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## Walk The Line (DVD) Review

By Britt Gillette

Nominated for five Academy Awards, and winner of the Oscar for Best Actress (Reese

Witherspoon), Walk The Line chronicles the life and times of legendary country music star Johnny Cash with an intense, and sometimes dark, intimacy. Following on the heels of the previous year's Oscar Award-winning picture Ray, based on the life of Ray Charles, I entered the theater under the mistaken impression that Walk The Line would be a cookie-cutter attempt to capitalize on the various themes of that picture's commercial success. But although the dramatic personal struggle with drug addiction is prevalent in both films, Walk The Line was more than able to stand on its own as a powerful and impressionable big screen biography. And just like the aforementioned film, you leave Walk The Line with a renewed interest in the music of Johnny Cash and a deep personal attachment to the lives of Cash and his likeable wife, June Carter.

Directed by James Mangold, the talent behind such notable films as Kate & Leopold (2001) and Identity (2003), Walk The Line begins in the rough and tumble world of Depression-Era Arkansas where a young Johnny Cash (Joaquin Phoenix) tends to the family cotton farm with his parents and older brother. Early on, a family tragedy strains the relationship between Cash and his father, providing a glimpse into the epic moment that would shape his life forever. Soon after, the film jumps to the early 1950s where Cash perfects his guitar talents while stationed overseas in the Air Force. His marriage to high school classmate Vivian Liberto lands the two in Memphis where Johnny supports the family as an appliance salesman while pursuing his musical interests on the side. Here, Cash founds The Tennessee Two with bassist Marshall Grant (Larry Bagby) and guitarist Luther Perkins (Dan John Miller), and the trio plays its way to a music deal with local label Sun Records.

As part of a promotional campaign, Cash is put on tour with other "rockabilly" newcomers Elvis Presley (Tyler Hilton), Jerry Lee Lewis (Waylon Payne), and Carl Perkins (Johnny Holiday). But during his tour with the quartet, the life of Johnny Cash takes numerous turns. He meets the affable June Carter (Reese Witherspoon), begins an addiction to amphetamines and alcohol, and watches his marriage to Vivian deteriorate under the strain of his constant absence. All three would come to define the next fifteen years of Cash's life as he struggled to triumph over his personal demons. Despite his all-encompassing drug addiction, Cash nevertheless manages to crank out hits, but his personal life hits rock bottom following bouts with divorce, loneliness, depression, and his continued drug addiction.

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When Cash reunites with June Carter in a musical collaboration, the magical bond between the two is amplified. But Johnny's addiction threatens to ruin everything they've built together...

The most impressive aspect of Walk The Line, aside from the storyline itself, is the performance of Witherspoon and her counterpart Phoenix. Amazingly, both provide their own voiceovers, and for the casual listener, very little difference can be detected between the Hollywood talents and the real life country music legends they impersonate. Much was made of the performance of Joaquin Phoenix in the days leading up to the film's release, but I came away more impressed by Witherspoon.

Apparently, so did the Academy because they awarded her their highest honor for the role. What stood out the most was the actress's down-to-earth smile and charismatic mannerisms. She created a character with ample assertiveness, yet one that burst at the seams with an infectious optimism and love for life. As such, the audience can't help but fall in love with June Carter. In addition, Witherspoon displays an amazing singing voice that accurately captures the distinct and unique aspects of June Carter's talent. Overall, Walk The Line is a fine film, and a fitting remembrance to the career and life of

country music's greatest icon, Johnny Cash...

Britt Gillette is author of The DVD Report (

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), a blog where you can find

more reviews like this one.

### **Recordable DVD formats explained**

**By Kenny Hemphill**

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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.

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 as

## Walk The Line (DVD) Review

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.

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