

INTRODUCTION

'Movies are dead'

– Susan Sontag, *New York Times*, 1996

'It has never been a better time to be a film fan'

– Gary Tooze, *DVDBeaver.com*, 2005

In the beginning God created 120-millimetre optical discs. And the discs were blank; and worn-out VHS tape was upon the face of the television. And God said, Let there be encoded MPEG-2 compressed video, and two to six channels of AC3 sound. And a 650-nanometer red laser moved upon the face of the discs.

And God said, Let there be popcorn: and the disc was spun. And God saw that the first film was *Twister*, and it was not so good. But it shone bright and was loud. And God listened to tales of how Jan de Bont created the blustering wind from the void. And the evening and morning were the first day.

And men from the Americas came to God and said, Lord, our analogue television system uses the standards laid down by the National Television Systems Committee in 1941 and 1953, in which there are fewer lines of picture resolution than in the lands of Phase Alternating Line, and a different refresh rate, according to the electrical current frequency of our land. And God divided the PAL discs from the NTSC discs, and formatted the NTSC discs to play 720x480 pixels at 29.97 frames per second, and the PAL discs to play 720x576 pixels at 25 frames per second. And the evening and morning were the second day.

And men from Digital Theater Systems, Inc came to God and said, Lord, our multi-channel surround-sound format is richer and more life-like than Dolby's AC3. And God added DTS alongside the AC3 encoding, on discs where there was spare bit-space and a likely market. And the evening and morning were the third day.

And the masters of Jan de Bont came to God and said, Lord, the devil may take digital copies of *Twister*, and beguile our customers therewith, unless we can place a flaming sword at the gate of the digital bit-stream, to keep the way of the river of revenue. And God added Content Scrambling System encryption coding, and gave the masters of de Bont the power to licence the software key.

And those masters again came before God and said, Lord, we would