



by John Caldwell

Waiting for Blu-ray?

There are dual layers (of DVD recording) to every story.

You've probably heard about the competing high-definition DVD recording formats (Blu-ray and HD DVD) that are on the horizon. And if two competing future formats aren't confusing enough, there are already dual-layer recordable DVDs available, though you can only record standard-definition video on them—for now.

So is it time to jump into dual-layer DVD recording, or should you wait for the new HD formats and their recorders?

Dual-layer DVD technology is not all that new. Hollywood has been churning out motion pictures on dual-layer DVDs for years. What's new are dual-layer DVD recordable discs and the growing number of DVD recorders that will perform dual-layer recording and record to traditional single-layer DVDs and CDs. And the discs are compatible with most DVD players and computer DVD-ROM drives.

There are a myriad of benefits to dual-layer DVD recording. Dual-layer DVD recordable discs offer up to four hours of high-quality MPEG-2 video or up to 8.5 GB on a single-sided disc with two individual recordable "layers," as opposed to 4.7 GB with a single-layer disc. DVD recordable discs allow you to create longer home movies and even consolidate many home movie projects onto a single disc. And with more space comes increased bit-rate authoriz-

ing that results in noticeably better video quality.

Let's not forget that up to 8.5 GB of uncompressed DVD disc space is also

a great place to store your valuable computer data, applications and backup settings. You can pack up to 12 CDs or 5,902 floppy disks' worth of information—or store approximately 2,000 MP3 songs or up to 17,000 JPEG images—onto one dual-layer DVD.

Different Formats

Both the DVD Plus (+) and Dash (-) formats are still very much alive. The DVD+RW Alliance was the first to present a dual-layer recordable standard, called Double Layer. The write-once DVD+R DL debuted in 2004 with drives and media from several major manufacturers, including Sony. Recording speeds for DVD+R DL were initially 2.4x. However, drives supporting DVD+R DL can also record single-layer discs at up to 8x or faster (using write-once media), and they support high-speed CD-R/RW burning.

In May, Toshiba announced a double-sided, dual-layer hybrid ROM disc comprised of a dual-layer HD DVD-ROM side and a dual-layer DVD-ROM side. The disc can store 8.5 GB of standard-definition content on the DVD-ROM side and will be able to store 30 GB of high-definition content on the HD DVD-ROM once HD DVD players become available. Toshiba has also announced the development of a triple-layer HD DVD-ROM (read-only) disc with a capacity of 45 GB, or 12 hours' worth of high-definition movies.

I know, it's complicated. But why wait? There are simply too many benefits to owning one of today's dual-layer DVD recorders, as opposed to waiting to purchase an HD recorder somewhere down the line.

Good viewing and listening! **EH**

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