

Warner Going Exclusively With Blu-ray

By Greg Tarr -- TWICE, 1/4/2008 1:28:00 PM

Burbank, Calif. – In a major move in the ongoing high-definition disc format war, Warner Bros. Entertainment said it has decided to release high-definition optical discs exclusively in the Blu-ray disc format beginning later this year.

Barry Meyer, Warner Bros. Entertainment CEO and Kevin Tsujihara, Warner Bros. Home Entertainment Group president, made the historic announcement today, citing “consumer demand.”

Warner had been the lone studio producing HD titles in both Blu-ray and HD DVD formats, after Paramount opted to drop support for Blu-ray Discs to go exclusively with HD DVD last year.

Warner also has one of the largest catalogs of box office hits.

“Warner Bros.’ move to exclusively release in the Blu-ray disc format is a strategic decision focused on the long term and the most direct way to give consumers what they want,” stated Meyer. “The window of opportunity for high-definition DVD could be missed if format confusion continues to linger. We believe that exclusively distributing in Blu-ray will further the potential for mass market success and ultimately benefit retailers, producers, and most importantly, consumers.”

Warner Home Video said it will continue to release its titles in standard DVD format and Blu-ray. After a short window following their standard DVD and Blu-ray releases, all new titles will continue to be released in HD DVD until the end of May 2008.

“Warner Bros. has produced in both high-definition formats in an effort to provide consumer choice, foster mainstream adoption and drive down hardware prices,” said Jeff Bewkes, Time Warner president and CEO, the parent company of Warner Bros. Entertainment. “Today’s decision by Warner Bros. to distribute in a single format comes at the right time and is the best decision both for consumers and Time Warner.”

“A two-format landscape has led to consumer confusion and indifference toward high definition, which has kept the technology from reaching mass adoption and becoming the important revenue stream that it can be for the industry,” stated Tsujihara. “Consumers have clearly chosen Blu-ray, and we believe that recognizing this preference is the right step in making this great home entertainment experience accessible to the widest possible audience. Warner Bros. has worked very closely with the Toshiba Corporation in promoting high definition media and we have enormous respect for their efforts. We look forward to working with them on other projects in the future.”

Warner had been one of the earliest studios to support HD DVD, before later opting to add Blu-ray Disc titles. At that time, Warner said it would support both formats as long as there was an opportunity to make money from each format.

Paramount opted to drop Blu-ray Disc last year, reportedly after receiving a substantial subsidy from the HD DVD camp. Industry observers have said that both camps were wooing exclusive support from Warner Brothers as well.