



Blu-ray Disc News

News and Views from the Blu-ray Disc Association

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3 October 2006

Panasonic announces world's first Blu-ray video recorder



DIGA DMR-BW200

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Shigenobu Hirahara, Associate Director of Corporate Marketing, Panasonic

Panasonic has unveiled the world's first Blu-ray Disc recorders that can play back Blu-ray-Video discs. The Blu-ray DIGA DMR-BW200 and DMR-BR100 can record High Definition imagery on Blu-ray rewritable discs and dub from the built-in hard-disk drive (HDD) to Blu-ray discs at 4x speed without compromising video or audio quality. The new Blu-ray Disc recorders will be available in Japan from November 15.

"As a leader in the cutting-edge Blu-ray disc technology, Panasonic is proud to present these two models," commented Shigenobu Hirahara, Associate Director of Corporate Marketing Division for Panasonic Brand in Japan. "With the development of digital broadcasting and the increased popularity of large-screen flat panel TVs, there is an increasing consumer desire to record and playback High Definition images."

"When combined with Panasonic's VIERA TVs and other home theater products, the new DIGAs will provide consumers extraordinary new home entertainment experience with 1080p HD images and 7.1 channel dynamic sounds," added Hirahara.

The new models support single-layer 25 GB and dual-layer 50 GB BD discs (BD-RE and BD-R). Users can record up to six hours of High Definition programme material on a 50 GB BD disc. In addition, the DMR-BW200 and DMR-BR100 come with a built-in HDD with a huge capacity, 500 GB and 200 GB, respectively.

The DMR-BW200 is equipped with a total of seven TV tuners including two tuners each for terrestrial, BS and 110-degree CS digital broadcasts and one analogue TV tuner. That enables users to record two digital TV programs simultaneously on the HDD. Users can also record one program on the HDD while recording one on a BD-RE disc.



DIGA DMR-BW100

Thanks to Panasonic's image processing technologies, the DMR-BW200 and DMR-BR100 can record and reproduce images in high quality. The new DIGAs' image processing engines include Panasonic's own HD Optimizer that automatically detects and suppresses noise which is unique to digital broadcasting. The engines also incorporate a video converter that can record images with details when down-converting from HD to SD (standard definition) to store on DVD discs. The reverse is also the case – when connected to a TV via an HDMI cable, the converter can up-convert SD content to HD to reproduce high-resolution images.

The new BD recorders exemplify Panasonic's efforts in making high-tech products easy-to-operate. For example, the two models feature Playback Navigation that can automatically sort programs recorded using weekly or daily programmed recording function into appropriate folders. They also provide easy operation with VIERA Link single remote control. When used with other home theater components that support the VIERA Link, users can operate the components including a recorder, TV and home theater receiver with just one remote.

HDMI for all PLAYSTATION 3 consoles



PLAYSTATION 3

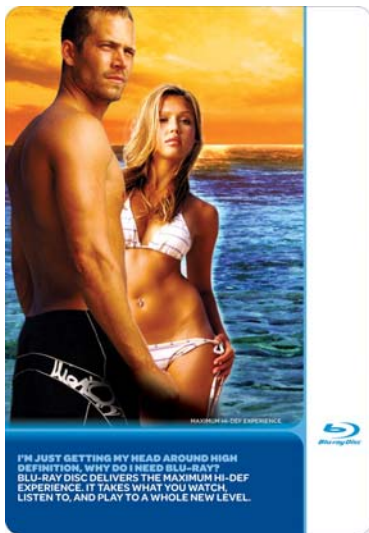
Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. (SCEI) has announced that the smaller capacity PLAYSTATION 3, with 20GB hard disk drive (HDD), will come equipped with HDMI (Version 1.3/supporting Deep Colour) output as standard with the system.

Since SCEI first announced product specifications of PLAYSTATION 3 at the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) in May 2005, demand for enjoying full High Definition image quality and realistic digital sound through HDMI has grown tremendously. Given the sharp increase in availability of flat displays supporting HDMI in the market, SCEI has decided to make HDMI standard on all PS3 models.

This announcement is strategically important since besides being an advanced next generation games console, PLAYSTATION 3 will also be one of the best value-for-money Blu-ray Disc players on the market. Designed to an impressive specification, the third evolution of Sony's games platform is designed to sit under a home's main television and become the hub of the home's High Definition home entertainment network.

Standard HDMI connectivity across all PLAYSTATION 3 models means that they will interface to the large and rapidly expanding array of HDMI compliant devices and integrate seamlessly within a very large number of homes worldwide.

Companies team up to promote Blu-ray Disc format



“A key feature of this campaign is its openness – it is applicable to a very broad range of companies and a diversity of local markets. We believe that its clear and exciting message will have a very broad appeal”

*John Quarrey
Krow Communications*

One of the strengths of Blu-ray Disc is the breadth of support that the format enjoys from more than 170 companies. The latest news from the Blu-ray Disc community tells of the formation of a core group of companies that have teamed up to promote the format within key strategic markets.

The core group of companies includes Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, Twentieth Century Fox, Disney Corporation, Warner Brothers, Panasonic, Pioneer, Sony and Sony Computer Entertainment.

The core group's 'raison d'être' is to provide a solid platform from which to promote Blu-ray Disc in local markets. A European core group has developed a set of format promotion guidelines, which will be implemented by teams in the local country markets. The platform is open and the make-up of the cross company teams in each region will depend on the nature of that local market.

The group will co-ordinate local joint company promotions. It will ensure a consistent style across campaigns, companies and countries and it will support local task forces where cross company initiatives are developed.

The core group of companies has created messaging and graphics guidelines that enable promotional material to be created in a uniform style with ease. The campaign benefits from the creative input from London-based Krow Communications, which has assisted with the campaign concept creation, messaging and tactical implementation.

“Running under the banner of *Maximum Hi-Def Experience*, we have created a communications package that allows companies to promote the Blu-ray Disc message using their own and third-party material,” remarks Krow Communication's founder, John Quarrey. “ We have developed a common design template, specific advertising material and concepts for promotion events. A key feature of this campaign is its openness – it is applicable to a very broad range of companies and a diversity of local markets. We believe that its clear and exciting message will have a very broad appeal.”

The core group of companies' aim is to maximise format promotion opportunities in local markets. Most importantly, it provides a framework for the teams to address the challenges within each individual country and use their collective assets to overcome those challenges in ways best suited to that market.

The Blu-View: Sun Microsystems

Sun Microsystems was aware that the Blu-ray Disc Association had been intending to offer a Java technology-based interactivity platform since early in the format's evolution. The company formally joined the association in late 2004 to help with the specification process and to ensure Blu-ray Disc was well-aligned with and would benefit from the other consumer technologies which have standardized on a similar Java platform (such as cable and broadcast television, and mobile phones).



Earlier this month, the Blu-ray Disc Association announced that Sun had moved into the very heart of its organization by joining its board of directors. What does this news mean for the on-going development of Blu-ray Disc? *Blu ray Disc News* spoke to Sun's Senior Industry Manager, Digital TV, Bill Sheppard.

"I believe the fact that the technologies underlying Blu-ray Disc all have room to evolve will be key to the format being relevant for a decade or more," commented Bill Sheppard. "Blu-ray Disc not only has higher storage capacity today, but has demonstrated a roadmap suggesting significant storage increases will be feasible in the future. Similarly, BD-J (Blu-ray Disc's interactive feature set) is a very open-ended platform, which will be capable of supporting new content types which may not be on our radar today, but will be key in a few years. Just as today's internet looks very different from that of five years ago, I believe our expectations around a home media experience will evolve as well, and in key areas the Blu-ray Disc specification is very forward-looking."

So how important is interactivity today? Because true interactivity is not widely available in the US today, Sheppard believes that consumers have little or no context for what it can add to the viewing experience. Once the studios and other content providers become comfortable with the technologies available to them, he believes that we will see a wide range of innovative interactive content to complement the high definition audio/video experience. "Rich blockbuster titles lend themselves to an incredible range of interactive features to allow the viewer to immerse themselves inside the world the movie creates," expands Sheppard. "This could take the form of interactive exploration of the various settings where the movie takes place, various games making use of characters and objects from the film, or even a bundled version of the popular "Scene It?" focusing exclusively on content from the movie."

In addition, with the US cable industry rolling out the OCAP interactive platform, which is based on the same Java technologies as BD-J, there will be an opportunity for TV interactivity to be repacked on Blu-ray Disc and Blu-ray Disc interactivity to be delivered to cable set-top boxes.

Looking at various forms of interactivity available on the market, Sheppard believes that BD-Live (Blu-ray Disc Interactive) is an exciting prospect for both consumers and the entertainment industry. "I think a particularly powerful aspect of BD-Live is the fact that BD-J doesn't constrain developers to any particular content type," comments Bill. "Other solutions generally define interactivity in the form of "mark-up language" (i.e. HTML), which is generally quite efficient in terms of how quickly content can be created, but can be very limiting in the variety of content which can be created. BD-J provides the best of both worlds. Developers can use mark-up language when they'd like to quickly generate common types of content, but can develop using standard programmers' tools when they want to develop new forms of content or user interfaces which don't lend themselves to markup language.

"We've seen a similar dynamic on mobile phones," continues Sheppard. "The phone's WAP browser uses mark-up language to access common web-type

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Senior Industry Manager,
Digital TV
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Bill Sheppard

“As a Board member Sun will be in a better position to work with the studios and the player manufacturers to assure all these components are in place resulting in a wide variety of compelling Blu-ray content for consumers.”

Bill Sheppard

content such as news and sports scores or email, but a much wider variety of typically more interesting content, including games, audio/video playback, and productivity software, are authored directly to the phone's Java platform. As a result of the flexibility provided by BD-J we're looking to the creative community to provide some very interesting content on Blu-ray Disc.”

Sun is approaching the Blu-ray Disc with a long-term strategic view and sees a number of areas for further development. “In addition to the types of interactivity which movies lend themselves to, I think we'll see a great deal of activity in providing entertainment and educational titles on Blu-ray Disc,” states Bill Sheppard. “Legacy DVD is very, very limited in terms of the variety of content which it can support. “Scene It?” is a good example of a very popular party game which has been successful in spite of DVD's limitations. On Blu-ray Disc the game could have far more content and provide a much richer user experience. Blu-ray Disc will provide an excellent platform for children's programming as well. Titles like *Sesame Street* could include interactive components geared toward the target audience, but in a much more foolproof environment than installing and running software on a PC.”

Sun's adoption on to the Blu-ray Disc Association's board is something that pleases Sheppard and, he believes, will add to the Blu-ray Disc proposition significantly. “Sun has a great deal of experience in building a content ecosystem for the mobile market, where there are now over 1.5 billion Java-enabled phones and over \$100 billion dollars in revenue have been generated for content providers and mobile operators as a result,” concludes Bill Sheppard. “Building a healthy developer community requires a variety of authoring tools, testing programs, and developer support resources. As a Board member Sun will be in a better position to work with the studios and the player manufacturers to assure all these components are in place resulting in a wide variety of compelling Blu-ray content for consumers.”

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to help

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