



Blu-ray Disc News

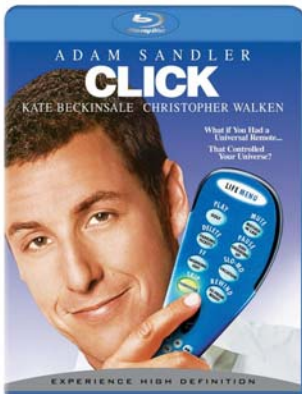
News and Views from the Blu-ray Disc Association

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Blu-ray movies cruise up to 50GB discs



The dual-layer High Definition disc promises to deliver the interactivity and extras that the Blu-ray Disc format uniquely offers. 'Click' is one of three 50GB Blu-ray discs in the studios' pipeline, alongside Ridley Scott's Black Hawk Down, and Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby.

At the High Def 101 Conference in Los Angeles, Sony Pictures Home Entertainment announced the North American release of *Click* on Blu-ray Disc, representing another strategic milestone for the format. *Click* was released in the US on October 10 and represents the world's first ever 50GB Blu-ray Disc movie release.

The dual-layer High Definition disc promises to deliver the interactivity and extras that the Blu-ray Disc (BD) format uniquely offers. *Click* is one of three 50GB BD discs in the studio's pipeline destined for the North American market, alongside Ridley Scott's *Black Hawk Down* (to be released in US on November 14), and *Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby* (to be released in US on December 12).

Two other studios have announced 50GB discs: 20th Century Fox is releasing *Kingdom of Heaven*, *Director's Cut* on November 14, and Lionsgate is preparing a dual-layer Blu-ray Disc of *The Descent* for a December release. Warner Bros. is expected to announce that its next wave of BD titles will include one or more dual-layer discs.

Because of its greater capacity, the Blu-ray Disc of *Click* will include all the bonus features from the DVD, in High Definition, as well as uncompressed PCM (pulse code modulation) audio. Bonus features include an audio commentary with star Adam Sandler, director Frank Coraci, executive producer Tim Herlihy and writer Steve Koren; four deleted scenes; and seven short features, including a documentary on the film's special effects and a "Director's Take."

Black Hawk will be the first title to feature Sony's new "Blu-Wizard" playlist technology, which lets viewers customize the way they watch special features. Extras include an audio commentary with author Mark Bowden, screenwriter Ken Nolan, producer Jerry Bruckheimer, director Scott and U.S. Special Forces

Veterans '93 as well as six making-of documentaries exploring various aspects of the movie's production.

Talladega comes with nine deleted and extended scenes, all in High Definition; an audio commentary with director Adam McKay and others; bonus race footage; a gag reel; three interviews; *Ricky & Cal* commercials and PSAs; a short feature on Will Ferrell returning to Talladega; and various other extras.

Sony Blu-ray Disc video recorders and PCs to be launched in Japan

Sony will launch two Blu-ray Disc video recorders in Japan this December. The machines both feature hard-disk drives for day-to-day recording and a Blu-ray Disc drive for longer-term storage. The BDZ-V9 has a 500GB drive, and the BDZ-V7 has a 250GB drive. There are two digital tuners in each recorder so that two High Definition programs can be recorded simultaneously. Both recorders were unveiled during a news conference at the CEATEC show in Tokyo last week.

The recorders are designed to appeal to videophiles with demands for high specifications, including Linear PCM audio and 1080p (1,080 lines progressive scanning) output, which is the highest of several image levels judged to be High Definition. The recorders can also be connected to Sony's recently launched High Definition camcorders by a Firewire connection and can play back the AVCHD-format discs used in the cameras.

The higher-capacity BDZ-V9 will be launched on December 8, and the BDZ-V7 will follow about a week later on December 16. The machines fill an important gap in Sony's High Definition strategy, which by now has HD-capable products in several parts of the consumer video market including televisions and video camcorders. In Japan, these will be joined in November by the PlayStation 3 game console and then in December by the two new recorders. Launching the recorders internationally is possible, but nothing has been decided as of yet, Sony said.



Blu-ray Disc takes centre stage at CEATEC

Sony also announced the addition of Blu-ray Disc to more PCs in its VAIO line. The VAIO Type-R master is an Intel Core 2 Duo-based machine loaded with High Definition editing and authoring software. It will be available on October 28. A Blu-ray Disc drive will also be offered as a build-to-order option with Sony's Type-L computer. With the new computers, Blu-ray Disc is now available in four of Sony's VAIO product lines.

Magnolia announces Blu-ray movie releases

Independent movie distributor, Magnolia Home Entertainment has released its first wave of Blu-ray Disc titles on October 10.

Among Magnolia's six-strong first Blu-ray Disc wave are *Bubble* and *The War Within*; documentary *Enron: The Smartest Guys In The Room* and the HDNet



Bubble on Blu-ray Disc

shows *Bikini Destinations: Triple Fantasy* and *HDNet World Report Special: Shuttle Discovery's Historic Mission*.

All six titles will be released on BD-25 single-layer discs and several titles, including *Bubble*, *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room* and *The War Within* will feature audio commentaries.

Magnolia is one the first studios to include High Definition special features – *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room* and *Bubble* each feature 1080i High Definition episodes.

Panasonic launch Blu-ray Disc player in Europe



Panasonic DMP-BD10

In Europe, Panasonic has launched the DMP-BD10 Blu-ray Disc player, which features a number of advanced technical specifications. According to Panasonic, the minimum requirement for a Blu-ray Disc player is that it can process 62.2 million pixels per second and 1,000 times more audio processing power than a CD. Also, the player processes 15 billion pixels per second and 192kHz/24bit audio on 8 channels.

The DMP-BD10 features P4HD (Pixel Precision Progressive Processing for HD), rendering high-quality progressive images, smooth motion, and sharp diagonals. Both for the de-interlacing and scaling, the DMP-BD10's super-high-speed P4HD generates each pixel correctly according to information obtained from up to 60 surrounding pixels.

Applying progressive processing to huge amounts of data, it delivers images of striking beauty. There's 16-level motion detection and pixel-based motion adaptive technology which adapts depending upon the amount of motion in the content.

The Blu-View: Pioneer USA

For the next in its series of Opinion Former interviews, Blu-ray Disc News grabbed some time with Andy Parsons, Chair of the Blu-ray Disc Association's North American promotion committee, and Senior VP of new product development for Pioneer USA to talk about the fast developing North American Blu-ray Disc market.

The first Blu-ray Disc video products appeared in the U.S. market in late June, consisting of Samsung's player and a number of titles from Sony Pictures and Lionsgate. In the past few weeks Warner Bros., Disney and Paramount also started shipping their first titles. Fox and MGM have announced that they will ship theirs soon, so before long there will be content from all seven studios supporting the Blu-ray Disc format on the US market.

Also, there are projected product launches from more manufacturers, such as Panasonic, Philips, Pioneer and Sony before the year end, and of course PLAYSTATION 3 will be launched in the US in mid-November.

There are Blu-ray Disc computer writer/readers in OEM and retail channels, including models from Panasonic, Pioneer and Sony, as well as complete computer systems from Sony. Dell has announced its intention to ship Blu-ray Disc-equipped desktop and laptop systems before the end of the year.

“When we put all of this together, it should be very clear that in the coming months Blu-ray Disc has overwhelming support by key content providers and hardware brands,” commented Andy Parsons. “If a consumer is standing in a retail store deciding which format to invest in, I think it's pretty obvious that the one with the most titles and player brands on the shelf is the safe buy.”

So how has the US market responded to Blu-ray Disc's introduction? In North America, Blu-ray Disc has been enjoying a great deal of press coverage, and there are a growing number of enthusiast websites and blog sites that are reporting on every detail of BD products and the format.

Parsons believes that the level of scrutiny has been surprising. “We didn't expect so much consumer discussion about codecs, bit rates, the impact of film grain and even the nuts and bolts of player signal processing circuits,” explained Parsons. “We are watching these discussions with great interest, and are learning a lot about what's important to these earliest adopter consumers.

“Meanwhile, on the retailer side, I think Blu-ray Disc is seen as a key enabler for HDTV sales. At the recent CEDIA [electronic installer] show in Denver, Blu-ray Disc players were on display in at least six different manufacturers' stands, and I saw constant activity around whichever BD player was on display. The time I spent talking with retailers in our (Pioneer's) stand was particularly interesting, since it gave me a chance to speak with the people tasked with selling High Definition products to consumers. They really need Blu-ray Disc products to show their customers how fantastic a full resolution display can look with very high quality HD content, since BD players tend to bring out the very best of these newest 1080p displays.”

When asked what he believes are the key features of the Blu-ray Disc format, Parsons responds enthusiastically. “Based on what I've been reading on the online forums, picture and sound quality seem to resonate the most with consumers,” affirms Andy. “In particular, 1080p seems to be a hot issue among the home theater enthusiasts, since true 1080p/24 is the closest we can provide to a movie theater experience in the home.

“There also seems to be a positive reaction to Blu-ray Disc's user interface, which is quite advanced compared with DVD. BD's popup menus are really striking due to their high resolution and better integration of on-screen controls without



*Andy Parsons
Pioneer USA*

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*Andy Parsons
Senior VP, New Product
Development
Pioneer USA.*

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disturbing the continuity of the program. I believe this is the essence of Blu-ray Disc - providing the very best possible High Definition experience."

As the adage says, it's content that makes formats. In this respect Andy Parsons is keen to emphasise the strategic importance of Hollywood's very active support for Blu-ray Disc.

"The only reason we have any of this technology is to enable people to enjoy movies, music and games in the most emotionally satisfying way possible. As nice as flat panel High Definition displays and Blu-ray players are to own, they are of little use without a large array of high quality HD content to enjoy on them."

"I cannot stress enough the importance of content in this discussion," enthuses Parsons. "I believe that the only reason we have any of this technology is to enable people to enjoy movies, music and games in the most emotionally satisfying way possible. As nice as flat panel High Definition displays and Blu-ray Disc players are to own, they are of little use without a large array of high quality HD content to enjoy on them.

"The Blu-ray Disc Association worked hard to develop a format that would attract as many content providers to support the BD format as possible, since the ability to enjoy your favorite titles in High Definition is what will, in turn, attract the most consumers. I'm proud to say that we now have seven of eight major Hollywood studios supporting Blu-ray Disc - Disney, Fox, Lionsgate, MGM, Paramount, Sony Pictures and Warner Bros. - with five of them supporting only Blu-ray.

"I can't think of a more powerful reason why Blu-ray Disc will prevail than this overwhelming content support," observes Andy Parsons. "Put another way, why would you invest in a format that will not allow you to watch Disney, Fox, Lionsgate, MGM and Sony Pictures movies on it?"

"We've always touted our superior industry support, and over the coming months it should become obvious to retailers and consumers how this will translate into a strong message that Blu-ray Disc is here to stay."

Nearly four months into the US format launch, Parsons is pleased with Blu-ray Disc's market position. But neither Andy Parsons, Pioneer, nor the Blu-ray Disc Association are resting on their laurels. Asked what he sees as the key 'touchstones' in the next six month period Andy's eyes light up.

"The introduction of many more products, including both titles and hardware. We've always touted our superior industry support, and over the coming months it should become obvious to retailers and consumers how this will translate into a strong message that Blu-ray Disc is here to stay. Just consider the impact of PLAYSTATION 3 by itself: there should be millions of these consoles in consumer homes worldwide by this time next year, with every single one of them capable of playing Blu-ray Disc titles.

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"That huge population of players should help create significant demand for more content, and I'm certain that content providers will be happy to respond accordingly with more title releases. This in turn should attract more mainstream consumers to the format," concludes Andy Parsons. "What's kind of funny is that some people have informed me, often rather sternly, that "we learned before that the best technology doesn't always win," implying that some other mysterious factor could overcome our superior capacity, higher bit rate, and so on. Well, the only "other factor" I can think of is massively more industry support in the form of many more

products. So I like to respond that this time, we are fortunate that Blu-ray Disc has both advantages, so sometimes the best technology does win in the end.”

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