

UltraViolet lights way to lifetime movie watching rights

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A Digital Entertainment Content Ecosystem (DECE) alliance that includes Warner Brothers, Microsoft, NBC Universal, Sony, and Fox is working to break down walls between gadgets and services. The DECE alliance has set up an UltraViolet platform for film lovers to create free accounts in the Internet "cloud" where versions of movies they buy in DVD or digital formats are stored in online "lockers."

Giants from Hollywood, technology and retail are out to rev up digital film sales by letting people buy lifetime rights to watch movies on whichever devices suit their fancies.

A [Digital Entertainment](#) Content Ecosystem (DECE) alliance that includes Warner Brothers, Microsoft, NBC Universal, Sony, and Fox is working to break down walls between gadgets and services to catalyze demand for films.

The new stream of revenue expected with the arrival of digital distribution of movies years ago didn't arrive. Instead, DVD sales shrank without digital an offsetting increase on the digital side.

The DECE alliance has set up an UltraViolet platform for film lovers to create free accounts in the Internet "cloud" where versions of movies they buy in DVD or digital formats are stored in online "lockers."

"If you buy a movie, it comes with a copy in the cloud," Warner Brothers Digital Distribution president Thomas Gewecke said during a DECE panel discussion at the [Consumer Electronics Show](#) that ends Sunday in Las Vegas.

"You don't have to worry about your hard drive filling up or crashing, or if the device you buy isn't compatible."

People will then be able to watch the works on televisions, smartphones, tablets or any other devices registered to accounts. Registered devices can be changed as technology evolves.

"A bunch of companies got together and we decided for a do-over," said Sony Pictures Entertainment chief technology officer Mitch Singer.

"UltraViolet is going to come out with movies and TV shows in a way that is predictable; free Ultraviolet accounts that work on all products and services."

DECE expected people to begin seeing films bearing the UltraViolet logo by the middle of this year.

"We've essentially finished the product development part," DECE director Mark Teitell said.

"Now, it is time for content, retail, and service providers to deploy things that can plug into this account system."

The common UltraViolet file format was intended to be integrated into videogame consoles, computers, DVD players, and other movie viewing products or services.

"A common file format means consumers could use UltraViolet content on multiple brands, or take a (memory) stick and move it between devices," Teitell said.

Internet-capable televisions, Blu-ray players and other hardware working with UltraViolet "out of the box" should be available in 2012, he predicted.

"This is actually the way digital streaming was supposed to work," Teitell said. "This way, content works where ever whenever."

Storing films in the cloud "future-proofs" collections because they can be streamed to new devices that hit the market, according to Peter Levinsohn, president of new mediate at Fox Film Entertainment.

"Ownership needs to have privileges," Levinsohn said during the panel discussion.

Noticeably missing from DECE was Disney film studio and Apple, the California company behind culture changing iTunes online entertainment shop and coveted iPads, iPhones, and iPods that feature video viewing.

"There is no impediment to Apple making UltraViolet available on its devices," said NBC Universal digital distribution president JB Perrette.

"Disney as well. You have one versus everybody else, and I like this side of the bet. I think they will come on board at some point."

Microsoft media and entertainment group vice president Blair Westlake said that high-speed 4G wireless Internet networks and other technology advances have cleared the way for UltraViolet's cloud-based movie model.

"If we deliver and follow the keep-it-simple-stupid approach, consumers will adopt (UltraViolet)," Westlake said. "The way content is sold is going to evolve in the next 12 months."

Leaders in Samsung Electronics are championing UltraViolet, but since the 2011 product lines for televisions and DVD players are already set people shouldn't expect compatible hardware until 2012 at the earliest.

"Hopefully, this will make it into next year's product cycle," said Samsung media center solution vice president Tae-Jin Kang.

Mobile devices evolve faster and could get UltraViolet earlier, he added.

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