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Blu Ray Media: the Mystery of Philips

Blu Ray blank media guide : Best Blu Ray media brands

Best Blu Ray Media Brands Part 4: The Mystery of Philips



There is a real mystery about Philips Blu Ray media. Philips does not sell a lot of Blu Ray media under its own brand in the US, but it manufactures media, typically with an MID of PHILIP-R04-00 (we already discussed MIDs [here](#)), for at least 7 large factoring brands in the US, and probably many more. It even manufactures media for Ritek, which is the most common manufacturer of factored media for outsourced DVD media brands, ahead of the #2 media outsourced media OEM, CMC Magnetics.

Why is Philips supplying so many brands, and why is it that Ritek/ Ridata itself is outsourcing its media production? This is not

a mystery to us. Ritek/ Ridata went through a major quality problem for all the Blu ray disks it sold up until the second quarter of 2010: the media degraded so fast that BD-R disks manufactured by Ritek often became unreadable in a few months, generating massive data loss. Both Ritek/ Ridata and Memorex (outsourced to Ritek at the time) showed a massive percentage of user reviews testifying about data loss. Clearly, the problem was so acute that Ritek itself had to stop most of its production and switch to Philips licensed media.

The first puzzle is that the reported quality of Philips media across the brands it supplies varies widely. The percentage of positive user reviews goes from 66% (a shockingly low rating) for Merax (now factoring from Optodisk) to 93% (an shockingly high rating) for Optical Quantum, going through 87% for Maxell, 72% for Memorex, 78% for VinPower (the true name of the company which owns Optical Quantum, and which sells, under the VinPower brand name, a less expensive line), and 82% for Ritek. The average across all known brands supplied by Philips is 83%. In the DVD media market, the MID is what we go for to evaluate media quality - why does it appear different for BD-R media?

A part of the discrepancy can be explained by the fact that several outsourcing brands switched from Ritek to Philips in the course of 2010, including Memorex, and Ritek itself. Their previous history of poor quality, due to the Ritek media blow-out, will still be reflected on the user reviews for the brands that used Ritek at the time, then switched. This explains in part the very poor score of Memorex, and the middling one for Ritek. It does not, however, explain the poor records of Merax and Maxell, where user reviews do not report archival failures. This conundrum is encapsulated in the Taiwanese company VinPower, where the home brand (VinPower) scores

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78%, while the "premium" brand (Optical Quantum) scores 93%, although both using the same PHILIP-R04-00 MIDs. How can we see such a spread in quality ratings?

The second puzzle is that Philips does not manufacture its own media in the DVD market. It outsources all of its DVD media to CMC Magnetics, although the media is labeled with a Philips MID. In fact, CMC Magnetics lists Philips as the licensor of its Blu Ray technology. How can Philips suddenly become a low-price media manufacturer for BD-Rs, when it does not appear to have existing manufacturing expertise for other media, and when it outsources its own DVD media to CMC Magnetics, a manufacturer with a poor reputation in the DVD market?

We feel that one explanation for both mysteries is that the actual media manufacturer for Philips might just be CMC Magnetics. As mentioned above, Philips has a history for outsourcing media to CMC Magnetics in China (and Moser Baer in India), even when the media shows a Philips MID. CMC Magnetics has an overall poor reputation in the DVD media market, but also one for a very wide variability in its media quality. Manufacturing by CMC magnetics could explain a wide range of quality ratings for the Philips-R04-00 MID, and certainly would explain how Philips can suddenly become a low cost supplier. There is another, less likely, possibility: Ritek itself could be manufacturing this media under license from Philips. We consider this possibility much less likely, as (a) CMC has had a longstanding relationship with Philips, and (b) Ritek's failure to manufacture good quality Blu Ray media could not likely have been fixed very quickly, even with the help of some Philips Intellectual Property.

In addition, it is also possible that, in the newer market of Blu Ray media, different plants with the same recipe and process inside a single company may generate different media quality. This is the only way we can explain the very high 93% rating of Optical Quantum, with a very large number of reviews (199). Given the review sample size, the statistical margin of error for Optical Quantum is only 3.5% with a 95% certainty, and cannot explain the brand rating, when comparing it to the overall Philips manufacturer rating of 83%, or the Merax brand rating of 68% (with a 9% margin of error), if we assume even quality across all production batches among all plants. We could understand the difference, however, if Optical Quantum's media (and maybe Ritek's) came from a more successful plant at CMC, while other brands' media came from a less mature, and probably less expensive plant.

If CMC Magnetics is the manufacturer of the PHILIP-R04-00, which we consider likely, our global predictive quality rating for Philips at this time would be 83%. We analyzed very carefully the user review data for Memorex and Ritek/ Ridata where archival failures were reported. Looking at the dates of the reviews and the dates of media purchases, we could not find early archival failures for the Philips media, a comforting find, which leaves incompatibility and coasters are the primary failure modes.

Update 2/22/2011: Mystery solved!

Thanks to our reader *pepst*, we finally solved the Philips mystery:-) Philips had been manufacturing Blu Ray media in the Netherlands since the introduction of the Blu Ray standard. Philips' Dutch DVD media was **quite good**. In 2007, however, Moser Baer Industries of India, a manufacturer of CD and DVD media frequently factored by other brands, **acquired** the Optical Media and Technologies Division (OM&T B.V.) from Philips, and subsequently started manufacturing Blu Ray media in India, in its own manufacturing facilities. The agreement between Philips and Moser Baer provides for OM&T, now owned and operated by Moser Baer, to pursue selling Blu Ray media under the Philips brand name and MID. In July 2009, Philips and Moser Baer settled an intellectual property dispute over optical media technology, resulting in Moser Baer being allowed to pursue manufacturing of optical media under license from Philips. In late 2009, there were media from both manufacturing facilities being sold under the same MID. The variability of the Philips media is certainly explained early on by the presence of "good" media from the Netherlands and "less good" media from the new production facilities in India. It is not clear at this time if production in the Netherlands is still going on - although it appears that old stock is still sporadically available- or if all production has now switched to India.

Conclusion

- Manufactured by Moser Baer in India
- Global predictive quality rating for PHILIP-R04-00 is 83%, trending slightly up
- Very high variability in quality, but no early archival failures so far
- Non archival quality

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- Not recommended in general independently of the outsourcing brand
- Possible use when branded by Optical Quantum (not VinPower) only, as long as you carefully keep an eye on the brand's user reviews

Next we review Kodak blank Blu Ray media... So come back soon!

To understand Blu Ray lingo, check our [lexicon of Blu Ray vocabulary](#). Our Blu Ray brand predictive quality rating process is explained [here](#). Our statistical analysis practices are described [here](#), which is also where we discuss ConsumerPla.net's predictive quality rating.

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Posted by George Gear at 6:28 AM



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4 comments:

pepst said...

Majority of "PHILIP-R04-00" media are made by Moser Baer India. The rest (made in Netherlands, directly by Philips) is old stock.

February 21, 2011 12:08 PM

George Gear said...

Pepst - many thanks for your very valuable comment! We were able to verify it as well through checking with OM&T. Do you know if there is still some Dutch manufacture for Blu Ray optical media, or if the Dutch media is all old stock? OM&T would not tell us...

February 22, 2011 11:59 AM

pepst said...

These days, there are no BD-R/BD-RE manufacturers outside Asia, as far as I know. Therefore all Dutch media should be old stock.

February 23, 2011 12:54 PM

George Gear said...

Thanks pepst. We are still trying to get OM&T to confirm, but they are being very coy:-)

February 24, 2011 11:47 AM

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