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IFA 2007: HD DVD Group announce next-gen price war

Entry level HD DVD player for 299 euros

by Amy-Mae Elliott published on 31 August 2007

It might have seemed that the HD DVD Promotion Group did not have a lot to work with for their major IFA press conference this year.

The recent news that Paramount and DreamWorks are to back HD DVD exclusively, massive news with huge implications for the format war, was overshadowed by unsubstantiated rumours that this move was due to a \$150 million deal, rather than genuine preference for the format.

The group tried to brush this aside with an appearance by Chris Saito, vice president of marketing for Paramount. He spoke for the film company and for DreamWorks and reiterated previous statements about HD DVD offering the consumer better value.

News can always be spun though and the Group were keen to inform the crowd that 75% of independent studios in Europe are now releasing titles on HD DVD and that there will be 90 new European titles in 2007, bringing the total to 400 by the end of the year.

"HD DVD is the most affordable way to own HD content in Europe" was the big message, as well as the statistic that the software take-up rate is higher for HD DVD with an average of 4 disks bought per player as opposed to the 0.7 average of Blu-ray.

The forthcoming big HD DVD movies were mentioned, among them all five Harry Potter films, the Bourne Trilogy, Evan Almighty as well as Blade Runner.

The line about standalone players being more



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important that games machines (e.g., the PS3) was brought up again with GFK statistics about only one Blu-ray movie sold for every two PlayStation 3s.

Another key argument for HD DVD, and many would say a valid one, is that early adopters of the HD DVD standard are assured of their purchase platform's longevity, compared to Blu-ray, and we quote from the slide: "BD-Java still not implemented in Blu-ray - not until 2008?" and the even clearer "HD DVD is a standard".

Some of the interesting forthcoming interactivity features were discussed with the ability to edit favourite clips, vote via online polls and play quizzes mentioned.

The Group states that the content available now is "scratching the surface of what's possible" and that with more film-makers shooting with consideration for interactive features what's coming is "gonna blow you away".

The Group asserted that 70% of all current HD standalone players sold have been are HD DVD and that it was, and even more so, will become the "true mass market format".

In a slightly strange aside, but presumably catering to the home crowd, a large part of the presentation was given over to exclusive clips of Herbert Gronemeyer's (the biggest German solo artist ever) new HD DVD music video that boasts 7.1 surround sound.

A presentation by CEO of EMI Music Wolfgang Hannebrink showcased the format's potential for music videos.

Next came the real crux of the matter: HD DVD is reliable, HD DVD is cheap. Playing the same price card as with the

previously announced HD DVD laptops, the Group announced a new low cost player from Venturer - the SHD-7000. An entry level device this will cost just 299 euros when available later this year.

The new Toshiba players will also be on the right side of affordable, the 1080p capable HD-EP30 that can manage 24fps will be priced between 349 and 399 euros, while the next level up HD-EP35 will be between 449 and 499 euros.

Aside from the slight diversions and stat-twisting that Blu-ray is just as guilty of, the big message from the HD DVD Promotional Group from this year's IFA appears to be that HD DVD is here, it's affordable and it's reliability (or capability to be better than DVD) is not in doubt.