

HP Adding HD-DVD/Blu-ray Hybrid Drives to PCs

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According to an HP representative, the company will make these new options available on May 9 for select configure-to-order PCs, such as the HP Pavilion Media Center m8010y and d4890y series.

The m8010y series will start at \$929.99 and the d4890y series will begin at \$949.99, according to HP. Both Media Center PCs will come with an optional LG Super Multi Blue Blu-ray Disc Rewriter and HD DVD-ROM Drive (GGW-H10N), which the company demoed at this year's Consumer Electronics Show.

Judy Chan, HP's Consumer Desktop Product Manager, said that component pricing will be available on Wednesday, via hpshopping.com when customers will be able to configure both of the chassis series. She added that all the new options will be available for the m8010y series, but that the d4890y series will be limited to the Intel Quad-core processor and Nvidia GeForce 8800 graphics card. It is expected that the optical drive will cost between \$800-1200, falling into a comparable price range to LG's standalone BH100, also known as the Super Multi Blue Player, although that was not confirmed on Monday by HP.

A representative did say that the optical drive is a triple-format writer and will be able to write to Blu-ray discs at 2x (single-layer and double-layer), DVDs, and CDs. The drive will not be able to write to HD DVD, however. Currently, Toshiba is the only company that manufactures an HD DVD writer for PCs.

For consumers with even more cash on hand, the m8010y series will feature an optional digital cable receiver, the ATI TV Wonder Digital Cable Tuner, for viewing and recording HDTV programs, HP said. Here, the company is following Dell's move a few months back when it included the same tuner in its Dell XPS 410 PC.

HP also plans to make both Media Center PCs available with an optional Intel Core 2 Quad (Q6600) processor, and Nvidia's 640-Mbyte GeForce 8800 GTS, which comes with two DVI inputs as well as a TV-out connection.

When asked if the company would be including dual format optical drives in its notebooks, Chan said it wasn't likely in the near future.

"HP's current focus is to provide a dual format optical drives for consumer desktop customers," she said. "HP also continues to assess consumer needs and market trends when introducing new technology."

As has been the case in the past, HP is remaining on the sidelines of the HD DVD/Blu-ray wars for now.

"HP is interested in offering compelling solutions to consumers and letting them decide on what format they best prefer," Chan said when asked why the company was opting for the hybrid route.

Editor's note: This story was updated with comments from HP's Judy Chan, as well as additional information about the m8010y and d4890y series.

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