

Home Entertainment's Hollywood Mainstay—Blu-ray

(NAPSA)—As it celebrates its fifth birthday, Blu-ray technology has quietly emerged as one of Hollywood's greatest success stories and continues to drive the high-definition revolution across America.

Attracted to the format's super crisp visual and audio qualities, consumers have snapped up more than 200 million Blu-ray discs of their favorite films and TV shows since the format's launch. Over 29 million homes across America have a Blu-ray player—making it one of the fastest-growing new technologies in the home entertainment industry.

Blu-ray aficionados contend that its quality can't be beat on high-definition television screens, big and small. Filmmakers endorse Blu-ray because they say it transports the theatrical experience into people's homes—capturing every detail, every sound and every emotion as they intended in the movie theater. The discs are loaded with extras that provide consumers extended ways to enjoy their favorite movies—behind-the-scenes vignettes, outtakes and special interactive features. Further digital technology means you can download new content on Wi-Fi-capable Blu-ray players and smartphones.

So why isn't Blu-ray as familiar as VHS tapes, CDs or DVDs? And why do some pundits suggest that physical media may be on its way out? Much of it has to do with America's appetite to access content anywhere, anytime. Services such as Netflix or Vudu give consumers the ability to stream content into their homes whenever they want.



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Streaming media, and the ability to view streamed content on TVs, computers and smartphones, is here to stay. But the growing demand for Blu-ray suggests that both formats will continue to have a place in home entertainment for the foreseeable future.

According to the Blu-ray Disc Association, in the format's freshman year, 6 million discs were sold in the U.S., compared to a projected 119 million sales by the end of 2011. In the case of James Cameron's epic movie, "Avatar," the best-selling Blu-ray disc of all time, more than 1.5 million Blu-ray copies were sold on the first day it became available. Over 5 million Blu-ray discs of "Avatar" have been sold in the United States since it was released last year. Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment's film "Rio" also broke records when it reached the No.1 film in retail sales for more than four consecutive weeks, which hadn't happened since "Avatar." To continue to broaden its appeal, movie studios are also tapping into their

catalogs to remaster classics for Blu-ray, including "Fight Club," "Thelma and Louise," "Last of the Mohicans" and "West Side Story."

There are more than 4,500 movie titles now available on Blu-ray. And by 2014, Futuresource, an industry analyst, expects that there will be a staggering 72.2 million connected Blu-ray players in the United States, up from 14.4 million in 2010. The Blu-ray player may also be an economical answer to the ever-changing home media industry. With many players priced around \$150, Blu-ray players can play CDs, DVDs, Blu-ray 3-D discs, and stream movies. A recent survey of Blu-ray player buyers found that 42 percent purchased because it was affordable, compared to 26 percent of early Blu-ray buyers.

Another reason customers have flocked to Blu-ray is the advanced capabilities to take their movie with them wherever they go. Many Blu-ray discs also come bundled with a Digital Copy so they can watch the movie on Android or Apple smartphones. This remains a popular benefit as more people consume content while on the go. The mobile device also represents another great opportunity for moviegoers to interact with popular characters, play games and watch bonus footage.

As Americans pop in Blu-ray discs and watch images that complement their big screen televisions, the high-definition revolution fueled by the format is likely to win even more converts. The recent addition of Amazon's most requested title, "Star Wars," to Blu-ray has further proven that the Force is strong as it ranked best-selling catalog title of all time.