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## BLUE - RAY vs. HD-DVD

For most of us, deciding between a Plasma or LCD TV is difficult enough. Soon you will also have to decide between two competing standards of next-generation DVD formats, Blue-ray and HD-DVD. Not since Beta vs. VHS has a format war caused so much confusion. Unlike Beta vs. VHS, where the decision only affected which formats you watched, this battle will have an impact on computer users and game players as well, since these are the next generation of optical players for both computer and game systems.

**So the question is why this new format?** The answer to this question can be found in the new generation of high definition TV's. Today's DVD players and game systems are not capable of maximizing the picture that these new TV's can display. While a DVD player can be plugged into any television and provide you with a much better picture than your old VCR, do not expect the same to be true with Blue-ray or HD-DVD. If you have an old analog set, a newer LCD, or a Plasma set with extended definition, and not high definition, the picture of the Blue-ray/HD DVD won't look much better than that of a regular DVD. The picture quality of HD-DVD or Blue-ray will be dramatically better if you have one of the new, high definition TV's.

**So what is the difference between Blue-ray & HD-DVD?** For the typical consumer, there really isn't much to choose between the two. While each side claims certain advantages over the other, such as higher storage, better picture, or lower prices, there is no clear-cut winner as yet. The reality to most consumers is that these two formats are using different technologies to arrive at the same result, a truly spectacular picture when matched with the right TV.

**So who's supporting who?** At this time, Blue-ray has more support from the consumer electronics companies – Sony, Panasonic Philips, Samsung, Sharp, Pioneer, & LG are all on board, while Toshiba is the only major consumer electronics company behind HD-DVD. In computer circles Blue Ray has Dell, HP & Apple in it's corner while HD-DVD has major players in Microsoft and Intel throwing their support behind that format. Gaming systems fall right in the middle; the new Sony PlayStation 3 will already have a Blue-ray player built in while Microsoft has just announced an HD-DVD player upgrade for their X-Box 360!

**So how do I choose?** Unless you are an early adaptor, or have extra money burning a hole in your pocket, choosing not to choose may be your best decision at this time. Since these new players aren't exactly cheap right now, the last thing you want to do is buy a machine that becomes obsolete in favor of another format. While both Blue-ray and HD-DVD will play regular DVD's, Blue-ray disc's won't play on HD-DVD players & vice versa.

It is likely that a clear-cut winner will emerge in the near future, so your best bet might be to wait for the new dual format players that are likely to arrive as this battle drags on.

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