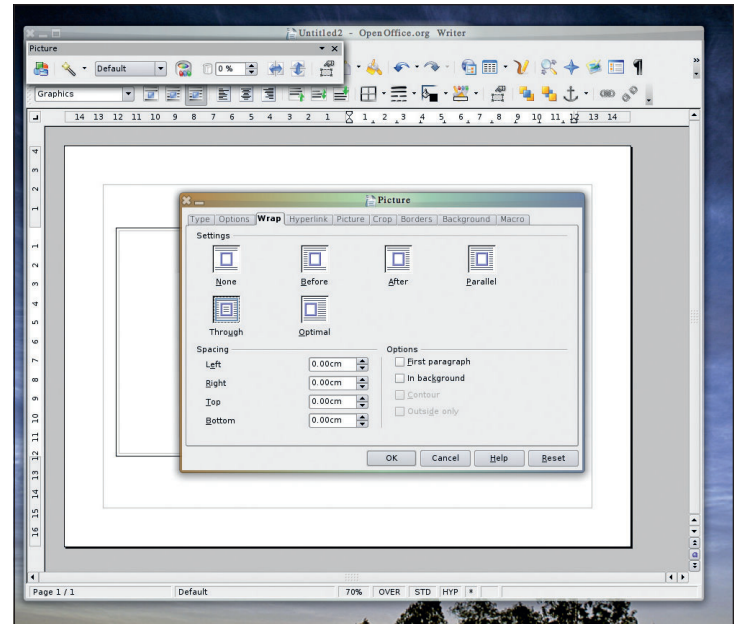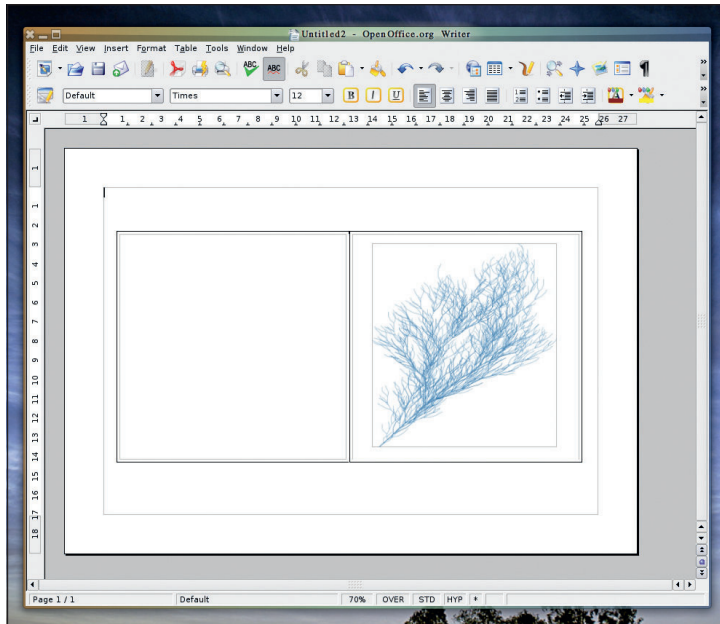
6 Get the output

With two frames in the view, position them both side by side so that neither overlaps the edge of the document window. You will find that they snap together easily so that you don't have to spend hours making sure they're both on exactly the same vertical line. As the inlay is printed out, the frame on the right will form the front cover, while the frame on the right will form the inside cover opposite the disc itself.
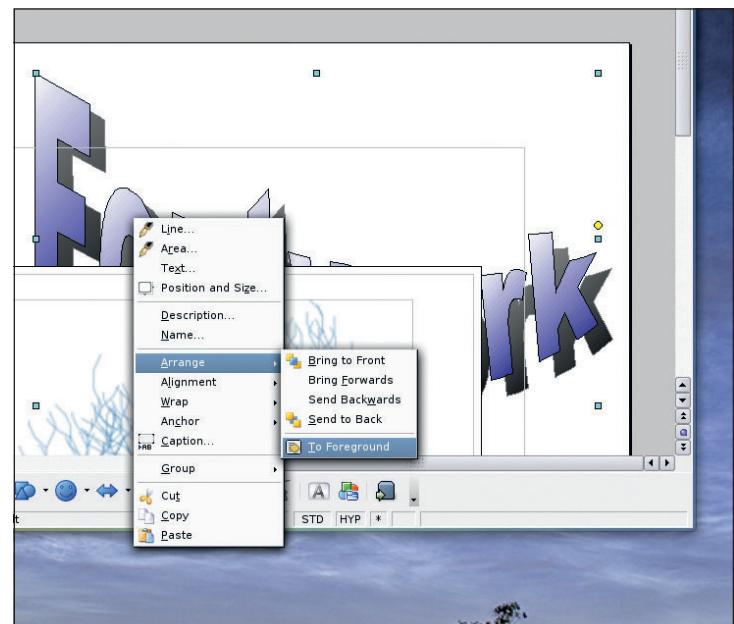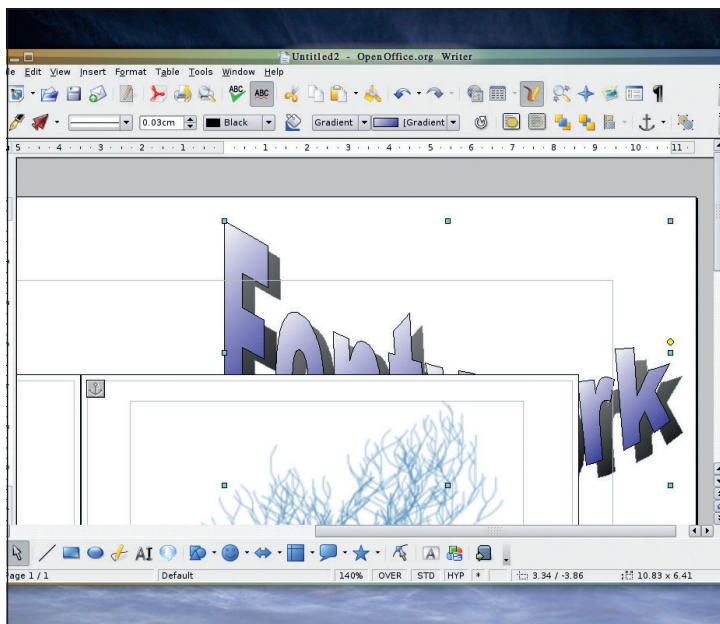
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Project 3: CD cover with Writer

7 Picture this!

A CD cover wouldn't be worth anything without some nice artwork. You need to edit and import your favourite image, or even download something that you know is freely usable. The Open Clip Art project (**www.openclipart.org**) is a good place for images and ideas. You need to be sure the cursor is inside the frame you want to import the image into, otherwise you won't be able to move it into the right place.

8 Text wrapping

You need to make sure that the position of the text you want to add to the image will not be impeded by the wrapping function. Double click the image to open the Picture window and select the wrap tab. Choosing the 'through' option will mean that any text you type around the image will blend into the picture rather than wrap around the edge. If you know you don't need this feature, then leave the wrapping option set to 'optimal'.
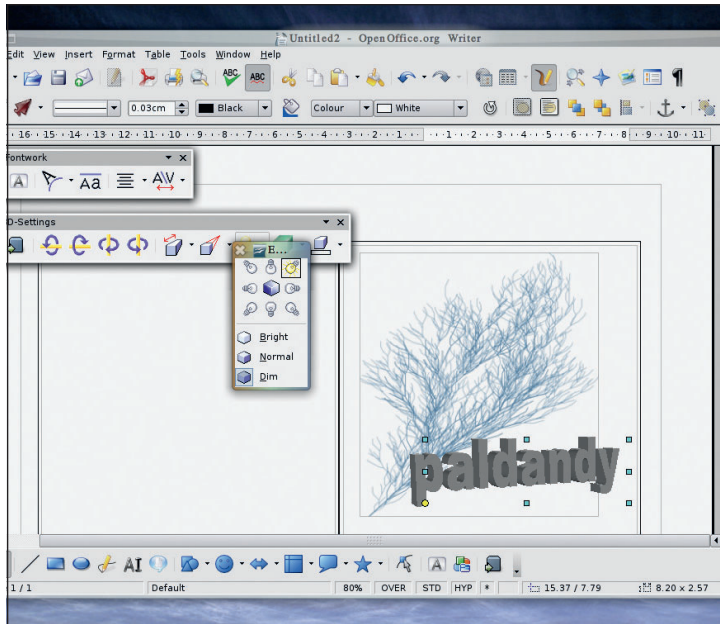

9 Work with Fontworks

We're now going to use *OpenOffice.org*'s clever *Fontworks* illustration tool to add the text. Click on the Pencil icon to launch the illustration toolbar, and then click on the font icon to insert some 3D text. Double-click on the text will let you change the word (we'd suggest the album title), but you might have noticed that the word will appear beneath the two frames we created earlier. We'll solve that problem in the next step.
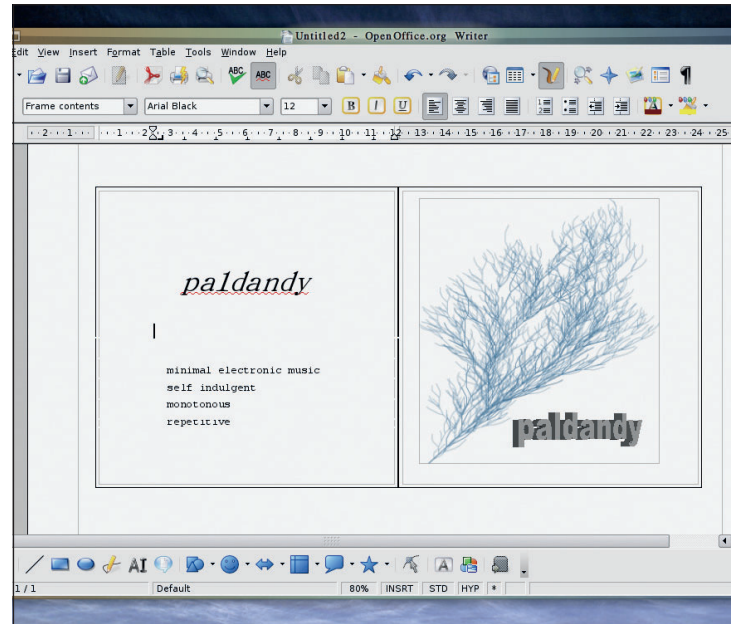

10 Image layers

Writer uses a series of layers for images – just like the onion skin overlays used by animators, and the reason why the your pretty text is obscured by the frame is because it's on the bottom layer, behind both frames. The answer is to bring it forward, making it sit over the other layers. Right-click on the word, and select Arrange > To Foreground. This will bring the text layer to the front.
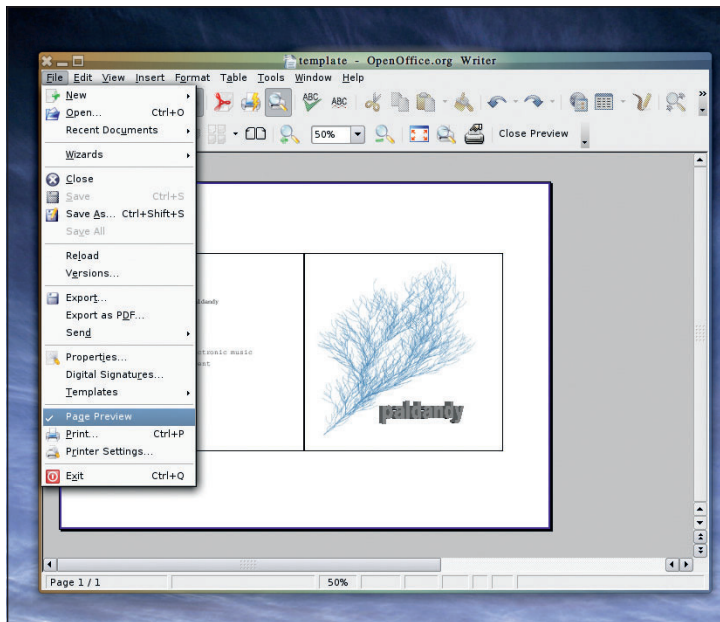
11 Text experimentation

Fontworks gives you a lot of control over exactly how you want the 3D text to appear. You can change the lighting, rotate the angle, alter the perspective as well as scale and twist the characters. You should spend some time playing around with this feature until you're happy with the appearance of the text. You will then need to scale and move the words into position over the artwork you've imported for the front cover.
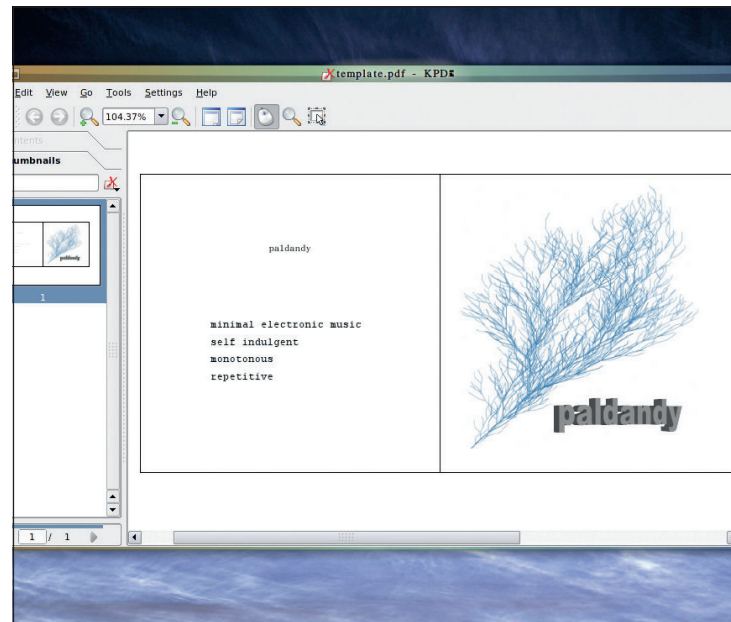

12 Artist details

You also need to add the words for the inside cover. This is often the tracklist for an album, or some words that describe the artist or the recording so think about using a list. Clicking inside the frame on the left will bring the cursor to the top left, from where you can start typing your words just as you would with a normal *Writer* document. This is the power of frames, and thankfully, HTML fully supports the formatting you use in frames, which makes them ideal for laying out websites in *Writer*.

13 Preview your inlay

Now that the design is finished, then you should take a look at the page preview selected from the File menu. This is an approximation of how your page will look on printed paper, and it's the first place you should check for any problems. There can be quite a big difference between the way *Writer* shows a design and the way the page preview works, so make sure the text and alignment is exactly as you want it.

14 Print it out

Finally, you're ready to send your design to the printer. This is easy, as you can just use the normal printing function within *Writer*, but you may also want to get your design professionally printed. In these cases, you should export your document as a PDF, as most digital printing bureaux will now prefer this format. As with the print preview, make sure you check the PDF carefully first before sending it. See p92-95 for more on printing and PDFs. **LXF**