

# Packaging the winner

Now that Blu-ray technology is the victor in the format battle, just how will the new hi-def discs be packaged? Jill Bilzi finds out

**O**pinion about what form Blu-ray Disc (BD) packaging will take depends on which executive from which company answers the question. Plastic-based packagers want the blue plastic Amaray-style BD case to be the industry standard, while the paper-based packagers are pushing for what they see as more environmentally friendly alternatives.

The issue of cost is a key consideration for packaging suppliers who want to manufacture eco-friendly BD options. Many of the greener materials cost more than standard materials because there are limited supplies available. Automated packaging is also weighing on the minds of those who want to 'go green', with several executives calling for the establishment of some standards on the packaging manufacturing side that will allow the replication/fulfilment side of the industry to develop standard automation equipment to quickly and efficiently load the discs.

What the industry as a whole can agree on, apparently, is that once a standard for Blu-ray packaging emerges, the market for special packaging is limitless. Using their past experience with other hi-def optical media, such as LaserDisc and DVD, many fully expect hi-def consumers to want all kinds of multiple BD sets, higher-priced special studio editions and unusually packaged limited editions.

Below, packaging industry executives sound off on the future of hi-def media packaging. Some are exhibiting at the MEDIA-TECH Expo in Frankfurt, while others will travel to the German city to meet with customers for private discussions off the show floor.

## Sean Maddox, marketing manager, AGI Amaray

AGI Polymatrix and AGI Amaray, which developed the industry-standard packaging used by major film studios, has created packaging targeting pre-school children, in addition to launching a new packaging concept to further its green credentials, according to Sean Maddox of AGI Amaray.

The Kidz Box product is aimed at young children with its large graphic printing and bold colour scheme. Maddox says the Kidz Box concept is already "a great hit" in Australia "due to its ability to increase sales and differentiate the product for this market". "Kids really respond to this case, and it makes it easy for parents to identify safe and suitable product."



The Kidz Box uses large graphics and bold colours to appeal to children

Maddox adds that AGI Amaray rejects any suggestion that plastic cannot be 'green' since it typically can be recycled.

"Recycling is the key approach in the EU and, in Australia, recycling rates are more than 80% for plastic," he says. "The environment is important to us; Amaray DVD boxes are made in a one-piece, one-material construction to allow easy recycling."

Since BD is a premium product, Maddox says plastic is a natural choice for BD packaging.

"Plastic is seen as premium, and offers a package that will look great on the consumers' shelves for years to come. Our research constantly shows this, and differentiation has been achieved with shape, size, colour and silver foil blocking. Consumers do not regard our cases as packaging but as part of the product, and the case offers durable protection for many years. We are not talking about throw-away cartons."

AGI Amaray continues to closely guard its intellectual property rights. "Our product is out there and launched, so we will be looking at other companies to see who is copying us and what action could be taken."

## Richard Roth, executive vice president, sales and marketing, Ivy Hill

New York-based Richard Roth says Ivy Hill, a Cinram company, is committed to developing great paperboard packaging solutions across the board for all media, not just BD. The company has been promoting its Eco-Options packaging line and has a working partnership with the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC).

"I think the industry is on the cusp of a major tidal wave of change. I personally feel that the important thing is to really 'do green', not just talk about 'going green'. We want the message to be our products and their sustainability."



Ivy Hill is "concerned and committed" to green packaging, a direct result of its clients' interest in it, and ultimately, consumer demand for more environmentally friendly product packaging. "The average consumer looks at plastic and thinks that it does not meet sustainability requirements. But, there is an understanding in the industry that unless things are done in a comprehensive and uniform way, sustainability won't happen."

While paperboard packaging is Ivy Hill's metier, Roth says Cinram also makes plastic components. "As a free-standing product, we're looking at across-the-board solutions for BD. There are any number of innovative ideas that are floating around. The truth is, at the end of the day, anything can be automated – it's a question of how much?"

Like many other executives, Roth thinks the dimensions of the current blue plastic BD packaging will probably be the industry standard going forward. "Obviously, the materials and the thickness of the packaging could be altered. But I don't think the height and width will change.



Ivy Hill: doing green, not talking green, with a range of paperboard packaging

"Everybody who sees that package knows exactly what it is. There are certain visual cues in product packaging that become an inherent part of that product: a red cigarette box is Marlboro, a yellow border around the perimeter of a magazine is *National Geographic*."

Once standard hi-def packaging becomes well-known to consumers, Roth sees enormous potential for special BD packaging.

"Special packaging is so critical for our market. Part of the strength of packaged goods comes from the desire of the consumer to want to own the product. It's a way to create demand for BD, and the packaging challenge is that much greater in an environment where people have an electronic alternative."

## Jakob Skarin, founder and chief executive officer, JakeBox

Since the resolution of the hi-def format war, JakeBox has been developing Blu-ray packaging, Jakob Skarin says.

"There are some issues left to work out, but we're working on them," he states.



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**JakeBox fulfils consumers' demands for special packaging**

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"We will offer the same ingenious solution as we have been offering for CD and DVD formats, but adapted to the Blu-ray size."

Skarin says he is "very happy" that "eco-awareness is catching on now", referring to the general industry shift towards more sustainable packaging. JakeBox is a patented, recycled-paper, Swedish packaging concept for optical media discs. Its most significant characteristic is the folded 'claw' that holds the disc and then unfolds to 'present' the disc, lifting it up and making it accessible to the consumer. The JakeBox is made of 100% recyclable carton board or paper and is always printed with vegetable inks, according to Skarin.

"We get a lot of feedback saying that a disc in a JakeBox has a sense of added value and importance. It's only natural that this applies to Blu-ray also. And the eco-trend speaks in our favour, too."

Skarin, echoing what many industry executives believe, expects there to be a large market for special packaging with BD.

"We have noticed that there is more of a market for special packaging for all formats, and I can't see why Blu-ray should be an exception. Most companies that live off selling discs have realised lately that to keep selling discs they must offer the end user something more desirable than what they have previously been offering."

Skarin says a disc in a JakeBox is evidently more desirable than a standard package. He says there are fan chat sites and blogs that discuss JakeBox packaging, which weighs about one-third less than traditional plastic packaging.

"We have made several titles where a JakeBox version has been released alongside the standard version, and the JakeBox version has been sold out instantly, even at a higher price," Skarin says. "The same people that aren't willing to pay anything at all for the standard version are willing to pay a bit more to get something special."

At MEDIA-TECH, Skarin says JakeBox will focus on meetings with the companies with which it is in licence discussions. Skarin will also participate in the green packaging panel at the trade show.

"Our ambition has always been, and still is, to license our concepts to established packaging companies, rather than compete with them, although we have initially been forced to 'become a packaging company' and more or less compete with them, to prove that there is a demand for our concept," Skarin says.

**Jean Noel Fournillier, managing director, Key Solutions**



Key Solutions has been developing four different types of BD packaging, according to Jean Noel Fournillier. These include a patented Blu-ray Star Metalpak that opens flat and is made of two pieces of plastic clipped into a metal shell; a Blu-ray Metalmate that opens flat and is made of three pieces of metal glued onto a plastic case; Blu-ray Digipaks; and patented Blu-ray Woodpaks.

"We believe metal packaging reflects the concept of premium product packaging. Our minimum order quantity will be quite low – for example, 2,000 units – to target a bigger group of clients."



**Metal is ideal for packaging premium hi-def products**

He adds that Key Solutions believes its new, more luxurious wood, leather and metal packaging is ideal for the higher price point of hi-def media.

Fournillier says the resolution of the hi-def format war is an extremely positive step forward for the optical media industry as a whole.

"It helps the studios make clear decisions, so we will invest in designs and intellectual property rights in creating new packaging for Blu-ray Discs," he says.

Key Solutions will be exhibiting some of its newest BD packaging designs at MEDIA-TECH, and Fournillier will be a speaker at the green packaging seminar there.

**Dolf Blomhert, managing director for EWS and commercial director of MPI**

As one of the largest one-stop shop suppliers of media packaging, MPI already has a wide range of different, existing BD packaging solutions, according to Dolf Blomhert.

"This means that we are offering boxes with different spine widths for both one or two discs, but also Digitrays in different variations for one or more discs. Each customer who wants to start with Blu-ray packaging tomorrow is more than welcome to contact us."

Blomhert says he expects that the emerging BD market will have a place for both paper-based and plastic-based packaging solutions, just as there is in

the regular DVD market. "MPI has always delivered what the customers were asking for. So, if they demand a paper-based packaging, we will deliver it. However, until now we have mainly received requests and orders for plastic-based solutions."

The company expects special packaging for BD to naturally evolve after standard packaging for the new format catches on with consumers.

"From our 20-year experience, we believe that the market for special packaging will come after Blu-ray has been properly integrated in the market with standard packaging," Blomhert says. "Blu-ray in standard packaging is, at this moment, a novelty for the consumer. Special packaging will benefit the most from its added value when the consumer has become used to Blu-ray in its standard packaging and therefore is able to identify the difference between the two."

"We strongly believe that the sooner it is clear what the definite formats for both the disc and the packaging will be, the better it is for everybody. The consumer will then have the confidence to invest in Blu-ray with a positive effect on the volumes sold, and MPI – as well as the industry as a whole – will have a better basis on which to calculate their investments."

Blomhert says MPI would be highlighting "our strongest selling point" at MEDIA-TECH, "namely the fact that we are able to supply each possible media packaging solution, and that we keep almost 3,000 different types of packaging in stock, which makes us unique in Europe".

He added that Blu-ray is "an essential part" of MPI's packaging programme moving forward.

**Fiorenzo Bettoni, VP sales and marketing, Europe, Pozzoli Spa**

Pozzoli has already developed and successfully launched its special packaging solutions for the Blu-ray Disc format, according to Fiorenzo Bettoni.

"The Push-Tray was conceived and designed for the new format in order to highlight and clearly distinguish it from any other packaging seen first on retail shelves. Its oval shape and the new hub design with no finger-holes to remove the disc make our Push-Tray the best solution to pack a BD."

Pozzoli launched the Push-Tray in May 2007, and it was used in the German release of (Continued on page 21)



**Sustainable while retaining all the qualities of standard products**

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the *Spider-Man* trilogy and for other titles. He adds "the industry should keep the perceived value of the BD very high."

Pozzoli is also working on more environmentally friendly packaging.

"We developed a special eco-friendly cardboard tray with the same oval shape, custom designed for the BD format." The first market production using this FSC-cardboard tray is likely to be in a fully FSC-labelled packaging for a BD title in the French market. It will be part of Pozzoli's new Ekoline.

"Ekoline not only retains all the qualities of our standard products but is also compatible with sustainable development. The components do not need to be separated and, therefore, are easy to recycle."

He said FSC STD 40 004 certification guarantees that every tree cut down to produce the paper used in Pozzoli products comes from forests that are managed effectively and responsibly, and that every stage in the process – from converting to marketing – is documented in compliance with CoC (Chain of Custody) guidelines.

"The Pozzoli packaging solutions that feature the FSC label are making a valuable contribution to the effort to safeguard global levels of forestation. This environmental commitment is also helping in the development of a more acute sensitivity towards our planet and its needs."

Bettoni also said that developing special packaging "is one of our main targets for this year".

"In order to support the industry, we will work to come up with the best solution not only in terms of creativity but also in terms of feasibility, automation and delivery times," he says.

### Frank Salvaggio, general manager, Ross-Ellis

Ross-Ellis had been developing packaging for hi-def formats months before the resolution of the format war, according to Frank Salvaggio, but what had been missing was the volume.

"Today we know Blu-ray is the format, so we've accelerated our work both internally and with our key suppliers of components. Given the strong Wal-Mart pressure towards sustainable packaging, we hope the industry does not simply adopt the Amaray-style package as the Blu-ray standard and considers recycled board and recycled plastic packaging alternatives, of which there are several."

In addition to being environmentally friendly, Salvaggio says some of these packages are "lighter, slimmer and use less material", resulting in lower shipping and warehousing/retail costs, and a lower carbon footprint. He adds, since the packages are slimmer, retailers can fit more units on their shelves.

"A package can be made to look attractive and functional while also being environmentally friendly. We have several packaging alternatives that contain very little plastic or are made entirely of 100% recycled board. Special coatings can be applied to enhance the attractiveness of the package."



Ross-Ellis has developed a range of packaging that contain little plastic or are made of 100% recycled board

Salvaggio says that some of the eco-friendly packaging is not popular yet due to the lack of disc-insertion automation.

"But the volume on Blu-ray is not yet large," he says. "This is the time to start using sustainable

packaging alternatives while also investing in automation, so that by the time the volume reaches seven figures per title, the fulfilment infrastructure would exist to efficiently produce the units required."

He says consumers respond favourably to special packaging and there will be a big market for it with BD titles. "Let's face it, consumers are more likely to pick up a DVD in a beautiful package and, if the content is of interest to them, they will likely buy the package and pay the 'extra cost' of the packaging."

### Frank Smulders, sales manager, media, St Ives (Uden)

St Ives is a printer to the entire media industry, according to Frank Smulders, and therefore the company adapts to the wishes of its customers.

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"We do not support one kind of packaging, but rather, we develop packaging on demand."

Smulders believes there will certainly be more of a market for special packaging with BD. "BD will have to win from DVD and to do this, BD has to be different and 'better' than DVD," he says.

At MEDIA-TECH, St Ives will be showing its "whole spectrum" of media packaging, not just BD packaging, Smulders adds.



**Matti Koski, director, Stora Enso Media Solutions**

Stora Enso will be at MEDIA-TECH, according to Matti Koski, who is also scheduled to appear on the panel on green packaging. He says Stora Enso took a risk on committing to 100% paperboard automated packaging a while ago.

"There are plenty of paperboard packagers out there, but I am not aware of any of them but ours that are fully automated. Right now, it's great to say, 'Yes, the Green Wave – the movement toward sustainability – came true,' but the truth is we took a risk initially and sometimes you get lucky!"

Stora Enso's DBS Discbox Slider is made from wood fibre, a renewable natural resource. The company has calculated that the CO<sub>2</sub>

emissions of the DBS case are only 10% of those of a standard plastic jewel case.

As with other executives interviewed by *MediaPack*, Koski says the industry is looking for "a clear footprint" for BD packaging, a standard he believes will take a few months to establish, not a few years.

"We're trying to find the BD standards right now. Absolutely nobody's going to invest huge amounts of money into automation until a standard is established."

Koski says that once the standard for BD packaging is established, the sky is the limit on 'special' packaging. "There will be everything under the rainbow in terms of special packaging for BD. There's no way of forecasting all the possibilities – they are all out there."



**Packaging made from a renewable natural resource, ahead of the green wave**

Stora Enso was not hugely affected by the resolution of the hi-def format war, as paperboard packaging can accommodate all sizes of discs; he does, however, expect the industry to continue to move towards paper packaging for discs.

"You can try to fight it for a while, but green is here," he says. "The snowball is now too big and it's very difficult to stop it."

He says that, particularly in the US, paper recycling has become the norm.

"We have the mindset of recycling here," Koski explains. "And our packaging can be recycled with the newspapers – it is biodegradable."

**Brigit van Winkel, director, international operations, Super Jewel Box International**

Brigit van Winkel says the "new and beautiful" Blu-ray Discs should be packaged in imaginative, eye-catching, premium packaging that "underlines the quality and durability of its content, rather than being detrimental to it".



"Blu-ray Discs should not be packed in an ordinary Amaray-style package, or even worse, in a paper-based package. Although some paper and cardboard

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**Philips Recordable Blu-ray Discs in SJB PLUS packaging**

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types of packaging are nice, there also exist many cheap and horrible versions that degrade its content to a throw-away that nobody can earn a penny on," van Winkel says.

The company is promoting its Super Jewel Box PLUS as "the perfect packaging for Blu-ray". The PLUS package is 1in taller than the Super Jewel Box STANDARD and is made of the same clear polystyrene.

"It is a sturdy and durable case that will make its content 'pop' and boost its perceived value. Consumers will see and feel the benefits in a more durable, sharper-looking, higher quality case."

Philips has chosen the Super Jewel Box PLUS for its recordable Blu-ray Discs, according to van Winkel.

**Susanne Klose, marketing director, sales and marketing, topac**

Now that the format war is over, Susanne Klose says topac is concentrating on designing attractive and useful packaging for Blu-ray Discs. "At the moment, we are developing a Blu-ray tray with new optical characteristics."

The company is also designing new cardboard products, made from one material only, and especially working on environmentally friendly packaging. "This is still a very important topic for many of our customers."

"The new tray that we have developed, together with extraordinary package design or choice of finishing, will make Blu-ray look high-quality and exclusive. Our customers can select from a wide range of packaging and find the most suitable for their Blu-ray product, but, also, the ordinary DVD product range can be used for Blu-ray."

Klose adds that special packaging is "very important" for the new format to stand out on the shelves.

"Special packaging is very decisive for a top presentation of Blu-ray product at the point-of-sale," she says. "Packaging sells, and with extraordinary packaging the product becomes much more attractive than a product in a soft box."



Klose says topac will be at MEDIA-TECH to meet with its customers and discuss new developments and trends.

**David R Coho, vice president, sales and marketing, Univenture**

Univenture is already well positioned to offer BD packaging, according to David Coho.

"The strength of Univenture's product development process is our anticipation of where the market is going and what it will need," he says.

"Well before there were requirements for multiple disc applications, Univenture focused on delivering a multiple disc UniKeep case wallet that would be recognisable to the consumer as a hi-def product, would fulfil the design expectations and needs of packaging designers, and incorporate a functional life to the consumer, thereby enhancing its eco-friendly characteristics."

Coho says the value, protection and performance of Univenture's Safety-sleeves becomes increasingly important for hi-def media, such as Blu-ray Discs. "The ease and flexibility of using a wallet that can accommodate various disc capacities allows for



consistencies and efficiencies when presenting a complete product offering,” Coho says.

He adds that since Univenture’s inception 20 years ago, the company has continually sought to make packaging more environmentally friendly while increasing the products’ functionality.

“Our development of the Safety-sleeve was revolutionary because it reduced materials by more than 83% from the jewel case. We were able to do this while increasing the functional use and protection of the package for the customer.”

He adds that focusing on packaging solutions beyond “one-time use and throw-away” is very important to Univenture’s packaging design and development. “Every product development considers the long-term effectiveness and how the product will be used.”

According to Coho, Univenture’s UniKeep case wallet and binders are made from a single material, polypropylene. In their basic form, they do not contain metal rings, rivets or other materials, therefore at the end of their useful life, the wallets and binders may enter the waste stream to be recycled.

(Univenture also added a line of EcoEndure UniKeeps that are made from recycled content, as well as a line made with an enhanced bio-degradation additive. Both of these product lines were part of the Green Media Summit in Los Angeles in April.)

“It is important that products balance the automation needs of production and assembly with how the consumer will use the product. A package may be made out of environmentally friendly materials or process extremely efficiently in production, but if it does not functionally meet the needs of the customer and enters the waste stream prematurely, it has missed two vital opportunities: brand recognition through packaging, and long-term environmental stewardship.”

Coho says Univenture’s package design considers the balance of long-term product functionality, how the consumer will use the product after the purchase, the product’s shelf presence and how it is assembled.

In other Univenture news, the company’s hi-def UniKeep case has been accepted by a major film studio for one of its key children’s product lines.

**Louisa Lau,**  
**managing director,**  
**Verano International**

Verano is already working on special packaging for Blu-ray Discs, Louisa Lau says, adding that the new packaging has to be as “gorgeous as the Blu-ray Disc itself!”. The company is planning to use a new material to give an added value to BD packaging.



“The Blu-ray Disc is a premium product – everyone in the industry will agree. Therefore, our mission as a media packaging specialist is to develop a BD packaging with a special finish. No matter which material is used, the major point is the finish. Unfortunately, the plastic box – even with a nice colour – is not enough to emphasise the real advantage for the end user.”

Lau believes BD technology could be seen as an excellent opportunity for editors and packaging manufacturers to develop new concepts in special packaging, adding that the “premium editions” will depend on the editors’ policy. She says that one of the reasons why hi-def titles were initially released in plastic boxes was because the quantities were low and that did not push the industry to develop special eye-catching packaging. ●



Using special materials and finishes for a premium product