

Direct to DVD Is The New Premium Digital Content

by [Carla Rover](#) on Tuesday, January 4, 2011



Hollywood's "second life," a world in which content is instantly available, multi-platform accessible and monitored second-by-second, allows any movie to be a great movie. How? By virtually isolating the critics and the extraneous demographics from content, studios are free to promote and redistribute content unfettered by public opinion, across highly amenable platforms using the most creative ad and interactive social technologies at hand. Consumers who like content from a certain genre have unlimited access to their favorite content, 24 hours a day as studios shift resources towards multi-network promotion and content delivery innovation. When that content becomes viral the positive reviews and product placement opportunities stack up. No one who watches these movies is doing so because it was the last flick with empty seats at the Megaplex. Their expectations are usually well-matched to content output, and an advertiser's product placement dollars are, even more so than general release products, matched to their targeted demographics. Hollywood's lesser known films are now attracting A-List supporting actors, whom are living profitable virtual lives in the cross-platform world of immersive content and ads, and marketers have a new realm within which to play.

A Brave New World of Interactive: Universal's Death Race 2: [CraveOnline.com](#), a male-oriented lifestyle and entertainment portal, created a site for Death Race 2 which combines genre-specific games and social network linkages with immersive ad experiences that seduce viewers online and off. While the site features the expected testosterone-induced digital fantasies (there is a "Blow Her Clothes Off" Game), CraveOnline, which boasts 35 million unique monthly visitors, has surgically removed any non-titillating, non-mercurial content and made the site a playground for the targeted market, period. While some Wall Street analysts like Whitney Tilson believe that Blu-Ray and DVD services like Netflix need to innovate fast to stay afloat, Blu-Ray disc production is up 60% over last year, and is expected to reach 2 billion in production by 2014, fueled by demands for special features and 3d content. That means that DVD releases will be packed with creative features and hooked into mega-websites steered towards highly-targeted audiences like that of CraveOnline that, well, crave content built around their interests. Mike Wokosin, V.P. of Digital Marketing for Universal Studios Home Entertainment stated that Universal Studios chose to work with CraveOnline because of the site's ability to appeal to the film's generally male audience by "engaging them and creating a loyal fan base" by delivering high-octane clips and interactive elements that carry the theme of the film. "With so much content available brands are focused on engagement", says David Cohn, Senior VP of

Sales for CraveOnline. "Custom, interactive elements keep users on the site for several minutes and cause them to connect with the brand longer. Yet it is important to have a strong marketing campaign that doesn't interfere with user experience. That requires that ads be incorporated seamlessly into content in a unique way". This CraveOnline does exceedingly well, employing shock and awe graphics with addictive social gaming.

When content loses its Shakespearean pretensions and gets down to the business of seducing an old fashion buy, partnering brands and content providers win because they are creating and distributing content around a target audience's trending interests. Is that superficial? Not so much. Getting products into the hands of consumers that want them is as elemental to society as your local grocery store, yet content requires more hustle to catch the eye and the dollars of potential fans.

What it Means for Marketers: Direct-to-DVD and Blu-Ray content offers a stand-out potential to get product placement that reaches a very, very targeted audience. While films like Death Race 2 may be targeted to excitable 18-34 year old males, other films, and websites like CraveOnline.com, may provide unique opportunities to bring your brand or content to a cross-section of Americana, one chunk at a time.

What it Says to Hollywood: Direct-to-DVD and Blu-Ray films offer major studios and brands a way to hit niche audiences while creating brand recognition flows through social networks. Creative interactive ads and special features which adorn Blu-Ray releases and their companion sites set a high bar for general release promotions. Audiences for these films tend to express high-levels of satisfaction with both the content and their viral promotions because the content is drawn from the audiences context of relevancy and social world.

Parting Shot: People-centered content is the new premium. Premium content is now beginning to require more than just generational references, it has to connect saliently and consistently with the passions, cerebral or adolescent, of its audience.