

DVDs, digital copies rule the movie roost



John Deans

When was the last time you watched a movie at home using a VHS tape?

Tape is dead and digital is the real deal. DVD stands for Digital Versatile Disk (previously it was Digital Video Disk) and has been the standard movie media for over a decade.

Initially in the early 1990s there was a format battle between DVD and SD (Super Density) disc.

After the DVD format won over the industry, DVD movies hit the stores and started replacing VHS tape cartridges. I quickly bought a DVD player to get the better quality picture and I did not have to remember to rewind them before returning the DVDs to Blockbuster.

Now DVDs are under attack and about to go the way of VHS tapes since Blu-Ray discs have become more available and Blu-Ray players more affordable. Two years ago I wrote a column on the Blu-Ray vs HD-DVD battle and I predicted the Blu-

Ray format would win out — and it did!

The Blu-Ray higher density video format played on a large high definition TV is simply gorgeous.

We now only rent Blu-Ray discs from our Netflix online movie rentals since we are used to that

level of image quality.

Once in a while there are some really good movies out like "Up!" and the recent "Star Trek" that we had to buy for our collection instead of just renting them. Both were Blu-Ray, incredibly clear and a joy to watch.

When my daughter opened the UP! box of discs she noticed that it came with a separate disc containing a digital version of the movie.

My wife then put it into our iMac, iTunes automatically recognized it and then prompted her for a code to unlock the movie, which was on a folded paper within the disc case.

From there it copied the UP! movie to the iMac's hard drive

taking just under 10 minutes. When that was done she was able to play the movie in the Blu-Ray high definition on the iMac's big 20-inch screen.

Then our youngest daughter had the idea to see if it would transfer to her iTouch and sure enough it did.

Later that weekend both our girls were able to watch the UP! movie on their iTouches in clear widescreen format. Maybe they should be writing this article instead of me since they figured all this out and explained it to me.

When we got Star Trek the next week I had to go through the process just so I'd know how it works.

Sure enough I found the code to unlock the digital copy within the folded title pages, which basically acts like a password, so be sure not to discard any paper when you first open the disc package.

I loaded the Star Trek movie onto our iMac after I entered the code and then validated my iTunes account by entering my password.

Then the copy phase began

which copied the 1.83GB MP4 digital movie file to the iMac's hard drive taking right at eight minutes.

Although iTunes says it is downloading the movie it is actually just copying from the disc to the internal hard drive. I checked the activity on the network interface just to verify that it was not really downloading it from some Web site.

Next I wanted to see if that code would allow me to put it on another computer and iTunes account so I loaded that digital disc onto my Windows laptop.

After starting up iTunes it prompted me for that code and after logging into my iTunes account it notified me that this code has already been used and the movie cannot be loaded onto a second computer.

This is to stop video piracy and illegal distribution of the digital copies belonging to major motion picture movies like what happened to the music industry with Napster.

By the way, they are still suing people that are illegally sharing or even downloading copyright protected music so do

NOT do that.

If you come across the music and video sharing (stealing) application called Limewire installed on any of your computers, especially your kids PCs, then immediately uninstall it and tell your cherubs to stop stealing music. That goes double for movies since the copyright cops will come down on you twice as hard for that one.

Within a few years, after Internet Service Providers (ISP) are able to provide five to 10 megabits per second of bandwidth to most every home which is several times what it is now, we will be able to just download any movie we want at any time.

NetFlix offers that now but it is very susceptible to network latency and ISP limitations.

In other words, removable media like optical discs like DVD and Blu-Ray will go the way of VHS tapes and be replaced by all digital downloads.

From there the rental downloads will be temporarily stored on the hard drives where as the purchased digital movies will be permanently saved and may even have a legal distribution

count like iTunes now has with music on a limited number of devices.

For now though we can purchase the Blu-Ray disc packs with the digital copy option and save those digital movies to our computers and handheld media players like iPhones, iPods, and iTouches.

You can tell I am becoming quite Apple centric (aka: Mac Bigot).

Hollywood learned from the music industry's slow reaction to digital media and has taken steps not to miss that market. I guess there must be a few capitalists within that group of liberal West Coast commies.

Bottom line: Keep an eye out for the digital copy option when you are browsing those new Blu-Ray movies for Christmas this year so you can give those extra special digital gifts.

Next week's column: 2009 Christmas list.

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