

## Hollywood And Silicon Valley Both Love Remakes, Sequels, And Series

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Do it once. Do it again. Even better, turn a remake into a series. They make lots of money. It works in Hollywood, and it works for the electronics industry too—sometimes. Just like movies, there are flops in electronics. But while the whims of the viewing public tend to have more of an effect on the success of movies, changes in technology can have a profound effect on whether a particular remake or series of products even makes sense.

Some changes are forced, like HDTV here in the U.S. Others are more natural progressions, like the drastically falling prices and astronomically rising capacities of memory. And overall, the consumer multimedia space is fraught with opportunities and pitfalls.

### THE HIGH-DEF EXPERIENCE

Here, HDTV is pushing the demand for high-definition content ([see the figure](#)). Right now, the only true option for 1080p content would be devices like Samsung's BD-P1400 Blu-ray player (*see "Samsung BD-P1400 Blu-ray" at [www.electronicdesign.com](http://www.electronicdesign.com), ED Online [17952](#)*).

While the results are impressive, there's a significant delay between popping in the disk and getting to the movie. But that delay stems less from the high-def player and more from how the disk is initially processed.

Actually, the movie studios place the biggest obstacle right on the screen. Some people may like all the movie previews that are hoisted upon us. I'd prefer to get to the main menu more quickly. Still, the wait may be worth it, assuming the movie is halfway decent.

Obviously, latency is critical in embedded design. Too much latency can make a computer game unplayable. But latency alone isn't always the issue.

I have two televisions within earshot of each other. One is an SDTV, while the other is an HDTV, with a cable box in between. It is now impossible to have both turned to the same channel because of the delay between the two, which is caused by the HDTV chain, including the cable head-end, the cable box, and even the HDMI link to the HDTV.

The collection of multimedia devices in my house ties all of these issues together. I'll tell you about my setup in a future column, but right now, let's delve into the High-Definition Audio-Video Network Alliance (HANA) and Digital Living Network Alliance (DLNA).

## CACHE AND CARRY?

HANA is closely wedded to IEEE-1394b, while DLNA typically winds up with Ethernet or Wi-Fi links. HANA had an impressive setup at this year's International CES, but for most users, it means a whole new wired or wireless infrastructure. On the plus side, IEEE-1394b supports isochronous transfers. This is key to allowing a multigigabit/s, high-bandwidth device like Samsung's BD-P1400 to provide content across the network.

The question is whether the isochronous nature of the network is a requirement if the cost of a sufficient size buffer becomes lower than the cost of the network infrastructure. Multicore laptops with gigabytes of RAM are standard fare, so why not an HDTV with its own sizable cache?

Caching also comes into play in movie distribution. Right now, it's easier for me to rent a Blu-ray disk via NetFlix or Blockbuster, but it would still be faster to download a movie overnight even with our existing, rather poor Internet access infrastructure.

I'll leave the legal issues of this approach to another time. But consider the falling prices and rising capacities of hard disks and flash memory disks. Likewise, consider eSATA and external PCI Express connections.

Multimedia applications, including caching support, can effectively use ever-increasing amounts of storage. Locking a storage device into a product made sense in the past when changes were less dramatic, but times are changing. Remakes of old designs may not play as well in the future, even with a massive makeover in cast and characters.

Of course, Ethernet is one of those technical methodologies that has been remade and turned into a series many times over. It will definitely give something like HANA's IEEE-1394b a challenge.

To be fair, HANA and DLNA are really in their infancy, and the tipping point for both will likely occur in the next year or two. The big question will be whether there will be a remake, a new and successful series of products, or a flop. Now, where was that copy of *Ocean's 13*?

**SAMSUNG** • [www.samsung.com](http://www.samsung.com)

**DIGITAL LIVING NETWORK ALLIANCE** • [www.dlna.org](http://www.dlna.org)

**HIGH-DEFINITION AUDIO-VIDEO NETWORK ALLIANCE** • [www.hanaalliance.org](http://www.hanaalliance.org)

fig 1



**Samsung's BD-P1400 Blu-ray player delivers a top-notch 1080p video stream when it's coupled with a Blu-ray disk.**

