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Trend of TV Shows on DVD

By Jeff Hodges

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What's the best way to watch an entire day of "Friends"? Or the first season of "Magnum P.I."? How about hours upon hours of "Knight Rider," "24" and "The Sopranos"?

From swish soirees to simply rotting away on the sofa, time suckage is at a maximum these days, thanks to the plethora of TV-to-DVD products, and they're spawning new ways to fill your weekends.

TV programs, no doubt, have become the fastest growing segment of the DVD business, according to industry experts. Three years ago, fewer than a hundred shows were available on disc. Now, there are more than 800 on the market, with dozens more coming out each week.

According to Video Store Magazine research, U.S. sales of TV shows on DVD nearly tripled from \$300 million in 2001 to \$870 million in 2002. TV shows make up an estimated 10 per cent of the DVD market, which last year tallied more than \$1 billion in sales.

While TV shows on DVD are nothing new – it's arguably the biggest-growth genre in the digital format – today's baby-boomer bounty demonstrates that classic series are coming out with increasing frequency. Call it a trend within a trend, one fueled by more older viewers tuning in to DVD as it continues to gain mass appeal and by studios digging deeper into their catalogs as they exhaust newer fare. Undeniably, there is a great sense of rediscovery as fans chase the titles they remember most fondly from their younger years – not just classic movies, but classic TV shows like: "I Love Lucy" and "Star Trek" besides "Have Gun, Will Travel". This occurs in the music business, but it's now redefining the home-video business.

The demand is certainly there, and so is the supply. Premium pricing and escalating demand translate into an increasingly lucrative profit channel for suppliers. According to the DVD Release Report, a weekly tip sheet, suppliers last year released 264 titles based on TV programs, more than 100 of them multidisc sets. The trend is toward complete-season sets, in which the difference in capacity and shelf space is most pronounced.

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Everyone is getting into the act

Everyone, it seems, is getting in on the game. Paramount Home Entertainment is capturing demographic segments with such diverse fare as "I Love Lucy" and "Star Trek."

Universal will release "Battlestar Galactica," "Sliders," "Quantum Leap," "Dragnet," "Emergency," "Magnum P.I." and "The Rockford Files."

20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, which began the drive to market TV shows on DVD with "The X-Files," is enjoying success with everything from "The Simpsons" to "Buffy the Vampire Slayer."

Warner Home Video has released two best-selling complete-season packages of "Friends," while HBO

Home Video continues to score big with seasonal installments of "The Sopranos" and "Sex and the City."

With the wealth of newer TV shows bowing on DVD, it appears both baby boomers and new buyers are ready to follow their TV favorites to DVD.

Outlook 2004

With the explosive popularity of TV shows on DVD, consumers are in for a big reality check. Sales of TV series on DVD are expected to top \$2 billion this year, and reality TV is a niche studios are mining in hopes of continuing the profitable run. Once viewed as the ultimate in disposable programming, reality TV shows new and old are popping up on DVD, with enough buyers to sustain an even greater flow in coming months.

Jeff Hodges is the owner of Order DVD TV Shows (<http://www.orderdvdstvshows.com>), which is a web site that focuses on community for TV shows on DVD. You can also purchase TV shows on DVD through Order DVD TV Shows too.

Recordable DVD formats explained

By Kenny Hemphill

Recordable DVD formats explained by Kenny Hemphill

Picking your way through the ton of information available on recordable DVD formats can be a nightmare. To help you out, we've done our best to distill it into this summary.

There are five recordable versions of DVD; DVD-R for General, DVD-R for Authoring, DVD-RAM, DVD-RW, and DVD+RW. None of the formats is fully compatible with the other although there are drives which will read, and in some cases write to more than one format.

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DVD-R for General and DVD-R for Authoring are essentially DVD versions of CD-R. And DVD-RW is a DVD version of CD-RW. All three formats can be read in standard DVD-ROM drives and in most DVD video players. The difference between DVD-R for General and DVD-R for Authoring is that DVD-R for General is a format intended for widespread consumer use and doesn't support 'professional' features such as piracy protection or duplication in mass duplicators. The Pioneer DVD-RW drive which is the most popular PC device for writing to DVD uses the DVD for General format. And as the case with CD, DVD-RW is essentially the same as DVD-R except that it can be erased and written to again and again.

DVD-RAM is slightly different as it is a sector based disc which mounts on the desktop of a PC when inserted into a drive. Files can then be copied to it in the same way as any other mounted media. Some single-sided DVD-RAM discs can be removed from their caddy and inserted in a DVD-ROM drive which will then be able to read the content of the disc.

There are DVD video recorders which use the DVD-RAM format. This enables them to pull off clever tricks like timeshifting - where you can watch the beginning of a programme you have recorded while you are still recording the end on the same disc.

DVD+RW is the newest format and not supported by the DVD Forum, the body which sets the standards for DVD. However, it is supported by some of the biggest electronics and computer manufacturers, and is therefore likely to stick around.

It is also the format used by Philips in its DVD video recorders. Despite not being authorised by the DVD Forum, DVD+RW is claimed by its supporters to be compatible with more DVD video players than DVD-R and DVD+RW writers are found in PCs from quite a few manufacturers.

Kenny Hemphill is the editor and publisher of



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