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Hybrid HD DVD/Blu-ray Products to Debut



By Jennifer LeClaire
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LG has announced its plan to offer a hybrid HD DVD/Blu-ray player, and Warner Bros. said it will release a dual-format disc. "These products are an attractive option for consumers who have been on the fence and are wondering which way to go," Adrienne Downey, senior analyst and Web manager with Semico Research, told TechNewsWorld.

The Blu-ray versus HD DVD battle is headed to Las Vegas, with new high-definition products rolling out at International CES (Consumer Electronics Show) next week. However, at least two manufacturers are extending an olive branch, of sorts, in the form of hybrid products.

[LG Electronics](#) on Wednesday said it plans to sell a DVD player that will play both high-definition formats of DVDs. [Warner Bros.](#) followed in those footsteps with news that it would launch a hybrid disc that works in both Blu-ray and HD DVD players.

Both new formats -- HD DVD and Blu-ray -- offer resolutions exponentially higher than standard-definition DVDs, along with more vibrant contrast and color, crisper sound and higher levels of interactivity.

"These products are an attractive option for consumers who have been on the fence and are wondering which way to go," Adrienne Downey, senior analyst and Web manager with Semico Research, told TechNewsWorld. "Hybrid options like the LG player and the Warner Bros. disc help increase momentum for the high-definition blue laser standard in general."

LG Goes First

LG's attempt to manufacture a hybrid DVD player has been an on-again, off-again effort. The company initially planned to launch the product last year, then withdrew in what Downey figured were production delays. [Toshiba](#) faced similar delays with its initial attempt at an HD DVD player last summer.

Despite the delays, LG can claim first-to-market status with its hybrid player. The LG unit will be officially revealed at CES, along with details on pricing and availability.

The South Korea-based electronics manufacturer said it expects its dual-format player to "end the confusion and inconvenience of competing high-definition disc formats."

Hoping for Hybrids

Downey has her own expectations. She predicted other hybrid players would emerge on the scene while the world waits for consumers to choose a victor in a long standards battle that is reminiscent of the Beta versus VHS wars of the 1980s.

"There are probably a lot of electronics manufacturers with hybrid players in the works," she speculated. "They are going to wait and see what type of success LG has with this product. I think this will be a popular product because consumers won't have to worry about which high-definition disc they buy."

Warner Bros., which backs both high-definition formats, hopes its hybrid disc will make it even easier for consumers. Dubbed the "Total HD" disc, Warner will show off its new technology at CES.

Hedging HD Bets

Technology analysts have been hedging their bets on which of the two new high-definition formats will ultimately win the war. Blu-ray maker [Sony](#) (NYSE: SNE) is going head-to-head with HD DVD champion Toshiba for a share of the high-definition marketplace.

Matsushita Electric Industrial (NYSE: MC), maker of [Panasonic](#), sides with Sony, along with most of the Hollywood studios. [Microsoft](#) (Nasdaq: MSFT) is aligned with Toshiba.

At stake is control over a media [storage market](#) that research firm In-Stat expects to grow from approximately US\$33 billion worldwide in 2004 to \$76.5 billion in 2009.

"This battle is far from over," Downey insisted. "It's going to be a long time before anything gets resolved. However, these hybrid options will be beneficial to the overall market for high-definition television." **ECT**

