



DVD & Blu-ray Release Report Special Report



For the latest release news or to download past editions
dvdandblurayreleasereport.com

Volume Number: 1,410/11
April 02, 2024

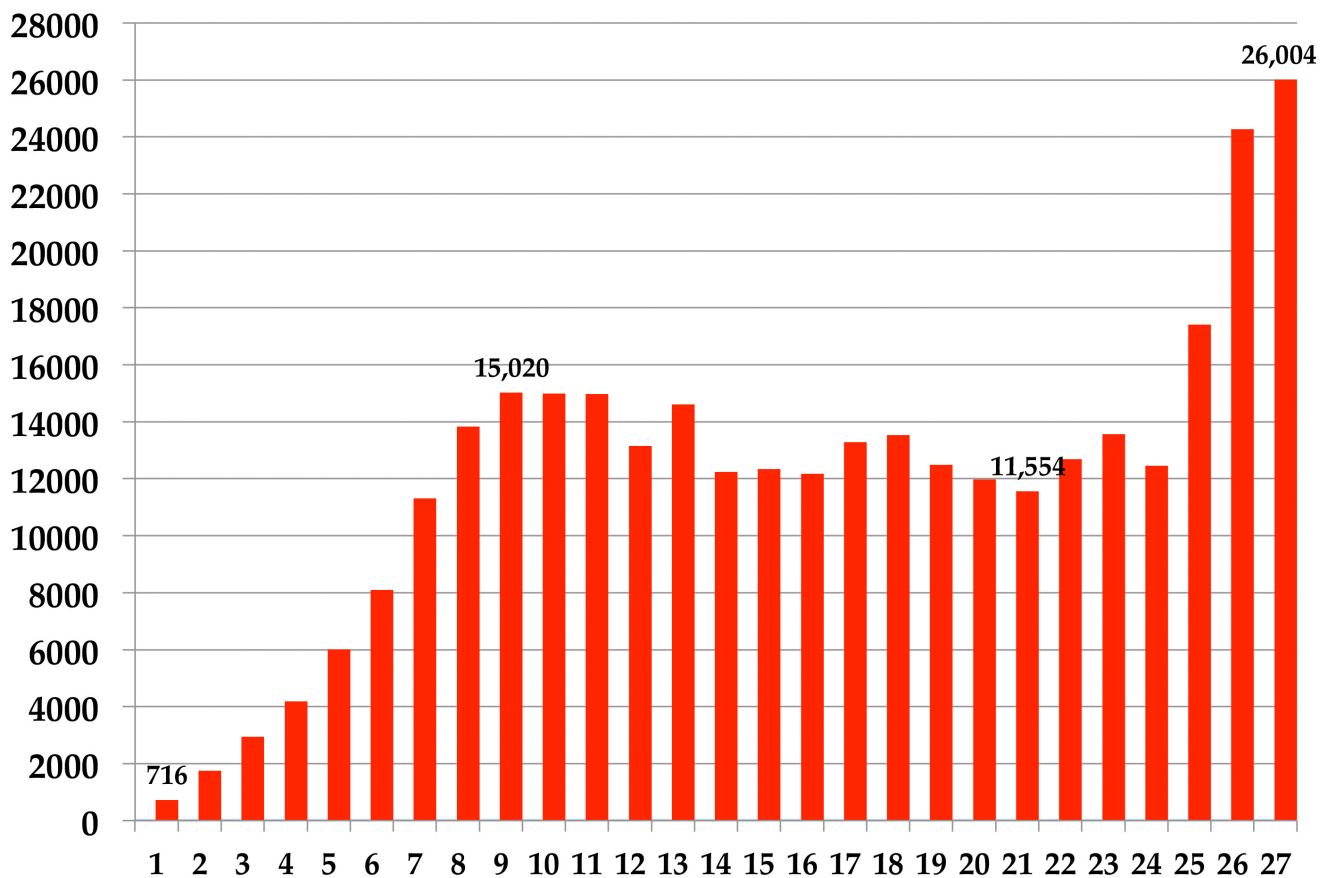
The DVD Format Celebrates Its 27th Anniversary - A Review

In Hollywood, you know, "Tinseltown," birthday celebrations can be lavish affairs. So it was something of a disappointment when there was no star-studded parade down Hollywood Boulevard to mark the 27th anniversary of the DVD format, which made the so-called "Hollywood" studios (only Paramount is actually in Hollywood) countless billions of dollars.

They have all but abandoned it. DVD is an old, tired, worn out format that only gets a release nod from a "Hollywood" studio for a major new theatrical release or perhaps a MOD (manufactured on demand) recycled to refill popular catalog selections ... the glory days are but a distant memory.

The focus is clearly elsewhere. Hollywood has moved on (and perhaps, not to the better).

The DVD Format 27th Anniversary* Annual Release Output With Key Milestones



* 27 years ending March 15, 2024

It would probably come as something of a surprise to modern day "Hollywood" studio executives that the latest 12-month cycle in the life of the DVD format was the busiest one yet. 27 years after the launch, a new record for the number of releases. *See 27 Years Next Page*

27 Years Continued

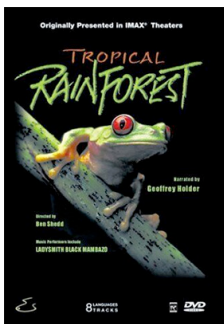
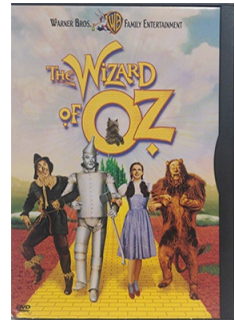
So what is it? Old, tired, worn out or on fire?

Perhaps a review would be in order to fully understand what has transpired over the life cycle of this transitional delivery system that replaced VHS and laserdisc for home viewing and collecting of physical media in 1997.

With great fanfare the revolution was to begin on Mar. 25, 1997 with the launch of 34 films on the newly developed DVD format — “Digital Versatile Disc” — from three sources, all controlled more or less by Warner Bros.

These would be MGM (distribution as the result of the Giancarlo Parretti/Kirk Kerkorian debacle in 1990), New Line (owned by Warner Bros.) and Warner Bros. itself under the guidance of the “Godfather of DVD,” Warren Lieberfarb.

Included in the launch were such popular films as *The Wizard of Oz*, *Rocky*, *Singin’ in the Rain*, *Blade Runner*, *The Road Warrior* and *The Exorcist*. An impressive selection of titles all packed in “snapper cases.”



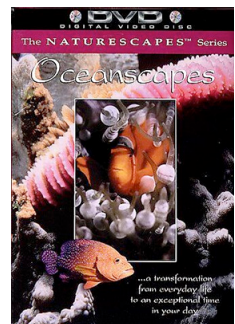
However, Mitch Perliss and his Slingshot Entertainment banner crashed the party on Mar. 19, 1997 with four titles — *Animation Greats!*, *Africa*, *The Serengeti – IMAX*, *Antarctica, An Adventure – IMAX* and *Tropical Rainforest – IMAX*. These were packaged in former Disney executive Ben Tenn’s slim “hard” plastic cases.

This “birth date” does create some minor confusion. Each year, with the mid-March starting point, it means that the overlap encompasses two calendar years — 28 calendar years, but only 27 anniversaries, so we will refer to annual milestones as just “year” (and its number) rather than “2019/2020” postings.

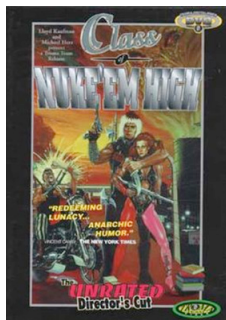
So who came next? Former K-Tel executives Mickey Elfenbein and Philip Kives would be the next to enter the DVD market on Apr. 22, 1997 with eleven selections under their Simitar Entertainment banner.

Simitar had its own take on packaging. The DVDs were in a CD case, which came out of the bottom of a descriptive cardboard sleeve (gravity would often play a role in the CD case crashing to the ground).

The next wave (seven releases) from the original trio hit stores on Apr. 29 and it was at this time that Sony Pictures arrived with four films — *Fly Away Home*, *In the Line of Fire*, *Jumanji* and *Legends of the Fall*.



By Labor Day, Warner Music/WEA, HBO, Image Entertainment, Central Park Media, Artisan Entertainment, USA Home Entertainment, UAV, Universal Music/MCA and Elite Entertainment were on board.



The count on Aug. 31, 1997 stood at 180 DVDs.

On the lead up to Thanksgiving of 1997, several more companies made the plunge — Sony Music, Master Tone, Geneon, Digital Disc, Tai Seng, D-Vision/Essex, Wellspring Media, MPI (a trio of Beatles selections on Nov. 14), Shanachie, Winstar, Troma (*Class of Nuke’em* and *Sgt. Kakukiman* on Nov. 18) and Universal (four films on Nov. 18, including *The Paper* and *Babe*)

By New Years Eve there were the likes of M2K, Anchor Bay (Dec. 2 with *Stepford Wives*), Walt Disney Studios (Dec. 9), American Gramophone, N2K Encoded Music, Passport International, Pioneer and Koch International.

The title count stood at 528.

During the first part of 1998 — on the run up to the first anniversary of the DVD launch — Madacy, Video Watchdog, Digital Multimedia and Front Row released their first DVD product offerings.

716 DVDs releases were in the marketplace at the end of year one.

Nowhere to be found among these pioneers were Paramount and 20th Century-Fox.

The product mix on the format’s first birthday is worth noting. 51.5 percent of all of the titles released were Theatrical Catalog (movies prior to the launch of the format), with just 38 New Theatrical Releases (often marketed as day and date with VHS).

Holdouts “Hollywood” studios, Paramount and 20th Century-Fox finally gave in and joined the party during the fourth quarter of 1998. Paramount on Oct. 6, 1998 with four titles,

See 27 Years Next Page

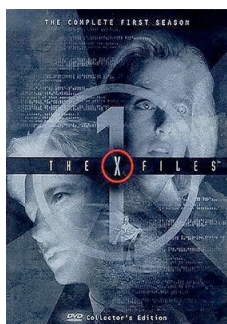
27 Years Continued including *Face/Off* and *Kiss the Girls*, while Fox waited until Nov. 3 with a contribution of three DVD releases, which included *Hope Floats*.

For the first nine years of the DVD format it was up, up, up in terms of the number of titles entering the market place. When DVD celebrated its ninth anniversary in March of 2006 the number of new releases had reached 15,020.

Something, however, was about to change ... the introduction of the Blu-ray format on June 20.

While DVD over VHS was a quantum leap in image quality and “things” you could do with a film, the introduction of the Blu-ray format was marginal in comparison. Storage capacity and better sound and image quality were noted, but for most consumers it was just “OK” as an upgrade.

By the end of the ninth year in the life-cycle of the DVD format there were 63,841 releases, with Theatrical Catalog — although still the leading category — dropping to 17.6 percent of the release pie.



One major change that should be noted during the first nine years of the DVD format was the realization that television series programming could be packaged and sold to consumers. VHS was a logistical nightmare for series programming, but on May 9, 2002 that all changed when 20th Century-Fox released the seven-disc collection of *The X-File: The Complete First Season*.

When the DVD format celebrated its ninth anniversary there were 1,666 multiple disc sets of television series programming in release.

Beginning with year ten, the numbers of new DVD releases each year crabbed sideways for the next 15 years. There was a distinct downward trend, slight, but nevertheless there. Up a little, down a little, but never matching the 15,020 record of the ninth anniversary of the format.

A low was reached in year 21 (ending March of 2018) with just 11,554 new DVD product offerings reaching the marketplace. It was clear, at this point in the format’s life cycle, that DVD was on its way out. It was a good run, making the “Hollywood” studios billions in profits and making collecting of physical media (for more than just movies) a reality.

But wait, something begin to happen in the spring of 2021 as the format reached its 24th anniversary ... a growing surge of new titles; a revival.

Why? It is not an easy answer, but generally speaking the rebirth of the DVD format was sparked by a combination of market forces.

First, beginning in 2019 (in earnest) the “Hollywood” studios fell in love with streaming and cut back *See 27 Years Next Page*

DVD At Year One By Release Category

Code	DVD Title Release Category	Year One	Percent
A	Anime	5	0.7%
AD	Adult-Themed, Non-Feature	23	3.2%
CC	Cartoon Collections	5	0.7%
CH	Children's Programming, Non-Feature	9	1.3%
D	Documentary	3	0.4%
F	Foreign Language Feature Films	38	5.3%
FI	Fitness		0.0%
M	Music	38	5.3%
Mini	Mini Series		0.0%
MOW	MOW (TV Movies)	18	2.5%
R	Religion Themed - Non-Feature		0.0%
S	Films of the Silent Era	4	0.6%
SH	Short Subjects	18	2.5%
SI	Special Interest	58	8.1%
SP	Sports	2	0.3%
SS	Silent Short Compilations	5	0.7%
ST	Performance: Stage Productions (Non Musical)		0.0%
TC	Theatrical Catalog (pre-1997)	369	51.5%
TN	New Theatrical (1997-current)	38	5.3%
TS	Theatrical Serials (1930 - 1956)		0.0%
TV1	TV Series Programming (single disc)	5	0.7%
TV2	TV Series Programming: Multi-Disc Sets		0.0%
V	Direct to Video Feature Films	64	8.9%
Total		716	100.0%

DVD At Year Nine By Release Category

Code	DVD Title Release Category	Nine Years	Percent
A	Anime	3,641	5.7%
AD	Adult-Themed, Non-Feature	1,559	2.4%
CC	Cartoon Collections	291	0.5%
CH	Children's Programming, Non-Feature	2,283	3.6%
D	Documentary	410	0.6%
F	Foreign Language Feature Films	5,362	8.4%
FI	Fitness	1,151	1.8%
M	Music	6,835	10.7%
Mini	Mini Series	362	0.6%
MOW	MOW (TV Movies)	1,697	2.7%
R	Religion Themed - Non-Feature	460	0.7%
S	Films of the Silent Era	401	0.6%
SH	Short Subjects	402	0.6%
SI	Special Interest	8,623	13.5%
SP	Sports	2,648	4.1%
SS	Silent Short Compilations	101	0.2%
ST	Performance: Stage Productions (Non Musical)	142	0.2%
TC	Theatrical Catalog (pre-1997)	11,217	17.6%
TN	New Theatrical (1997-current)	3,316	5.2%
TS	Theatrical Serials (1930 - 1956)	172	0.3%
TV1	TV Series Programming (single disc)	1,661	2.6%
TV2	TV Series Programming: Multi-Disc Sets	1,666	2.6%
V	Direct to Video Feature Films	7,528	11.8%
Total		63,841	100.0%

27 Years Continued on the number of releases (which had been trending for some period of time) to focus on the new, bright, shiny toy (losing billions in the process). This lack of focus on physical media would create a void.

Second, the Covid pandemic struck in 2020 and the commitment to streaming (for all the stay-at-home consumers) picked up pace and anything related to DVD was just an afterthought ... however, the consumer hunger for collecting and owning physical media remained. This demand — a void created by the “Hollywood” studios — would be recognized and filled.

There was a third factor that had also been changing the face of physical media and that is manufacturing. This would be the switch from replicated DVDs (and Blu-rays) to MOD (manufacturing on demand).

The DVD format “flipped” in 2017 and for the first time there were more MOD releases than replicated releases ... Blu-ray would follow in 2021. The surge in MOD was a major factor in driving both Ingram (distribution) and Best Buy (retail) out of the market (not equipped to deal with this).

Streaming • Covid • MOD

By the spring of 2021 the “Helper” community, my term for traditional pirates and bootleggers, began to recognize that the traditional “Hollywood” studios either didn’t care or just chalked up piracy of their intellectual properties to the cost of doing business. There was no enforcement ... everything was up for grabs without consequence!

The focus was on streaming, which, by its very nature, served up pristine masters to the “Helpers” (or void-fillers) ... a film streams and the same day it is available for purchase, it has gotten that sophisticated since 2020/2021.

Three major factors—Streaming, Covid, MOD.

The result: Year 25 (ending March of 2022) saw a new record of 17,406 DVD releases, which was eclipsed in Year 26 with 24,274 new titles. And, now the candles are lit for the 27th anniversary of the format with yet another new record ... 26,004 new DVD arrivals (perhaps peaking once again ... time will tell).

After 27 years there have been 327,534 DVD releases, with the catch all category titled “Special Interest” being the number one source for product, followed by Theatrical Catalog (15.8 percent of the release pie).

What is the future of DVD? If you looked around at year nine you might have said, “flat.” If you look around now, you are not so sure. From a “Hollywood” studio POV DVD is dead, done, finished. From a consumer POV, it is an entirely different story. Buckle up and enjoy the ride.

DVD At 27 Years By Release Category

Code	DVD Title Release Category	27 Years	Percent
A	Anime	7,452	2.3%
AD	Adult-Themed, Non-Feature	4,042	1.2%
CC	Cartoon Collections	575	0.2%
CH	Children's Programming, Non-Feature	10,006	3.1%
D	Documentary	6,050	1.8%
F	Foreign Language Feature Films	25,451	7.8%
FI	Fitness	5,254	1.6%
M	Music	26,209	8.0%
Mini	Mini Series	1,427	0.4%
MOW	MOW (TV Movies)	7,384	2.3%
R	Religion Themed - Non-Feature	10,364	3.2%
S	Films of the Silent Era	2,750	0.8%
SH	Short Subjects	2,474	0.8%
SI	Special Interest	53,513	16.3%
SP	Sports	38,207	11.7%
SS	Silent Short Compilations	469	0.1%
ST	Performance: Stage Productions (Non Musical)	407	0.1%
TC	Theatrical Catalog (pre-1997)	51,906	15.8%
TN	New Theatrical (1997-current)	13,060	4.0%
TS	Theatrical Serials (1930 - 1956)	1,113	0.3%
TV1	TV Series Programming (single disc)	4,728	1.4%
TV2	TV Series Programming: Multi-Disc Sets	14,201	4.3%
V	Direct to Video Feature Films	32,355	9.9%
Total		327,534	100.0%