

Making the Switch to Blu-ray

It doesn't seem that long ago to many of us when DVD was the pinnacle of the home theater experience -- especially when compared to VHS. DVD quickly became the new centerpiece of most home theater systems. Then came hi-definition -- and with it, HD-DVD and Blu-ray discs: the next step in portable digital media. Each was a distinctly different method for delivering higher resolution video and improved sound quality, but there seemed to be a great deal of confusion among consumers as to which one to choose. The movie studios were even divided, each opting for one format over the other, leaving home theater enthusiasts wondering if they would be left with no choice but to purchase two different players to ensure they would be able to upgrade all their favorite movie titles. Many wisely postponed making any decision, waiting to see which format would prevail as the standard. Some market watchers predicted that HD-DVD would reign supreme since the adult entertainment industry seemed to be gravitating toward that format, because the last time there was a home video format war -- VHS vs. Betamax back in the early 80's -- the format adopted by that industry won out. Plus, HD-DVD had a slight head-start in the marketplace with early-adopters.

Even the next generation gaming consoles took their respective sides. Sony's Playstation 3 came equipped to play Blu-ray discs -- which was no surprise, considering Blu-ray technology was developed by Sony. And on the other side of the ring was Microsoft's Xbox 360 with an HD-DVD player.

Eventually, toward the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, it was a combination of shifting movie studio alliances and the popularity of the Playstation 3 that helped tip the balance in favor of Blu-ray -- making HD-DVD players and discs almost as obsolete as Betamax tapes and 8-track.

So, now that Blu-ray is *the* hi-definition portable digital media format, how does one upgrade a home theater system to Blu-ray? And is it still too early to make that investment? Because, to be fair, even standard DVDs look noticeably better on newer hi-definition displays -- especially with players that up-convert the content. So isn't that good enough?

For some people, it is. But up-converted video isn't true HD, and home theater aficionados -- purists -- prefer to get the most out of their home theater experience by upgrading their players and movie collection to Blu-ray.

One factor that helps sway even the most budget conscious is that the players have come down in price in recent years. But what about all those standard DVDs sitting on our shelves? Blu-ray discs -- while coming down in price -- are still more expensive than standard DVDs. And Blu-ray players still play standard DVDs.

The main thing to keep in mind when considering upgrading to Blu-ray is time.

First, time has indicated that hi-definition video *is* the future -- plain and simple. If you watch network television broadcasts -- especially sporting events -- on a standard definition TV, you may have noticed that much of the action on the left and right sides of the screen is being cut off because the technical personnel (camera operators, etc.) are thinking in terms of hi-def, knowing that standard is becoming a lumbering dinosaur. So for you last remaining holdouts, dismissing the whole HD phenomenon as a passing fad, think again. Like rock and roll, HD's

here to stay -- and that also seems to be the case with Blu-ray when it comes to portable hi-def digital media.

The second thing to keep in mind when considering the upgrade to Blu-ray, as it relates to time, is that you don't have to upgrade your entire movie collection overnight. Pricing of the players and the discs keeps dropping as the technology continues to become even more mainstream, so the impact on your wallet won't be as noticeable. And besides, you probably got your money's worth out of those standard DVDs -- keep them. Standard DVD players will still be around for several more years -- as standalone and portable players or as your computer's optical drive. Keep your standard DVDs as spare copies of your favorite movies to bring on long car or airplane trips. Or, sell them on eBay, and use the proceeds to help finance your gradual upgrade to Blu-ray.

However you decide to upgrade your home theater to Blu-ray, don't skimp on the cabling. You may be tempted to stick with analog connections out of convenience and familiarity -- and there's nothing wrong with that, especially at first -- but if you really want to get the most out of your Blu-ray experience, keep digital whenever possible. You won't regret the relatively minor investment to do so. And Optimized Cable Company can help you with your Blu-ray upgrade with a wide variety of cables at competitive prices all in one convenient location.