One of the most significant, yet least used, features in Windows Vista Home Premium and Ultimate editions, is, ironically, so massive that it once required its own version of Windows XP. That feature is, of course, Windows Media Center (WMC).

WMC enables your PC to be the hub of your digital entertainment experience, and thanks to Windows Vista, you need not sacrifice basic Windows capabilities to enjoy the convergence of TV, movies, music, photography, and video. And to make it even more enjoyable, WMC is just as much at home in a media room with a big-screen HDTV as it is on your desktop. WMC enables you to sit back, relax with your favorite snacks and beverages, and surf your home media resources the same way you surf TV channels.
Maximizing the Potential of Windows Vista’s Multimedia Control Center

Despite its capabilities, though, WMC is often overlooked by users looking to get more enjoyment and more usefulness out of Windows Vista. This book’s Job 1 is to make sure you, the reader, understand what WMC can do, how it makes your life easier and more fun, and, not least, how you can build upon WMC to customize your digital media experience.

As you’ll discover by reading this book, you can use portions of WMC without adding any special hardware to a typical PC. But, if you want to maximize what it can do, you’ll also discover how to customize your existing system’s hardware, which software components to add, and how to use other parts of Windows Vista to make WMC even more powerful and enjoyable.

As you read this book, you’re sure to discover, just as I have, that WMC’s simple interface conceals a very powerful, yet user-friendly, media hub. Helping you unleash that power is what this book is all about.

How This Book Is Organized

This book contains 16 chapters and two appendixes, covering every aspect of WMC from “What is WMC?” in Chapter 1 to “How do I solve problems with WMC?” in Chapter 16. Let’s take a closer look at what you’ll find between the covers of this book.

Part I, “Getting Started with Windows Vista Media Center,” includes the following chapters:

Chapter 1, “Introducing Windows Vista Media Center,” helps you understand the role that WMC plays in the Windows Vista experience, its Windows XP ancestors, and the WMC interface. It’s the perfect way to introduce yourself to WMC, or as we often refer to it in these pages, WMC.

Chapter 2, “Equipping Your PC for Media Center,” shows you the hardware that different components of WMC need to use. Whether you’re building a PC from the ground up, remodeling an existing PC for use with WMC, or preparing to buy a computer for use with WMC, it’s a must-read chapter.

Chapter 3, “Setting Up Windows Media Center,” gives you a front-row seat as we set up a typical PC for use with WMC. From adjusting your picture to setting up your TV tuner, you’ll understand the process from start to finish.
Once WMC is configured, it’s time to enjoy it. That’s what Part II, “Enjoying Media with WMC,” is all about:

Chapter 4, “Viewing and Recording Live TV,” shows you how to watch broadcast, cable, and Internet TV, how to deal with standard, digital, and HDTV, and how to record TV shows and series so you can enjoy them on your own schedule.

Chapter 5, “Watching and Recording Movies,” shows you how to find out when your favorite movies will be broadcast on TV and how to enjoy your favorite films whether they’re on TV, on DVD, or on your hard disk.

Chapter 6, “Importing and Playing Audio,” guides you through the process of ripping your CD library to disk, creating playlists, enjoying Internet radio, and synchronizing the contents of a portable media player so you can take your music with you when you leave WMC.

Chapter 7, “Importing and Viewing Photos,” helps you grab your photos from your digital camera, organize them, view them, fix common problems, and create impromptu slide shows with music.

WMC isn’t just for enjoying media. You can also use it to explore the worlds of sports, news, gaming, and even use it to create your own media, as you’ll discover in Part III, “Beyond the Basics of WMC,” which includes:

Chapter 8, “Enjoying Sports with Windows Media Center,” shows you how to enjoy the riches of sports news, TV, games, and fantasy sports from the comfort of your easy chair and media room.

Chapter 9, “Playing Games and Enjoying Online Content,” helps you play the same family-friendly games included with Windows Vista from the comfort of the WMC interface, shows you how to turn WMC into a hardcore gaming launcher, and introduces you to third-party features that enable you to enjoy even more digital music, video, news, and other media without leaving the WMC interface.

Chapter 10, “Creating CDs and DVDs,” is your step-by-step guide to creating CDs and DVDs of your favorite music, video, and photos right from the WMC interface.

WMC is powerful all by itself, but your home network makes it even more powerful, as you learn in Part IV, “Adding Windows Vista Media Center to Your Home Network,” which includes:
Chapter 11, “Adding and Using Media Center Extenders,” introduces you to a hidden side of your Xbox 360: the ability to access your PC’s WMC interface via your home network. You’ll also learn about other types of Media Center Extenders and how to improve their performance.

Chapter 12, “Connecting with Windows Home Server and Other PCs,” helps you use WMC to enjoy media resources on PCs everywhere on your home network, including Microsoft’s new Windows Home Server. You’ll also learn how to fine-tune your home network for better performance, discover the best choices for Internet service, and learn how to tell when your router is slowing down your network.

Part V, “Enhancing Windows Vista Media Center,” helps you learn to make Windows Vista Media Center more powerful by using it in conjunction with other Windows Vista components and third-party applications, and it helps you manage the most common issues you might encounter.

Chapter 13, “Using Windows Media Player with Windows Media Center,” shows you how Windows Media Player works with WMC, how to configure its audio-ripping feature so you get the music quality and format you prefer, how to easily create playlists and rate audio, how to edit track and album information, and how to add visualizations so you can enjoy the full capabilities of your digital music collection within WMC.

Chapter 14, “Creating Photo and Video Content for Media Center,” helps you explore how to import video, use Windows Live Photo Gallery to make your picture library more WMC-friendly, how to use Windows Movie Maker to shrink the size of your TV recordings, create custom videos, and create DVD slide shows you can enjoy in WMC and elsewhere.

Chapter 15, “Extending Media Center with Third-Party Apps,” shows you an exciting world of programs you can use to customize WMC, make its built-in features more powerful, and add new features and capabilities. We’ve tracked down the software, so you can choose from a wealth of options to make WMC the media center you’ve always dreamed of.

Chapter 16, “Troubleshooting Media Center,” provides expert advice on dealing with the most common problems you might run into and helps you protect your digital media collection.
This book also includes two appendices designed to help readers with specific questions:

Appendix A, “Using Windows Anytime Upgrade to Get WMC Features and More,” is a must-read if you have a version of Windows Vista that doesn’t include WMC (such as Windows Vista Basic or Business), or if you want to move up from Windows Vista Home Premium to the ultimate (Windows Vista Ultimate). This appendix helps you understand the process of using Windows Anytime Upgrade to move up to a better version of Windows Vista.

Appendix B, “Moving from Windows XP Media Center Editions to Windows Vista Media Center,” helps users running PCs with Windows XP Media Center Edition to make the move to Windows Vista.
Watching and Recording Movies

Windows Media Center (WMC) can bring the magic of movies to your PC, whether you use it to watch or record movies on TV or to enjoy films from your DVD collection. By adding third-party software, you can also enjoy Blu-Ray discs in WMC.

How to Find Your Favorite Movies Your Way

WMC makes it very easy to find the films you want to watch live or record for future enjoyment. Choose your favorite method from the TV + Movies menu (Figure 5.1):

- To find movies by viewing time, genres, or top ratings, use the Movies Guide menu.
- To find movies by title, keyword, category, actor, or director, use the Search tool.
- To play movies on DVD, use the Play DVD menu.
Later in this chapter, I’ll also show you how to add a plug-in that enables WMC to play movies you’ve stored on your hard disk and how to get support for Blu-Ray movies. However you like your movies (live, recorded, on DVD, on hard disk, or Blu-Ray), WMC has the best seats in the house ready for you.

![Movie-watching selections are found on the right side of the TV + Movies menu.](image)

**FIGURE 5.1**

Introducing the Movies Guide

Unlike the Program Guide you learned about in Chapter 4, “Viewing and Recording Live TV,” the Movies Guide has movies—and nothing but movies. The Movies Guide takes full advantage of today’s widescreen displays to show movie titles by poster or packaging (Figure 5.2). You can find your favorite films in a variety of ways:

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**caution** If your cable TV or satellite TV package includes adult-oriented content, keep in mind that these movies will show in the Movies Guide. To prevent access by users to undesirable movie or TV content, set up a separate account for each user in Windows Vista’s Control Panel and use the Parental Controls feature in Windows Media Center.
Want to watch a movie right now? Open the On Now menu (also shown in Figure 5.2); it lists films that are currently being broadcast on the movie-oriented TV channels in your program guide.

Can’t find a movie to watch right now? Check out the On Next menu: It lists films that will be broadcast right after the films listed in the On Now menu.

![The Movies Guide’s On Now menu.](image)

To learn how to use Parental Controls in Windows Media Center, see the “Parental Controls” section, Chapter 4, p. 130.

If you’re more systematic in your movie watching, use one of the following menu options:

- Want to watch a western? Cuddle up with your sweetheart for a romantic evening? Relive history? Dive into the Genres menu (Figure 5.3) to start exploring.
- If you prefer the best in moviemaking, go straight to the Top Rated menu: It lists only three- and four-star movies (Figure 5.4).
**FIGURE 5.3**
Some of the genres in the Genres menu.

**FIGURE 5.4**
Selecting a film from the Top Rated menu.
You can select a film as soon as you open the menu containing the film, but it does take a few moments (or longer) to display poster or package graphics. Some older or independent films might not have a suitable graphic, so only the title is shown.

When you click a film, the title, release date channel number and name, and broadcast date and time are shown below the thumbnail (refer to Figure 5.4). The numbers at the lower-right corner of the screen indicate the total number of films in the current menu or submenu and the current selection.

Watching a Movie from the On Now Menu

To watch a movie, select it from the On Now menu and click Watch from the Movie Details menu (Figure 5.5).

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**note** The Movies Guide lists only films that are being broadcast now or up to 14 days from now. If you want to plan out your movie viewing in a longer timeframe, visit the websites of your favorite movie channels to see what films will be available later, and then look for them once they fall into the timeframe of the Movies Guide.

**tip** By default, different parts of the Movies Guide use different display options. Most menus use the small thumbnail view, while others use the list view. To change between these views or to switch to the optional large view, right-click a movie listing from any menu and select the view you want.

---

**FIGURE 5.5**

*Preparing to watch Mutiny on the Bounty.*
The Movie Details menu shown in Figure 5.5 lists the title, star rating, release date, channel, time, a brief synopsis with leading cast members, the director, and classification information (genre, MPAA rating, TV rating, whether the film has closed captioning, running time, and language).

Other options include Cast + More, which displays a scrolling list of cast information, reviews, and similar movies (Figure 5.6), as well as Record, Advanced Record, and Other Showings.

**FIGURE 5.6**
*Use the Cast + More dialog to learn more about a movie.*

Have time for a movie, right now? On Now is the place to go.

➔ To learn more about using Recording, Advanced Recording, and Other Showings to record a movie, see “Recording Movies,” this chapter, p. 147.

➔ To learn how to record movies listed as “Not in Guide” when they are broadcast, select “Recording Movies Not Listed in the Guide,” this chapter, p. 148.
Using the On Next Menu

The On Next menu lists the next film in the rotation on your TV provider’s movie channels. When you select a movie from the On Next menu, the options offered on the Movie Details menu (Figure 5.7) are similar to those listed for movies on the On Now menu, except that the Watch option is missing.

![Movie Details](image)

**FIGURE 5.7**
_Please provide a description of Figure 5.7 regarding movie details._

The On Next menu provides you with a convenient way to see what’s next. However, if your movie tastes are more specific, there are better ways to use the Movies Guide to find what you prefer, such as the Genres and Top-Rated menus.

Using the Genres Menu

The Genres menu gives you a way to drill down through the movies in the Movies Guide by their genre to find your favorite. Choose your favorite type of film from the 18 genres listed, and you can then select by title, year, rating, or start date (see Figure 5.8).
FIGURE 5.8
You can navigate the Genres menu by year, rating, and start date.

When you select by start date, today’s films are listed first.

Using the Top-Rated Menu
There are plenty of one-star horrors and two-star mediocrities cluttering up the movie channels at any given time. If you prefer to watch only the best, open the Top Rated menu and choose from only four-star (listed first) and three-star movies in the current guide listings (Figure 5.9).
Using the Search Tool

The Movies Guide is the perfect way to browse for movies, but if you’re looking for a particular title, a particular actor, or a particular director, you’ll spend a lot of time scrolling through listings. Save yourself time and frustration by leaving the Movies Guide and going to the Search tool.

You can search by Title, Keyword, Categories, Movie Actor, or Movie Director. Select the search and then enter the search term(s) using either your remote control or a keyboard. To save time, names that match the letters entered show up in the middle of the screen (Figure 5.10).

When you see a match, highlight it, and click OK on your remote to see matching movies or TV shows (Figure 5.11).
FIGURE 5.10
Searching for classic movie swashbuckler Errol Flynn.

FIGURE 5.11
Using Search to track down movies featuring Errol Flynn.
Keep in mind that searching by title can be tricky in a couple of ways. Although only one actor or actress can use a particular name (others with the same given name must use a different stage or onscreen name), there are no restrictions on movie or TV show titles. Search for a title like *Notorious*, for example, and you might see the title listed with “More” instead of a broadcast date. “More” indicates that there are multiple TV show episodes and/or movies with the same title. Click More to display the episodes or movies to choose from (Figure 5.12). Make sure you select the show or movie you want.

**FIGURE 5.12**
Select the exact TV show episode or movie you want to record when WMC indicates there is more than one episode or movie with a matching title.

**Recording Movies**
You can record movies from the Movies Guide in a variety of ways, which is perfect if you don’t have time right now to watch your favorite films but don’t want to miss them. You can use the On Later, Genres, and Top Rated menus as the starting points for recording, depending upon where your movie is listed.
Recording from the Movies Guide

To record a movie from the Movies Guide, select a movie using any of the menus, open the Movie Details menu for the movie, and select Record from the menu.

When you select a movie for recording, its Movie Details listing displays the message, “This program will record,” and the movie listing displays the red dot icon WMC uses to indicate recording (see Figure 5.13).

![Fig 5.13](image)

Red dot indicates this movie will be recorded

**FIGURE 5.13**
When you select a movie for recording, its Movies Guide listing indicates you’ve selected it for recording.

Recording Movies Not Listed in the Guide

What if you want to record a movie, but it’s not available in the Movies Guide yet? Are you stuck checking the guide every day from now until...whenever? Thankfully, no.

From the Similar Movies menu (refer to Figure 5.6), you can select movies to record, even if they’re not listed in the guide. When you select an unlisted movie to record in the future, the Movie Info dialog lists a Record in Future.
option (Figure 5.14 A). Select this option, and the movie will be automatically scheduled for recording the next time it appears in the Movies Guide (Figure 5.14 B), and the Movie Info dialog also reminds you the program will record (Figure 5.14 C).

**FIGURE 5.14**
Selecting a non-Guide movie for recording (A), confirming the selection (B), and viewing the reminder (C).
You can also select a non-Guide movie from the Movies search shown in Figure 5.11 for future recording. Press the Record button on your WMC remote or right-click the movie and select Record from the menu.

**Recording from the Search Tool**

The Search tool can be used for very fast selection of movies to record, especially if you know what you’re looking for. When you search by title or keyword, highlight the movie you want to record and press the Record button on your remote. If you prefer, you can still open the Movie Details dialog and select Record instead.

Searching by category involves a couple of additional steps: First, you must select Movies and then select the genre you’re interested in. Then you can record right from the title listing.

When you search by Movie Star or Director name, highlight the picture you want to record and press the Record button on your remote.

**Customizing Recording Options**

The Movie Info dialog lists Record Settings or Advanced Recording as a menu option. Record Settings is displayed after you select the movie to record, while Advanced Recording is displayed for films you haven’t yet selected for recording. Select either of these options to open the Record Settings dialog and view (or change) the settings that will be used to record the movie (Figure 5.15).

You can choose from three options in the Record Settings menu: Stop, Quality, and Keep. Here’s what I suggest:

- **Stop:** Movies generally start and stop on time (unlike some types of sports events), so you should use the default Stop: On Time setting.
- **Quality:** If you are building a permanent WMC movie library, or if you plan to burn a DVD of your movie before deleting it, use the Quality: Best setting. For movies you are merely watching once, use lower quality settings, depending on how much disk space you want to use and how critical viewing quality is to your enjoyment. Note that if you have digital cable, broadcast TV, or satellite TV service, selecting lower-quality settings has no effect on quality or disk space used.
Keep: If you are building a permanent WMC movie library, select Keep: Until I Delete. With this option, you’re in charge of how long the recording stays on your system. If you have plenty of space but don’t plan to keep the recording, use the default Until Space Needed setting. Want an incentive to watch your recordings right away? Choose After 1 Week. To automatically delete a movie after you watch it, choose Until I Watch.

Be sure to save your changes by clicking Save.

➔ For more information about how much disk space is used by TV/movie recording, see “Crunching the Numbers: TV Recording” in Chapter 2, Equipping Your PC for Media Center,” p. 29.

Canceling a Recording

Change your mind about recording a movie? Whether you realize that you selected the wrong movie, want to record a different showing to avoid a recording conflict, or just plain changed your mind, it’s easy to cancel a recording.
You can look for films scheduled to be recorded by checking the Movies Guide or searching for the film title. The films that will be recorded show up with a red dot in the listing (refer to Figure 5.12) or have a red dot overlaying the thumbnail (refer to Figure 5.13). If you want to cancel a recording, open the Recorded TV menu, select View Scheduled, and scroll through the listing to the movie you want to drop from the schedule (Figure 5.16).

![Scheduled recordings](image)

**FIGURE 5.16** Use the Recorded TV menu to view scheduled recordings, and choose a picture to cancel from the recording schedule.

After you find the picture, open the Movies Info dialog and select Do Not Record (Figure 5.17). The movie is removed from the schedule.
Watching Recorded Movies

Once you’ve recorded your first movie, how do you watch it? To find your recorded movies, open the Recorded TV menu. The recordings of your movies are listed alongside TV and sports recordings. To play your movie, select it, and select Play from the Program Info menu (Figure 5.18).

Depending on the aspect ratio used by your movie and your display, you might need to adjust the aspect ratio used for playback.

➔ For more information about adjusting zoom settings for the best-quality playback, see “Selecting Zoom Settings,” this chapter, p. 156.
FIGURE 5.18
After selecting a movie from the Recorded TV menu, click Play.

Resuming or Restarting Movie Playback
Don’t have time to finish your movie? Press Stop on your remote or select Stop with your mouse. When you return to your movie, you will see two new options: Resume and Restart. Select Resume to play the movie where you stopped it and Restart to start it from the beginning (Figure 5.19).

For more information about Keep Until options, see “Recording Defaults,” Chapter 4, “Viewing and Recording Live TV,” p. 113.

➔
Saying “Goodbye” to Your Recording

You can delete a recording whenever you want. To delete a recording, select Delete from the Program Info menu. The disk space occupied by the recording is freed up, so you have room for new movie recordings.

Watching a DVD Movie

To watch a DVD movie from within WMC, insert the DVD into your computer's DVD drive, select the Play DVD option from the Movies + TV menu, and the DVD starts playing immediately.

For more options, press the More Info/Details button on your remote or right-click the screen to display the menu shown in Figure 5.20.
Selecting Zoom Settings

Because we live in a world where movies and TV shows might use any one of several aspect ratios, you might need to tweak the screen settings used for playback to avoid squashed or vertically stretched displays, even if you followed the procedure described in Chapter 3, “Setting Up Windows Media Center,” for configuring your display.

Use the Zoom setting on the DVD playback menu to help match your display and the aspect ratio used by your movie.

To toggle through zoom options, select Zoom from the Info menu and press the OK button on your remote or keep clicking Zoom in the Info menu with your mouse. The options include

- **Zoom option 1 (Normal):** The movie displays full-screen on displays with the same aspect ratio. Widescreen films will display letterbox black bars on standard displays; standard films will display black bars at the side on widescreen displays.
Zoom option 2 (Zoom): The movie is zoomed to display full-screen; edges of the image will be cropped.

Zoom option 3 (Stretch): The movie is stretched to fit the screen without cropping, but the image might be distorted horizontally (standard movie) or vertically (widescreen movie).

Zoom option 4 (Intelligent Zoom): The movie is zoomed to display full-screen, but the edges are stretched more than the center.

Which zoom option works the best? That depends on the aspect ratio of your display and of the movie itself. If the movie is in the same aspect ratio as the display (for example, a widescreen movie on a widescreen HDTV or desktop display, or a classic movie on a standard TV or display), use the default, zoom level 1. However, if the movie and the display don’t match, use one of the other zoom options if you want to fill the screen. I prefer to view films at their native aspect ratio and put up with letterbox borders, but if you don’t, the Zoom menu is your friend.

Figures 5.21 and 5.22 compare zoom results when viewing a typical 1.85:1 wide-screen comedy (Bill Murray’s classic *Groundhog Day*) on a widescreen display.

If you are not able to change the screen display by using the zoom controls shown in Figures 5.21 and 5.22, you probably don’t have your display set for the correct resolution. Exit WMC, open the Appearance and Personalization menu in Control Panel, select Adjust Screen Resolution, select the display used by WMC, and use the Resolution slider to select the correct resolution. If the display is a PnP display, you will normally use the highest setting (right-most slider). If this setting doesn’t work, experiment with lower resolutions.

You might also need to download and install an updated driver for your graphics card or onboard graphics port. You can use the Update Driver feature in Device Manager, or manually download and install an updated driver. Some graphics card vendors also provide a special menu option that provides options for HDTV and other displays. See your graphics card’s or motherboard vendor’s website for details.

Figures 5.21 and 5.22 compare zoom results when viewing a typical 1.85:1 wide-screen comedy (Bill Murray’s classic *Groundhog Day*) on a widescreen display.

**FIGURE 5.21**

*Normal Zoom versus Zoom.*
Using Other Menu Options

The Movie Details option doesn’t do much: Select it, and you get two choices—play the movie from its current position or restart it. WMC might crash when you use this option, so stay away from it.

You can restart a paused movie by pressing the Play button on your remote or by clicking the Play icon in the mouse menu, and you can restart a film from the beginning by selecting Title Menu and restarting the film from there.

Use the Settings selection to open the Settings menu.

Creating a DVD Library with My Movies 2

Although you can play your DVDs through WMC, if you want to create a true DVD library, whether you flip discs in and out of your system’s DVD drive or copy discs you own to your hard disk, you’ll need some third-party software.

One of the most popular choices among WMC users is the My Movies 2 program. Developed by Brian Binnerup, My Movies 2 enables you to more easily manage and enjoy your DVD or Blu-Ray movie collection in WMC. In the following sections, I’ll provide some guidance for helping you use My Movies 2. However, for the most up-to-date information, be sure to see the My Movies 2 website at www.mymovies.dk.

note My Movies 2 is free-ware, but to unlock some advanced features, you must accumulate various levels of points. Points can be earned by making financial contributions to My Movies 2’s developer, by adding information about DVDs or Blu-Ray discs not in the My Movies database, or by enhancing existing information for a movie. See the website for details.
Installing My Movies

My Movies 2 comes in two different versions, with separate downloads for 32-bit and 64-bit Vista. You must have the Server/Client edition installed on the system that is used for watching DVDs within WMC. Despite its name, it is installed on both networked and standalone systems. The Client version is installed on other Windows Vista (or XP) systems that connect to the system running Server/Client, enabling you to use remote systems to manage your collection.

The Server/Client edition is about 75MB and downloads as a ZIP file you decompress with Windows Explorer before installing; the Client edition is about 9MB and is a self-extracting .EXE file.

My Movies Server/Client edition includes SQL Server 2005 Express Edition, which is installed automatically during installation. After SQL Server 2005 Express Edition is installed, the installation process for My Movies begins. By default, the program installs to C:\Program Files\MCE\My Movies.

When you install My Movies, it creates a My Movies folder in the Start menu with the following shortcuts:

- Collection Management (run this first)
- Donate for My Movies (the program is free, but donations enable you to unlock advanced features)
- Frequently Asked Questions (a useful resource for learning how the program works)
- My Movies (the main program)
- Uninstall My Movies (the uninstaller)

Getting Started

After you download and install My Movies 2 Server/Client, you must run its Connection Management program from the standard Windows desktop before you can use it within WMC.
Click the splash screen to configure your server. After the server is configured, you can start adding movies to your database, using a variety of methods:

- If you have already copied DVDs to your hard disk, open the File menu and select Folder Content. Point to the folder that contains your DVDs, and My Movies adds them to its database.

- To add movies on your shelf, select Add Titles, and choose By Barcode (you can type in the barcode or scan it in with a webcam), By Disc ID (insert your DVD and click Search), By Title, By Manual Typing (use this feature to add a movie that is not in the My Movies database), or by Upcoming Releases. When you add a movie, you can choose whether to catalog it as Online (stored on your hard disk) or Offline (run from your DVD drive), and you can categorize the movie thus:
  - Owned, For Keeps (the default)
  - Owned, For Sale
  - Owned, For Sale or Trade
  - Pre-Owned
  - Ordered
  - Wished
  - Rented
  - Pre-Rented

My Movies helps you keep track of your favorite films, whether you buy, borrow, or rent them.

When you add a movie, you might be prompted to add updated information from the My Movies 2 webservice. Select this option to get the most up-to-date information about the film.

Blu-Ray and HD-DVD Support

My Movies 2 includes support for these formats when you have a compatible decoder and appropriate hardware installed.

To learn more about using Blu-Ray movies in WMC and My Movies 2, see “Watching Blu-Ray Movies in WMC,” this chapter, p. 162.
Adding My Movies to the WMC Interface

To add My Movies to the WMC interface, start WMC after you close the Connection Manager. You will be prompted where to place My Movies. You can add My Movies as an option to the TV + Movies strip or as a separate My Movies strip (the third option, as a menu option in the Program Library, doesn’t work in Windows Vista). Select an option (Figure 5.23), and you will be prompted to restart Media Center to apply the change.

![Figure 5.23](image)

**FIGURE 5.23**
Selecting how to display My Movies in WMC.

Figure 5.24 illustrates these options.

If you want to change how My Movies is displayed in WMC, follow this procedure:

1. Exit WMC.
2. Restart Collection Management.
3. Open the Configure menu.
4. Select Media Center Interface.
5. On the Interface tab, click the Reset button next to Current Menu Program Interface.
6. Click OK on the confirming dialog.
7. Close the Media Center Interface tab.
8. Close the Collection Management program.
9. Restart WMC.
10. Select the view you prefer when prompted.
11. Click OK on the confirming dialog.
12. Close WMC.
13. Restart WMC.
14. My Movies will be placed in the WMC interface as desired.

![Image of WMC interface views](A.png) ![Image of WMC interface views](B.png)

**FIGURE 5.24**
*My Movies in its own strip (A) compared to My Movies as a menu item in the TV + Movies strip (B).*

**The Settings Menu**

The Settings Menu in My Movie 2’s WMC interface provides options for configuring its user interface, the movie list (Views), parental control restrictions (this option requires that WMC’s own Parental Controls option be enabled first), DVD playback and copying, and managing your DVD collection.

➔ For more information about using WMC’s Parental Controls, see Chapter 4, p. 85.

**Watching Blu-Ray Movies in WMC**

If you’ve moved up to Blu-Ray HD movies, you’re probably wondering, “OK, how can I enjoy this 1080p goodness in WMC?” The following sections show you exactly what you need.
Hardware
You’ll need the following hardware in order to enjoy Blu-Ray movies with WMC:

■ Blu-Ray read-only or Read/Write drive (these also support CD and DVD media)
■ HDCP-enabled onboard or discrete graphics card
■ HDCP-enabled HDTV or widescreen LCD panel

Software
You’ll need the following software in order to enjoy Blu-Ray movies with WMC:

■ Blu-Ray decoder that supports Windows Vista (minimum)
■ Blu-Ray decoder that supports WMC (preferred)

Although Microsoft includes DVD decoding in Windows Vista (including Media Center), it does not include Blu-Ray decoding in Windows Vista. You can use a third-party DVD decoder, but if it doesn’t include an WMC plug-in, you must exit or minimize WMC to run the decoder. Some Blu-Ray decoders for Windows Vista include

■ CyberLink PowerDVD 8 Ultra—www.cyberlink.com (about $100; free trial available). Add WMC support by downloading and installing freeware Cyberlink/VMC plug-in version 1.6 or later (available at http://ourmediacenter.com/node/9).
■ Blu-Ray/HD-DVD plugin for Nero 7 or Nero 8—www.nero.com (about $30; Nero 8 Ultra [required for use of plug-in] is about $80–100; free trial available).
■ ArcSoft TotalMedia Theatre—www.arcsoft.com (about $90; free trial available). Incorporates WMC plug-in.

note My Movies 2 also supports Blu-Ray (as well as HD-DVD) movies if you have a compatible decoder installed. (The developer recommends ArcSoft TotalMedia Theatre.) Contribute or earn 2,500 points, and you can unlock My Movies 2’s Blu-Ray and HD-DVD backup feature so you can copy your movies to hard disk for easier access. To learn more about My Movies 2’s support for Blu-Ray and HD-DVD movies, go to http://wiki.mymovies.dk and search for Blu-Ray.
Which is the best solution for you? In reviewing comments from existing users of these products, the answer seems to be “it depends.” Try the trial versions of the applications and plug-ins to see which ones work the best for you.

➔ To learn more about My Movies 2, see “Creating a DVD Library with My Movies 2,” this chapter, p. 158.
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