

Blu-ray drives seeing limited growth within PCs

September 2 2009, By Rex Crum

The sharp video quality of Blu-ray disc players, increases in the devices' technical capabilities and growth in the number of high-definition video titles has made the devices one of the most-popular consumer-electronics categories in the last year.

But as stand-alone Blu-ray players are finding their way into more living rooms, and shipments are forecast to rise by an average of almost 50 percent a year through 2013, the adoption of Blu-ray disc drives inside personal computers is expected to pale in comparison.

"It's becoming a product differentiator, and the acceptance levels are growing, but the average person is still more likely to pick up a Blu-ray disc player than a computer that can play Blu-ray discs," said Ross Rubin, an analyst with NPD Group.

Technology researcher iSuppli estimates that Blu-ray drives will be found in only 3.6 percent of PCs shipped worldwide in 2009, rising to 16.3 percent in 2013. ISuppli also estimates that the number of stand-alone Blu-ray players will rise from 9.1 million units this year to 42.1 million by the end of 2013.

Reasons Blu-ray technology has been slow to gain ground in the PC market stem from some basic factors of economics to the amount of content that is available in the format.

"There's various reasons people transition from one format to another,"

said Michael Yang, senior technology analyst with iSuppli. "Going from CD to DVD drives didn't take so long because of what a DVD could be used for, and the prices weren't that different."

While none of the major PC makers sells a desktop or laptop with a Blu-ray drive as a standard component, Dell Inc., [Hewlett-Packard](#) Co. and others do offer Blu-ray drives for various PC models, typically for an extra \$100 to \$125.

"Right now it's more of an enhancement," said Brian Zucker, a technology strategist at Dell and a member of Blu-ray Disc Association standards group.

Zucker said that as PC prices continue to drop, the extra cost associated with adding a Blu-ray drive can still be a negative factor for a potential PC buyer.

"A lot of it does have to do with pricing," Zucker said. "It's still cheaper than three years ago, when it would cost \$300 or \$400, but it might still be holding people back."

Another reason given for the lack of Blu-ray adoption in PCs is that the computer is still seen by many as a work-related device. And with a screen smaller than many TVs, consumers would rather get the full Blu-ray experience by watching a movie on their high-definition TV rather than on their computer.

But Zucker believes the drives will gain more traction with computers as people begin to build up their [Blu-ray disc](#) libraries at home and, with a laptop, decide they want to watch their videos while traveling or away from their living rooms.

"People are soon going to realize that they'll have these collections at

home, and will want to be able to watch them on the go," Zucker said. "And often, the best possible viewing screen is the one on their computer."

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