



Blu-ray Disc News

News and Views from the Blu-ray Disc Association

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Contents in this issue

- Blu-ray Disc outpaces HD DVD in US
- Fox & MGM unveil exclusive BD release slate for 2007
- Disney brings Cars to gloriously interactive BD
- Sony Pictures highlights strong international BD market
- PS3 BD drive could pay off with Unreal Torment III

Blu-ray Disc outpaces HD DVD in US

Since the launch of HD DVD in the spring of 2006, an estimated 3.7 million High Definition discs have been sold in the US, including 2.2 million in Blu-ray Discs and 1.5 million in HD-DVD through the end of July, according to Home Media.

Blu-ray Disc High Definition movies outsold films on the rival HD-DVD format by 2-to-1 in the United States in the first half of 2007, according to fresh market intelligence published by Home Media Research.

The research division of Home Media Magazine said sales of Blu-ray discs totalled 1.6 million units from January 1 through July 1, compared with 795,000 HD-DVD discs sold in that period.

This current situation exists despite HD DVD being launched commercially six months prior to Blu-ray Disc. Since the launch of HD DVD in the spring of 2006, an estimated 3.7 million High Definition discs have been sold in the US, including 2.2 million in Blu-ray Discs and 1.5 million in HD-DVD through the end of July, according to Home Media.

A Home Media spokeswoman said Blu-ray Disc got a further boost in August from strong sales of the *300* title. Stephen Nickerson, senior vice president, market management at Warner Home Video, reported sales of about 190,000 Blu-ray units of the film, versus 97,000 in HD-DVD since July 31.

The film has already been confirmed as the fastest and highest selling High Definition disc to date.

Blockbuster Inc., the largest U.S. provider of home movie entertainment, in June set out plans to line its shelves with Blu-ray Disc DVDs, saying Blu-ray Disc rentals were "significantly outpacing" HD-DVD rentals.



Fox & MGM unveil exclusive BD release slate for 2007

“Given that Blu-ray has consistently outsold HD DVD all year, and this is the case for any titles released by any studio in both formats, we believe that the time is right for us to accelerate our activities and help convert the nearly 60 million High Definition households worldwide into Blu-ray households.”

*Mike Dunn
President Worldwide
Twentieth Century Fox
Home Entertainment*

Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment has unveiled an aggressive global Blu-ray Disc release strategy including 29 new release and “must-have” catalog titles that runs through the end of the 2007 calendar year. Among the many highlights of the impressive worldwide slate are six day & date BD/DVD new theatrical releases from Fox including the \$241 million box-office family favorite *Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer* and the \$335 million box-office action powerhouse *Live Free or Die Hard*, four day & date BD/DVD (U.S. only) new theatrical releases from MGM, 19 ‘must-have on BD’ films from the two studios’ libraries, Fox’s first-ever TV release on BD – *Prison Break* - and Fox’s intention to release at least one state-of-the-art title per month featuring numerous BD ‘firsts.’



Fantastic Four come to Blu-ray Disc

households,” noted Mike Dunn, President Worldwide, Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment. “By the end of this calendar year there will be expansive availability of technically vibrant releases featuring never-before-seen, advanced BD-J interactivity as well as a broad offering of playback devices at attractive prices that will prove to any doubting consumers once and for all that Blu-ray is the only way.”

“And as Blu-ray continues to grows stronger, it has become survival of the fittest which is most apparent in the retail landscape where our eager and growing global Blu-ray consumer base has caused a shift that is forcing the allocation of more space to the format that is selling the best. And, in many recent instances of note, top retailers in North America are choosing to promote the Blu-ray format exclusively in their stores,” continued Dunn.

Among the BD industry ‘firsts’ from the Studios’ upcoming global release slate are picture in picture capability, enhanced viewing and surround sound modes with the ability to mix and match picture and sound, direct access to in-movie features through one of the four colored buttons on the BD



Live Free or Die Hard

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Mike Dunn

remote and the most technically vibrant BD-Java interactive multi-player challenge and trivia games to date. The Studios' slate also takes full advantage of BD-Live functionality this fourth quarter. Internet-connected consumers will enjoy unique, title specific "web-enabled" interactive features and games and "web-exclusive" downloadable content with the ability to connect and interact with other broadband BD users worldwide.

Cementing its leadership position within the industry - previous BD releases *Night at the Museum* and *X-Men The Last Stand* rank in the Top 20 best-sellers - the vast majority of the Studios' upcoming global slate will be presented on 50 GB dual-layer discs with advanced BD-J interactivity and feature numerous Blu-ray exclusive High Definition bonus materials that further realizes BD's incredible potential. Consumers will enjoy the superior video and audio elements of AVC encoding and Lossless HD audio on many of the coming titles as well as enhanced and integrated menus, personal scene selections, search indexing, trivia and other title specific games and High Definition bonus materials.

Upcoming BD-J features exclusive to priority catalogue titles from Fox and MGM include an "Alien Scavenger Hunt" (*Independence Day*) that challenges players to earn points by identifying the correct number of aliens in select scenes to unlock additional bonus features; a "Global Warming Trivia Track" (*The Day After Tomorrow*) where users must correctly answer questions about global warming to keep the Earth's temperature from rising and being destroyed; and a historical and geographical pop-up map (*Master & Commander*) that tracks the location of Captain "Lucky" Jack Aubrey and his enemies.

Disney brings Cars to gloriously interactive BD

In a move that indicates the studios high confidence in the Blu-ray Disc format as a platform for future business growth, Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment has announced that it will bring its first-ever collection of Pixar short films to BD this holiday season. On November 6, the studio will debut a single disc set, *The Pixar Short Films Collection*, exclusively on Blu-ray Disc.

The set will contain 13 of Pixar's short subjects, many of which have appeared on the DVD releases of full-length Pixar theatrical features. However, this will mark their first appearance in High Definition. The special release is being timed to coincide with the debut of the first Pixar BD feature to hit Blu-ray Disc, *Cars*, which will be released in November.

To whet movie lovers' appetites for what the studio believes will be one of the High Definition events of the year, Disney has posted a new trailer for its upcoming Blu-ray Disc release of *Cars* providing a first glimpse at the disc's sophisticated



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interactive features, which rank amongst the most creative seen on any High Definition release to date.

Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment plans to debut the animated blockbuster on November 6, when it will be one of a trio of the first Pixar releases to hit Blu-ray Disc, alongside *Ratatouille* and *The Pixar Short Films Collection*.

Highlighted specifically in the clip are first looks at two features exclusive to the *Cars* Blu-ray Disc release. Stretching the format's BD-Java capabilities is the "Car Finder" game, allowing viewers to search for over 200 models of cars hidden throughout the movie, and even "race the clock" to find a specific car in a frozen frame of film.

Also showcased is the "Cine-Explore" mode, where John Lasseter "personally guides you through the making of the movie while you watch the movie." Additional announced features on *Cars* include deleted scenes, the short film *Mater and the Ghostlight* and all of the other features included on the standard-def DVD version of the film, released late last year.

Sony Pictures highlight strong international BD market

"This news underscores not only the demand for premium content in these markets, but also the need for a home entertainment format with an impenetrable content protection system like Blu-ray Disc's."

*Matt Brown
Executive VP
International Sony
Pictures Home
Entertainment*

After beginning international Blu-ray Disc shipments this April, Sony Pictures Home Entertainment (SPHE) has reported that the format is exhibiting considerable strength in developing markets outside the core US and European territories. In particular, SPHE notes that sales in Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, Eastern Europe, South Africa and the Middle East now account for 10% of the company's overall business.

Individually, South Africa represents the largest share of these markets' Blu-ray Disc sales, with more than 15,000 units shipped to the country to date. During the month of June, Sony enjoyed a 21% rise in Blu-ray Disc title orders across these regions.

"It is extremely positive to see an increase in volume of Blu-ray software sales in these markets where piracy has previously ravaged the DVD business," said T. Paul Miller, senior VP of international at SPHE. Matt Brown, executive VP of international at SPHE, added, "This news underscores not only the demand for premium content in these markets, but also the need for a home entertainment format with an impenetrable content protection system like Blu-ray Disc's."



Matt Brown

Currently, Sony is the only studio supporting Blu-ray distribution in these areas, but they hope that their success will inspire other Blu-ray Disc supporting studios to add their content to these regions as well.

PS3 BD drive could pay off with Unreal Torment III

“Blu-ray has definitely given us a lot of legroom. “If you think down the road, well maybe the next UT beyond this one, on Blu-ray disc, we might fill the whole damn disc with all the cool stuff the mod makers make.”

*Mark Rein
Vice President
Epic Games*

Epic Games' *Unreal Tournament III* is a PLAYSTATION 3 exclusive for 2007. The main reason, according to the developer, is that Sony is more open to Epic's proposals for an open system to allow game modifications to be run on the PS3. There may also be another, however, for Epic's apparent favour of the Sony console.

Speaking at the Edinburgh Interactive Festival, Epic Games' VP Mark Rein spoke highly of Blu-ray Disc's storage capacity. In fact, Epic may have to omit several maps in the Xbox 360 version due to space constraints posed by the traditional DVD-9.

“We'll compress some things. But you know, we may have fewer maps on the 360 version... Blu-ray has definitely given us a lot of legroom,” said Rein. “And what's really cool is if you think forward and think about what we've done in the past with UT. We had UT 2003 and then we had UT 2004, which was everything in UT 2003 plus a whole bunch of great mod stuff that we went out and purchased from mod makers.”

“If you think down the road, well maybe the next UT beyond this one, on Blu-ray disc, we might fill the whole damn disc with all the cool stuff the mod makers make,” added Rein.



If storage media is indeed a big factor in the final product of *Unreal Tournament III*, Sony may be smiling upon its Blu-ray Disc drive in the PS3, reaffirming the company's feelings that it is “the smatest decision we ever made.”

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