Publisher's Note

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Welcome to the 14th edition of our annual publication, the informative, inquisitive, and at times irreverent companion to www.dvd-intelligence.com, our industry website.

A magazine, launched at the dawn of DVD, that still offers today food for thought on the present and future of discs, surely is a reminder that, notwithstanding sagging DVD sales figures, packaged media is still a massive global business worth about $40bn. And running on an installed base of nearly 1.5 billion DVD playback devices worldwide.

Hard-working *DVD and Beyond* readers are forgiven for feeling despondent as they hear the online prophets repeat *ad nauseam* that the days of packaged media are numbered. They shouldn't.

Digital delivery is certainly on the rise, but it would be ill-advised to announce the death of packaged media with too much ardor – an exercise in which some commentators seem to take perverse pleasure. Because money talks, sooner or later Hollywood – but even more so the independent publishers – will have to square the circle between the inexorable fall of high-revenue producing packaged media and the unstoppable rise of low-revenue generating online digital content.

Digital delivery may also throw a spanner in the progress of Blu-ray. Slow perhaps, but the march is inexorable, especially now that BD hardware and software can be had for the price of a night at a budget hotel! Even the 3D-capable variety of players are soon becoming an impulse buy.

Looking at the latest developments, it seems to me that the Blu-ray Disc is not about to be cast aside. For one, stereoscopic 3D displays can only rely on the high-capacity BD if you seek the best picture quality – 1080p in each eye, with active shutter glasses.

The executives interviewed for our annual Industry Survey (p.48) have conflicting views as to whether 3D will be a growth engine for Blu-ray.

Beyond 3D, it is the ever larger and sharper living room TV that might need to rely on the only source of high definition material, and at a mass-market price – the BD disc.

4K displays are already on the horizon. The CE industry badly needs to inject into the marketplace a new consumer product to secure business margins. The apostles of autostereoscopic 3D need them in valiant efforts to offer – glasses-free – the 3D quality already enjoyed by glass wearers. But autostereoscopy has other problems of its own to be the shot of adrenalin 4K (or even 8K) displays need.

What the new generation of TVs will need is higher resolution content to optimise the consumers' investment. Blu-ray is the best placed candidate to deliver that, for the foreseeable future.

A few more words about 3D. Whether the growth of the home entertainment stereo format is falling short of expectations depends, of course, on what the expectations are supposed to be, and compared to what? Headaches, unsighlty glasses, content shortage, hardware costs, all have been thrown at the poor souls, like me, who enjoy what they have seen so far. Indeed, I suspect many sceptical commentators have not really experienced fully what the technology can offer.

During the London Olympics, I watched every night the one-hour native 3D compilation of the day's events produced by the BBC. Simply stunning! You no longer look at canoeing the same way… David Attenborough's *Kingdom of Plants 3D* is another immersive experience worth writing home about.

The strangest thing is that technologically-advanced 3D is often compared unfavourably to internet-capable connected TV. Is retrofitting a Wi-fi modem in a TV the ultimate in human endeavour? Connected TVs are selling well, apparently. But once in the living room, few are connected. Surely, smart TV is an easier sell than 3D TV, for the time being, but does it provide a superior experience? Hell, no!

2012 is the year of cloud formations. UltraViolet has left the drawing board to become in earnest an innovative – trailblazing? – means of delivering video. Its birth has not been easy and the midwife still has a lot of pampering to do. My scepticism is slowly melting because my experience of going through the registration processes has been uneventful. User-friendly, it is not yet and it helps to be computer literate! I don't know if I was lucky because my friend Bob Auger's experience (p.18) was rather different and perhaps more indicative of what the "ordinary consumers" might be facing – at this point in time.

We organised the London Video Rendezvous in June where UltraViolet and Digital Copy took centre stage. The videos of two excellent panels are available at www.dvd-intelligence.com/video/?id=160.

Once again, the magazine brings a unique blend of perceptive analyses. Also, 12 industry movers and shakers answered our questions in an exclusive survey on DVD, Blu-ray, 3D and the future of packaged media.

The support we have received from the industry, especially in these times of economic hardship, has been once again most gratifying. It helped maintain this publication as the annual review that market-leading companies prefer to use in their efforts to reach customers in Europe.

After eight years in operation, our website attracts record numbers of visitors, now from over 100 countries. It is Europe's premier online source of news, analysis and data on packaged media and other delivery technologies vying for position. And now with a unique video section.

As always, I welcome your comments. Good read!