

## No winners in format war



### State of Illusion

By CHRIS MARSHALL

I would like to give my two cents about what people are calling the "new media format war" between HD-DVD and Blu-Ray. I consider myself a geek, or a nerd, or a technophile, or whatever buzzword you wish to apply. I am definitely an early-adopter of new technologies. So I don't say this lightly; I predict both will fail as media formats.

While I believe they will fail as media formats, I do believe they will eventually succeed as new storage formats. The reason I believe both will fail as media formats is simple: consumers do not need a new media format.

I believe higher resolution televisions are just a fad designed to bleed more money out of the consumer. I say this because the number of new high-res television technologies released in the past 10 years have been astounding--debuting in the high thousands of dollars--and average consumers cannot afford them.

However, HD-DVD and Blu-Ray will succeed as storage formats because consumers are in desperate need of something bigger and more reliable.

HD-DVD will initially offer up to 30 gigabytes of storage, with a 45 GB, triple-layer disc in devel-

opment. Blu-ray will offer 50 GB of storage on the dual-layer discs, with a 100 GB quad-layer disc in development. The capacity of these formats dwarf the current 9 GB or so maximum that dual-layer DVDs offer. I only hope that when burners for the new formats are made available to the public, the quality of the writable discs are much improved compared to that of current CD and DVD writable media. The dye used on them is terrible and the current estimated shelf-life of a burned CD or DVD is only three years--unacceptable for a storage medium.

HDTV is a nigh useless technology. Human perception is very limited, our five senses can only process so much information. Super high-resolution televisions and media are becoming excessive: soon the human eye won't be able to tell the difference. I think DVDs on my normal, cathode ray tube television look fantastic and normal broadcast television channels look just fine.

Blu-ray and HD-DVD formats are relying so much on the fad of HDTV, they will most likely fail.

However, if for some reason one format succeeds, the victor will have been helped greatly by one oft-overlooked business: pornography.

There are three businesses that will play a role in the format war: the movie industry, video games and pornography. Movie studios and video game companies have already chosen their side, but only now are people starting to discuss the role porn will play in this war. This all

harks back to the VHS-Betamax format battle in which the porn industry played an important role. The porn industry, in choosing the VHS format for movies, helped put Betamax in an early grave.

People often underestimate the pornography industry. Moral arguments aside, porn is a huge money-maker. It's difficult to find accurate numbers on how big the porn business is. All the anti-pornography groups--who I assume wish to strike fear into people concerning pornography--cite numbers showing porn as a \$14 billion a year business in the United States. However, I've also read other numbers, printed in *Forbes*, saying the porn industry generates as little as \$2.6 billion a year.

The truth, as Aristotle would say, lies somewhere in the middle. Adult Video News, the Hollywood Reporter of porn, estimated that the whole adult industry generated \$12.6 billion in 2005--\$4 billion of which came from movie rentals and sales.

Even taken with a grain of salt, this \$4 billion business will definitely play a large role in deciding which format succeeds, HD-DVD or Blu-Ray. A lot of the big porn studios are leaning toward Blu-Ray as the preferred format.

But in an industry where anyone with a hand-held video camera full of shaky sex footage can make money, it's anyone's guess as to which format porn moviemakers will choose.

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