

The following is a review of Klic-N-Kut Studio. It took me longer to write than I expected simply because I kept finding new features to include. This program has it all.

A tool bar along the left side contains all the most commonly used functions. It reminds me a bit of the tool bar in Photoshop Elements. Clicking on any icon will pop out a row of nested tools from which to select the function needed. When the function is selected, all available settings are then displayed at the top of the screen.

As anticipated, you can readily create welded-letter titles with mats from your own .ttf installed fonts. You can also readily weld letters and images to each other and/or weld to custom-designed frames. Auto-tracing imported black and white and colored clipart requires just a few clicks of the mouse and a wizard is available to walk you through the process, if desired. You can then break the tracing and remove any traced paths that may not be needed. What makes this program REALLY stand out is the node-editing capabilities. Right click on a node and a little box of 8 icons pops open. You can easily break a node into two disconnected nodes or provide a new path between two nodes. You can change straight-line paths into curved paths and vice-versa. If a path appears to be a little “wonky”, you can click on each end of the path and a smooth curve will replace the nodes.

KNK Studio has a Print and Cut function different from the optic eye method, but definitely precise (see method description below). I also successfully setup and cut dashed lines (called pouncing). The geometric shapes and welding functions allowed me to custom-design a flower and then I used the multi-pass function to cut my flower from chipboard! Cool!

There are so many miscellaneous goodies, I decided to simply list a selection of them at the end of the review. This is NOT all of them. I keep finding new things every time I explore the program. The Klic-N-Kut Yahoo group is a great resource for finding out the latest discoveries and downloading updated tutorials for this program.

Because of my commitment to “tell it all”, there are a few negatives that I will share. First, the security on the software is REALLY tight. An included security key (dongle) must be plugged into a USB port on whatever computer is running the software at any given time. **YOU MUST NOT LOSE THE DONGLE** as this is your proof of purchase for the software! If lost, an entire new \$250 software purchase must be made!

Another negative is that while the Help files are extensive and detailed, it’s not always clear to me how to find the menu choice or function to reach that item. Several times I searched on a particular topic, found exactly what I wanted, but still didn’t know where to click on the screen to find it. But just as with Wishblade, RoboMaster, WinPC Sign, Illustrator, and Inkscape, there are step-by-step

tutorials being written for scrapbookers, a support site has been created at www.scrapbookdiecutter.com, and Yahoo groups have already formed to help answer questions.

And a third rather strange function is how the program handles fonts. Rather than just reading all of the .ttf fonts currently installed in Windows, one must “select” fonts to install into KNK Studio. Now there are some positive advantages to this: if you decide to use a font after opening the program, then you can just double click the font in Explorer or My Computer and then it will show up in the list of fonts you can then install in KNK Studio. Still, this is so inconsistent with how most Windows programs handle fonts that it will take some time for new users to become accustom to it.

In summary, this is a fully-functional, exciting, and fun program for hobbyists and scrapbookers to use! If you love bells and whistles, this is the program for you. In spite of having so much functionality, I have found it fairly easy to remember where I find features due to a well-organized main screen and very useful pop up windows. It takes some time to get used to the differences in terminology after spending a year learning RoboMaster, but in time they will become second nature! The challenge now is grasping the many more features I have at hand! I need more hours in the day!

Sandy McCauley

Miscellaneous Features You'll LOVE (in no particular order)

- Using the scroll button on the mouse, you can zoom in and out as needed! How I do love that! Pressing the middle mouse button toggles you into the “hand mode” where you can move the document around to find the part of the image you need.
- It doesn't matter where the images reside in the main document screen or how large the document size was set by the creator or even how large the image is itself! When you click on cut, the image is immediately placed in the lower left hand corner. In this cut screen, YOU then specify the dimensions of your media and you will see where the image will cut. You can then move it away from that corner, as desired. You can resize the image to what you need. You can also rotate and mirror you image in the cut window without disturbing the original image.
- Alternatively, if you prefer a WYSIWYG approach, you can set the defaults so that the document area on the screen matches the size of the paper/cardstock you place on the mat and images will cut in precisely the same locations... same orientation. This is really useful for new owners who are getting oriented with the cutter.

- There are several ways to fill your screen with the same image. You can use an array function in your main document screen to simply click and fill rows and columns of the image and adjust the space between each one. Better still, let's say you only want to make multiples one time and leave your file with just one image. After going into the cut function, you can then specify the number of repeats you need and it will show how many will fit based on the media size you specify and the spacing. After cutting, you return to your original window with only one copy of the image.
- You can specify what order you want the various colored lines in your image to cut. You can also set the KNK to pause between each color to change out the media or just check which colors to cut, as with the Wishblade or Craft Robo.
- You can label the colors in your image with specific names. For example, in a tracing of a doll, you can label the brown lines as "Hair", the pink lines as "Face", the black lines as "Shoes", etc. Then, when you go into the cutting window and pull up the list of colored lines to check off, it will have those names listed by the colors.
- While in the main document window you can "turn off" images based on color. Let's say you have a bunch of images in four different colors on your screen and you want to only work with the red items. By holding down the Alt key and clicking on the red color on the screen's palette, all the non-red items will be converted to a dashed outline leaving just the red ones for you to select. You can no longer work with the other colored items. Similarly, holding down the Ctrl key and clicking on the red color will convert all the red items to a dashed outline, leaving the other colored items visible and selectable.
- The print and cut capability doesn't involve using an optic eye as with the Craft Robo and Wishblade. Instead, the user selects the image and clicks a button to add registration marks around the perimeter. The image and registration marks are then printed and the printout placed on the mat. The software then directs the user to move the blade (using the keyboard) to each of three registration marks and click on a "set position" key. Based on these positions, the KNK will then accurately locate and cut the image.
- The program will tell you how many inches and seconds it took to cut a particular image. It also has a built-in clock if you want to time how long it takes you to complete a project. This would help store owners and those who "cut for money" have a very accurate and fair way to price their work.
- There is a "banner fill" function which will "color in" your images. Thus if you are using a gel pen to draw letters rather than cut them, you can have the interior of the letters filled with the ink, as well. You can also choose to just outline instead. Note that this "banner fill" can also be used to emboss

images or words onto cardstock, paper or vellum using an engraving tool, sold separately.

- For those designers who like to include instructions, labeling, and even dimensions in their files, it's a cinch to do it all. One particular feature that will be so cool with patterns and templates is the ability to highlight the image, click on Object Dimension and when you drag the marker on any side of the image and let go, the length of that side is automatically added along with the arrows extending out to the boundaries of that side. You can also drag an arrow away from any spot and add a label such as "Fold along this line." (Hope this makes sense!)
- An Undo Navigator tracks every move made during image design and editing so that you can go back and click on each step to review the changes that were made and decide at which point you wish to revert.
- The Weed feature will instantly add a box around your image and cut it out. This will be handy for designing greeting card fronts.
- The Multi-pass function allows the user to specify how many times to repeat the cut. This is important when cutting thicker chipboards where more than one cut is usually necessary to completely penetrate the material.
- The Ginsu knife tools allow you to "cut" an image into parts. For example, you might have a tracing of an apple, leaf, and stem, all connected in a single path. Use a ginsu knife to separate the leaf and the stem to cut from different colors of cardstock, as in a paper piecing. Fast and easy!
- There are text stretching/transformation functions to alter the look of your titles. In addition, you can create Word Art titles in Microsoft Word and copy/paste them into KNK Studio for cutting.
- If an auto-tracing yields more nodes than needed, you can highlight any section and then delete half of the nodes used and repeat, as desired. Of course, the Klic-N-Kut's speed is so much faster that I tend to just leave the nodes in place.
- You can import dozens of different file formats including .bmp, .jpg, .dxf, .ai, .eps, .gif, .tif, .pdf, .png, .wmf, .psd, and more. You can also export in many formats, including .dxf, .pdf, .ai, .eps, and .svg. Note that the software developers are working on .gsd import and export functionality for those KNK owners who have an extensive gsd collection or want to share their KNK creations with Wishblade and Craft Robo owners. We are hoping this functionality will be available by the time the Element is released.