

High-def editing for the masses

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With the cost of high-definition camcorders and HDTVs quickly coming down, consumers are becoming more and more creative in how they use their video cameras. Companies like Ulead Systems Inc. and Pinnacle Systems Inc. are bringing HD editing to the masses with low-cost HD editing solutions like Pinnacle Studio 10 HD and Video Studio 9, which includes an HD plug-in. Both solutions give consumers the capability to edit in native HD for less than \$100.

Thanks largely to government regulations, HDTV content development and delivery have moved fairly rapidly in the United States since 1994. Europe, on the other hand, chose to let the market set the pace for conversion, and there was only one channel delivering digital content in Europe in 2004. Service expansion has been painfully slow, so the need for HDTV sets has been mired in high cost and lack of interest. England's BBC has been one of the early adopters, so European broadcasters are watching its progress before they jump in with breathtaking content.

High-def TV set sales are experiencing considerable growth in the Pacific Basin, but for a change sales in the area lag behind those in the United States. Europeans are certainly interested in high-def big-screen viewing, and the set manufacturers and European retailers are convinced that the soccer World Cup will be the key decision point for many households. Then European consumers will face the same challenge U.S. buyers face: a dizzying array of sets and techie points that will totally blow your mind.

According to Jeff Hastings, general manager for Pinnacle Systems, "There are not just two parts to the HD story -- digital capture devices and HD-ready display equipment. There is a third component -- HD editing and management -- that is just as critical. All three go together and are quickly becoming a need-to-have, not a nice-to-have."

Hasting added, "HD hardware is really driving consumer electronics purchases this year, but software to enhance, manage and share the huge amount of content created is really what makes HD quality come alive in the home, on a cell phone, gaming device, or wherever the consumer demands."

Both Ulead Video Studio 9 and Pinnacle Studio 10 offer more than just the option to edit in HD. Both system give users new to editing a "foot in the door" approach, with clean user interfaces, the ability to burn complex and professional-level DVDs, create special effects with green screen and multi-track overlays.

Ulead spokesman Andy Marken, of the California-based Marken Communications, said, "Plasma and LCD TV screens are rapidly coming into the "consumer" price range, but more importantly people are finding that they want to do their own video, their own way and show it/share it. It is a phenomenon that is based on the uncertainty of the world around us and wanting to be more in control of 'my' content when I want to watch it.

"Consumers are part of the growing number of home video enthusiasts who are not satisfied with just plugging their camcorder into the back of a TV and watching unedited video. They're proving that even busy people who aren't technically savvy can quickly create entertaining videos that can be shared and played back on a TV with a DVD player."

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