Blu-ray Disc News

News and Views from the Blu-ray Disc Association

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IFA Special – Day 3

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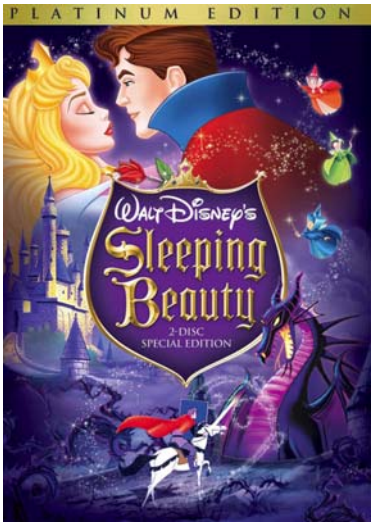
Major studios turn up the gas on Blu-ray Disc

As reported in yesterday's newsletter, many European independent film distributors are releasing movies on Blu-ray Disc this autumn. However, this is by no means the only software-oriented news coming from IFA this week. At the BDA press conference, many of the major Hollywood studios made announcements of exciting release slates for the remainder of 2007.

Sony Pictures' Don Eklund announced that the company has sold more than 250,000 Blu-ray Discs in Europe. Eklund highlighted the imminent release of the *Spider-Man* Trilogy and 30th anniversary BD release of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (see later interview with Rich Marty for more information). Also, Danny Kaye from 20th Century Fox confirmed the release dates for *Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer* and *Live Free or Die Hard*, (which was first reported by this newsletter last week).



In other major news, Stephen Foulser, VP Marketing & Business Development EMEA at Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment announced the studio's first ever Platinum Title on BD; its first ever BD-Live title and its first full motion Picture in Picture bonus features.

Traditionally, Walt Disney Studios does not release its most prestigious titles on a new format until it is absolutely certain of the long-term viability of the platform. So news that Platinum-selling *Sleeping Beauty* will be available as a Blu-ray Disc presentation this autumn is a clear indication of the studio's confidence in BD.

National Treasure starring Nicholas Cage will set a new standard in Disney BD releases when it emerges as a fully featured BD-Live title. Disney developers have utilized the full gamut of rich interactive features within this Java-based interactive tool kit to create a new kind of entertainment experience.

And thirdly, two new titles – *Finding Nemo* and *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* will be the first Disney full motion Picture in Picture bonus features.

Adding further to this stellar line up, Warner Home Video's Monica Juniel announced that the studio has released more than150 Blu-ray Disc titles in Europe to date. Some of the studio's best selling releases include *Blood Diamond, Superman Returns, Flags of our Fathers* and *The Departed*.

Indicating an ambitious BD market development policy, Juniel highlighted a number of key releases between now and the holiday period. *300*, the best selling BD title in the US to date is starting its European release and will be available in all European territories within the next 60 days.

Other holiday releases include *Ocean's Thirteen*, which will be released together with the other two movies within the franchise – *Ocean's 11 and 12*. At the same time, *Harry Potter and The Order of the Phoenix* will be released alongside the other four movies in the series, enabling movie lovers to enjoy the whole Harry Potter franchise on Blu-ray Disc.

Other catalogue classics available from Warner in Q4 include *Blade Runner* and a series of Stanley kubrick movies – *Full Metal Jacket, Clockwork Orange, 2001: A Space Odyssey, The Shining* and *Eyes Wide Shut.*

View BD movies on Nero 8

Nero has today announced that Nero 8 users will be able to playback their favorite movies in Blu-ray (BD-ROM) disc format in a future update of Nero 8.

BD-ROM playback in Nero 8 will provide users with access to a wide range of commercially available Blu-ray disc titles. Nero 8 supports crystal-clear 5.1 audio in Dolby Digital, DTS and high-definition audio in Dolby TrueHD and the uncompressed studio quality PCM soundtracks (up to 7.1 channels) that are found in many Blu-ray titles. To enable the ground breaking interactive BD-J features in Nero 8, the company has embraced Sun Microsystems Java technology.

"Nero understands that users have different needs when it comes to digital entertainment," Charly Lippoth, Chief Technology Officer, Nero, noted. "Nero 8 unlocks the features found in Blu-ray discs, and playback of BD-ROM titles will allow Nero 8 users to amplify their entertainment experience."

Nero 8 will support BD-ROM playback through an additional plug-in. The plug-in can be purchased by Nero 8 users through the Nero Web shop.

PS3 fuels BD revolution, so says Sony Pictures

"This fall is going to be an exciting time with some highly anticipated movie releases from Sony Pictures," commented Rich Marty, Vice President, New Business Development at Sony Pictures Home Entertainment after the company's announcement of major *Spider-Man and Close Encounters of the Third Kind* Blu-ray Disc releases in October and November.

In particular, the release of '*Close Encounters'* on BD is predicted to be a highlight: the release marks the 30th anniversary of the iconic sci-fi movie. Marty reports that this spectacular movie represents a superb showcase for Blu-ray Disc's capabilities and expects the High Definition release to create a real stir amongst movie fans of all ages. The studio collaborated with Spielberg on what represents his first High Definition disc.

"So far 2007 has exceeded expectations with sales of standalone players and PS3 outstripping HD DVD by at least 2 to 1. Consumers are reacting very positively to BD, as are retailers – it has been a great year for Blu-ray Disc."

Rich Marty
Vice President,
New Business Development
Sony Pictures Home Entertainment

Talking more generally about the new business prospects offered by Blu-ray Disc Rich Marty was in bullish mood. "So far 2007 has exceeded expectations with software sales outstripping HD DVD by at least 2 to 1 and hardware sales being even more decisively in favor of BD. Consumers are reacting very positively to BD, as are retailers – it has been a great year for Blu-ray Disc," affirms Marty.

Rich Marty

"PS3 is critical to the success of Blu-ray Disc – it is a platform for at least the next 10 years and it's not some kind of short term solution," explains Rich Marty. "We predict some really exciting market developments around PlayStation in coming months. Many of PS3's early adopters are more interested in games but the next wave will be much more interested in the platform's media center capabilities. We saw this with PS2 and DVD where the console was integral to DVD's rapid establishment. We anticipate a similar reaction with PLAYSTATION 3 and Blu-ray Disc."

Pioneer introduces 2nd generation BD writer

As momentum builds behind HD content with the launch of a range of new movie titles pressed to Blu-ray Disc (BD), Pioneer confirms the European availability of its latest BD writer. The BDR-202 internal drive for PCs supports the writing of both write-once (BD-R) and rewritable (BD-RE) single-layer BDs at 144Mbps and 72Mbps respectively. The versatile writer is equipped with a range of proprietary technologies to enhance writing performance and is also compatible with a range of DVD and CD media; speeds include 12X writing to DVD-R/+R, 6X to DVD-RW/+RW and 24X to CD-R/RW.

The BDR-202 is targeted at professional users working with data intensive applications such as graphics houses and creative companies composing HD content. Authoring houses will also purchase the writer to re-master commercial

BD releases. In addition, consumers who regularly work with voracious data applications, including building video and music libraries, may elect to use the 25GB capacity offered by BD to manage their multimedia files. Using MPEG-2 compression at a high-definition (HD) bit rate (19.4Mbps), a typical film of 135 minutes requires approximately 19.6GB of storage space – equivalent to around four single-layer DVDs – compared to a single BD that can easily accommodate the movie and a range of interactive extras.

Pioneer
sound.vision.soul

‘Interest in HD among consumers is increasing. The scale of the major brands backing the format across IT and CE environments ensures that manufacturers can quickly respond to meet demand. This in turn will increase price competition to add additional momentum to BD,’ says Chris Tampsett, Sales Director, Pioneer Europe Multimedia Division. ‘It’s also important to recognise that BD delivers the step-up in optical storage performance that consumers require and content companies need to deliver feature-rich movies and HD gaming on a single disc; the format provides the capacity to ensure that it’s the natural long-term successor to DVD.’

Philips introduces 2nd generation Blu-ray Disc player

Building on the success of its first generation player, Philips has announced the introduction this autumn of a new player – the BDP-7100. The new model will offer 1080p picture resolution and audio support for Dolby TrueHD and DTS HD High Resolution Audio.

The Philips BDP7100 supports native 24fps cinematic resolution input via HDMI, which is the same format used in movies. In addition, the player will feature HDMI CEC that allows the control of other devices with one remote.

The BDP7100 Blu-ray Disc player is available across Europe this autumn.

“IFA has been a remarkable event for Blu-ray Disc with many studios and distributors ramping up their BD release schedules in Q4,” commented Philip’s Frank Simonis. “The European market needs greater choice in CE players and this exciting new player offers that – outstanding quality and excellent value for money.”

We are here to help

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