



# Blu-ray Disc News

News and Views from the Blu-ray Disc Association

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## Fox synchronize North American BD X-MEN release with PlayStation launch

As the saying goes, content makes formats. In this respect, Blu-ray Disc is exceptional in that over 90 per cent of the Hollywood Movie Studios are actively producing content and releasing movie titles on Blu-ray Disc (BD). Continuing its unwavering commitment to BD, the only High Definition packaged media platform broadly supported by the film, music, gaming, computing and consumer electronics industries, Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment (TCFHE) has announced the North American Blu-ray debut of *X-MEN: THE LAST STAND* on November 14, timed and demographically perfect for the launch of Sony's much-anticipated Playstation 3 on November 17.

The three X-MEN movies are among the studio's most popular and successful, collectively grossing over \$1 billion at the worldwide box office and selling over 45 million DVD/VHS units. Reigning as one of the biggest films of the year and the industry's biggest BD release ever, *X-MEN: THE LAST STAND* features 100% HD content in AVC (MPEG4) including the film and the bonus features – a first for Fox. It carries a suggested retail price of \$39.98 U.S. / \$49.98 Canada.

The BD release of *X-MEN: THE LAST STAND* on November 14 joins Fox's action-packed line-up of initial BD releases, which includes *BEHIND ENEMY LINES*, *FANTASTIC FOUR*, *KINGDOM OF HEAVEN (Director's Cut)*, *KISS OF THE DRAGON*, *THE OMEN (2006)*, *THE LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN*, *SPEED* and *THE TRANSPORTER*. These releases also carry a suggested retail price of US\$39.98/CAN\$49.98.

The week following the X-MEN launch brings the Studio's first day-and-date DVD and BD release with the concurrent release of *ICE AGE: THE MELTDOWN* on November 21 in North America. This inaugural day-and-date release will benefit from the comprehensive, multi-million dollar marketing campaigns already in place for *ICE AGE: THE MELTDOWN*, which will tout the availability of the title on both DVD and BD.

Authored in HDMV with AVC (MPEG 4 compression) and high-resolution 6.1 DTS



**Blu-ray Disc compliments the stunning special effects on X-MEN: THE LAST STAND**

ES HD Lossless Master Audio, the *X-MEN: THE LAST STAND* BD release boasts two commentary tracks (director Brett Ratner with writers Zak Penn and Simon Kinberg; separate track featuring producers Avi Arad, Lauren Shuler Donner and Ralph Winter), 12 alternate / extended scenes presented in 5.1 Dolby Digital audio (with optional director / writer commentary) and enhanced Marvel Trivia Track – with this feature activated, color graphics pop up throughout the film giving inside information from the Marvel universe on characters and events, plus favorite Marvel Comics are referenced and Marvel characters and graphics are incorporated into the presentation.

*Fox's commitment to emerging technologies such as Blu-ray Disc is dedicated to enhancing the consumer experience of its products and providing for backward compatibility with their existing home entertainment libraries while also aggressively protecting its intellectual property from piracy.*



Fox's commitment to emerging technologies is dedicated to enhancing the consumer experience of its products and providing for backward compatibility with their existing home entertainment libraries while also aggressively protecting its intellectual property from piracy. The Blu-ray companies fully embrace the Studio's steadfast commitment to the fight against piracy and the preservation of the integrity of its properties. Twentieth Century Fox is a member of the Board of Directors of the Blu-ray Disc Association.

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## Sony PlayStation gears up for global revolution

As one of the world's leading brand names, Sony-knocking seems to be a national pastime on many continents. So it is not surprising that the company's gaming division – Sony Computer Entertainment – has weathered a storm of recent criticism regarding the delayed European launch of its next generation PLAYSTATION 3 console.

Despite this, and ahead of its North American and Japanese launches later this month, senior company executives report that their launch strategy is on time and on target. Key movers and shakers within the company exude confidence – safe in the knowledge that this third generation PlayStation console enjoys far greater levels of anticipation and forward orders than either previous model.

Born out of this confidence, Sony executives are candid about the challenges they have faced in bringing such a sophisticated High Definition home entertainment



**Phil Harrison**

platform to market. "Incorporating Blu-ray Disc within PLAYSTATION 3 was always going to be ambitious at such an early stage of the technology's lifecycle," commented Phil Harrison, President, SCE Worldwide Studios. "It has caused minor manufacturing delays - that's the price you pay for adopting brand new, leading-edge technologies that will be future proof. But the medium and long-term pay back will more than compensate for these early snags. We will resolve these issues - we are already catching up. We will continue to catch up on the production, and as you know, we haven't changed our full-year forecast of six million units [by March 2007], so we're only talking about a ramp-up issue. We're not talking about the fundamental design of the product itself."

The motivation for Sony to down-scale its PLAYSTATION 3 launch in order to accommodate Blu-ray Disc is understood when Sony explains the key role that this High Definition technology plays within the revolutionary console. Firstly, its superior storage capacity is essential to PLAYSTATION 3 since it allows Sony and other content creators to produce stunning games and distribute them on single discs, making loading and playing simple and intuitive.

"Already with our launch titles, we're getting up close to the 25GB limit that we have on our Blu-ray Disc titles this year," explained Phil Harrison. "Next year, we will raise that to 50GB and I'd expect that we'll be getting close to that in the fairly near future as well."

Aside from its capabilities as a games console, Sony Computer Entertainment emphasizes that Blu-ray Disc and HDTV are integral to the PLAYSTATION 3 entertainment experience. Recent research amongst over 1900 existing PS2 users identifies that more than 92 per cent of users identify its ability to play DVDs as a key motivation for their purchase. This compares with just 53 per cent of users that were motivated by the ability to play games over the Internet using broadband.

Sony points out that PLAYSTATION 3 will offer a much broader entertainment experience than PS2 and it will earn a new position at the center of the home's main living room rather than in children's bedrooms.

Despite the delayed launch of PLAYSTATION 3 in Europe, Sony Computer Entertainment Europe continues to thrive in a competitive marketplace. The company has announced a significant milestone for PlayStation 2 with 40 million consoles now in the hands of consumers throughout Europe and the PAL territories.

The 40 million mark establishes PlayStation 2 as the most popular computer entertainment system in Europe and surpasses its predecessor, PlayStation (PS one), which sold just over 39 million units. Now into its 6<sup>th</sup> year, PlayStation 2 has proved a worthy successor to the groundbreaking PS one, which at the same 6-year mark had sold just 33 million units.

"We are extremely proud of the continuing success of PlayStation 2", said David Reeves, SCEE President and CEO. "In the last month or so sales of PlayStation 2

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*Phil Harrison  
President  
SCE Worldwide Studios*



throughout Europe and PAL territories has exceeded 100,000 units per week, which is extremely pleasing and proves the format is as popular now as it ever was. Through the continual development of new and innovative gaming titles, in particular the social gaming phenomena such as EyeToy, SingStar and BUZZ! PlayStation 2 will remain the games console of choice for new and experienced gamers alike.”

The 40 million milestone also coincides with another noteworthy achievement; PlayStation 2 now has over 2000 software titles available in Europe with approximately another 50 due for release prior to Christmas.

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## The Blu-View: Warner Home Video

Warner Home Video was elected to the Blu-ray Disc Association’s Board of Directors in October 2005. The company immediately started researching the format’s capabilities as well as preparing titles for launch on the Blu-ray Disc, the first of which are slated for European release later this year.

As Senior Vice President – Market Management, Steve Nickerson is at the heart of Warner Home Video’s Blu-ray Disc business team. In this interview, Steve identifies the key drivers that are motivating the company in its drive towards establishing Blu-ray Disc in the High Definition home entertainment market space.

In a market where DVD-Video has exceeded expectations in terms of format growth and volume shipments, why does Warner see a need for Blu-ray Disc? “Standard Definition DVD is of course our core business in packaged media, and we expect that to be the case for the next several years,” comments Steve Nickerson. “But as consumers all across the globe increase their adoption of High Definition TV, they are looking for ways to maximize their enjoyment from their new TV. While there continues to be increases in broadcast, cable, and satellite programming, consumers have grown accustomed to using DVD to select the programming they want at the time they want. We need to offer consumers this same capability as we enter the High Def generation. Blu-ray Disc gives us this capability.

“The Blu-ray Disc format has been developed to offer consumers the highest quality picture and audio available in home entertainment. But the format also will incorporate the ability to include levels of interactivity never before possible, directly on the disc as well as through the inclusion of internet connectivity,” explains Nickerson.

Already, Warner Home Video has announced a raft of Blu-ray Disc movie releases, including recent hits and catalogue favorites. In Europe these include *Firewall* and *Syriana* (in the new hits category), as well as classics such as *Full Metal Jacket* and *Space Cowboys*. News from Warner tells of the studio pulling all the stops out in order to exploit the added value potential of the BD format with its new releases, especially in terms of its approach to interactivity.



**Steve Nickerson**

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Senior Vice President – Market  
Management  
Warner Home Video*



“For Blu-ray Disc to compete favorably with Standard Definition DVD and digital downloading in the future, there is a requirement for more than just great pictures and sound, and the interactive possibilities are the primary way in which BD can accomplish this,” states Steve Nickerson.

Blu-ray Disc’s crossover capabilities between TV, PCs and games consoles is something that Nickerson is well aware of. He regards the potential to view Warner movies on a range of platforms - all in stunning High Definition - as a concept that is tremendously exciting. Consumers will not have to wait long for the first iteration of these multi-media capabilities given the North American and Japanese PLAYSTATION 3 launches later this month. PLAYSTATION 3 will have a significant impact on the fledgling High Definition market, and it is a marketing concept that Nickerson prioritizes in his Blu-ray Disc vision of the future.

“The launch of PLAYSTATION 3 will put 400,000 Blu-ray Disc compatible machines into consumers homes very quickly,” comments Steve. “The challenge will be understanding how consumers who are buying a games machine will utilize the device as a movie player and finding the best way to merchandise our movies so that we can reach these new Hi Def consumers.”

This kind of multi-media functionality is new, not just to Warner Bros., but also to the whole entertainment industry. The beauty of BD is that within the framework of the Blu-ray Disc Association all 170-member companies have a fantastic environment in which to conceptualize and develop new and sophisticated consumer propositions. In particular, with high quality feedback from the movie studios, consumer equipment manufacturers are putting tremendous efforts into developing new devices that are capable of exploiting the Blu-ray Disc format to the greatest extent.

“As with any new format, industry wide support is important for the initial introduction and ongoing success,” explains Steve Nickerson. “We look forward to seeing more of the products that all of these companies will introduce into the BD universe, and the reaction of consumers to them. Once there is a wide array of products in the retail stores is when we will be able to truly measure the impact of this broad based support.”

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