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VIDEO MAGAZINE JUNE 1985

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June 1985

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Channel One

Tsukuba Doo

Our editor who is sometimes affectionately known as the young curmudgeon was recently seen galavanting around Japan and other ports in the Far East. One reason for his far-flung sojourn was a short visit to the international science fair, know as Expo '85. The technology extravaganza began with a bang (literally a loud, celebratory firework that jarred the nerves of tens of thousands of people at exactly 9:30 a.m.) on a rainy March 16. It continues for the next 183 days through September 16. Expo covers 252 acres in the Ibaraki prefecture, an hour and a half north of Tokyo. Some 45 countries built exhibits costing around $2.6 billion, though as you might expect, the Japanese pavilions are omnipresent.

The formal theme of Expo is "Dwellings and Surroundings—Science and Technology for Man at Home." The fair had been touted for several months by Japanese organizers as a showcase for state-of-the-art technology. Our young curmudgeon, however, turned in a notice that could only be summed up with the word "disappointing."

"I guess I plead guilty for expecting too much. I had hoped to be dazzled by science and research; that is, what's in the labs now that we'll see in the future," our editor reported. "Instead, there were too many multi-screen projections with surprisingly pedestrian presentations. The theme seemed worthy enough. I figured it translated into something like celebrating man's collaboration with technology and his surroundings. Yet it seemed like the exhibitors were more interested in telling us why the mating habits of fiddler crabs were so crucial to understanding how we live. I think the Japanese were confused. They didn't know whether they wanted a Disneyland or a science fair, and so an unsatisfying compromise emerged." This point of view was also expressed by Ichiro Kakehashi, VIDEO's Tokyo correspondent, who patiently watched Expo's progress during the early part of this year.

Newsday, the Long Island paper, hinted at what caused this schizophrenic reaction. "A March 1984 poll indicated that 40 percent of the Japanese people who knew about Expo '85 didn't plan to attend," said *Newsday*. "The sponsors—which is to say the government—at that point decided to aim more for a festival than a science show." So the Japanese, perhaps learning a bit from America, decided to go for boffo box-office. Commerce wins out once again, our curmudgeon sighed.

The specific shortcomings? "I'm referring to things like the world's tallest Ferris wheel (hardly an engineering feat) and a mag-lev train that travels at less than 20 mph (not exactly new). Artificial intelligence usually meant robot displays that were big on kinetic arms and small on intelligent application ideas. The emphasis seemed to be on cute, as one robot could sketch fairgoers' portraits from digitized camera images." The young curmudgeon mentioned that there were far more impressive robots in TDK's tape factories, including a few brainy types that could manage to load and unload cartons on assembly lines.

Of course, there was stuff to write home about. "Perhaps the brashest idea was Sony's 80-by-130-foot Jumbotron TV screen which loomed ominously on the horizon. It looked large even when you were a half mile away. Reporters were continually wearing out jokes to Lance Braithwaite, our technical maven, about when he was going to 'videotest' the beast.

"My favorite part was the architecture. World's fair building design is usually chancy and unconventional, and Expo is no different. There were several notable edifices, including Mitsubishi's (with a long, angled mirror-like facade), the IBM pavilion (a triangle enclosing a sphere), the Gas pavilion (large circle structures), the Fuyo Robot Theater (a sphere inside a half shell), the Sumitomo pavilion (with a 'suspended' cube in the front), and the Ibaraki pavilion (with its two mountainous pyramids). And that satellite dish built by Nippon Electric Corporation—does anyone know of a bigger one? You could get a whole lot of visual satisfaction without once entering an exhibit," said our only-sometimes-crabby correspondent.

So if you're headed to the Far East, bring a wide angle lens for your camera.

—The Editors

VIDEO

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Fast Forward

Late-Breaking News

Tape Famine

Start burying those blank cassettes in your backyard—there may be a shortage by the end of 1985. That was the prediction of executives from JVC, Maxell, and other manufacturers at a recent conference in Florida.

The worldwide avalanche of VCR sales is causing an enormous demand for blank tape, both from VCR owners and program duplicators—200 million blanks may be sold this year alone. But competition has caused prices to fall—at times to such low levels that tapes become a profitless item. So manufacturers aren't likely to expand plant capacities in the near future. They'll just cool their heels and wait for the inexorable laws of supply and demand to drive prices back up. Way up.

Cable Turkeys

First the bad news, then the worse news. Business is lousy in pay cableland. With typical understatement HBO claims new subscriptions for 1985 have not been "as robust as we hoped," and a Showtime/Movie Channel executive says early '85 was "very, very bad."

But the cable advertising business is booming. Cable ad revenues were over $500 million in 1984, and are expected to pass $1 billion by 1986. The dangers and the temptations are clear. A drift toward increased commercialization is already well underway, making cable channels look much like the pitch-cluttered networks they came to bury. There's no way of predicting whether—or how soon—some bright pay cable company will seek to bolster its sagging fiscal health with just one or two tiny little paid ad spots. Or three. Or....

Beyond Beta

Toshiba, formerly a Beta-only company, has announced plans to market "a complete line" of VHS VCRs in the U.S.—including a 4-head wireless remote model (M-5400) for $649.

That leaves Sony as the last purely Beta manufacturer, and even Sony's purity is now officially in question. Its 8mm camcorder (CCD-V8; $1695) finally arrives here this month. The V8 has only one speed; and its camera section delivers 240 lines of horizontal resolution—30 less than Panasonic's Omnimovie Camcorder/Player (see "Videotests," elsewhere in this issue), which uses a full-size VHS cassette. And yes, you can see the difference.

Waking Giants

China and Russia are joining the video revolution in a big but conservative way. Hitachi, Toshiba, and JVC are all opening color TV factories in Chinese cities, with combined yearly output potential in the millions. RCA, Matsushita, Mitsubishi, and others hope to win billion dollar color tube plant contracts in China; and significantly, Phillips now reports orders for LV players (200,000 over the next few years), LV discs, and disc production equipment.

Russia has been slower to join the revolution; but Soviet officials recently announced that a Panasonic-licensed plant is set to start VCR production near Moscow. Its recorders are all targeted for domestic consumption.

Anti-scramble

As cable programmers like HBO gear up to scramble their satellite feeds this Fall, two new congressional bills are aimed at foiling them—and at protecting the rights of backyard dish owners. Cablers want to stop dish users from stealing their signals. But one bill (introduced by Rep. Gregg, R-N.H.) would stop scrambling for 2 years or until programmers develop a valid system for selling decoders—no scrambling allowed until pay cable companies give dish owners a way to buy their services.

The second bill (introduced by Rep. Tauzin, D-La.) would regulate rates dish owners could be charged—gearing them to average cable subscription fees, and allowing the FCC to step in if cablers don't price fairly.

Twin Deck Terror

That dreaded twin deck—the Sharp VCR with two-cassette capacity for tape copying so simple even a brain-damaged pirate can do it—has been raising tempests of rage from Hollywood ("Fast Forward," April, 1985).

In a bizarre turn of events, a recent classified ad in the Los Angeles *Times*—right in the heart of Hollywood—offered to sell "famous make" twin decks. But repeated calls to the given number (1-800-327-6330) produced no answer—and no indication as to who had ordered the inflammatory (and possibly bogus) ad in the first place.

Sharp has no plans for a U.S. version of the machine. It makes only PAL-SECAM versions which sell in the Middle East for up to $1500. For that price, enterprising pirates could buy 3, 4, or *many* cheap standard VCRs.

Death Rays

TV and radio broadcast produces RF radiation—at times more than national guidelines say is safe. Since 1969, the FCC has had the power to regulate radiation levels under provisions of the Environmental Policy Act. But until recently it had no rules as to *how* it would implement its power.

Beginning in October, it will require license applicants to submit Environmental Impact Statements if there's an indication of possible high-radiation levels. The new FCC policy may have been prompted by a recent action of the EPA. The agency found that two radio towers in Hawaii produced radiation above safe levels set by federal guidelines.

Hi-Fi Chrome

BASF will announce a Hi-Fi tape this month called, imaginatively enough, Super High Grade Hi-Fi. It's the first all-chrome tape specifically engineered for Hi-Fi machines, and is said to be different both in formulation and coating from other chrome tapes.

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Feedback

Readers Air Their Views

Going Public

Speaking as a recent VCR convert and lifelong film buff, I want to commend you for producing the most informative and entertaining video magazine around. I found your tape tests helpful and look forward to updates and future features. I especially appreciate your transfer grading and comments in the "Film Clips" section. Too many video magazines give their readers straight film reviews rather than what should be film-on-tape reviews.

I would like to see a comprehensive article on the rapidly expanding area of public-domain films on tape. I have seen as many as five different editions of the same film priced from $14.95 to $19.95. They vary widely in quality and running time. I recently bought one plainly labeled as running 85 minutes; it ran 62 when I clocked it. Luckily, the store refunded my money without argument. However, I have recently noticed signs saying no refunds are available for these tapes.

Though I know it would be impossible to do a complete rundown on all public-domain tapes available, you would do your readers a great service by comparing different versions of some more popular titles. Perhaps you could also include some of these releases in your regular review section, again contrasting various versions. Thanks and keep up the good work.

Alan J. Abrams
New York

Thanks for the encouragement and the idea. Thanks also for an opportunity to remind our readers to exercise caution in buying PD titles. While some companies are producing tapes that range from acceptable to good, such as Kartes Video Communications with its $19.95 line of Video Film Classics, some of the releases we have seen priced at $14.95 have been abysmal. Sometimes it's a better idea to go to a higher-priced supplier such as Blackhawk, Cable Films, or Video Dimensions for higher quality. Video Dimensions, for instance, charges $29.95 for many of its titles but duplicates from clean prints onto high-grade tape. See the lead item in Ken Winslow's May 1985 "News & Views" column for more on this subject. As for our review section, we consider any fresh release of a title we've never reviewed—whether previously released or not—as a new release, and we tend to avoid reviewing any product of unacceptable quality.

Up the Resolution

I am writing to echo J. Neil Makaroff's sentiments in his February 1985 letter [No Baloney]. He is angry that the 8mm format now gives us three formats of equally poor picture quality. The 8mm manufacturers are bragging that they can get results as good as with half-inch. I do not think they should be so pleased with themselves. But if real quality can be achieved with 8mm, perhaps there is hope that the half-inch formats can be upgraded to provide more decent quality as well. There is clearly a strong and growing demand for this among consumers. It may be hard to convince manufacturers to upgrade while their current inferior products are selling like the proverbial hotcakes, but if enough people complain in letters to national magazines like yours and enough purchasers return machines that are virtually unusable, perhaps we might see some change. Build a better video mousetrap and the world will beat a path to your door.

Kenneth M. Robbins, M.D.
Middletown, Conn.

You Want Taste?

The reviews in VIDEO Magazine are one of my favorite features. I am at times both impressed and surprised at their depth of knowledge and openmindedness, e.g. Mark Fleischmann's review of the Residents' *Mole Show* or John Leland's comparison with U.S. "straight edge" in his review of the punk documentary *UK/DK*. But Tom Soter's "The Best of the Worst" was at best a fleeting glimpse of this genre of filmmaking, and Harvey Elliott's background comments on the films of H.G. Lewis were inaccurate.

Lewis made 37 films between 1960 and 1972, of which only 10 were shot in Florida. The majority of his films hail from Chicago, as he does himself. Eight of his films were horror films. His movies dealt with monsters, madness, ghosts, a magician, a vampire, sex-starved teenagers, hippies, a nudie Western, and even an all-female motorcycle gang that would make the Hell's Angels cringe. The unadulterated king of exploitation and godfather of gore, Lewis deserves a place in the independent filmmaker's hall of fame with the likes of Roger Corman and Ed Wood.

After all, who can forget the man who gave us such great lines as "A Ghastly Tale Drenched with *Gouts of Blood* Spurting from the Writhing Victims of a Madman's Lust"? "Gouts," believe it or not, is in the dictionary.

Bill Eversale
Latrobe, Pa.

Eight Million Stories

I enjoyed Tom Soter's "The Greatest Stories Ever Told" [April 1985], but he forgot many titles: *Spartacus* with Kirk Douglas (which just came out), *Barabbas* with Anthony Quinn, most films by Ray Harryhausen, *The Bible, The Great Heroes of the Bible, The Search for Historic Jesus, Life of Christ, Search for Noah's Ark*—the list goes on and on and on.

M.L. Mutolese
Havertown, Pa.

We know, we know, we know. The author was aiming for a representative survey of a vast field and limited himself to what was available at press-time.

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PG

Hardware Q&A

Please answer the following question, because I have been asking professionals for months and nobody seems to know. If I order laser videodiscs from France, England, or Germany, would I be able to play them here in the United States on Pioneer equipment?

I. Kalimenor
Washington, D.C.

Technical Editor Lancelot Braithwaite replies: The simple answer is "no, but...." European LV discs (and CED videodiscs as well as videotapes) are made for different television systems—PAL and SECAM. The system we use in the U.S. is NTSC, which is not compatible with those signal formats. Why, then, the "but"? Because: (1) A few NTSC discs and tapes do find their way to Europe. (2) If you're willing to buy a PAL player and a multiple-standard TV, you can view PAL-format software in this country—at considerable expense. (3) If the software is not available in NTSC format, you can have it transferred to NTSC—again very expensive. Beware of copyright problems in making transfers and get permission.

I wish to introduce myself as a 1980s Audio-Videophile. I have attached a sheet listing the equipment that I possess. I have a few unanswered questions pertaining to my system. I have tried asking professionals in the field of audio/video within the south Florida area, but no one appears competent or sufficiently versed to supply me with the information I need to try to perfect the overall quality of the components I am using.

1. Is there a special or individual "Dolby/dbx" on the market for specific use with VCRs? Or audio receivers? (Even though my VCR has Dolby, when the audio signal is being channeled through my stereo receiver and equalizer, I still experience a noticeable hiss, which destroys the quality that I desire.

2. I was informed by my cable company that I am 20 amplifiers down the line. I experience light picture quivering and light fuzziness. Is there a video enhancer available to eliminate or deaden this problem?

3. Is it possible to record audio from cassette to VCR? (My equalizer has two tape monitors—#1 for the Cassette Deck, #2 for the VCR.)

4. My 45-inch rear-projection TV has a faint high-pitch hum when it is on. The hum is heard from the speakers. I was informed by the TV technician that there is nothing to correct it. Is this true?

5. In your opinion, which produces the best quality picture and sound (stereo)—Beta format or VHS format?

Steve Sherman
N. Lauderdale, Fla.

Technical Editor Lancelot Braithwaite replies:

1. Both Dolby and dbx made standalone processors for audio some years back. They were intended only for use with properly encoded signals. For your application try a Dynamic Noise Reduction system such as the DNR 450 by Advanced Audio Systems International (VIDEO, October 1981) or the KLH DNF 1201A Dynamic Noise Filter (VIDEO, December 1981). These systems cut noise without the need for encoding.

2. Sounds like your signal may be both weak and noisy. You can't do anything about the noise buildup but you can reduce the effect of a weak signal with an amplifier from your local Radio Shack. It will clear up the quivering and fuzziness—but it will probably be a bit more grainy.

3. You can record "audio only" on some Hi-Fi VCRs with special provision for that. On other VCRs speed regulation partly depends on picture sync, so you might want to put on some kind of video and record as if it were a simulcast or an audio dub—even if you don't watch the video.

4. Sounds like leakage of sync into the audio. We're not familiar with that model, so we don't know what can be done about it.

5. What format is "better" changes back and forth. The new Super Beta is probably ahead at this point. That format has all of the benefits of Hi-Fi sound and improvements in both picture noise and resolution. Watch out for Super VHS, though.

A Beta Value

After reading the "Beta'd Traps" letters in your March 1985 issue I find myself asking questions regarding the Beta vs. VHS battle. In my arduous VCR-buying research I have found little reason to buy a VHS machine, which was my original intention. Beta is simply a better value. Prices for a full-featured Beta Hi-Fi deck such as Toshiba's V-S46 are lower than any similarly featured VHS machine. Looking at budget VCRs, compare the under-$300 pricetag of Toshiba's VM-41 to any budget VHS machine. The VM-41 has a five-motor transport. I've yet to find a Beta with less than five motors. Due to the VHS format's lower writing speed and narrower bandwidth, which forced VHS designers to write AFM Hi-Fi audio with an extra set of heads, it now seems that compatibility and production of VHS Hi-Fi tapes is a problem, to say nothing of how the VHS camp is going to deal with Super Beta.

Travis McKenzie
Ashland, Mo.

VCR and Driver

Lancelot Braithwaite's "Blank Tape Tests" were a lovely example of how VIDEO can best serve its readers. In a free and openly competitive market the manufacturers should expect to be judged against one another, and VIDEO has done an explicit and useful survey of blank tapes. Why not do the same with VCRs, starting with the basic no-frills-or-frippery VCR? This is where most newcomers make their first buying decision. The present articles about the newest VCRs remind me of the enthusiasm car magazines have always shown for the sort of cars hardly anyone ever buys. They are lots of fun to try out, but the guy buying his first car and wondering if it will hold together until the final payment comes due gets no consideration when he picks out a frugal econobox. So let's see a comparable series of tests on econobox VCRs at least once a year. It should include comparison shopping for actual selling prices. List prices are an outrageous fiction in this market.

Kenneth O'Meara
Holland, Mich.

Our annual no-frills VCR survey will appear in an issue later this year.

Beaming Up

As an LV owner I'm gratified by the overwhelmingly enthusiastic response Pioneer's new hybrid LV/CD player is getting from video and audiophiles alike. And that special digital-audio LV discs are already appearing (e.g. *Star Trek III*) shows software suppliers are giving this new capability immediate attention—in contrast to VHS Hi-Fi, which was comparatively slow getting off the ground. Now, with Sony opening a disc-pressing plant and both Sony *and* Teac reportedly planning to market LV/CD players, LV is slowly but ever more steadily carving out a comfortable and permanent place for itself. As an early believer in the laser system, I feel vindicated.

Anthony De Cosa
Clinton, N.C.

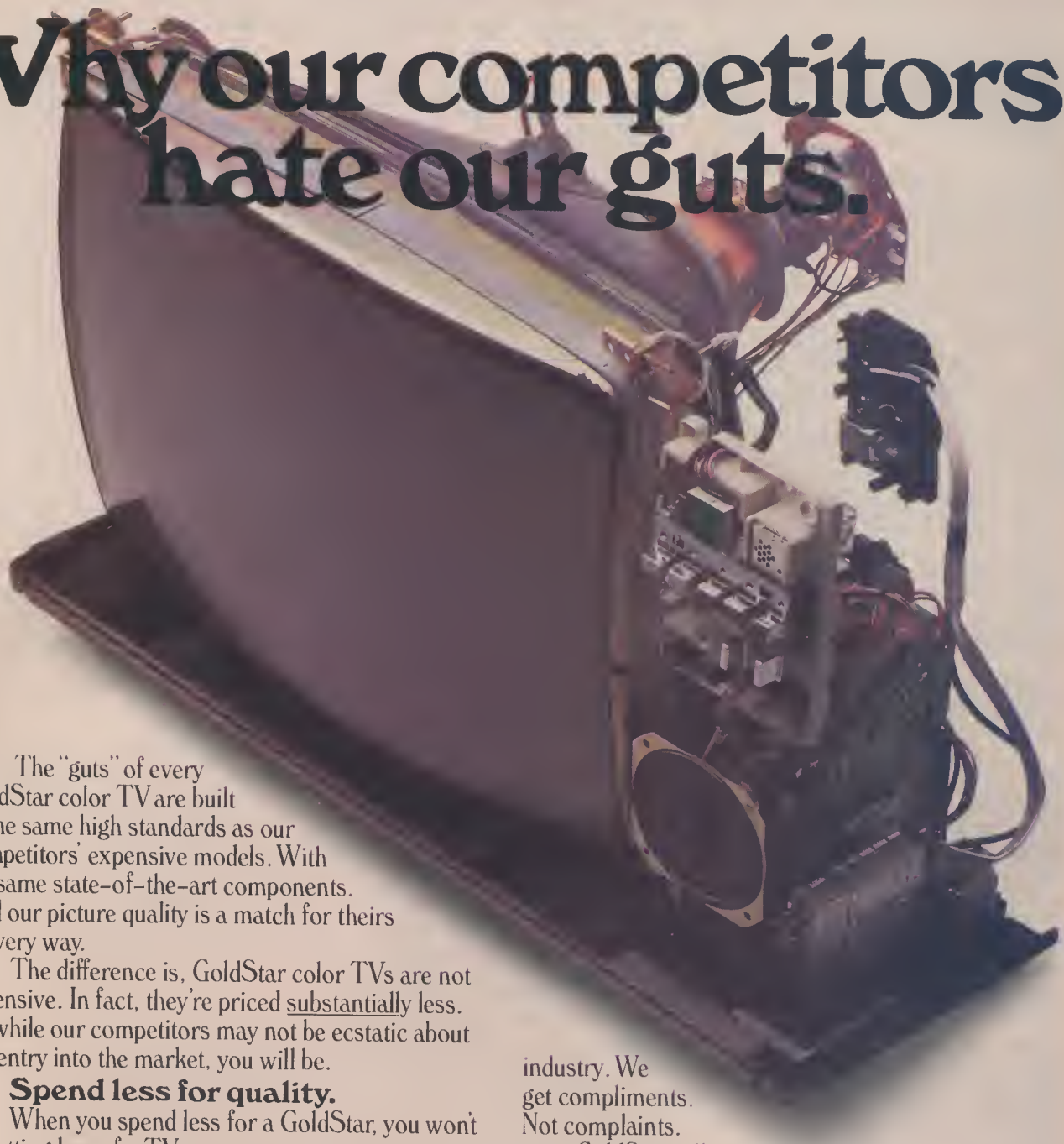
But 'Seriously,' Folks

This question is often asked among my friends. I don't believe it has been discussed yet in your magazine. What is a good source for "foreign" or "serious" films on Beta and VHS? By this I mean films by people like Bergman, Fassbinder, and Wenders. Are they available? Or are they just being ignored by the video boutique purveyors who are pandering to the tastes of the masses? I read you all the time.

Curt Neitzke
Dawson, Ill.

Embassy Home Entertainment has issued a lot of Bergman movies in the past year. MGM/UA has released Fassbinder's Berlin Alexanderplatz *opus—a massive undertaking. We reviewed Wenders'* American Friend, *out from Pacific Arts, last October. Full-catalogue video retailers—the relatively rare breed that are willing to order things for customers—are the places to look for these releases, and*

Why our competitors hate our guts.



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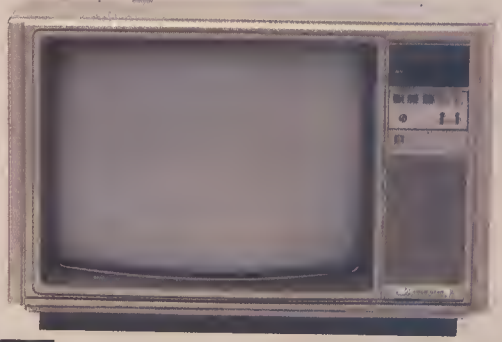

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Feedback

you can always write to the manufacturers for more information. The only thing we're not sure of is what you mean by "serious." A lot of us take American-made movies "seriously."

Titled Nobility

An atrocious version of the cult classic *King of Hearts* is now playing on cable (and available on tape), and it prompts a question. Am I the only film buff who wants to hear actors speak with their own voices? Is there an alternative for those of us who are not too lazy to read subtitles and enjoy the subtlety of a movie? Where can we find subtitled versions of film classics and foreign films?

Joseph C. Zawacki
Willingboro, N.J.

It's up to the releasing companies, and reader letters may be one way to influence them. We are gratified to note that Embassy, for instance, has made available titled versions of such recent foreign-film gems as Fanny & Alexander *and* The Return of Martin Guerre, *reviewed by VIDEO's Harvey Elliott in "Quick Takes/Film" last month and this month, respectively.*

Timeliness

Recently one of my favorite films, *Battle of the Bulge,* came out on tape from Warner Home Video. I couldn't find it for sale, so I rented it from one of my tape clubs. The length of the original movie is 163 minutes. The Warner version is 142 minutes. At least two scenes important to the story context were cut out. If I had bought this tape, I would have returned it.

Neal P. Forman
Englewood, Colo.

Through no fault of Warner Home Video, the original version of this film has been lost, according to a Warner spokesman. When studio executives decide a film must be cut and recut, archival integrity is not uppermost in their minds. Battle of the Bulge *is only one victim of slovenly studio practices. Warner's video people issued the best (longest) version they could find, but barring a miracle, video viewers will never see the roadshow version shown in theaters. "That's terrible!" we exclaimed to the spokesman. "That is terrible," he agreed. He's already read a lot of mail on the subject. (Public-domain films are often another story; it's best to look up the official running time of a title before laying down your money, if you want the completest possible version.)*

VIDEO welcomes your comments and questions. Due to the volume of mail we receive, however, it is not possible to send personal replies; please do not include self-addressed envelopes with letters. All letters published may be edited for clarity and space. Address correspondence to **Feedback, VIDEO Magazine, 460 W. 34th St., New York, N.Y. 10001.**

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ROMANCING THE STONE	0894092	A DAY AT THE RACES	2502092	BUTCH CASSIDY & THE SUNDANCE KID	0517302
STAR WARS	0564162	WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION	0717122	PORKY'S	0775112
TOOTSIE	1509042	MANHATTAN	2581032	SOME LIKE IT HOT	0584042
WARGAMES	0828002	THE BIG CHILL	1527022	ROBIN HOOD (Walt Disney)	5299092
KING KONG (Original)	5502022	CASABLANCA	0507082	CABARET	4001272
POLICE ACADEMY	6049002	LAWRENCE OF ARABIA	1514072	PSYCHO	1013032
TIGHTROPE	6051052	FRENZY	1036062	CADDYSHACK	6023022
RISKY BUSINESS	6033082	SPLASH	5304022	THE ROAD WARRIOR	6028052
NINOTCHKA	2592002	THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING	0858032	CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND—Special Edition	1510012
SINGIN' IN THE RAIN	2554062	THE MUPPETS TAKE MANHATTAN	0923042		
SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON	5504002	CARRIE	0503362	ALL ABOUT EVE	0044082
HIGH ROAD TO CHINA	6022012	ARTHUR	6024092	THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD	0526392
THE WAY WE WERE	1529002	THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN	0534212	THE KING AND I	0573072
THE PHILADELPHIA STORY	2503082	BLAZING SADDLES	0012142	DR. STRANGELOVE	1521082
A CLOCKWORK ORANGE	6004032	GREYSTOKE—THE LEGEND OF TARZAN	6045042	THE MALTESE FALCON	0508072
MAKING MICHAEL JACKSON'S THRILLER	7103012	LIFE OF BRIAN	6019062	THE COMANCHEROS	0762242
		MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS	2529082	GENTLEMEN PREFER BLONDES	0627292
THE RED SHOES	4505022	ARSENIC & OLD LACE	0735102	KRAMER VS. KRAMER	1503182
YANKEE DOODLE DANDY	0574062	EXCALIBUR	6021022	JANE FONDA'S WORKOUT CHALLENGE	5260042
THE NATURAL	1649052	RED RIVER	7507032		
THE LAST UNICORN	0685102	ON THE BEACH	0652192	CITIZEN KANE	5501032

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New Products

Pioneer Mid-Line LV Player Preserves Laser Virtues

All the laser verities are present in a new middle-of-the-line LaserVision videodisc player from Pioneer. The PR8210 joins an already distinguished line of players ranging from the LD-660 ($299) to the CLD-900 (the famed combination LV/CD video/audio player).

Features include fast scan at three times normal speed in either forward or reverse, slow motion, numbered frame access, chapter and frame search, and CX noise reduction for the player's high-quality two-channel sound. The LV specs are all there too, including 70dB audio dynamic range and 350 lines of horizontal image resolution.

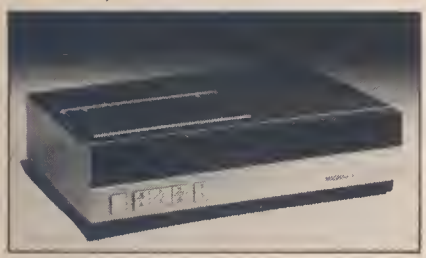
Price: $499.

For additional information, circle No. 150 on Reader Service Card.

Magnavox Adds 2 Models To Low-Budget VHS Line

Magnavox has two additions to its Matsushita-made line of VHS VCRs. Both are low-budget mono machines.

Model VR8408GY is a top-loading unit with 14-day/2-event programmability and 14-function remote control. Its soft-touch controls include frame advance, still frame, and slow motion. Other features: one-touch recording, channel lock, and transition editing.



Magnavox VR8408GY

The VR8418GY is a front-loading model with 14-day/4-event timer. It features a 14-position 107-channel tuner, one-touch recording, and picture-sharpness control.

Prices: open list.

For additional information, circle No. 151 on Reader Service Card.

JVC Introduces Mono 4-Head Front-Load VHS

The JVC HR-D130U is a four-head VHS VCR with front loading. Though not stereo, it does offer noiseless special-effects reproduction due to its four-head design. The roster of features includes 1-event/14-day programming, 12 station presets, fluorescent display with elapsed recording time counter, auto rewind, picture search at seven times normal speed at both SP and EP speeds, wireless remote control, and picture-sharpness control.

Price: $599.

For additional information, circle No. 152 on Reader Service Card.

Quasar Calls Its Camcorder 'VHS Movie'

Quasar's variation on VHS VideoMovie is called VHS Movie. The one-piece camcorder uses a full-size VHS cassette.

VHS Movie's half-inch electronic viewfinder allows viewing of recently shot footage right on location, and its half-inch Newvicon pickup tube is designed to minimize ghosting. Other items on the six-pound unit include forward/reverse picture search, 20-lux low-light sensitivity, and f1.4 6:1 power zoom lens with macro capability. The unit can be powered by rechargeable battery, AC (with adapter), or car cord.

Price: to be announced.

For additional information, circle No. 153 on Reader Service Card.

Sanyo Adds Autofocus To Betamovie Camcorder

Sanyo's second-generation Betamovie adds autofocus to the one-piece camera/recorder. Like other Betamovie units, this one records up to three hours of footage at the Beta II speed using an L-750 cassette. Playback requires a standard Beta VCR, but no adapters. The unit comes with a half-inch SMF Trinicon pickup tube that shoots in light levels down to 28 lux. Other features include optical viewfinder, 6:1 power zoom lens with macro capability, and an AC adapter (included) that recharges the battery in an hour and powers the unit on household current.

Price: $1599.95.

For additional information, circle No. 154 on Reader Service Card.

Solid-State NEC Camera Uses CCD Image Sensor

NEC's contribution to the growing number of mini video cameras is the TC-110E, a featherweight solid-state unit using a charge coupled device (CCD) image sensor in place of a pickup tube.

Among the unit's specs are excellent low-light sensitivity of 9 lux, high image resolution (250 lines horizontal, 350 vertical), signal-to-noise ratio of more than

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50dB (luminance), and power consumption of about four watts.

The camera's electronic viewfinder uses a newly developed 0.7-inch black & white cathode ray tube with mode display. Other notable characteristics include one-touch auto white balance and 6X zoom with macro capability. The camera will work with either Beta or VHS portable VCRs, and any adaptability problem can be solved by changing the camera cable. (With both Beta and VHS VCRs appearing under its brandname, NEC is apparently sensitive to such problems.)

Price: $949.

For additional information, circle No. 155 on Reader Service Card.

Harmon-Kardon Monitor Whets Video Appetite

Harmon Kardon, known for its audio products, has followed the introduction of its first VCR (the VHS Hi-Fi VCD-1000) with the unveiling of a 25-inch high-resolution monitor. The VM-100

looked good when displayed at a trade show earlier this year. In addition to a comb filter for optimum image sharpness (400 lines), it employs other sophisticated circuitry. Harmon Kardon points to three design features in particular that help reduce geometric distortion (incorrect reproduction of shapes). Automatic color-temperature control provides stable color balance, and three video inputs are available to meet the demands of an expanding video system.

Price: $1095.

For additional information, circle No. 156 on Reader Service Card.

Emerson Brings Out 'Monitor Design' TVs

Though not known for exploring the high-tech end of the electronics business, Emerson has introduced three "monitor design" TVs with high-tech features. Two have 20-inch screens, and the last is a 13-incher.

The 20-inch MS30R has built-in decoding for the dawning age of stereo broadcast TV. Other audio-related features include dual front-mounted two-way speakers (with tweeters); treble, bass, and balance controls; and stereo/mono switching. The five-watt audio amp can power the built-in speakers or supply external ones via external speaker jacks. The tuner receives 139 channels and is cable ready. Other features include 90-minute sleep timer, on-screen time and channel display, and wireless remote control.

Emerson describes its other 20-inch set as "stereo adaptable." It has a 24-hour auto on/off control system, sleep timer, audio and video ins/outs, on-screen clock/channel display, and 11-function remote control. The 13-incher, like the other two, tunes 139 channels and has on-screen time/channel plus audio/video inputs/outputs. It also includes a front-mounted TV/Video selector switch.

Emerson MS30R

Emerson M20R

Prices: MS30R, $799.95; M20R, $699.95; MR13R, $529.95.

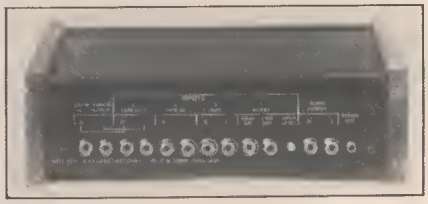
For additional information, circle No. 157 on Reader Service Card.

Emerson M13R

Rhoades Teledapter Enhances Sound

The Rhoades TE-600 Teledapter is a multifunction audio processor designed with video users in mind. It offers noise-reduction, stereo-synthesis, and "ambience" processing.

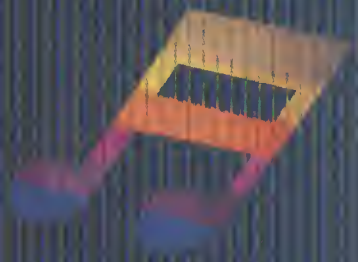
The Dynamic Noise Reduction (DNR) circuit requires no prior encoding of the audio signal. It selectively reduces hiss in a signal by monitoring the volume. When the volume is low and hiss is conspicuous, it reduces the noise. When the volume is high enough to mask the noise, the circuit reduces its noise-reduction effect. The degree of noise reduction can



be determined with an adjustment knob, and the circuit switched with an in/out button.

The stereo synthesizer turns monaural sound—whether from TV, VCR, or some other source—into simulated stereo. More unusual is the "ambience processor," which according to the manufacturer adds "concert hall effects. Vocals tend to reverberate, and bounce off the walls, as in a live performance." This circuit does not work with a mono signal.

The unit also provides switching of up to three stereo or four mono inputs, a tape monitor loop for audio-system connections, and an isolated mono input for direct connection to a TV-speaker



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From the delicate flutes of "Swan Lake" to the driving decibels of MTV, Sony UHG has the dynamic range and frequency response to take it all in.

Then dish it out with realism surpassing even reel-to reel decks.

In addition, we back coat each cassette with black carbon so that the tape runs smoother, with fewer drop-outs and will last longer with less wear on your VCR.

And in order to maximize the reception of ever improving TV signals, Sony UHG tape — with greater audio and video S/N ratios — is a must for picture perfect pictures and picture perfect pitch.

All in all, no one knows more about broadcasting a signal, playing it at home and recording it for keeps than Sony.

New Sony UHG Hi-Fi video cassettes. It's music to your ears. And your eyes.

For additional information, circle No. 101 on Reader Service Card

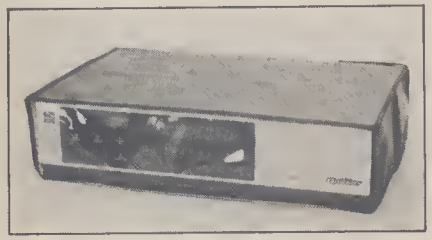
terminal.

Price. $149.95.

For additional information, circle No. 158 on Reader Service Card.

Bib Dustcover Protects Slimline-Design VCRs

VCRs hate dust. When enough of the stuff gums one up badly enough, it will cheerfully go on strike. So if your home is prey to this problem, you might want to check out the Bib VE-32D dustcover, sized to fit slimline tabletop machines made by Matsushita (covering Panasonic, Quasar, Magnavox, and a multitude of other brandnames).

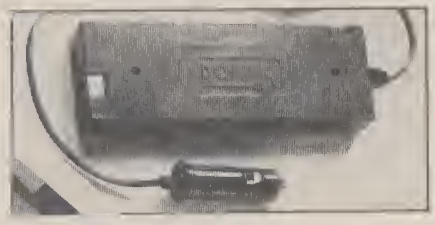


The cover, measuring 17-1/2 by 11-3/4 by 4-1/4 inches, is made of "leatherlike cushion-backed vinyl in a contemporary brown," according to Bib, including a see-through front cover and custom-cut back cover that respectively allow visual access to displays on the VCR's front panel and connection access to its back.

Bib will continue to make its VE-16 and VE-32 dustcovers, which fit most full-size tabletop recorders.

Price: $12.95.

For additional information, circle No. 159 on Reader Service Card.



VDO-Pak Car Cord Powers Portable VCRs

Sometimes powering a portable video system from a car battery is more convenient than using VCR batteries or battery packs. To that end, VDO-Pak's CLM-11 package provides a cigarette-lighter adapter and cord with a built-in three-amp negative ground fuse and a six-foot cable. It functions with the following VCRs: Panasonic 5800, 8110, 8484, 8500, 9600; Magnavox 8474, 8475; J.C. Penney 5110, 5115; Canon 30A; Sylvania 4525, 4540; General Electric 5022, 5024, 5026, 5028; Olympus 105, 106; Philco 1728; Quasar 5440, 5442, 5740, 5747.

Price: $21.95.

For additional information, circle No. 160 on Reader Service Card.

Bogen Clamps Down with 'Mini' and 'Clip' Clamps

Clamps have a variety of uses for the videographer who's getting into fancy setups. Bogen has two new clamp models. The Mini Clamp (2940) is a lightweight, sturdy device that opens to 1-1/8 inches. It is also available with a double-ended 5/8-inch stud (2941). The Clip Clamp (2936) fits on the Bogen Magic Arm, Bogen Articulated Arm, and Mini Clamp. It can be attached to poles, stands, or other items to hold flats, reflectors, etc.

Prices: 2940 Mini Clamp, $9.95; 2941 Mini Clamp with double-ended stud, $12.95; 2936 Clip Clamp, $7.95.

For additional information, circle No. 161 on Reader Service Card.

Bogen 2936 (left); 2941

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Fine Tuning

Your Video Questions Answered

by Roderick Woodcock

Small and Square

Q *I was watching* Life's Most Embarrassing Moments *on TV recently and noticed that in some of the blooper clips they ran, there was a small colored square in the corner of the picture. What was that for?*

Kirk Collins
West Covina, Calif.

A A lot of these blooper clips come from the private collections of the stars and celebrities who appear in them. In the case of bloopers from sitcoms and TV shows, the original blooper was never aired, so all that remains is a copy of the original tape. Invariably, these tapes are imprinted with a series of numbers called "time-code," which assist the video editor in locating specific scenes when they edit the final, finished production. The squares you saw were superimposed to remove these time code displays, which would have cluttered up the picture and confused the viewer if they had been left in the picture.

Shuttle Bug

Q *My new RCA VKT700 "Dimensia" VCR has a useful feature called tape remaining which automatically displays the length of time left on a videotape in the upper right hand corner of my TV screen. It does this when I'm playing back or recording a tape, even when I'm just rewinding or fast-forwarding. I've noticed, though, that while it always computes accurately when I'm in play or record, it sometimes gets confused when I'm just winding the tape—if I'm looking for a certain spot on a tape I've recorded at SP, for example, but the VCR is set at LP or SLP, the display will be inaccurate. Why is this?*

Tony Michaels
Brooklyn, N.Y.

A As you've noticed, the time-remaining feature works most accurately when you're recording or playing back a tape. As long as the tape is laced up around the video drum, the VCR properly interprets the control track signals being recorded or played back from the tape, and computes the time remaining accordingly. In the regular shuttle mode, however, the tape is unloaded back into the cassette and the VCR can't read the control track pulses. Instead it takes its information about the tape from the type of tape you're using (T-120 or T-60) as well as the speed at which you've set the VCR. So when you're shuttling through a tape recorded at SP and have the VCR set at SLP, the display is based on how long a tape recorded at that speed would last.

The solution is easy. Just set the speed switch on the VCR to match the speed at which the tape was recorded. Not a bad trade-off for such a convenient feature.

Back on Track

Q *I have two Sony SL-2000 VCRs and each is excellent. Sometimes, though, when I take a tape made on one unit and play it back on the other I get a large white bar in the center of the picture, even with the tracking control adjusted to its maximum position. The tape plays fine if I put it back in the VCR that recorded it in the first place. I'm using Sony L-500 UHG tape. Why am I getting this effect?*

Jack Baron
Plantation, Fla.

A It seems clear that one of your two machines is significantly "out of spec" for tape tracking. This could be due to back tension problems or some sort of misalignment in the transport. Did one of the units get a shock or jolt recently? Make a few more "interchange" tests with some prerecorded tapes or tapes you can borrow from friends and see how they track on your machines. With BII tapes especially, you should have little difficulty in eliminating noisebars by using the tracking control. BIII tapes are more difficult to track due to the narrower pitch of the video tracks.

Once you've determined which machine is out of spec—the one that has trouble playing "objective" third-party tapes—take it in for service, describing the nature of the difficulty to the serviceman.

Follow the Thread

Q *I have a Sony SL-2700 which I bought here in Europe at the base audio/video club. Right after I bought the machine, I noticed that it distorts the Hi-Fi sound and picture, though the regular audio tracks sound fine. I can see little creases on my tapes, and the problem appears more obvious with L-830 and L-750 tapes. I took it in for service and was told it had a loading problem. It was fixed, but the problem returned after a couple of days. I asked for a replacement machine, but was told that there were no more in Europe. Do you think there's a problem with the video heads or the tape I'm using?*

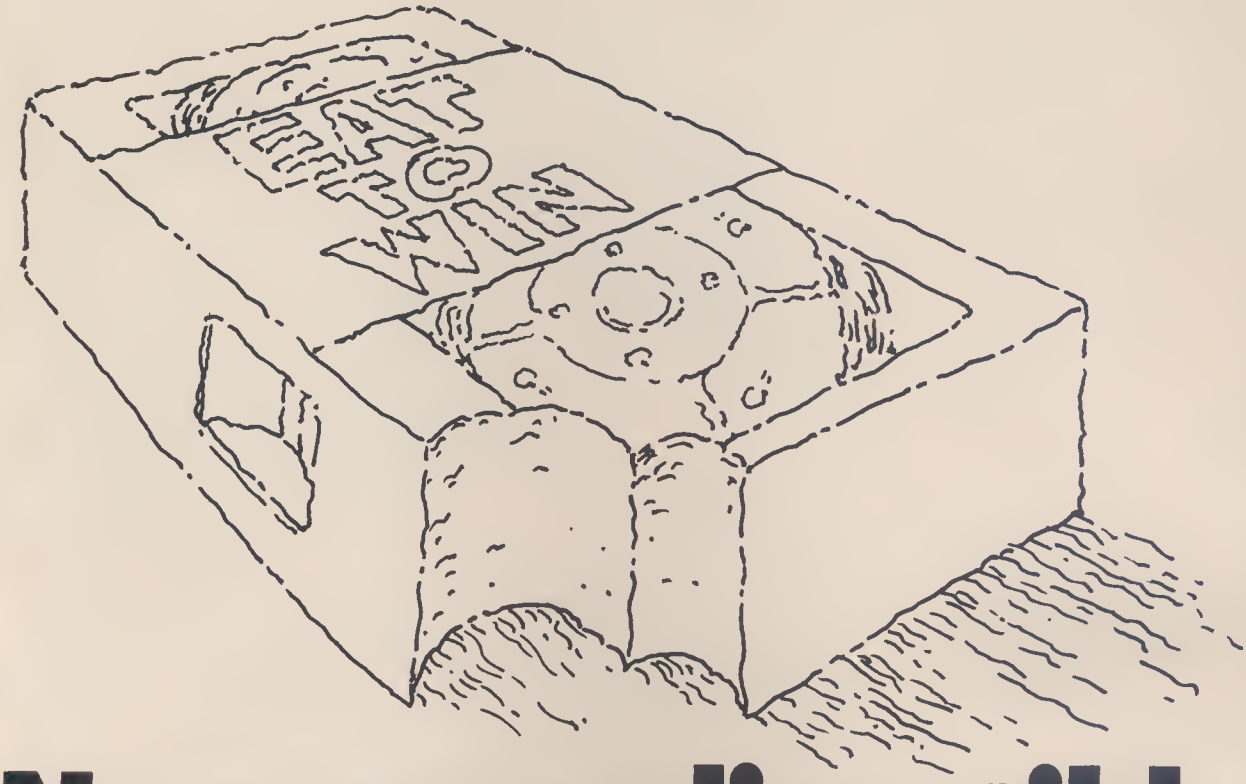
Jeffrey Thomas
Bitburg AFB, Germany

A I'd go with the original diagnosis and suspect that the machine has a problem with the threading ring. It's either loading the tape inaccurately around the drum, creating the little creases you've noticed or, once the tape is loaded, it's not flowing smoothly past the guides and drum. Either way, the damage to the tape is significant —with a Hi-Fi machine, large creases or dropouts will impair not only the picture but the Hi-Fi soundtrack as well.

Take it back to the club you bought it from and assert your rights under the guarantee. If they can't get it fixed locally, they should foot the bill for sending it to a service facility that can. I wouldn't expect a replacement machine, however.

Scrambled Video

Q *I recently purchased a Zenith VR-3010 VHS VCR. During speed search (at all speeds) the picture is completely scrambled. The picture waves from the top during playback at the beginning and end of the tape. When I stop recording and then start again, I notice during playback that I've either taped over the end of the last scene or there*



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is a blank space between where I stopped and where I started. Are these problems common to VCRs? *Bob McElwain*
George AFB, Calif.

A You don't indicate what sort of TV you're using with your VCR, but I'll bet it's an older model. Many color sets manufactured before 1977-78 don't have the necessary stability in their horizontal scanning circuits to work well with VCRs, especially when you're using special effects features like fast scan. The waving or bending is a sure tipoff that your set is old. It's a common complaint, and invariably comes from people who have just purchased a VCR and have it hooked up to a vintage TV. A TV serviceman should be able to adjust the scanning circuits of your TV so that it won't lose its horizontal or vertical sync when you activate the search button.

As for the overlap/gap effect you're noticing between two different shows, this too is a fairly common attribute of VHS-format VCRs. Whenever you press stop, the tape unthreads from around the video heads and goes back into the cassette. Pressing record rethreads the tape, but where it lands around the video heads can be very arbitrary, depending on how far you are into the tape as well as the design of the VCR. To make "seamless" edits between programs use this technique: Rewind the end of the program already recorded—slightly. Play back the end of that program. When you reach the point where you want to begin the new recording, hit the pause button. Now hold down both the record and play buttons at the same time. The still frame picture will disappear from your TV screen and be replaced by a signal from the VCR's tuner—that's the show you are about to record. When you're ready to record, release the pause button. Now you're back into record, and without the glitch or overlap you've described. For best results, keep the record speed between one show and the next consistent, or you'll notice some picture disturbance during playback when the VCR has to suddenly speed up or slow down.

Fisher Story

Q *A few months ago, I purchased a Fisher FVH-725 VCR. I bought a Fisher because I trusted the name and have had good luck with its audio products. Later, a friend told me that Fisher VCRs are made by Sanyo. Is this true?*
Matt Hines
Mesa, Ariz.

A Fisher VCRs are manufactured in Japan by Tokyo Sanyo, which also sells Sanyo brand VHS VCRs in Japan as well as building similar VCRs for other companies, including Radio Shack. Sanyo U.S.A. continues to support and sell the Beta format. Time will tell whether they will add a Sanyo brand VHS format to their American line or, like NEC, sell both formats.

Grade in the Shade

Q *I have a NEC Beta VCR and I've tried so-called "high-grade" video tapes, which cost considerably more than standard grade ones. However, I've not found any appreciable difference in the quality of the tapes I make with them. Do your test results differ?*

I'm also looking for a bidirectional tape rewinder. Are they available and where can I get one?
Frederick H. Schumacher
Sunrise, Fla.

A There definitely are qualitative differences between one brand of tape and another, as well as different grades of tape under the same brand. (For the whole story, see our "Blank Tape Test" features in the February, VHS, and March, Beta, 1985 issues.) These differences can be objectively measured though the differences may often be so subtle that, given other variables—like the speed at which you record, the quality of the signal you're recording, and the age and type of TV or monitor you use—you may or may not be able to see them. If you're happy with the recordings you're making on standard tape, don't spend the extra dough for high grade, even if it's for the "psychological" assurance of better quality. I *do* recommend high grade tape for all one-shot portable tapings, where you don't get the chance to reshoot.

Yes, there are a few bidirectional Beta and VHS tape rewinders. Contact Broadax International Trading in Whittier, Calif. (213-698-6277) for information on its Ginga MK III, or try D & L Trading in Bensenville, Ill. (312-766-7444) for its Utopia model, which also features a built-in three-digit counter.

Move Your Tail

Q *In your review of videotapes ("Blank Tape Tests," February and March 1985), the author pointed out that it's best to store tape in a tail-out position. Yet manufacturers insist on including auto-rewind features on their VCRs, and movie rental clubs insist that you return rented tapes fully rewound. How critical is the storage method?*
Mary Ellen Padod
Elk's Village, N.Y.

A For longterm storage of cassettes that are watched infrequently (perhaps once a year), I recommend the tail-out storage—having to rewind the tape before you view it the next time helps even out the windings in the tape and limber it up prior to playback. I still judge VCRs with automatic end-of-tape rewind a convenience, though, since you've got to rewind the cassette before viewing it and, unless you plan to archive lots of cassettes like so many unread books, you're going to view it within a day or so, which makes the manner of storage irrelevant.

Video rental clubs turn over their cassettes so quickly that their compulsory rewind policy (some stores exact a small fine if they have to rewind the tape for you) is a convenience for them and the next customer renting the tape. The policy varies of course, and some dealers like to get the tape back tail-out so they can rewind it themselves and inspect for damage. Note that on some VCRs the auto-rewind feature is disabled in the timer or "instant record" mode and can be switched off altogether on a few machines.

Speed Cleaning

Q *I have a Scotch VHS head-cleaning cassette. It is recorded at the SP speed and therefore runs through my machine at that speed. Since I have a 4-head VCR, does this mean that my EP heads are not getting cleaned? If they aren't, is there a head-cleaning cassette designed to work at the EP speed?*
Robert Simandl
Florissant, Mo.

A 3M chose the SP speed for its cleaning cassette because it is the only speed that's found on every make and model of VHS recorder/player sold. Some VHS machines don't offer LP recording/playback or EP recording/playback, which would make a special head-cleaning cassette recorded at those speeds incompatible with some products. In any event, remember that with multiple head VCRs, *all* the heads make contact with the videotape *all* the time. So even if you have a four-head VCR and never use the high speed (or slow speed), the heads are wearing at the same rate and in the case of a head-cleaning cassette, they're getting cleaned at the same rate too.

Load the Canon

Q *I've seen a catalogue ad for the Canon VR-30A recorder and VT-30A tuner which claims that the unit offers "true broadcast quality performance." The ad was written by the catalogue company, not by Canon. If I've been reading your column and other articles in VIDEO correctly,* no *consumer VCR offers broadcast quality. First, isn't the Canon just one of many Matsushita products sold under a variety of brand names? Second, isn't the primary difference between consumer and professional cameras their horizontal resolution? Am I in the ballpark? What is "broadcast quality," and how does it compare to consumer units?*
Ross Hunter
Orange, Va.

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A I'm sure that Canon would not approve such an unequivocal statement about its product's "broadcast quality." And you're right in that the Canon VHS portable is generically almost identical to other portables built by Matsushita. If consumer VCRs and cameras could offer "broadcast quality" recording, we would see them being used by network news crews, wouldn't we? But we don't. It is true that in some special situations like the Olympics and "blooper" shows, consumer tapes or cameras have been used. But even here the pictures have to be enhanced through secondary signal processing techniques.

The Canon VHS recorders, especially the 4-head VR-30A and VR-40A, are fine recorders, but are no more "broadcast quality" than any other consumer equipment. Nice ads, though.

Proper Conduct

Q *As the operator of a small photo studio, I would like to offer video coverage of events like business meetings, weddings, reunions, etc. Is it feasible to create good quality audio/video productions using consumer level equipment like the Canon VR-30A (proclaiming broadcast quality)?*

Mark Wengler
Houston, Tex.

A What a coincidence! We have a feature on that subject in this month's issue (see "Wedding Shoots"). As the story indicates, you can get good results with consumer equipment—if you use it carefully. But don't expect your finished productions to be "broadcast quality." I've seen "amateur" videotapes made on half-inch equipment on local cable channels, but in most cases the quality is far less than what you expect from the networks. But even if you don't use "professional" equipment, you can still conduct yourself as a professional when videotaping special events. Hence, our article.

True-Value Taping

Q *The operating instructions with my Panasonic PV-1430 indicate that "while adjusting tracking control, the Hi-Fi audio sound may revert to normal audio. This is normal." And "in LP mode, there may be no compatibility with Hi-Fi audio from tapes recorded on other model Hi-Fi VCRs." I'm concluding that if I record at the LP speed (which I find to be the best all-around compromise on my non-Hi-Fi VHS VCR), I may not be able to play my old library of Hi-Fi tapes on a new VCR.*

Also, if I record at either the 2-hour or 6-hour speeds and my future VCRs need a large amount of tracking adjustment to play my old tapes, will I be able to play them at all on my new VCR? Are these conclusions correct? I also have a Sony SL-5200 Beta Hi-Fi. Its instruction manual has no such warning. Is Beta Hi-Fi technically superior to VHS Hi-Fi?

S.V.
Bronx, N.Y.

A As we reported in our evaluation of both Beta and VHS Hi-Fi systems ("Hi-Fi Standoff," December 1984), mistracking will introduce audible noise into the audio since the audio and video signals are either mixed together (Beta Hi-Fi) or one overlays the other (video over audio, as in the VHS Hi-Fi system). If a tape mistracks severely, then many Hi-Fi VCRs (like the PV-1430) are designed to switch from the impaired Hi-Fi track to the linear audio tracks, which aren't susceptible to tracking errors but are sonically inferior to the Hi-Fi signals. The assumption behind this strategy is that any audio is better than none at all.

LP incompatibility occurs because manufacturers who offer LP recording do so with a wide range of video head widths, generating more potential inter-

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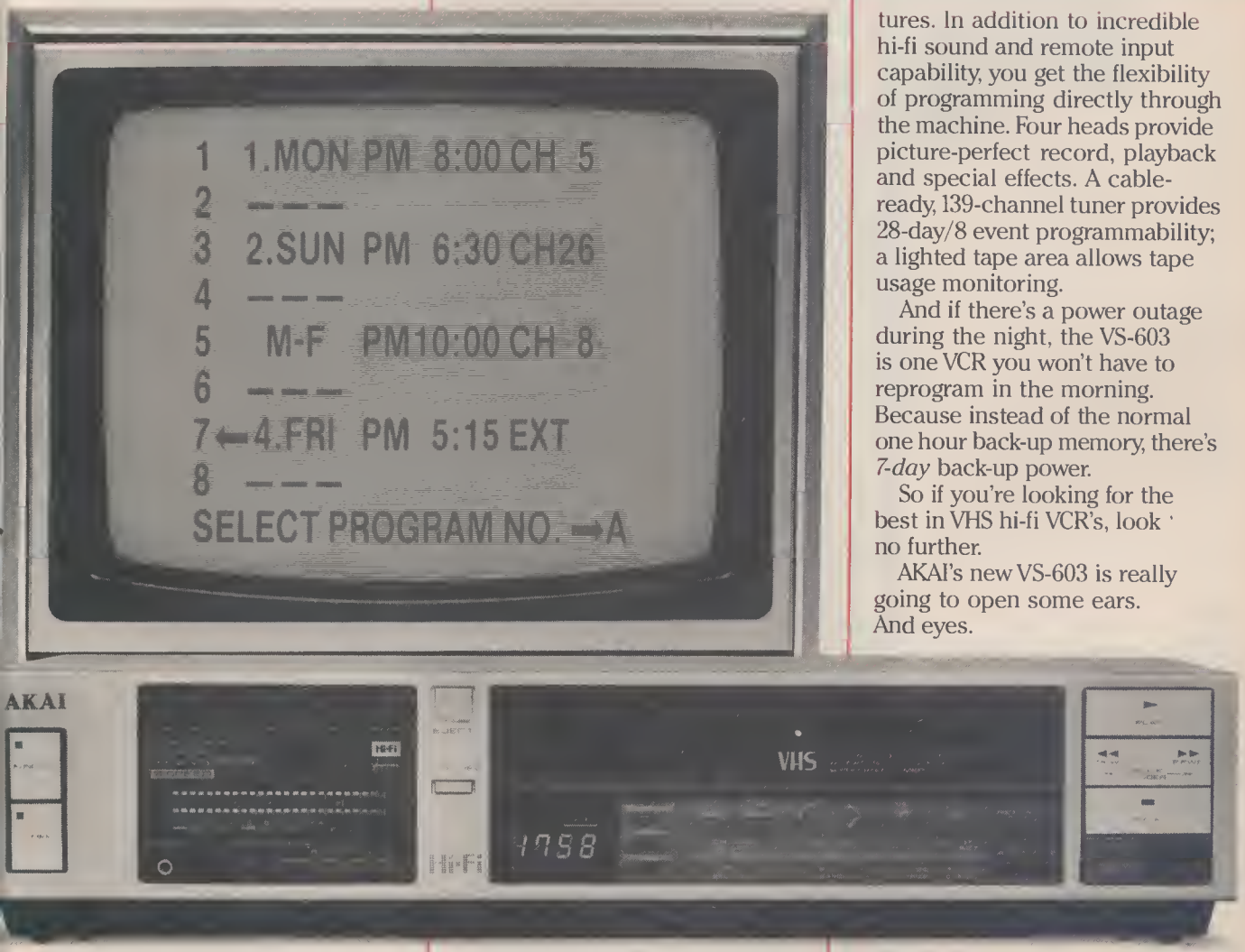

tures. In addition to incredible hi-fi sound and remote input capability, you get the flexibility of programming directly through the machine. Four heads provide picture-perfect record, playback and special effects. A cable-ready, 139-channel tuner provides 28-day/8 event programmability; a lighted tape area allows tape usage monitoring.

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change problems. As a general rule, tape interchangeability—which affects a VCR's ability to play back the video (and Hi-Fi audio) signals recorded on a different machine accurately—is more vulnerable at slower speeds. The problem afflicts Beta Hi-Fi recordings as well, so I wouldn't judge the Beta system to be superior on this basis.

My recommendation is to make your valued recordings—those you intend to keep for a long time—at the fastest speed, SP for VHS and BII for Beta. Lesser speeds can also be used, but with the expected drop in audio and video quality. With attractive tape prices (less than $5 for many name brand T-120s or L-750s), high-speed taping is more cost-efficient than ever.

Idle Problems

Q *My Panasonic PV-1265 is about 15 months old and won't scan backwards. For the first year it worked fine, but now if I try to scan backwards I get a still picture for about five seconds and then the machine shuts itself off—as if I had pressed the stop button. Now, to see something over again I have to press stop, rewind the tape a bit, and press play again. Is there something I can do to fix this problem myself?*

Raymond Furtivo
Pittsburgh, Pa.

A Many VCRs employ small plastic wheels with rubberized surfaces as "idlers"—gadgets that are pushed up against the base of the take-up or supply reel to make them rotate in the right direction when fast forwarding or rewinding a tape. When the VCR is new, the idler has a rubber surface with a lot of "bite" and friction, enabling it to grab onto the plastic base of the reel. But as the VCR ages, especially in areas with a lot of airborne pollution (like Pittsburgh), the rubber can deteriorate prematurely, becoming hard and brittle. This causes the idler to slip against the reels rather than rotating them.

I suspect that this is what has happened in your case. You might be able to carry out an interim fix by removing the cover of your VCR (power disconnected) and swab the rubber surface of the idler with acetone or carbon tetrachloride, cleaning agents which will soften up the rubber and restore the lost bite. This is an *interim* fix and you should replace the worn idler (or the outer rubber tire) affixed to the plastic hub with a brand new one. If that's beyond you, take the VCR into a shop and have them do it. It doesn't take long and the part is relatively inexpensive, so it shouldn't cost that much. Make sure you ask how much up front, though.

You Name It

Q *I have a Zenith VR-2000 VHS VCR. Would you explain the difference between it and other four-head machines? I can't tell the difference between it and two-head machines made by several other companies. Would it have been better to buy one of the two-head models for about $100 less?*

Hugh Tinsley
Cumming, Ga.

A I can't do justice to the subject of multi-head VCRs in this column, so you'll have to wait for a feature on this topic. For the moment, it's enough to point out that four-head VCRs outperform two head VCRs in recording, playback, and in generating special effects for tapes recorded at the fastest SP speed. Multi-speed VHS VCRs with only two heads can't deliver the same quality at the SP speed since their heads are optimized for recording and playback at the slower LP and SLP speeds. If you do most of your recording at SLP, I would say that the two-head VCRs you didn't buy would have served as well as your Zenith. On the other hand, the second set of heads is a definite plus when viewing or scanning prerecorded tapes, which are always recorded at SP. I would have taken the Zenith.

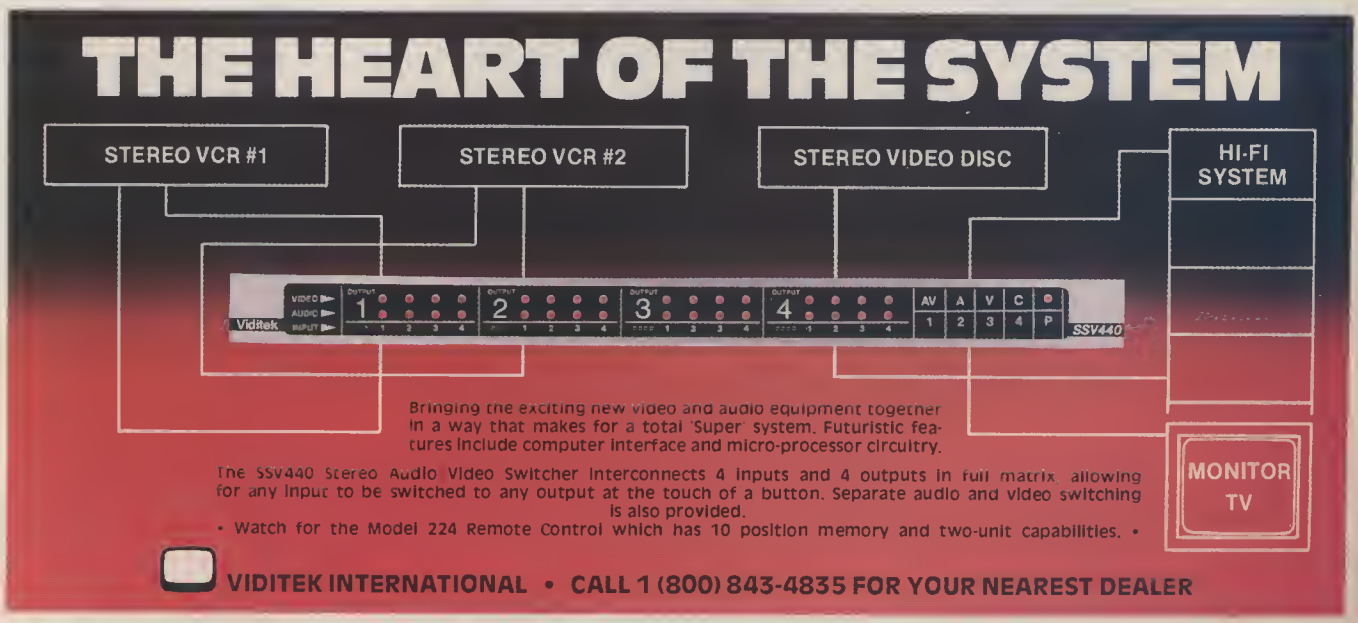
Breakout!

Q *I own a Magnavox VR-8481 VHS portable VCR and its matching tuner. I want to purchase a monitor and use the VCR's tuner to feed it a signal. The problem is that all of the audio and video outputs are on the recorder and not on the tuner, so there seems to be no way to use it all by itself. Is there some way to have the tuner modified so it can be used without the recorder?*

Brian Clark
Rensselar, N.Y.

A While the audio and video signals coming out of the tuner are available on the multi-pin connector that normally feeds into the VCR, I'm not aware of any "breakout" box accessory that would allow you to feed that information into your monitor without the companion VCR. It's possible that a skillful serviceman with access to the correct schematic diagrams could build such a device, but I have no idea what he would charge for such a modification.

Unless size is a consideration, it would be cheaper to shop around for a used VCR that—while no longer useful as a VCR (shot video heads, bad motors, etc.)—could still serve as a useful tuner. There were also tuners made a few years ago (like Sony's TT-2000) that provided audio and video outputs from the tuner rather than the VCR. If you could find



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Fine Tuning

one of these at an attractive price, it would serve your purpose quite well.

Retirement Feature

Q *Can turning a VCR off while it is operating harm either the machine or the tape? I did that recently when I was rewinding a cassette by pressing the wrong button on the remote control.*

Christina Stan
New York, N.Y.

A Unless there's some unforeseen slippage in the way the VCR winds the tape when the power goes off, I doubt that any serious harm can be caused. Some VCRs, in fact, have a convenience feature that's close to what you've done accidentally. The Hitachi VT-89A can be placed into the rewind mode and then turned off. The VCR will, however, continue to rewind the tape to the leader and only then will the power actually shut off. It's a nice feature if you don't want to wait to rewind a tape before retiring for the night.

The Pits

Q *I was taken aback by the Editors' reply to the letter entitled "Beta vs. LV" ("Feedback," December 1984) in which they say "LV has always recorded images digitally, but until now it has recorded the sound via the analog method." I could have sworn that those microscopic pits on LV discs are not binary digits but an analog representation (FM, to be precise) of the video signal. Have I misunderstood the fundamental principle of LV recording for all these years, or have you?*

W. Rivers
Alexandria, Va.

A You're right. LV audio and video recording has always been based on microscopic "pits" etched into the surface of the disc by a laser and read back the same way. That information is then processed as an FM signal. The new Pioneer CLD-900, however, does incorporate the capability of reproducing digitally-encoded stereo audio provided it has been placed on the original videodisc when it was pressed. The CLD-900 will also play back digital audio discs using a separate motor mechanism and discrete circuitry.

A Piece of the Rock

Q *Can you tell me if there is such a thing as insurance for video recorders? I've got a lot of money tied up in equipment and I would really hate to see it stolen or lost in a fire.*

Sam Holmes
Vanceboro, N.C.

A Yes, you can get "video insurance." Assuming you've got the rest of your household goods insured already, just contact your agent and have your video acquisitions added to your inven-

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Fine Tuning

tory. If you've got a video camera, you might want to make a "video inventory" of your entire household at the same time and then store the tape in a safe place outside of your home—a safe deposit box is best. Keep an accurate list of serial numbers and make sure your policy covers the equipment at its replacement value rather than a depreciated value. That way, if disaster strikes you'll be in a better position to buy comparable equipment.

The Price Is Debatable

Q *In "Fine Tuning" (December 1984) you stated that it wasn't possible to change the Hi-Fi audio on a tape after it has been recorded. It can be done, however, if you use another Hi-Fi VCR to dub both the video and the new audio together onto a separate tape.*

Wayne London
Buffalo, N.Y.

A Good point. With those VCRs that offer "simulcast" recording switches, you *can* re-record an old video signal onto a new tape along with a separate audio signal, which will become the new Hi-Fi signal. The price you pay is in the loss of video quality when you go down one generation through the dubbing process. There will be losses in the Hi-Fi audio as well, but they'll be less noticeable.

We Are Servo

Q *In an ad for the Pioneer LD-700 LaserDisc player it states "tracking control plays even warped discs." Does this remove crosstalk? Warped discs are enough to drive you crazy.*

Bill Donaldson
Windsor, Conn.

A Both the LD-700 and the newer CLD-900 incorporate two new servo mechanisms designed to tilt the laser assembly as needed in order to minimize crosstalk. The new design works well in eliminating most minor cases of crosstalk but won't be of any help with severely distorted discs, which may require pressing between two heavy boards or sheets of glass to render them playable. Pioneer is continuing to refine both their players and the means they use to press discs, so it's likely that newer releases will be less susceptible to this sort of visual annoyance.

The Peak

Q *I just bought a Sony SL-2700 Beta Hi-Fi VCR. About the 16 LEDs on the peak level meters—they flash in sequence from left to right as the sound level increases, but when they return to the left as the sound drops the peak LED of both meters remains lit for about three seconds while all the others turn off. Is there a purpose to this design, or is my*

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Fine Tuning

VCR defective? — *Myron Schulman, Brooklyn, N.Y.*

A Sony has built into its SL-2700 what are known as "peak hold meters." After they register the peak audio positions, the maximum setting is identified by letting the LED remain lit for a few seconds or until it's altered by another higher audio signal. This makes it easier to adjust the levels so that the audio is peaking just slightly below the red areas. Some other VCRs, including the Hitachi VT-89A and RCA VKT-700, have similar peak hold meters while most other Hi-Fi decks have peak level meters only (no holds). If you've seen the majority of decks without the peak-hold feature, I can understand why you thought that the Sony machine had a flaw.

Clear the Clog

Q *I'm a new owner of a Sony BMC-110K Betamovie. Can the same video head cleaner device be used for both the Sony Betamovie and my Sony Betamax VCR?*

John D. Solon, El Paso, Tex.

A Yes. Betamovie, which doesn't offer any sort of video playback of its own (a design disadvantage compared to other camcorders) even has a special warning light in the viewfinder to alert you to a clogged video head—which could impair the quality of your recordings.

Black Box

Q *I've had a Zenith VR-2000 VHS for about six months. The other night I turned it off and instead of the regular picture coming on my TV the screen was black. I had to push the Tape/TV button manually for it to come back. After I had finished recording I played the tape back only to find that I recorded nothing. What happened? I'm also hooked into cable. How do I watch one channel and record another with this hookup?*

Earline Gamble, Gardena, Calif.

A I suspect the problem is with your cable system. Since you've indicated that you have difficulty recording one channel and watching another, you're obviously wired into a decoder box of some sort. Many cable systems now use addressable decoder boxes that receive impulses from the cable office to turn certain signals (usually premium channels) on or off, depending on what you've paid for. Many boxes also have a "time out" feature that disables them completely if you turn off the power to them or disconnect their cable input. And unfortunately, they sometimes turn the signal off by themselves or flutter inter-

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mittently. I suspect your box did just this while you were taping, resulting in a tape with nothing on it at all. When you pushed the Tape/TV button you had a picture because you went from the Tape mode (no signal) to TV mode, which is the normal channel 3 or 4 signal unimpaired by the cable box.

As for wiring up your VCR to record one show while watching another, see our recent wiring article ("Getting Wired," May 1985).

Blackout

Q *Regarding a question that appeared in the January '85 "Fine Tuning" column on switching a VCR into the "aux" mode to erase the end of a tape without a signal: I find that this technique just doesn't work with my Fisher FV-715. When there is no signal on the tape, the speed fluctuates randomly from EP to SP to LP. The result is not only snow on the tape, but also a lot of work on the motor. Any other suggestions?*

Ernie Bial
Westbury, N.Y.

A Try waiting until after a station has signed off at the end of the day (or just before they start programming) and record a stable broadcast signal like colorbars or a test pattern. It might be easier to keep a special "black" tape handy—one that has nothing but solid black recorded on it—and to dub that signal onto the end of the tape. This assumes, of course, that you've got a second VCR to dub from.

You can make a black tape by covering the lens cap of a camera, disconnecting the audio inputs, and recording thirty minutes or an hour of total black. Do it at the fast speed since you can always dub it down to other speeds later on.

Audios, Amigo

Q *I have a Panasonic PV-1730 VHS Hi-Fi VCR which I sometimes use as an audio deck. It has a record mode switch for audio only or audio/video on the back panel, but I notice that some other makes (such as the RCA VKP-950) have no such switch. Although I have not tried it, it seems that audio-only recording should work even if this switch is not used. What is the function of this switch and how does it differ from the RCA?*

David Brandt-Erichsen
Tucson, Ariz.

A Both Beta and VHS Hi-Fi VCRs can be used as "audio only" recorders, and the results are far better than can be obtained with even top-of-the-line audio cassette decks or reel-to-reel audio recorders. However, since their primary purpose is to record video, their function as audio decks is secondary to the job of recording audio and video at the same time.

For these and other instances (where the video signal is irrelevant to the audio you intend to record) use the audio only switch to generate a stable, all-black video signal. With or without a picture, the VCR *has* to be fed a coherent video signal to record the control track pulses needed to stabilize playback later on. Audio only recording still requires a stable video signal for it to work. In the case of the RCA VKP-950, no switch is provided but as you point out, if you don't intend to watch the picture it doesn't matter what sort of video you record—as long as the signal is strong and stable. A glitch in the video signal will cause the control track to "burp" and that will impair the Hi-Fi audio track. The idea of the built-in black generator makes sense, but with care it's not absolutely essential. (Note also that a few VCRs, like RCA's VKT-700 and Hitachi's VT-89A, generate a stable black signal for audio recording when switched into their "aux" modes, provided no active video signal is plugged into their video input jacks.)

In any event, the prospect of making 8-hour party tapes is a tempting one. ☑

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Videogram

The Electronic Intelligencer

by William Wolfe

Sculpture by Ajin/Photo by Hero Ihoro

VideoUpdating

Dating services often use videotaped profiles of clients to help others find "love at first sight," but do they help? California psychologists Stanley Woll and Paul Cozby tested 100 dating service members to find out, and there are a few surprises.

- Video hurts as much as it helps. "A combination of written and videotaped information clearly results in increased confidence in an accurate judgment," Woll says. "Unfortunately, this is not based on any corresponding increase in accuracy."
- Men do better with videodating. "Men seem to be more accurate in judging women on video, and they remember more, more accurately, than in judging by writing. Men are not necessarily better judges of character [however]. Women could be better at conveying information nonverbally—they're better 'senders.' "
- The sexes differ in the attributes they judge most accurately on video. "Women better judge such characteristics as affection, mellowness, emotion, playfulness; men seem more accurate in judging women on leadership, task-orientation things such as independence, [whether] they take responsibility."

Videotaped interviews can help, Woll found, but only when dating-service clients keep things in perspective: "Videotapes convey a lot of information, and are much better than written materials alone. But people can put on some kind of act. It's a five-minute slice of their lives, conducted by a professional—so don't expect too much."

Picker's 'Sundae in New York': from Flatbush to Hollywood.

Pickervision

It's a long way from Flatbush to Hollywood, but Brooklyn-based Jimmy Picker has made the trip twice, and last time he came back with an Academy Award for Best Animated Short of 1983. Picker, 35, snatched the statue for *Sundae in New York*, a four-minute short featuring a clay puppet of New York Mayor Ed Koch crooning "New York, New York." Now *Sundae*, which N.Y. critics called "one of the funniest four minutes on film," is available as a Vestron video along with five other Academy Award-winning animated shorts.

Picker's first trip was in 1977, when his *Jimmy the C*—featuring a clay Jimmy Carter warbling "Georgia on My Mind"—was nominated for an Oscar. *Sundae* provided for a triumphant return. "Getting the award was terrific," Picker says. "I'm still high on it." That doesn't mean he's been idle. In the feature film *Better Off Dead*, "a nutty teen comedy" due out this fall, Picker fills a 90-second dream sequence with a singing hamburger.

Picker is experimenting with new materials, though he doesn't expect to use video equipment in his productions. "Video animation can be done, but it's so expensive it's ridiculous. At first I was dead set against it all—y'know, who needs this stuff? Now I have a VHS recorder. It's a convenience. I use it to show tapes of my work."

Up next for the guy who calls his business Motionpicker Studios is a foray into longer shorts and maybe feature-film writing. "What I'd really like," Picker says, "is to do a romantic Christmas special." With clay? "Of course."

Stop-n-Spend

Would you buy a GE VCR in the store where you buy Veal Scallopine Lean Cuisine? Residents of Cleveland, Ohio will answer this question if and when they use Touch-n-Save, an electronic shopping kiosk from CompuSave that's sprung up in all of the city's Stop-n-Shop supermarkets.

Touch-n-Save looks like an arcade video game, but it swallows credit cards instead of quarters and takes orders for up to 3000 products, which are delivered by mail in

3 to 7 days. Shoppers will probably like CompuSave's "deep discount" pricing policy: "We are competitive with the lowest prices you can find," says Larry Mayle, CompuSave's chief executive officer.

CompuSave is one of several companies hawking electronic kiosks (see "Videogram," "Cathode Catalogue," March 1985 and "Inter-Activity," April '85 for details on units from R.R. Donnelley & Sons and NCR), but Mayle thinks Touch-n-Save will be the first to appear in a nontest situation. "We're the only one operating," he says. "We do everything, carry the service from start to finish. Nobody else can do that."

CompuSave's Touch-n-Save: 3000 products, deep discounts.

So far, Cleveland is the only place you can find Touch-n-Save, but hush-hush negotiations are in progress with supermarket and convenience-store chains nationwide.

Tubular Triumph

Audio and video pioneer Henry Kloss has been named 1985 New England Inventor of the Year. Kloss, founder and president of Kloss Corporation in Cambridge, Massachusetts, was picked over more than 200 rivals for his work on large-screen projection TV.

Kloss first gained notoriety in audio circles, where he cofounded Acoustic Research (AR) and Advent. He was also the "K" in KLH. From top-quality consumer-level loudspeakers and other stereo equipment Kloss turned to television. Ignoring established TV makers—which said large-screen TVs would be unwatchable—Kloss insisted that "important visual images were made trivial" on conventional TVs and plowed on. The result was the patented Novatron tube used in all Novabeam projection TVs.

The awards ceremony at the Boston Museum of Science gave Kloss the opportunity to caution fellow inventors: "Getting the idea and making the first of something is the easy part. Actually manufacturing the product means hours and hours of pure drudgery." In this case at least, it also means some good-looking big-screen pictures.

Bye Bye Buying

If you bought a prerecorded video last week, you're in a select group. A whopping 98 percent of all business done in video retail stores is rentals, according to preliminary results from a survey administered by A.C. Nielsen. A Nielsen spokesman emphasized that these are preliminary results, and said the numbers may change since only one-third of the surveys have been fed into the service's computer.

The numbers probably won't change too much, however, and if they are to change at all in favor of sales, prices will have to come down. A quick glance at the Top 10 Sales/Rentals charts for the last few months makes that clear—seven to nine of the top ten best-selling videos are priced at a suggested list of $40 or less, while eight to nine of the top ten best-renting videos list at $79.95.

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The star of 'In the Shadow of Bigfoot': available for inspection.

Bigfoot on Tape

Scotland has the Loch Ness monster and Easter Island has its statues. In the U.S., the object of some mystery and a lot of hooey is Bigfoot. Now Amazing Horizons has a home video which it says shows full-motion footage of the legendary creature.

In the Shadow of Bigfoot (85 min., $49.95; from AHI, Box 61662, Sunnyvale, Calif. 94088) follows the Amazing Horizons "team" around the country as they investigate Bigfoot sightings. On two occasions cinematographer Ivan L. Marx—who's worked on documentaries for Disney and Bill Burrud—filmed what he claims is a pointy-headed Bigfoot. At close range. Is it truly the hairy phenomenon?

Dr. Warren L. Cook, Ph.D. thinks so. Cook, professor of history and anthropology at Vermont's Castleton State College, says "with grippingly dramatic, authentic, lengthy, and beautiful footage of this extraordinary species, [the video] shifts the debate from whether or not the creature exists to 'what can we learn about it, from it'. . . . I cannot escape concluding that there is such a creature living in North America." A healthy dose of skepticism makes for a less kind conclusion, yet the video—and the "creature"—are available for inspection.

Either way, it's hard to resist the companion poster: "Bigfoot—He's always there, watching, waiting, wanting."

Vidbits

Disc-overy—Laserphiles who want to keep up on the latest news about home video's best-looking (and great-sounding) format may want to check out the *LaserDisc Newsletter*. The monthly publication includes equipment news, program reviews, "Letters to the Editor," and classifieds. And don't miss the "Dead Side Database," where readers tell what they've found on the unused sides of MCA DiscoVision discs—like ancient Oldsmobile and Buick training films starring minor celebrities.

Vidgames go down again, but this time they're going down in history—the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, that is. The Museum recently added *Pong*, *Pac-Man*, *Dragon's Lair*, and *Sharpshooter* to its collection. A spokesman said the games won't be a passive exhibition—they'll be available for "scholarly study."

But can it cook? Israeli scientists are developing a robot that brings you a bowl of soup from the kitchen if you're sick. Then it trundles off to change tapes in your VCR. This robot won't go for just anyone, though—the projected cost is $10,000.

Cops and camcorders—Massachusetts State Police are using video cameras to record images of people arrested in alcohol-related incidents. In one tape, a besotted man stumbles as he tries to walk a straight line and lurches into a wall, laughing hysterically all the way. A spokesman said "it's going to save a lot of time in the courts."

TV Den

Techniques and Technology

Fancy Threads

by Roderick Woodcock

The new 8mm format has finally arrived in the form of video entries from photographic giants Kodak, Polaroid, and Canon—along with G.E. and Sanyo, with more to follow. And now the gap between stores that sell video gear, and camera stores selling video *and* photo gear, is finally beginning to narrow.

Pull in elusive images, or attach your video camera to a microscope (from left): 0.5X wide conversion, super wide-angle extender, 1.5X tele-conversion lens.

Les Morsillo/wide and tele lenses courtesy of Optrox

After a few years of looking at new electronic gadgets like portable VCRs and video cameras as rivals to the long-undisputed supremacy of film photography, more camera stores than ever are rushing to embrace the electronic medium, opening sophisticated audio and video departments that are in many ways more specialized than those of the established video stores. While many camera stores won't hesitate to sell you a table-model VCR, many also carry portable VCRs, cameras, and most recently camcorders—including Betamovie, the lighter-weight VHS VideoMovie, the new 8mm system, and (starting this month) the newer VHS camcorders that accept full-size cassettes. The emphasis is definitely on video as an electronic replacement for the nearly dead interest in super 8 filmmaking.

As videographers become more sophisticated, one feature that's more in demand is the interchangeable lens. While many early cameras, and most inexpensive ones today, still come with a fixed-range zoom lens that's built into the camera and can't be removed, many others have interchangeable optics that can be unscrewed and replaced with other optical systems offering a more versatile range of picture-taking options.

Consider the possibilities. If you can remove the lens on your camera, you can replace it with a super telephoto that can pull in distant images of rare birds or other elusive wildlife. With the right adapter you can even attach your camera to a telescope to obtain even more magnification. With Halley's comet scheduled to return to earth in 1986 after a 76-year absence, optical dealers around the country already report a surge in telescope sales. Going in the opposite direction, you can use the appropriate accessory to attach your video camera to a microscope—and then display on closed-circuit TV, or capture on tape, images normally invisible to the naked eye.

Exploiting either of these potentials requires the appropriate camera. Companies like Canon, Pentax, and Minolta have been selling cameras with "C-mounts" as well as adapters enabling a customer with an established investment in 35mm-camera lenses to use them on his video camera as well. Other video manufacturers including JVC and Panasonic have also recently deployed a wider range of cameras offering the option of interchangeable lenses. Examples include the JVC GX-N4 and GX-N7, which are also available as slightly different models selling under the Magnavox brand name.

By industry convention, a C-mount lens uses a 1-inch-diameter (25.4mm) -32 thread. In addition, the distance from the banking shoulder of the lens-mounting thread to the image plane (surface of the pickup tube or imaging device) is 0.69 inches. But don't assume that because the threads happen to coincide between your camera body and the lens you've bought, everything will work out. The crucial test is whether the new lens focuses accurately at infinity when the lens lines up with that reference mark on the lens barrel. If it focuses slightly before or after that point, you may still be able to use it—but within a more restricted focusing range.

Another thing to watch out for is "vignetting"—darkening of the picture's corners. An improperly mounted lens can cause this effect (so can a large lens hood), and it may be more pronounced as the lens "stops down" to a smaller aperture when used under bright light. Note also that many cameras offering interchangeable lenses still offer features like automatic exposure control and power zoom, usually through a short umbilical cable that goes between lens and camera body. Your surrogate telephoto probably won't have a similar cable, so remember to check the exposure carefully, since you'll be adjusting it manually.

What can you do if your camera doesn't have an inter-

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changeable lens? There's hope, though the solution offers less versatility than can be obtained from interchangeable optics. For cameras having the lens fixed to the camera body, you must resort to add-on or supplementary lenses which screw into the threads on the lens front. On some cameras, you can see these threads (on the inside of the front edge of the lens, just above the manufacturer's name) and occasionally the serial number, focal-length range, and maximum aperture of the optic. With others, you've got to remove the metal or rubber lens hood that comes with the lens. A stiff twist counterclockwise should remove it.

While C-mount lenses all conform to the same basic thread size, there's no standardization with supplementary lenses, and you'll find the diameter of the threads on the front of the lens varying anywhere from 49mm to 58mm. Popular intermediate sizes include 52mm and 55mm. Fortunately, these sizes are common enough in the world of 35mm SLR cameras, and any differences in thread size between the lenses you buy and the thread size of your camera are easily overcome by clever double-threaded gadgets called "stepping rings." Using one of these, you can easily make a supplementary wide-angle or telephoto lens with a 58mm thread fit a camera with a 55 or 52mm thread, just by slipping the adapter between the two. It's as easy as that.

Companies making and selling supplementary telephoto and wide-angle lenses include Sony (VCL-1558A Tele and -0758A Wide lens), Canon (VC-200A Tele), and JVC as well as independent suppliers like Ambico. But it doesn't matter what brand you buy as long as you get the right size of stepping ring to make the lens work. It's still a good idea to check out your potential purchase before plunking down your money, though, since you'll want to make sure everything focuses correctly before you take home the new lens.

Usually there won't be any problem. Slipping on a wide-angle adapter, for example, will generally expand viewing angle and depth of field enough to cover up any slight differences in focus between the normal lens and the new combination. Since, with the majority of cameras, "what you see is what you get" via the electronic or optical viewfinder, any major incompatibilities will be apparent immediately.

Going to the opposite extreme, adding a telephoto adapter will reduce the viewing angle of the camera and narrow the depth-of-field. With a few telephoto adapters you may notice that when you've set the original lens at "infinity" (that sideways figure 8 engraved on the lens barrel), the image isn't completely sharp. If it gets even less sharp as you "rack" the lens to a shorter distance, you won't be able to use it for photographing distant objects—though it may be useful for obtaining a magnified image of something closer by, but difficult to approach nevertheless (animals in a zoo come to mind).

If the lens comes to a sharp focus at infinity before the regular lens reaches that setting, then your impressive new telephoto-combo is "for-focusing." This is less of a problem since you'll still be able to use it for general telephoto picture taking, though it will reduce the closest distance you'll be able to focus otherwise. When that situation arises, it's an easy matter to remove the supplementary lens and go back to the prime lens.

Not all of the exotic glass you might want to add to your video arsenal will be as heavy (or expensive) as an entirely new interchangeable or supplementary lens. Interesting changes in viewpoint and perspective can be had for a lot less money simply by buying a few filters or

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PRESENTS

Paddington Bear

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TV Den

closeup lenses. Colored filters come in a wide range of sizes—the same sizes, in fact, that you've already determined you'd need for those supplementary lenses already discussed. Use filters for special effects, to alter the tint of a certain scene, or to create a trick shot by separating the image into three, four, or five different elements using prism-faced optics.

One of the most common, and virtually indispensable, filters that every video camera should have looks like nothing more than a piece of screw-mounted flat glass. Whenever anyone buys a 35mm camera, a conscientious photo salesman will make a pitch for this inexpensive (about $10 or less) glass insurance. Screw it onto the front of the lens on your video camera to protect the latter against dirt, sand, fingerprints, or scratches. If it becomes significantly damaged, it's easily replaced—unlike your original lens. These shields come double-threaded as well, enabling you to add other filters on top of them, or to replace the lens hood that came with your camera.

Closeup lenses are still another possibility. Yes, they let you get "closer" to the object—but no, that doesn't mean they have any telephoto characteristics. Closeup lenses look a lot like filters, but with a visible curvature to the glass. Usually they're sold in a little kit of three, marked +1, +2, and +3 in order of ascending strength. If your camera doesn't offer a "macro" setting, you can use one or two of these lenses to reduce its normal focusing range. They're ideal for framing small objects like photographs and flowers. Even if your camera does have a macro feature, you may find that—while it's great for super-powerful magnification ranges (some focus as close as the surface of the lens!)—it's less useful for photographing objects of an intermediate size. Closeup lenses to the rescue!

Where can you buy all these optical gizmos? Nowadays, many of the larger video stores have recognized the consumer's interest in this sort of accessory and have started to stock them. Also check out your largest local camera store. Even if it hasn't started to stock video gear (which is unlikely), it will still keep a line of filters and closeup lenses in stock for the established 35mm cameras.

And if you don't happen to live near either one of these two types of outlet (a letter writer recently chided me for always assuming that all of our readers live in or near the "big city"), try mail order. Another inexpensive source of filters and lenses (at least in the Los Angeles area) are the various photographic flea markets and swap meets that are held from time to time throughout the year. Similar events pop up in other "big cities" around the country.

Random Access

Personal Computers, News, and Games

Home Banking

In the past few months four of New York City's largest banks have offered various forms of home banking for account holders. The premise is simple: if you own a personal computer and modem (some banks are offering rebates or discounts on this essential telephone coupling device), you can check your balance, pay bills, and transfer money among your accounts at any time during the day or night, all at the touch of a few buttons on your keyboard.

It all sounds very handy until you look at the fine print. The banks' charges for this service range from $5 to $12 a month—far cheaper than cable TV. But look at it this way: The total cost is $60 to $144 yearly for something you already get free. Banks rightfully plug the "convenience" aspect of home banking in their marketing literature, but all you really save is a small amount of time (and even this is questionable) and a few cents on postage.

Say you sign up for Chemical's Pronto at $12. A first-class stamp is now 22 cents. That means you have to write a total of 55 checks a month (nobody I know writes half that many) just to break even. Does the system save you money? I think not. How can it save you time? You do all the keyboard input—it's *your* labor, not the bank's—and you pay for the privilege.

Other systems (Citibank, Manufacturer's Hanover, and Chase Manhattan) all assume that consumers with computers will flock to this idea. Why, I don't know. It is nearly as convenient to use an automated teller card.

When I posed the "why do we need this?" question to Chase Manhattan Vice-President Kathy Biro, she said, "We did a lot of research on that. It isn't home banking. Until you can deliver cash, it won't be. We know computer owners are sophisticated people. We had to give value, and we didn't want to give a laundry list of services that the customer didn't want." To its credit, Chase lowballs the opposition with a charge of $5 a month which includes the basic services, a bulletin board (no chat mode), and electronic-mail capability involving other subscribers. The system is graphics-based (not ASCII), which means rank computer beginners will understand it. The bank pays for the access time via 800 number.

So far, home banking seems like a fable. Look at it this way. Your favorite *restaurateur* charges $20 for a great meal. One night he tells you: "Sir. We're giving you an option since you like our food so much. If you want, you can eat at the restaurant at 3 a.m., while we're closed. Of course, since we're not here at that hour, you must cook the meal, serve it, clean up, and wash the dishes. And we're only going to charge you *$25* for dinner." Who would fall for something like that?

—Doug Garr

Fly by Night

Banking isn't the only service going home electronic. TWA and CompuServe recently introduced TravelShopper, yet another shop-at-home idea, this time for airline seats. If you are already on the CompuServe network (as with home banking, you need a PC and a modem), you may check TWA's as well as several other airlines' latest information on domestic and international flights, including the basic booking rules for each fare among 100,000 cities. Then you can book a seat, buy a ticket with your credit card, and have it waiting for you at the airline counter (as long as at least one leg is on TWA).

Like home banking, this sounds good until you check further. CompuServe's basic connect rates cost $12.50 an hour by day, $6 at night and on weekends. The TravelShopper service costs more: $20 during the day, $15 at night. The regular OAG service used by travel agents lists all available flights on line (you can't book or buy a ticket, however),

Illustrations by A. M. M. Zygarowicz

and runs $32 an hour by day, $21 at night.

OK, let's assume you're on TravelShopper with a 300-baud modem. Let's say it's nighttime, around 7 p.m. You access the system to arrange for a domestic flight and return. Let's say it takes five to ten minutes to search for the cheapest fare and find an open nonsmoking aisle seat. It might take another five to ten minutes to actually book the seat (punch in your card number and expiration date) and tell the system where you want the ticket waiting. It could cost you as much as $5, and you've done all the work. You could call the TWA reservations clerk (who can do it faster and more thoroughly than you because he does it for a living—he'll even check American's schedule if you ask nicely) or wait in the morning until your travel agent can do it (no fuss, no charge except a local phone call). By the way, if you designate a travel agent on the system, he still gets his 10 percent booking commission though he does no work.

Why bother with all this? It begins to resemble the restaurant fable. We asked TWA's senior vice president of marketing and sales, Stewart G. Long, and he too wondered: "I don't know why they [his customers] don't call the airline." But people—4000 so far, out of CompuServe's 185,000 subscribers—seemed to want the service, he said, and they most often accessed TravelShopper at 9 p.m. when they could still call TWA's reservations clerk.

Other airlines apparently don't think much of the idea. We polled American, United, Eastern, and Delta. Chuck Novak, a spokesman for United, said, "We're absolutely not getting into the TravelShopper at all. We turned it down. We're not allowing people to get into our inventory," he added, perhaps alluding to the database security problem.

American Airlines may be working on something different. Said Joe Stroop, an American executive, "We're not going public on anything until we're satisfied with our product. In other words, we're not going to rush with anything simply because a competitor is already doing it. It takes our own agents 40 hours of classroom work to use the system. We're trying to come up with a simpler system." He wouldn't confirm whether American would actually implement anything.

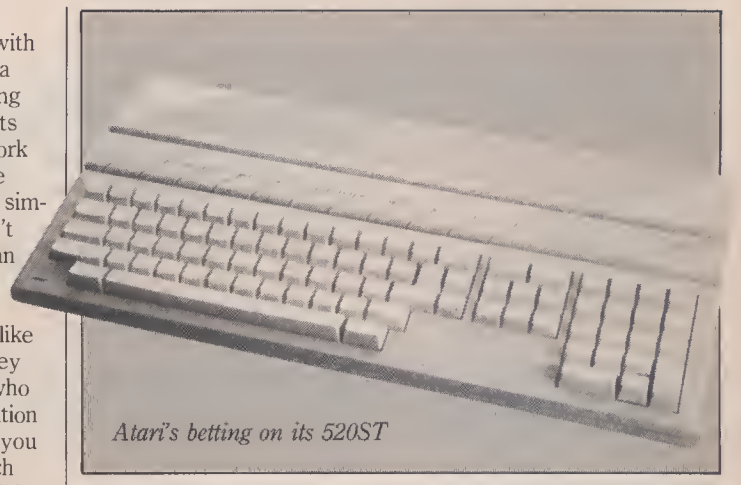
TravelShopper seems like a waste of time and money for all but a few people who can't get enough gratification from their computers. If you absolutely must book each leg of a Des Moines-to-Tel Aviv flight at 2 a.m. and don't mind doing all the work (not to mention paying extra), it may appeal to you. Otherwise, it's another nonuse of the machine.

—Doug Garr and Julia Lisella

The New Atari

By the time you read this, we'll know whether Atari has made good on its promise to get its much-heralded ST series computer into K-Marts and other discount stores. The company, now headed by the notorious Jack Tramiel (he founded Commodore as a typewriter repair company in the 1950s), desperately needs a hit product and industry pundits agree that the "Jackintosh" will be Atari's savior, if anything. The computer was so nicknamed because it resembles Apple's Macintosh. Tramiel claims his system will do as much as, if not more than, the Mac—for one-third to one-half the price. The "Fat Jack" features 512K RAM, a 3.5-inch floppy-disk drive, 12-inch hires color monitor, and a color dot-matrix printer. The software is mouse-driven. All this is supposed to run under $1000.

Tramiel is noted for his "computers for the masses" philosophy but there is considerable doubt as to whether the masses will flock to the cathedral of the High Priest of the Low End. Most software people I've spoken with won't write for the ST machine even though they've seen it and like its GEM operating system. (One software author even admitted that the Motorola 68000 in it makes the computer easy to write for.) There are two reasons for this: one, they distrust Tramiel because he's announced products that never materialized; and two, nobody wants to spend a lot of time writing software for a machine that doesn't have an installed base (industry jargon meaning nobody's bought it yet).



Atari's betting on its 520ST

And therein lies the rub. Who's going to buy a computer with no software? Atari says 25 to 30 programs will be ready when the computer is, but who knows how good they'll be? Tramiel may have tipped his hand when he made a rare public appearance at an industry trade show where he appealed to independent software authors for their support. He said he'd be able to help them (construed by authors as providing royalty advances), but one respected company president said privately, "Atari hasn't returned any phone calls."

—Doug Garr

BEST SELLERS/HOME

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9. **Goto.** IBM. Spectrum Holobyte.
10. **Wizardry.** AP, IBM. Sir-Tech Software.

LEGEND: AP = Apple, APc = Apple IIc, APe = Apple IIe, AT = Atari, C64 = Commodore 64, COM = Commodore Pet/CBM, CP/M = 5¼" and 8" formats, DEC = DEC Rainbow, EPS = Epson QX-10, IBM = IBM-PC, MAC = Apple Macintosh, PCjr = IBM PCjr, TIP = Texas Instruments Professional, TRS = TRS-80, VIC = Commodore Vic-20, VTR = Victor 9000, WNG = Wang Personal Computer, ZEN = Zenith 100.

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New Channels

Covering Cable, Pay-Per-View, STV, and DBS

Captain USA's Groovy Tube

by Tim Onosko

Jim Hendricks, of the USA Network's 'Commander USA's Groovy Movies': sheer stupidity, brilliant surrealist humor.

Isn't it a bit strange that cable TV has yet to produce its first star? Back in the 1940s, when there were far fewer TV sets than the number of homes connected to cable today, Milton Berle became so popular that movie theaters were virtually empty every Tuesday night when he was on the air. Hard as it may be to believe, Berle's lispy drag-queen imitations and low comedy routines on the *Texaco Star Theater* actually made people run out and buy sets.

The best cable can seem to do, though, is to nudge the careers of a few personalities. Kathleen Sullivan was a fixture on the Cable News Network before moving to ABC's early-morning news show. Pat Buchanan, former Nixon speechwriter and conservative spokesman, did a little better. He went directly from CNN's *Crossfire* talk show (with Tom Braden) to the Reagan White House, where he's now the administration's director of communications—sort of a super press secretary.

But cable has produced a fair number of "cult" personalities. The first was probably Bill Tush (whose last name, he insists, rhymes with "rush"). Tush and Tina Seldin gathered an intensely loyal audience in the late 1970s with their hip and goofy *Late News Early in the Morning* show on the Turner superstation WTBS. At the peak of his cult period Tush was awarded his own hour-long Saturday-night comedy series on the channel, only to prove he was no comic. Now Tush's cable career is drifting and he anchors CNN's *Show Biz Today*, the network's generic *Entertainment Tonight* ripoff.

Today's cable cult figures include Justin Wilson, the funny host of *Cookin' Cajun* on the Learning Channel, WGN's *Bozo the Clown*, and the world's worst talk-show host, WOR's eternal Joe Franklin. Of course we can't forget wrestler "Hulk" Hogan, who hopscotched his way from the USA Network's *Tuesday Night Titans* to MTV to a berth as chief geek of the new (and certainly weird) pop music/pro grappling cult. (Actually, Hogan—who appeared onstage at the Grammy awards with cartoony rock chirper Cyndi Lauper—may already have transcended his cult status to become a full-fledged media personality bigger, even, than Pat Buchanan.)

And who will be cable's next cult personality? An almost sure bet is a largely unknown 38-year-old New York actor named Jim Hendricks, whose fans know him only as the character he plays on the USA Network's Saturday-afternoon show *Commander USA's Groovy Movies*. Before you flip the page, check this guy out.

Hendricks, as the cigar-smoking Commander, is probably the hippest kid-show host since Soupy Sales. Every Saturday (noon, Eastern) he walks a fine line between sheer stupidity and brilliant surrealist humor. Thrown in along the way, just to keep the adults listening, are a few wisecracks that would never make it past the censors at CBS, NBC, *or even ABC*. Some of the Commander's jokes would have been called "barracks humor" in another day and age.

The Commander is, ostensibly, a movie host. But most of the "groovy" movies on his series are so bad, so wretchedly awful, so nauseous (you get the idea) that the five-hour program is best viewed on tape with a finger on the "scan" button. For movie masochists, the USA film package includes public-domain features and serial episodes, a few okay Hammer gothic vampire pictures, and what must be the entire output of Mexico's Azteca Pictures—cheap, badly dubbed horror movies that virtually redefine film's low end all by themselves.

Still, Hendricks is so good that you can waste an entire afternoon wading through this cinematic wreckage. Of course, that's the idea: Children with enough time to waste have their fertile little minds poisoned by this wonderful garbage, while adults with even the slightest sense of responsibility are out doing something productive with their weekends, like installing a shower massage spray or building a patio deck. That's

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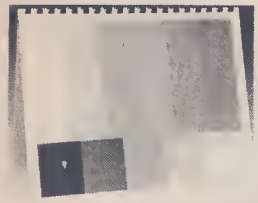

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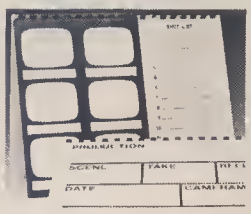

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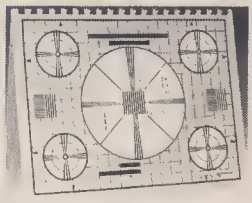

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New Channels

where your VCR comes in. You can see how the other half—15 years of age and under, that is—lives.

The story behind Commander USA is a simple one. He's a retired superhero who does some part-time messenger work and lives in his secret headquarters directly beneath a Paramus, New Jersey shopping mall. (An inside joke, the Commander's order and rank are "Legion of Decency, Retired." The Legion of Decency was the powerful Catholic film rating office of the 1950s and '60s.)

One of the most bizaare characters on the program is Lefty, the Commander's "righthand man." Literally a handpuppet, Lefty is the palm of Hendricks' right hand—on which he draws eyes, nose, and mouth with cigar ash. Another odd player is Norman, the Lost Entertainer of Atlantis, whose peculiar talent is speaking in a voice that sounds like he is underwater. Then there's an irregular parade of performers including the belly dancer that the Commander hyped to his young audience with an appropriate leer.

Hendricks got the job via an open audition which invited actors to attend with their ideas for the program's host. But the Commander was not the character Hendricks auditioned with. He was originally Uncle Willie, an older gentleman dressed in a button-up raincoat who lived in a trailer. "Willie," says Hendricks, "was very...uh...strict with the children. But the network thought the character was a little...well...a little 'dark' for the kids, you know?" A USA spokesman says that much of Uncle Willie made it into the present incarnation and, while the network "cleaned up his act," the Commander still "has a past." The show is written by Hendricks along with the program's creators, Hilary Schacter and Pam Bagot.

For the future, Hendricks promises more of the same humor, some "lady bodybuilders and karate experts," and "lots of good solid Mexican horror movies."

Lifetime Waits for No One

When writing about the Lifetime cable network, you never know whether it will end up as news or history. Lifetime, you see, has this terrible identity crisis.

Once upon a time it was two different, separately owned services: Daytime, a "women's" channel, and the Cable Health Network. Daytime grew out of a seamless afternoon cable talkfest hosted by Barbara Feldon (Agent 99 in the old *Get Smart* series). The Cable Health Network was the brainchild of Dr. Art Ulene, a TV physician and longtime mainstay on NBC's *Today Show*. It was devoted, naturally, to topics of health and fitness.

When the two services merged, the channel became Lifetime and kept its dual personalities. There were talk shows during which people exercised and exercise shows during which people talked. There was even a weird gene-splitting experiment that produced Regis Philbin. Regis cracked jokes, talked, and exercised. Finally, somebody at Lifetime recognized that none of this was working. Nobody was watching.

So earlier this year Lifetime hauled out the bloody axe of cancellation and gave a taste of the blade to all the original hosts on the channel (except Regis Philbin). Lifetime, it was decreed, would pursue a new program genre: talk *and* participation. This meant, apparently, that there would be more talk, less exercise, and a toll-free number so that viewers could talk back. They even gave Regis Philbin a telephone.

At the core of Lifetime's programming were four new shows built around more-or-less known TV personalities. Dr. Ruth Westheimer—a sure thing, her success on network radio and as a guest on network talk shows like David Letterman demonstrated her quirky appeal—received an hour for *Good Sex*, a call-in sex-counseling show. Stanley Siegel, the once-controversial New York talk host, was shipped to Los Angeles for *Talk Back America*. And former Minnesota Vikings quarterback Fran Tarkenton (with his obvious qualifications) was given the job of hosting *Smart Money*, a kind of drool session for yuppies featuring other yuppies who made it big in businesses like shoes and wallpaper.

The most curious departure from Lifetime's previous format was *Hot Properties*, a showbiz and gossip program hosted by Fred Newman, late of Nickelodeon's *Livewire* teenage talk show, and actress Tovah Feldshuh. Fred and Tovah put on the glitz and dug into "who's hot" and "who's not," interspersed with "hot" music videos and "hot" guests. Not only were the guests often *much* hotter than the hosts, but one, comedian Richard Belzer, was *so* hot that Lifetime dumped Fred and Tovah and installed the Belz as the show's new host.

Belzer, however, looked like a keen watchdog on a leash in *Hot Properties*. His usually irrepressible humor was unusually repressed by the hangovers from the program's previous regime and writers. Belzer, whose reputation as a "comic's comic" is legendary, may need only a minor tuneup before he's ready for a permanent place on television, but *Hot Properties* looked at presstime as if it needed a major overhaul or, better still, a little remodeling in one of those big junkyard crusher machines.

All of this, however, may be academic. By the time you read this, none of these programs or hosts (save Regis Philbin, who seems indestructable) may be left on Lifetime.

Here's the start of a hot summer.

The heat wave begins as Betsy Russell and Rory Calhoun team up in "Avenging Angel." They're hot on the trail of a cop killer.

And not even a cool blond can cool things off. Especially if she's a man. Impersonating blond bombshells like Marilyn Monroe, or fiery redheads like Ann Margaret in "The Female Impersonator Pageant." This entertaining talent competition, hosted by Lyle Waggoner and Ruth Buzzi stars 30 of the top female impersonators from such shows as "La Cage Aux Folles."

Also, down in the Delta, the Louisiana swamps are really steamin' up. Especially when a grotesque mutant is killing everybody in "Terror in the Swamp."

As if the temperature wasn't high enough, wait until you see the sultry problems Susannah York runs into in "The Adventures of Eliza Fraser." It's a tall tale about a very naughty lady.

Then the heat's on Dennis Weaver and Vera Miles in a World War II action adventure tale, "Mission Batangas."

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Video's Guide to

PROGRAMMING

NEWS & VIEWS

Frank Maraschiello

'Kane' & 'Kong' Find Definitive Laser Homes

By Ken Winslow

While tapes make it possible to *view* a film, they're not enough for those who want to *study* it. Two more elements are needed for the hardcore film student. One is better technology; this eventually will be available for tape users in the form of a frame grabber or memory store, something that may appear in the coming generation of digital receivers and not necessarily in VCRs. The second is more extensive information and background for those who want it.

Criterion has set out to offer what amount to video film courses by artfully employing the capabilities of the CAV-mode laser videodisc. File and forget your obsolete tape copies of *Citizen Kane, King Kong,* and other classics. Criterion brings them to you on frame-access LV-CAV videodisc as you have never been able to see them (or even wallow in them) before.

In contrast to some 1000 CLV titles (without frame access) available, there have been relatively few LV-CAV releases since the first MCA DiscoVision Silver catalogue in December 1978. A handful of new consumer CAV discs have been released since then, recently augmented by growing imports of Japanese CAV releases by The Instant Replay (479 Winter St., Waltham, Mass. 02154-1216; 800-VHS-DISC) and others. Those able to obtain CAV discs have used them for their own kind of film study: in return for the inconvenience of having to flip a CAV side every 30 minutes, they can call upon freeze, step, and variable framing without harming the disc. Buffs spend hours with the LV-CAV issues of last year's *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and this year's *Star Wars* and *The Empire Strikes Back* (see the "Directory"). But still missing is the kind of information about films and the people who made them that a true collector would enjoy.

Starting with *Kane* and *Kong,* Criterion has set out to do something about this. It has found the best available negatives for these two pictures and mastered them for normal LV viewing in linear form—with, however, added chapter stops at key points that do not interfere with the film but are carefully referenced in the extensive liner notes. Among the wealth of information presented, I would have wished to see some plot summary, but that is my hangup. The only flaw that came to my attention is the spelling of actor Frank Reicher's name (Captain Englehorn in *Kong*) which I checked against three references. Criterion's disc also includes stills, trailers, sketches, model designs, script, and other information plus commentary and information by noted authorities. For *Kane* Criterion's authority is Robert J. Carringer; for *Kong* it's Ronald Haver.

Although the mail-order prices (the only way to obtain them at this writing) may seem relatively high for an LV disc release ($89.95 for the 5-side *Kane,* $74.95 for the 4-side *Kong*), they are what you would pay these days for most new theatrical tape releases. Other Criterion "film study" titles in the works include 32 great Janus Collection foreign films such as Renoir's *The Grand Illusion* and *The Rules of the Game,* Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* and *The Seventh Seal,* Fellini's *La Strada,* Kurosawa's *Rashomon* and *The Seven Samurai,* Truffaut's *Shoot the Piano Player,* Lang's *M,* and Olivier's *Richard III.* Criterion says not to be misled. It expects to concentrate on American films.

Regular readers will recall our past complaints about the lack of regular CAV releases after the introductory all-CAV MCA DiscoVision catalogue. It's nice to know that LV's future is finally beginning to catch up with its past. (For more information write or call Criterion: Box 2310, Santa

Monica, Calif. 90406; 800-446-2001, or in California 800-443-2001.)

Defining the Problem Of Hi-Fi Frenzy

Hi-Fi confusion is breeding Hi-Fi frustration. The problem stems from claims or inferences about Hi-Fi in the wording of press releases and liner notes. It's not an intentional deception by program companies; I am convinced that there is an enormous amount of honest misunderstanding about what VCR Hi-Fi is and isn't, among both program companies and their duplicators.

You've laid out premium dollars for a Hi-Fi VCR and have the right to expect what the program label leads you to believe you are getting. If it is of great importance to you, for the time being, my advice continues to be to buy "Hi-Fi" identified programming from retailers only on the condition that if it isn't so on your equipment—*as described below*—you can get your money back.

Unlike audio "hi-fi"—which indicates extended frequency response, greater dynamic range, and better signal-to-noise ratio produced by a fixed reading head—VCR "Hi-Fi" reproduction has nothing to do with the nature of the audio signal itself. The term means two separate audio tracks are coming through the rotating video heads. Beta and VHS do it differently, but have this in common. If the video source's audio track(s) have extended frequency response, greater dynamic range, and better signal/noise, then Beta or VHS Hi-Fi will pass it all through. But if audio hi-fi is not on the video master, no amount of VCR Hi-Fi can reproduce what does not exist.

On occasion low-fi movie tracks are processed to improve frequency, dynamic range, and signal/noise. When they're placed on the video master for the VCR Hi-Fi playback, rejuvenated soundtracks sound quite good. MGM/UA's March release of *Gone with the Wind* is a case in point. Specialty labels such as Kultur Video—which offers a growing line of top-quality ballet, opera, and other material—are now making new masters with carefully processed audio tracks for Hi-Fi video release.

A second major area of Hi-Fi confusion is that a release so described is not automatically in stereo, with different but complementary audio reproduced from different tracks. Hi-Fi VCRs' dual tracks make stereo reproduction possible, but the source material must start with genuine stereo tracks. Many releases labeled Beta/VHS Hi-Fi have in fact dual monaural tracks: the audio coming out of your left and right speakers is identical unless your playback facilities are introducing some kind of artificial stereo.

To sum up, if a Beta video release says Hi-Fi, it should have both a mono linear track and rotating-head dual-track reproduction: at least three audio tracks. The dual Hi-Fi tracks may or may not be stereo as described above. VHS, because it offered linear dual tracks before it developed Hi-Fi dual tracks, can be more complex in its audio combinations. The two linear heads can provide either dual-track monaural or dual-track stereo. The two rotating Hi-Fi heads can provide either dual-track monaural or dual-track stereo.

Just to make you feel better (or worse?), I have yet to find any label issuing in VHS linear/Hi-Fi stereo to properly indicate that it is doing so. Stay tuned.

Tom Ballenger

Feds Mull Regulating Primal Screenings

The whirlwind of concerns about the FCC's deregulation of children's viewing continues unabated. Last October a Senate Juvenile Justice Subcommittee hearing centered on whether or not violence and aggression in television programming can affect the attitudes and behavior of the children who watch. All those testifying agreed that parents must take a central role in monitoring, regulating, and tempering what their children see. Children learn about family values, communication, and sharing from television. But what happens when a family can't handle its excesses and distortions? What, if anything, should regulators from outside the home be expected to do?

A CBS spokesman, representing the broadcast industry at the hearing, took the position that despite studies pointing to a correlation between the programming children see and what they do and think, there is no "convincing" demonstration of a connection between TV violence (portrayed or reported) and violence in the real world. Many dispute this. Broadcasters respond by pointing to differing interpretations of just what TV aggression is and whether it is always bad. Aggression is found in all forms and degrees, from sports and cartoons to primetime murder and mayhem. And it's not always against people. While I have seen no end of shooting, demolition, and property destruction on *The A Team* series, I have never seen anyone portrayed as being killed. The bad guys always lose. The good guys, calling upon unexpected resources at hand, always win.

Under consideration are positive alternatives for children and concerned parents. One has been a past proposal to require a minimum of five hours a week of educational and information programming designed for children and to provide tax incentives to corporations who commercially sponsor such programs. The second has to do with the often lurid promotional announcements that accent the violence on TV programs. One draft bill winning wide support would require networks and stations airing such announcements to also give equal time to announcements warning viewers about the possible harmful effects on children of violent programming.

Beware of Community Standard Bearers

Recent legal actions indicate that as cable and video grow in popularity, local concerns about portrayals of sex, violence, and strong language will increasingly be raised by groups who not only don't want to view the material, but also want to deny *you* the right to do so. It's another episode in the continuing clash between Constitutional guarantees of free speech and the Supreme Court-decreed right of communities to set local standards.

A grand jury has indicted the operator of a Virginia Beach cable system on a complaint brought by a group of local church leaders over the airing of seven Playboy Channel movies that are claimed to have violated a state antiobscenity law. The Playboy Channel, which serves about 800,000 subscribers nationwide, was also indicted. Though, as a cable spokesman points out, "this is adult entertainment that a certain percentage of our customers have chosen to view in the privacy of their home," the local prosecutor is now charged under state law to convince a jury drawn from the local community that the movies are meant to appeal to a prurient sexual interest, are offensive to contemporary community standards, and do not have literary, artistic, or other merit.

Last February the owner of a chain of Cincinnati video stores and one of his clerks narrowly escaped conviction for

handling and selling five adult video titles because the jury was deadlocked: five for acquittal, three for conviction. Jury members, seven women and one man, watched all five titles from beginning to end. The prosecutor can retry the case. For now the store owner is off the hook. But it cost him $50,000 and a lot of sleepless nights to defend himself.

Community standards aside, I know what my own standards are and those of my lovely lady, offspring, and occasional friends who share my viewing—be it broadcast, cable, or video. I make my own decision and have been known to leave my viewing group when something is on that others want to watch, but I don't. Often it's because I think the programming is just plain dumb.

In short, it's personal and not community standards that count in this multiset, many-channel, time-shifting age. Few of us have the same tastes, but all of us share the freedom to watch what we want. Anyone who reduces my neighbor's freedom also reduces mine. Think about it.

Now Freeze Frames Can Last Forever

Next time you ask a friend if he saw a particular scene in last night's TV show and he says he missed it, whip out a facsimile picture made with Mitsubishi's P-50U video printer. This nifty device looks at the same broadcast, VCR, cable, video game, videotex, computer, or live camera signal you are viewing and will make a single frame print as a reproduction of what appears on your TV screen.

Whenever you see something you want to visually preserve, press the remote control and a completely finished B&W freeze-frame hard-copy picture will poke itself out of a front-panel slot in about 15 seconds. When you cue the printer, a large-scale integrated circuit instantaneously grabs and stores a single frame in digital memory. You can keep this frame in memory as long as power is on or until you replace it with another. You can print as many copies from memory as you wish. You can change the print contrast and reverse black & white. An internal roll of thermal paper is capable of making 220 3-1/4 by 4-inch pictures at a rough cost of two cents each.

Aside from capturing address and phone information that always seems to catch you without a notepad, this would be a great way to get a hard copy of the cast and credits for that library you are building. And the next time you score high on a video game and know no one will ever believe you, preserve it with a video print. When you tape family and friends, put together an album of stills. Pose in front of your own camera and monitor and you can let others see you the way you see yourself. (For more information speak to Mitsubishi Electric Sales America, 3033 E. Victoria St., Rancho Dominguez, Calif. 90221; 213-537-7132.)

TOP 10 PROGRAMS

Cassette Sales

1. Stor Trek III: The Search for Spock (-)*. Color. 1984. William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, DeForest Kelley. Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi stereo, closed captions). $29.95. Paramount.

2. Gone with the Wind (-). Color. 1939. Clark Gable, Vivien Leigh, Olivia de Havilland. 231 min. Beta, VHS (digitally-enhanced stereo, closed captions). $89.95. MGM/UA.

3. Jone Fondo's Workout (2). Color. 1982. Jane Fonda assisted by 7 instructors. 90 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95. Karl.

4. Purple Roin (-). Color. 1984. Prince, Morris Day, Apollonia Kotero. 113 min. (R) Beta, VHS. $29.98. Warner.

5. Lionel Richie/All Night Long (-). Color. 1984. Includes "All Night Long," "Running with the Night," others. 35 min. Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi stereo). $14.95 (introductory). MusicVision.

6. Private Dancer (-). Color. Tina Turner sings "What's Love Got to Do with It," "Better Be Good to Me," others. 17 min. Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi stereo). $16.95. Sony.

7. Star Trek II: The Wroth of Khon (5). Color. 1982. William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, DeForest Kelley. 113 min. (PG) Beta. VHS (stereo). $39.95. Paramount.

8. Jone Fonda's Prime Time Workout (4). Color. 1984. Less strenuous routines. 50 min. Beta, VHS (closed captions). $39.95. Karl.

9. Raquel, Totol Beouty and Fitness (7). Color. 1984. Exercises for men and women of all ages. 90 min. Beta, VHS. $39.95. Thorn EMI.

10. Stor Trek—The Motion Picture: Speciol Longer Version (9). Color. 1979. William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, DeForest Kelley. 144 min. (G) Beta. VHS (stereo). $39.95. Paramount.

Videodisc Sales

1. The Empire Strikes Bock (1)*. Color. 1980. Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher. LV, CED (stereo). $29.98. CBS/Fox.

2. The Neverending Story (2). Color. 1984. Barret Oliver, Noah Hathaway, Tami Stronach. 94 min. (PG) LV (stereo, CX, closed captions). $34.98. CED. $29.98. Warner.

3. Purple Rain (5). As above, "Cassette Sales." LV (stereo, CX, closed captions). $29.98. CED. $19.98. Warner.

4. Tightrope (-). Color. 1984. Clint Eastwood, Genevieve Bujold, Alison Eastwood. 115 min. (R) LV. $34.98. Warner.

5. On the Woterfront (-). B&W. 1954. Marlon Brando, Eva Marie Saint, Rod Steiger. 108 min. LV. $34.95. CED. $24.95. RCA/Columbia.

6. Police Acodemy (3). Color. 1984. Steve Guttenberg, Kim Cattrall, Bubba Smith. 96 min. (R) LV. $34.98. CED. $29.98. Warner.

7. Romoncing the Stone (6). Color. 1984. Michael Douglas, Kathleen Turner, Danny DeVito. 106 min. (PG) LV (closed captions). $34.98. CED (cl. cap.). $19.98. CBS/Fox.

8. The Naturol (4). Color. 1984. Robert Redford, Robert Duvall, Glenn Close. 134 min. (PG) LV, CED. $29.95. RCA/Columbia.

9. The Lost Starfighter (7). Color. 1984. Robert Preston, Lance Guest, Dan O'Herlihy. 100 min. (PG) CED. $29.98. MCA.

10. Splosh (10). Color. 1984. Tom Hanks, Daryl Hannah, John Candy. 109 min. LV (stereo). $34.95. CED (stereo). $29.95. Touchstone.

Cassette Rentals

1. Stor Trek III: The Seorch for Spock (-)*. As above, "Cassette Sales." $29.95. Paramount.

2. Revenge of the Nerds (-). Color. 1984. Robert Carradine, Anthony Edwards, Ted McGinley. 89 min. (R) Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi, closed captions). $79.95. CBS/Fox.

3. Red Dawn (-). Color. 1984. John Milius, Patrick Swayze, Harry Dean Stanton. 114 min. (PG-13) Beta, VHS (Dolby Hi-Fi stereo). $79.95. MGM/UA.

4. The Woman in Red (4). Color. 1984. Gene Wilder, Charles Grodin, Kelly Le Brock. 87 min. (PG-13) Beta, VHS. $79.95. Vestron.

5. Bachelor Porty (-). Color. Tom Hanks, Tawny Kitaen, George Grizzard. 105 min. (R) Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi, closed captions). $79.95. CBS/Fox.

6. Police Acodemy (1). As above, "Videodisc Sales." Beta, VHS (closed captions). $79.95. Warner.

7. All of Me (3). Color. 1984. Steve Martin, Lily Tomlin. 93 min. (PG) Beta, VHS. $79.95. Thorn EMI.

8. Tightrope (2). As above, "Disc Sales." Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi, closed captions). $79.95. Warner.

9. Once Upon a Time in Americo (-). Color. 1983. Robert DeNiro, James Woods, Elizabeth McGovern. 225/143 min. (original/theatrical version) (R) Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi, closed captions). $89.95./$79.95. Warner.

10. The Noturol (5). As above, "Disc Sales." Beta (Hi-Fi stereo, closed captions). VHS (Dolby Hi-Fi stereo, cl. cap.). $79.95. RCA/Columbia.

*Number in parentheses indicates position last month; (-) indicates program is new listing.

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REVIEWS

FILM CLIPS

Produced for Theaters

Mean Streets
Color. 1973. Robert DeNiro, Harvey Keitel, David Proval, Amy Robinson, Cesare Danova; dir. Martin Scorsese. 110 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95. Warner. Reproduction: B

The Pope of Greenwich Village
Color. 1984. Mickey Rourke, Eric Roberts, Daryl Hannah; dir. Stuart Rosenberg. 120 min. Beta, VHS. $79.95. MGM/UA. Reproduction: B+

Martin Scorsese's first feature is a rambling inner-city tragedy, a bad-dream meditation on the terrifying consequences of destructive personal loyalty. Charlie (Harvey Keitel) is a young mafioso-in-training, a brooding, sensitive man obsessed with Francis of Assissi, smothered by the medieval village attitudes of New York Southern-Italian life. His uncle is grooming him for a place in the organization, but only if he will sever his ties to "unworthy" people—specifically to Johnny Boy (DeNiro), a half-crazed wiseguy who blows up mailboxes for fun.

In the jittery, episodic, improvisational atmosphere of *Streets*, DeNiro delivers an absolutely dazzling performance—and fills out a story which might have been trite and flat without him. He plays Johnny Boy to the manic hilt—so much so that the film suffers from a lack of objective distance. It views the world of low-rent punks, grinding slums, and stifling religion a bit too affectionately. Like Charlie, Scorsese seems to love Johnny Boy because of his hysterical destructiveness—not in spite of it. On the surface, *Streets* has a dated quality which viewers will either find distracting or charming. All those bellbottoms and teased hair are like the early '70s themselves—not modern enough to have the urgency of the contemporary, not distant enough to have the romance of the antique. But it doesn't matter if the years have been a bit unkind. *Streets* is still too tough to need the kindness of strangers—a great first film by a major director.

The same can't be said for *The Pope*, another film about destructive loyalties among modern-day New York Italians. Technically, the film is superior to Scorsese's post-student production. The camerawork is sharp, clear, and intimate; the editing crisp and professional. Mickey Rourke gives a strong three-dimensional performance. And there's Daryl Hannah to look at. The only thing *Pope* lacks that *Streets* has is soul. Eric Roberts is cast against type as a Johnny Boy character. He is too catalogue-handsome, too fey—in fact, effeminate in his portrayal. Perhaps director Rosenberg is trying to imply that there is repressed homosexuality in excessive loyalty between men. He'd better not let Johnny Boy and Charlie hear that—they'll come and break his legs for him.

Streets' shadowy interiors and night scenes are not clarified on tape—possibly more the fault of the original than the transfer. *Pope* comes to the home screen in a clear, skillfully done transfer. The preview version viewed was not yet approved for quality and may have been further refined for production copies.

—Richard Jaccoma

Once Upon a Time in America
Color. 1984. Robert DeNiro, James Woods, Tuesday Weld, Elizabeth McGovern; dir. Sergio Leone. 220 min. Beta, VHS. $89.95. Warner. Reproduction: A

Once Upon a Time in the West
Color. 1969. Charles Bronson, Henry Fonda, Claudia Cardinale, Jason Robards; dir. Sergio Leone. 165 min. Beta, VHS. $69.95./LV. $39.95. Paramount. Reproduction: A-

Sergio Leone is the genre movie's Orson Welles. Famous as *le grand auteur* of the spaghetti Western, Leone, like Welles, refuses to be anything but a manipulator of the most potent myths a situation can provide. And genres, coming with built-in mythologies, give him a chance to manhandle myths with a vengeance—and to indulge his nostalgia for his subjects, characters who tend to be the last of their kind in worlds that no longer need them. The Western is rich in such characters, so it is not surprising that *West* is more successful than *America*.

Part of *America*'s problem is that it begins so well. The first hour or so of this nearly four-hour film is perhaps the most gripping, intriguing, and purely cinematic footage done in this decade. It tells the story of "Noodles" (Robert DeNiro), who grows up to be head of his Jewish underworld gang, flees their New York stomping ground when the other gang members are mysteriously blown away, and returns decades later to explore mysteries old and new in response to an enigmatic summons—but from whom? Leone's handling of the

time frames containing their rise, fall, and resurrection, using sound and recurrent images to link the stages of the epic story, promises a more focused tale than he delivers. For while the rest contains flashes of the stylistic beauty of the first hour, it doesn't quite achieve the same enigmatic force, and leads up to an ending that is too elliptical. In this respect the short version, though damaged by the missing links present here, *did* let you know whether James Woods lived or died.

To make a tragedy of the stature he desires, Leone overdoes parts of his tale. To tell the story of the deceptive death that is at the center of the film, he gets carried away explaining the conditions of the gang's boyhoods and the strategems of its early scams. This is not to say that his tangents are not often amusing (a subplot about the local "fast girl" who grows up to be the quintessential big-mama madam) or pertinent (the recurrent involvement of the Tuesday Weld character with the gang) —indeed, they include some of the most striking images in the movie—merely that they are the price Leone had to pay to expand the gangster genre to the proportions he prefers.

With the Western, Leone is on home ground, and in 1969 he was at the top of his form with *A Fistful of Dollars, For a Few Dollars More,* and *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly* under his belt. *West* is the first with clearly epic length, as well as the first taken from a work of literature (both the Borges story "The End" and the Argentine epic poem *Martin Fierro* which the story continues). From the first frame (a reference to that other great end-of-the-West Western, *The Searchers*) to the last, *West* is an ironic, wry, tragic, comic, and mythic version of the death of the gods of the Old West, turning the events surrounding a revenge killing into a sacrificial pageant signaling the transition from the Old West into modern civilization.

Long before Fonda and Bronson finally face off there is ample indication that they are supposed to be two of the most single-minded and coldblooded antagonists in film history, stalking each other and the fortune both presume (incorrectly) they can have at Claudia Cardinale's expense. But just as neither is able to impress himself thoroughly upon her, neither is capable of sticking around for the payoff. The kind of men and women who forged a place in the wilderness for civilization to take root are not the kind who can make that civilization work. Part of Leone's brilliance is that, again like Welles, he can admire this kind of man without liking him: ambition is never pretty.

Both tapes are models of the transferral technicians' art. *America,* because it is newer, has more impressive visual and aural effects. Both repay every technical caress. I applaud Warner in particular for *America*: as MGM/UA did with *Heaven's Gate,* it has gone out on a limb for a picture that didn't conquer the box office.

—M. George Stevenson

Once Upon a Time in America

Country

Color. 1984. Jessica Lange, Sam Shepard, Wilford Brimley; dir. Richard Pearce. Beta, VHS. $79.95./LV. $34.95. Touchstone/Disney. Reproduction: A

This bleak pastoral fashions its own definition of beauty—the beauty of truth spoken harshly in an imperfect world. It is a magnificent film for this, and all its elements are consistent within this understated aesthetic. Jessica Lange arrived on the movie scene as a nymphet in the hand of an oversized ape, but here plays against type as a plain farm woman with simple concerns—food on the table, clothes on the kids. Shepard is known for his dark and sexy image, but plays a frustrated macho man up against nature and a strong woman.

Country

The direction is superb, calling little attention to itself as it rivets its audience piecemeal to the lives of these plain folk. By the middle of the film, one feels one has been methodically exposed to true hardship. But that is *Country*'s genius—it's done in fragments: here a still moment when the wind stops blowing, there a twister uprooting livestock and tractors. Tragedy builds slowly in mounting financial pressures that beset the family.

But this is nothing if not a tale of one woman's gathering strength as her man wilts from that pressure. And the film's dignity is such that it can show this dichotomy and make it plain that the woman understands why the man can't take it, but has no time to dwell on it. She must act. All this occurs within the context of a very real farmers' saga—made all the more cogent by the crisis in the headlines. Yes, farmers really are getting squeezed out by credit.

The photography is brilliant, lending beauty to the bleakness, picking out those telling details that speak cinematically, not verbally. The soundtrack by a group of Windham Hill artists (notably George Winston on piano and Darol Anger on violin) transcends the hip muzak of that label's usual output and adds dramatically to the effect. *Country* is an epic in a sense that *Gone with the Wind* and *Ben-Hur* are decidedly not—it puts the humans up there on the screen, but it is their concerns and their troubles that are writ large, not their showbiz mugs.

—Noe Goldwasser

Irreconcilable Differences

Color. 1984. Ryan O'Neal, Shelley Long, Drew Barrymore, Sam Wanamaker; dir. Charles Shyre. 113 min. Beta, VHS. $79.95. Vestron. Reproduction: B

As further proof that Hollywood is a state of mind and not a town at all, *Irreconcilable Differences* breezed in (and out) of movie threaters last year, and I predict its trip through your living-room will be even faster. Any resemblance between the characters in this movie and real people is coincidental and tragic. Young couple fall in love, have a baby, and break

up. He gets rich and famous, she gets fat and fever blisters. He directs musical version of *Gone with the Wind* starring talentless coked-up mistress. Bingo! He's bankrupt and ex-wife gets rich and famous.

Meanwhile, ex-baby is now Drew Barrymore, who is depressed all the time because her parents ignore her. She doesn't know when she's well off. These people are grotesque self-centered reprobates, though the ending is supposed to be a happy one because all three eat a hamburger together, smiling wanly. The director—who also cowrote it with a woman; I hope to God it's not autobiographical—likes movie jokes. They are no substitute for human comedy. And Shelley Long is no substitute for Diane Keaton, though she tries to be.

Vestron's VHS tape does just fine in the California sun, but the courtship takes place in indecipherable darkness on a highway in the rain, and the transfer is simply inferior in these nighttime scenes. I would have liked to look at these people before they turned ugly. —Harvey Elliott

Cloak and Dagger

Color. 1984. Dabney Coleman, Henry Thomas, Michael Murphy, Christina Nigra; dir. Richard Franklin. 101 min. Beta, VHS. $79.95./LV. $34.98. MCA. Reproduction: A

This is a movie for Father's Day. A little kid in search of heroes finds his Dad too preoccupied to fill the bill, so with the help of his Atari and his imagination, he invents Jack Flack, who looks just like his Dad. Davey lives in a world of video games and fantasy adventures, but when he stumbles across real-life murder and espionage and can't convince anyone to believe him, it's up to Jack and Davey, and Jack's help has its limits. In the nick of time Dad arrives to save the day, and Davey realizes he doesn't need Jack anymore. Heroes come in all sizes.

Sometimes modest virtues are enough to make good entertainment, and it is a mark of *Cloak and Dagger*'s modesty that life-or-death chases take place on city buses, not in careening cars. The age of the pursued (11) has a lot to do with that and with everything else in *Cloak and Dagger*: the spy plot is pursued and uncovered from a kid's point of view. Modesty also marks the solid and unsentimental performances of Dabney Coleman as both Dad and Jack Flack. *Cloak and Dagger* doesn't patronize its kids—the movie is exciting and suspenseful, even on its own terms—but neither does it shortchange its grown-ups. The gap between father and son is breached with tenderness and conviction, *sans* sappiness.

Davey is played earnestly by Henry Thomas of *E.T.*, and Michael Murphy makes an especially sadistic villain. The only false note is struck by brassy Christina Nigra, who plays Davey's young playmate as an incipient Selma Diamond. *Cloak and Dagger* is actually a remake of a minor classic called *The Window*, a 1947 Nostalgia Merchant title that won little Bobby Driscoll a Special Academy Award and that will eventually reappear on video.

MCA's cassette looks and sounds fresh and bright, with clean sun-drenched San Antonio as its refreshingly uncliched setting. I wished I were there.

—Harvey Elliott

The Henry Miller Odyssey

Color. 1969. Dir. Robert Snyder. 85 min. Beta, VHS. $79. Masters & Masterworks (15313 Whitfield Ave., Pacific Palisades, Calif. 90272; 213-454-3836).

Anais Observed

Color. 1975. Dir. Robert Snyder. 60 min. Beta, VHS. $64. Masters & Masterworks.

Robert Snyder's *The Henry Miller Odyssey* is just that: a rambunctious, rambling chronicle of a man who by sheer force of personality made himself one of the greatest writers of this century. While Miller's animated Brooklyn-accented meanderings—and his occasional on-camera monkeyshines—were effective enough to make this film documentary an absorbing look at the man in his 80s, Miller on video is even more entertaining. Under Snyder's benevolent directorship Miller becomes the cosmic host of a talk-show run amok. After our weird first view of Henry posing for his own death-mask, we get well over an hour of constant motion, in both black & white and color, as the *Tropic of Cancer* author flirts with various women, reacquaints himself with Paris, introduces us to his good and great friends (from Durrell to Brassai), and delivers a fascinating running monologue on subjects ranging from watercolors to his icy relationship with his mother. Even those who have yet to sample Henry Miller's inspired, straightforward prose will appreciate his lusty *brio*, shown here to great effect—and I suspect that more than a few will follow up by devouring the books themselves.

Not as successful is a second offering by Snyder profiling author and diarist Anais Nin. Her personality is more deliberate and subtle than that of her friend Henry Miller, and so *Anais Observed* seems relatively stilted. While her considerable following will appreciate this tape, others may have difficulty focusing attention on the succession of Nin's artistic pronouncements, intoned in a European-tinged accent that seems over-rehearsed, often heard as voiceovers imposed on images of the writer looking wistfully at a lily pond. If I weren't familiar with the quality of her work, I would have been driven up the wall by statements like "I am in touch with a deep subterranean river running inside the earth." Maybe the problem is that Nin, who freely admits a preference for fantasy worlds of her own making, doesn't get out much; in contrast to the Miller film, where Henry displays a voracious appetite for activity, knowledge, and good laughs, Nin only reluctantly allows Robert Snyder to open things up.

So it comes as no surprise that one of the best scenes in *Anais Observed* is the one where Nin gets together with Henry Miller. It's as animated and provocative as almost every scene in *The Henry Miller Odyssey*—and that is fine indeed.

—Steven Levy

C.H.U.D.

Color. 1984. John Heard, Daniel Stern, Christopher Curry; dir. Douglas Cheek. 88 min. Beta, VHS. $69.95. Media. Reproduction: B

C.H.U.D. (Cannibalistic Humanoid Underground Dwellers) aren't very frightening—I've seen worse things in my own apartment—which is just one reason why this inept horror flick has all the impact of a B.O.M.B.

The film opens with a woman and her dog being sucked into a sewer, where at least she'll never have to use a pooper scooper again. Cut to an underground soup kitchen, where bums and bag ladies are disappearing mysteriously, a tragic urban situation that naturally has everyone—even fashion photographer John Heard—in an uproar. No wonder government officials are trying to cover up the fact that C.H.U.D. really stands for Contamination Hazard Urban Disposal and that those hideous creatures are actually the bums and bag ladies themselves, mutated as a result of radioactive waste dumped under Manhattan. And with all that human flesh running around, they'll never go hungry again.

The dialogue includes such gems as "You must be a pretty important fella, fella" and "He's a madman. Gas could drive those things up *here*." The plot features such sensible scenes as the photographer's girlfriend being mysteriously splattered with C.H.U.D.-related blood in the shower, then sitting calmly to watch TV. Meanwhile, everyone in the film is threatening to run to the press if something isn't done

about C.H.U.D. They should have threatened to go to the Screen Writers Guild.

When the slimy creatures finally appear, their obsessive quest for flesh does take on entertainment value in that good/bad way B-movies have of mesmerizing you with absurdity. And the demented musical score adds the perfect touch of queasiness; too bad it underscores the notion that this film could have been prevented with a mere bottle of Pepto.

The depressing greys and blues of the color scheme are well-captured in the transfer, but the image, like the script, is a little blurry. —Michael Musto

Star Trek III: The Search for Spock

The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai

Color. 1984. Peter Weller, John Lithgow, Ellen Barkin, Jeff Goldblum; dir. W.D. Richter. 103 min. Beta, VHS. $79.95. Vestron. Reproduction: B

Buckaroo Banzai is either the most inane garbage imaginable or the most brilliant cult film ever made. It's the kind of movie for which they invented rewind—"what just happened?"—but in the impaired state recommended for viewing this obscure black comedy, it'll be difficult to summon up the energy to press buttons. Just watch it straight through 10 times—and by then, even if you don't know if it's brilliant or not, you'll at least know which one's Banzai.

Turns out he's a half-American/half-Japanese neurosurgeon who's also adept at martial arts, and has a rock band called the Hong Kong Cavaliers as well as a propensity for breaking the sound barrier at the slightest provocation—wacky guy. Peter Weller plays him drily, barely batting an eyelash as beings from the eighth dimension and/or Rastafarians from outer space compete for his attention while the President keeps calling to find out what to do about Russia.

With that kind of nonstop zaniness *Banzai* wants to be an instant cult movie and you can feel it straining to be worshipped in every frame. It also wants to be an engrossing adventure, not just a parody, and veers uncomfortably between slam-bang action and tongue-in-cheek esoterica. Yet the film's barrage of absurdities is so brash and persistent it's ultimately at least semi-irresistible. Rather than go crazy trying to figure it all out, you find yourself going with the idiotic flow almost as recklessly as the actors themselves.

They're a lovable menagerie, especially John Lithgow as the demented Dr. Emilio Lizardo and Ellen Barkin as Penny Prody, the overemotional identical twin of Buckaroo's ex-wife. The conviction behind their madness almost convinces you that maybe there is something to this thing after all.

At times the transfer cuts off the tops of scenes and elongates the image. But as Buckaroo himself always says as an explanation for everything, "Remember, no matter where you go, there you are." Understand? —Michael Musto

Star Trek III: The Search for Spock

Color. 1984. William Shatner, DeForest Kelley, James Doohan; dir. Leonard Nimoy. 108 min. Beta, VHS. $29.95. Reproduction: A

It would be hard to top the second *Star Trek* film, *The Wrath of Khan*. It had well-staged action scenes, witty and perceptive characterizations, and an affecting theme: coming to terms with mortality. It ended with the noble death of Spock.

The Search for Spock picks up where *Wrath* left off and more or less nullifies the theme of its predecessor. But it suffers from a worse sin: it takes itself much too seriously. Most of the movie is overwhelmed with a sense of grand mission, with heavily underlined sequences that say "this is about friendship"—as though simply telling a good story well wouldn't be mission enough.

Part of *Star Trek*'s success has depended on the main triumverate of characters, each representing one aspect of humanity: Spock is the mind, McCoy the heart, and Kirk the wit—the synthesizer of heart and mind. The three characters (and actors) worked so well together that even when the stories were weak, the personalities' interplay could carry the tale. In *Search*, however, the producer/writer Harve Bennett has sacrificed Leonard Nimoy (and Spock) to the director's chair and made McCoy (DeForest Kelley) a shadow of his former self. Without them William Shatner's Kirk seems unbalanced —a bit excessive, a bit humorless; certainly not as bad as in *Star Trek—The Motion Picture* but not nearly as moving or as vulnerable as in *The Wrath of Khan*. In addition, director Nimoy uses broad strokes when thin ones would do, and Bennett's dialogue is sometimes a little hokey even by *Trek* standards ("We have paid for it with our dearest blood").

Nonetheless, *Search* has its moments, usually involving the nominal bad guy, Klingon commander Kruge (Christopher Lloyd). Lloyd puts a lot of juice into a standard villain part and, although he lacks the high camp of Ricardo Montalban's Khan, manages to create a formidable foe.

Overall *Search* is a mixed bag, a hollow reflection of good and bad *Treks* past. Like the body of Spock, seen unconscious through most of the story, the film seems to be waiting in vain for the magic touch that will bring its disparate parts to life. The transfer, though, is excellent: rich and vibrant, with a good Hi-Fi soundtrack that nicely captures James Horner's vibrant score. And the price is even better. Keep it up, Paramount! —Tom Soter

The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai

QUICK TAKES/FILM

The Return of Martin Guerre

Color. 1982. Gerard Depardieu, Nathalie Baye; dir. Daniel Vigne. 111 min. French with English subtitles. Beta, VHS. $79.95. Embassy. Reproduction: A

If Bruegel had designed movies instead of canvases, he might have made this slender antique mystery. It is peopled with rich and colorful characters, a village full of skullcapped peasants—farming, feuding, and fearing demons. A stranger walks into the 16th-century village claiming to be a man who walked out on his family eight years earlier. The truth about his identity ultimately seems less important than whether he is a good man. The film is beautifully shot, with landscapes and compositions that provide much of the movie's subtext. Embassy's beautiful VHS transfer retains the rich reds with no bleeding and the somber earthtone browns predominate without making the film look drab. Finally, Embassy has released the movie with subtitles—as it should have done in the first place. —Harvey Elliott

The Wild Life

Color. 1984. Christopher Penn, Eric Stoltz, Ilan Mitchell-Smith, Jenny Wright, Lea Thompson; dir. Art Linson. 96 min. Beta, VHS. $79.95./LV. $34.98. CED. MCA. Reproduction: B+

Would it destroy my credibility to admit *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* is one of my all-time favorite movies? That it, more than any other movie I've ever seen, embodies and satirizes the true spirit of my high-school experience? That may explain both my fascination and my disappointment with *The Wild Life*, a teensploitation film about the misadventures of two young guys in a singles apartment. Cameron Crowe wrote both scripts. Sean Penn starred in *Fast*, Christopher Penn in *Wild*. Both movies offer funny as well as painfully insightful glimpses of love, friendship, sex, and the agony of growing up. But while *Fast* was almost oppressively true to my *milieu* (all of my friends turned out burgers in fast-food restaurants), *Wild* flaunts its defiance of it (none of my friends had a singles apartment). The strength of both movies is in boy/girl relationships: they'll make you cringe. *The Wild Life* is a good movie trapped inside a bad idea. (It is also MCA's first VHS Hi-Fi release.)

—John Leland

Hambone and Hillie

Color. 1984. Lillian Gish, Candy Clark; dir. Roy Watts. 97 min. Beta, VHS. $69.95. Thorn EMI. Reproduction: B+

Gish is the first lady of the American screen—the *very* first lady. Now she is 89 and in a dog of a movie about a dog named

Hambone. Miss Lillian loses him at JFK Airport and the movie follows his cross-country hike to join Miss Lillian in a California retirement village. He gets dognapped by a sleazy medical-lab supplier, befriends *Easy Rider*'s Robert Walker—who, still mellow after all these years, puts him in tune with the universe—and has other adventures. As for Miss Lillian, she hasn't much to do, and bad scanning of the wide screen adds to the problem by ignoring some human characters to focus on animals. —Harvey Elliott

Trouble in the Glen

Color. 1954. Orson Welles, Forrest Tucker, Margaret Lockwood, Victor McLaglen; dir. Herbert Wilcox. 91 min. Beta, VHS. $39.95. NTA.

"Another high-spirited romance from the author of *The Quiet Man*," says the box of this Republic color programmer. It *does* have some of the more interesting aspects of the Ford classic—an American stepping into a tinderbox situation that gets worse before it gets better, clan warfare, political sophistication about rural society. Orson Welles deliciously incarnates the new Laird of Glen Eachen whose battle against "his" peasants soon involves his daughter (Lockwood) and the American (Tucker)—first as antagonists, then as lovers. Not devoid of camp or sap, this film still has much to recommend it and Wilcox does a creditable job directing. Ford he isn't, but who is?

—M. George Stevenson

Killer Bats

B&W. 1942. Bela Lugosi, Suzanne Kaaren, Dave O'Brien, Guy Usher; dir. Jean Yarborough. 70 min. Beta, VHS. $14.95. VCI. Reproduction: B−

Get this: Bela Lugosi (let's not even pretend we're talking about a character *played* by Bela Lugosi) is an implausibly beloved doctor and chemist for a cosmetics company, embittered because—well, he's alienated from the fruits of his labor. Seeking revenge on his fairly likable capitalist employers, he develops an exotic aftershave fragrance and breeds giant bats who will kill at the first whiff of the stuff. He asks his benefactors to try it on. After one murder, enter the blocking characters: two wisecracking journalists and (you guessed it) the beautiful daughter of the capitalists, who becomes the love interest of one of the journalists. This formulaic cheapie is good enough to be respectable and bad enough to be good, but not idiosyncratically wretched enough to be art. Transfer is suitably pathetic. And that's the way it B. —John Leland

Johnny Nobody

B&W. 1961. Nigel Patrick, William Bendix, Aldo Ray; dir. Nigel Patrick. 88 min. Beta, VHS. $39.95. Monterey. Reproduction: A

An atheistic writer startles a pious Irish village by challenging God to strike him down, and a man without a memory appears and shoots him. Is he a miracle or a murderer? This throwback to G.K. Chesterton follows the town priest as he attempts to unravel the truth. Despite superb sound and picture quality, the views of Irish life and the sheer gravity of the acting are funny, and the "mystery" is predicated on the notion that the police can't do their job. And if you can't figure out the ending well in advance, you just aren't Catholic.

—Steven Grant

A Rumor of War

Color. 1980. Brad Davis, Keith Carradine, Michael O'Keefe; dir. Richard T. Heffron. 90 min. Beta, VHS. U.S.A. Reproduction: A

War is hell—especially in this conscientious look at the Vietnam War, which dredges up all the cliches about idealism gone sour and young men dying for nothing. It chronicles the real-life story of Lt. Phil Caputo, who starts his Marine career looking forward to the "great adventure" of war but ends up hating the whole thing. The characters are all standard war-movie types (the knowledgeable sergeant, the cynical lieutenant, the crazy colonel) and many of the scenes could have come out of *M*A*S*H* or *Hell is for Heroes*. The acting is fine within the limits of the script and the explosives and blood are excellently reproduced. Like the war it depicts, however, the point of the movie is muddy. —Tom Soter

VIDEO CLIPS

Produced for Home Viewing

Star Trek: The TV Series

Color. 1966. Where No Man Has Gone Before, The Corbomite Maneuver, Mudd's Women, The Naked Time, Charlie X, The Enemy Within, The Man Trap, What Are Little Girls Made Of?, Dagger of the Mind, Miri. William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, DeForest Kelly; dir. various. 50 min. ea. Beta, VHS. $14.95 ea. Paramount.

Its creator Gene Roddenberry called it a "*Wagon Train* to the stars," but that earlier series has been forgotten while *Star Trek* cruises on, rerunning and rerunning around the country. Kirk, Spock, Bones, Scotty, Uhura, and the other denizens of the huge 23rd-century starship Enterprise—along with phrases like "Beam me up Scotty," "He's dead Jim," and "To boldly go where no man has gone before"—are more familiar to some people than their own families. Why? Though you can look for the answer in books, at conventions, even in Ph.D. dissertations, the show itself is still the best place to look—and Paramount's release of all 79 episodes on videotape will sure help.

The first 10 episodes—beginning with the series' second pilot, "Where No Man Has Gone Before," and running through "Miri"—show what all the fuss has been about. A typical episode presents the heroic Captain Kirk (William Shatner) with a seemingly insoluble dilemma, such as a plague affecting the crewmembers ("The Naked Time") or a menacing alien capable of destroying the ship ("The Corbomite Maneuver"). The solution usually reaffirms what it means to be human, and entails the assistance of Science Officer Spock (Leonard Nimoy) and Chief Medical Officer McCoy (DeForest Kelly). They are two sides of the human coin—one is logic, the other emotion—and Kirk's wit and decisiveness balance them out.

Humanity is what the series is about, for all its sci-fi trappings. The best episodes deal with human issues from growing up ("Charlie X") and sexism ("Mudd's Women") to penal systems ("Dagger of the Mind") and computers ("What Are Little Girls Made Of?"). In "The Naked Time" the crewmembers are affected by a virus that forces them to reveal their innermost selves: their fears, hopes, and dreams. In "The Enemy Within" Kirk is divided into two parts of the same man: one savage, the other compassionate. In "What Are Little Girls Made Of?" a brilliant scientist transplants his mind into an android body but finds that his *soul* is missing. He can think, but he is not human. To be so, says *Star Trek*, is to feel. To make mistakes. To be emotional. To *care*.

The best *Star Trek* is the stuff of opera: stylized morality plays with characters painted in broad strokes that allow the viewer to empathize. As David Gerrold, a former *Star Trek* writer, put it in *The World of Star Trek*: "We want to be as brave as our Captain Kirks, as cool as our Mr. Spocks, and as outspoken as our Dr. McCoys. We long to be as colorful and as larger-than-life as they are."

For the uninitiated (if there is such a thing), the best of the first 10 are "Charlie X," a witty yet disturbing episode with Robert (*Strangers on a Train*) Walker's lookalike son as a human with strange powers, learning what it means to live in society; "The Naked Time," which spotlights all the leads in moments that would eventually become familiar as *shtick* (was this the first time Scotty warned that "the engines can't take much more of this," or that Spock cried?); and "Where No Man Has Gone Before," with Gary (*2001*) Lockwood and Sally (*M*A*S*H*) Kellerman as two crewmen transformed by an alien energy field. Shades of *2001*! Yet Kirk's message is melodramatically telling: "Do you like what you see? Absolute power corrupting absolutely?" The best episodes have calculated histrionics and well-staged action. They are notable for the wildly varying performances of Shatner, who can be both terribly good and terribly bad—all in the same episode (see especially "The Enemy Within").

In the end, what do you say about *Star Trek*? That it has a message? That it has good character types? That it has concepts? And that it now has the welcome familiarity of an old friend? Yes, and you can even say it's fun.

The transfer is excellent, the majority of the episodes exhibiting crisp color and sharp sound. The earlier shows have faded a little, but not too noticeably. That the shows are uncut is a delight.

—Tom Soter

The Executioner's Song

Color. 1982. Tommy Lee Jones, Rosanna Arquette, Eli Wallach; dir. Lawrence Schiller. 157 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95. U.S.A.

Gary Gilmore is fading into history, and while people remember his name, few can say what he did. But his 1977 death resurrected the death penalty, which had lain dormant in America for 10 years. Surprisingly, he fought not the sentence but every attempt to have it lifted. Not surprisingly, Gilmore's macho bravado in the face of death snagged the imagination of Norman Mailer, whose book *The Execu-*

tioner's Song provided the basis for this movie.

Gilmore's life was stupidly wasted and his death was pointless, but Mailer transformed him into a romantic hero. Shucks, he was just a frustrated country boy with the soul of a poet, lookin' for love in all the wrong places. His *angst* is rooted in sexual rejection, while his sensitive soul is ground underfoot by life. To Mailer, Gilmore's problem wasn't wanting too much too soon regardless of the cost; it was the inability of women to deal with Gilmore's inability to deal with them. The film (adapted by Mailer himself, presented as a TV mini-series, then released in a more coherent, *risque* theatrical version) reiterates Mailer's thesis. Gilmore's thoughts are speckled with talk about God, soul, karma, and love, and he's portrayed as a sublime outsider straitjacketed by society but acutely aware of its hypocrisy and therefore defiant to the end. As this view is less than accurate, it's hard to take *The Executioner's Song* seriously despite its admirable qualities.

It's a well-executed movie (though the picture was often fuzzy) with stunning Utah scenery. Tommy Lee Jones is suitably borderline for the lead, while Rosanna Arquette is electrifying as his girlfriend; her Nicole is as psychotic as Gilmore. But the film exemplifies the problem of docudrama. Instead of augmenting history, it turns history to fiction and tries to replace it.

—Steven Grant

Three Stooges Comedy Classics

B&W. 1932-47. Moe Howard, Shemp Howard, Curly Howard, Larry Fine. 79 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Spotlite.

The Making of the Stooges

Color, B&W. 1984. Narr. Steve Allen. 60 min. Beta, VHS. $39.95. Karl.

His eyes were small and squinty, like raisins in thickened oatmeal. His nose was lumpy like an old potato. Greasy hair skittered down either side of his head from the part in the middle. His ears were the size of zweiback crackers. And his voice drifted between gruffy wiseguy and whining stooge. He was Shemp, AKA Samuel Horwitz. Columbia's official 10-tape Stooge collection is Shempless. Most people think of the Three Stooges as Moe, Larry, and Curly. But real fans know that Shemp was, in his homely way, one heck of a stooge. He could make you yock your tonsils out.

Just in time for the 30th anniversary of his death in November 1955, Spotlite Video has released *Three Stooges Comedy Classics*, essentially a best-of-Shemp cassette. It has "Malice in the Palace," "Sing a Song of Six Pants," and "Brideless Groom" in which the hapless lamebrain tries to find a woman who doesn't cringe over his sap manners and some of the grossest faces he ever made. The latter two classics were made in 1947, the year after his deteriorating brother Curly suffered a stroke and had to retire. But—as if to show that one Curly is worth three Shemps—the tape adds a bonus, "Disorder in the Court," one of

Curly's best, with prime work from Tarzan-impersonating Larry, gun-wielding Moe, a braless saloon dancer, and a judge begging the boys to "control your killer instincts!"

The strength of most documentaries is in the quality of the film clips. Since Columbia owns almost all Stooge films, Karl Video had access to only one Curly short ("Disorder in the Court," used extensively) and a few Shemps for *The Making of the Stooges*. This material is on several public-domain cassettes, along with other "rare clips" the box cover mentions. Stoogephiles and other nyukleheads have probably seen the boys' Simonize commercial, "Stop Look and Laugh" trailer, and excerpts from *The Ed Wynn Show* and *Hollywood on Parade*. New to me were the short clip from "Dancing Lady" with Joan Crawford, and two ten-second shots of the Stooges live on stage: Curly in the '40s doing a dance step, Curly-Joe in the '60s trying to do a dance step. So the action clips illustrating Steve Allen's narration of the Stooges' history may be familiar to hardcore fans. So is the biography for anyone who's read the Maurer, Forrester, or Feinberg books.

But a third of the tape offers quickie interviews with friends and coworkers, which are interesting and fun. Appearing are directors Ed Bernds and Jules White, Jack Mahoney, some Stooge cameramen, Curly's wife and daughter, longtime Stooge defender Leonard Maltin, Paul Winchell, and the ubiquitous Emil Sitka. Bernds had a great line on Larry: "Most of his ideas were irrelevant. He was a bit flakey." This coupled with a clip of Larry stomping on a piece of chewing gum and howling in triumph like Tarzan. It's totally idiotic—and hilarious.

The average viewer mildly curious about the boys' story will find the hour fairly entertaining and informative. But it sure whets the appetite for a Columbia Stooge documentary, full of slapstick montages and the home movies owned by Moe's daughter Joan.

—Ron Smith

The Best of W.C. Fields

B&W. 1930-33. 60 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Spotlite.

Here, the "best" of Fields is "The Golf Specialist," "The Dentist," and "The Fatal Glass of Beer," three of the five shorts Fields made during the sound era. For some reason many companies have released these same three prints—with the same splice marks, space between each film, and soundtrack problems—and always in the same order. (Why not include "The Barber Shop" and "The Pharmacist"?) If Spotlite's version has a shade less contrast than some others, it also costs a lot less.

"The Golf Specialist" was Fields' first sound short, and the last one featuring the peculiar moustache that had fringed the underside of his nose for 20 years. It's almost a direct filming of his stage skit as he attempts to tee off, only to be distracted by blowing newspapers and the various scamps and vamps who wander by. "The Dentist" is also a traditional stage sketch with Fields taking on a variety of peculiar customers, bouncing asides off them, misusing them, and in one famous sequence

seemingly having an erotic tryst with the lady, who in the throes of tooth-pulling, has wrapped her legs around his waist. "Fatal Glass of Beer" is pure cinematic delirium, a melange of British music-hall song and straightfaced *non sequitur*, an in-joke between Fields and his fans that parodies Alaska, melodrama, sentimental song, and even film reality. It has that beautifully timed, terribly delivered snow-in-the-face gag, and the line that's since gone into *Bartlett's Quotations* as a Fields original: "T'aint a fit night out for man nor beast."

Some viewers will wonder what's so funny, but others will smile from ear to ear at Fields' nuance and style. Viewing Fields on tape is like finding a bottle of Napoleon brandy in the basement. —Ron Smith

Judy: Judy Garland in Concert

Vols. 1 & 2. B&W. 1964. 60 min. Beta, VHS. $34.95. RKO.

It is hard to believe that Judy Garland once had a weekly TV show—and harder still to believe America ignored it. Pitted by CBS against *Bonanza*, *The Judy Garland Show* folded after 13 hour-long programs that are now classics. Some featured high-powered guest stars like Ethel Merman, Lena Horne, Judy's daughter Liza Minnelli, and a hot newcomer named Barbra Streisand, but the most successful format proved to be The Concert—inspired by Judy's 1961 triumph at Carnegie Hall and modeled on those glorious evenings at the Palace when she would threaten to "sing 'em all and stay all night." And RKO has released two of those concerts.

Sometimes her voice doesn't climb where she wants it to go. When she's faced with choreography, she looks as if she's forgotten it all and has just decided to hop around happily. She'll make not-so-quick changes and joke blackly about the "dead spot" in the show. And she even screws up lyrics, getting tongue-tied on "Toot, Toot, Tootsie." But you still can't take your eyes off her, because, through all the gaffes, she brings a rare and magical quality to her vocals that wipes every other variety-show singer off the map. Investing her material with raw emotionalism as well as that evocative throbbing belt, Judy Garland makes every song a risk; sometimes the cameraman has a hard time keeping up with her frenetic physicality. She doesn't merely sing a song. She lives it.

And she's also a funny lady, both in her deadpan asides to the audience and in her clown/tramp performances in "A Couple of Swells" (from *Easter Parade*) on Volume 1, and "Be a Clown" (from *The Pirate*) on Volume 2. The second cassette has more traditional Garland material (including a stunning "Man that Got Away") and the first gives her some spirituals and patriotic numbers you might not have heard her do before.

Though the programs are virtually devoid of production values, RKO's tape-to-tape transfer has good audio and only minor ghosting. The only problem is a segment duplicated on both cassettes in which Judy sings a sentimental tribute to her children, Lorna and Joey Luft. It's sweet, but once is enough. —Harvey Elliott

A Guide to Good Cooking

Color. 1984. Jacques Pepin. 85 min. Beta, VHS. $49.95. Videocraft (141 E. 55 St., N.Y.C. 10022).

Master Cooking Course

Color. 1984. Craig Claiborne, Pierre Franey. 57 min. Beta, VHS. $29.95. MCA.

If you don't know how to boil an egg, that's OK. As long as you know how to put a tape into your VCR, *A Guide to Good Cooking* with Jacques Pepin will run you through the basics, including how to cook an egg without getting a filmy layer of grey on the yolk or a rubbery white. From how many knives to buy to how to stop a cutting board from sticking (put a wet dishcloth under it) to techniques for cutting onions, garlic, and tomatoes, this former chef to Charles de Gaulle and other French presidents should help most interested cooks hone their kitchen skills. The finale is a fried-chicken recipe complete with sauce and fruit salad. Though it isn't part of a series, this tape could be since there is so much to cover. But it has more than enough tips to be worth viewing. (Do you know the difference between black, green, and white pepper?)

Drily efficient Craig Claiborne and peppery, shouting chef Pierre Franey demonstrate onion slicing and garlic chopping but don't show, as Pepin does, the importance of curled fingers or the way to position the blade against protruding knuckles. Their tape is a four-episode cooking show with only a few incidental tips along the way. (Some tips clash with Pepin's: Should the green sprout in the garlic be used? Craig says no. Should garlic be mashed? Pepin says yes, for extra strong flavor.) Four complete menus are shown step by step, starting with things like cream-of-carrot soup, sauteed cucumbers, and beet-and-endive salad, progressing to poached salmon, chicken Portuguese, and a fish mousse. You need space, a spare hour or two, a variety of pots, pans, and molds, and a food processor. Even buttered rice becomes an adventure (with bay leaf, tabasco, and parsley). But the results, for the experienced chef, are tempting and impressive.

So it's Jacques for beginners, Craig for seasoned viewers. And for all—both tapes have this—there's the "making petaled roses out of peeled tomato skin" trick.

—Ron Smith

Yes You Can Microwave

Color. 1984. Donovan Jon Fandre. 56 min. Beta, VHS. $29.95. JCI (5308 Derry Ave., Suite P, Agoura Hills, Calif. 91301; 818-889-9022).

The mistake most cooking programs (and books) make is assuming people know how to cook. There's a big difference between following a recipe and knowing how to cook. Donovan Jon Fandre, of the cable cooking program *Microwaves Are for Cooking*, doesn't make that mistake in this cassette introducing the principles of microwave cooking. His easygoing plain-spoken approach is a welcome relief.

This tape packs an enormous amount of information into less than an hour. Some of it is sketchy, and Fandre's delivery is quick, but you can go back to clarify. The show begins with an explanation of what cooking does to food and the differences between conventional and microwave techniques, demonstrates some experiments to help you get the feel of cooking this way, and offers 11 basic tips for new microwave cooks. There are "chapters" on cooking utensils and accessories and on the process of converting standard recipes to the microwave.

Then, of course, there are recipes, although they are included mainly to demonstrate the tips and skills discussed elsewhere in the show. This is not a video cookbook. But Fandre's versions of *Osso Buco* (Milanese veal shanks) and leg of lamb make the viewer drool right on cue. Included with the tape is a good little paperback of the same title for kitchen reference.

—Tim Onosko

QUICK TAKES/VIDEO

Sakharov

Color. 1984. Jason Robards, Glenda Jackson; dir. Jack Gold. 120 min. Beta, VHS. $69.95. Prism.

This straightforward biography begins in 1968 as Sakharov (Robards) begins expressing his ideas on global nuclear security and meets his second wife Elena Bonner (Jackson). Viewers can't help but shudder when the couple return to their apartment and, almost casually while checking the mail, he says to her, "It's a letter for you from the KGB." Other than David Rintel's necessarily talky script, this is as good as any made-for-HBO film. Strangely, however, it does not ignite the ideological fire or raise the emotional wrath one would expect from such a deftly made political film. —Tim Onosko

Jam: Trans Global Unity Express

Color. 1982. The Jam. 29 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Sony.

This Video EP shows the band at the time of its final disappointing studio LP. The nine songs, run through at breakneck pace, do nothing to help the uninitiated understand the Jam's huge appeal in its native England. Live, leader Paul Weller's handling of guitar and vocals prevents the complexities of the Jam's albums from coming through. A better bet is *Snap!*, a video companion to the band's posthumous greatest-hits album, compiling the best of its video clips. —Wayne King

Dio: A Special from The Spectrum

Color. 1984. Ronnie James Dio, Vinny Appice, Jimmy Bain, Vivian Campbell, Claude Schnell; dir. Phil Tuckett. 51 min. Beta, VHS. $29.95. Warner.

Hard-rock warhorse Dio is a charming host. Gliding about a stage festooned with lasers, smoke bombs, hydra-headed snakes, and Egyptian icons, he communes with an audience hungry for the good ol' days of hard-rock concerts. Director Tuckett sidesteps the developing notion of concert/conceptual tapes and paints the screen with the stage pyrotechnics. He *looks* at everyone in the band, unafraid to hold shots for longer than TV's customary six seconds, and the approach succeeds stylishly. Dio should blow *him* a few kisses.
—Frank Lovece

Do They Know It's Christmas?

Color. 1984. Documentary; Boy George, Sting, members of Bananarama, Duran Duran, Boomtown Rats, Kool & the Gang, Phil Collins, others. 30 min. Beta, VHS. $9.95. Vestron.

This 30-minute documentary on the making of the 3-minute song is loaded with behind-the-scenes hipness and giggles, some mugging for the camera, shots of the stars rehearsing their solos, clips of the unfinished song with and without backing music, and snippets of overheard conversation. Boy George knifes through it all in a quick interview affirming that helping the hungry in Ethiopia is a positive thing to do, and besides, "We're so indulgent, aren't we?" The project did bring attention to the world hunger problem, and offered a fragile hint that rock music still can change the world. A little. —Ron Smith

Playboy's Girls of Rock & Roll

Color. 1985. Michelle Rohl, Natalie Pace, Celena Allen & the Splitters, Brenda Holliday, Ava Cherry, Kimberly McArthur, Dagmar Peterson, Debra Raye, Cheryl Rixon, Rainey Haynes. 60 min. Beta, VHS. $59.98. CBS/Fox.

It seems perversely right that a country that refuses to endorse the Equal Rights Amendment would mask softcore porn under the guise of rock & roll. Except for the middling Rainey Haynes, these 10 performers have almost uniformly midrangy voices, little interpretive ability, and virtually no charismatic spark. They're all gorgeous, of course, about half displaying their wares bare. If you want to see a singing centerfold, rent *Rockin' with Seka.* The *women* of rock & roll deserve better than this. —Frank Lovece

Bill Watrous/Refuge West Band

Color. 1981. Watrous and big band; dir. Ric Trader. 24 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Sony.

In every big city with a music school, herds of big-band freaks follow horn soloists as if they were prophets. This video mini-concert is for them. Though not slick on the video end, the audio is impeccable. Watrous is the trombone legend who marshalled these 18 young players into a swinging ensemble. They strut their way through four numbers, capped by Joe Zawinul's anthemic "Birdland," and they smoke it well. For those of you with a surround-sound system or a serviceable quad receiver, the added sonic benefits are SQ-encoded. It's like sitting in the middle of a windstorm. —Noe Goldwasser

Slapstick

B&W. 74 min. Beta, VHS. $39.95. Spotlite.

There are plenty of rarities on this survey of silent slapstick comedy: seldom-seen Mabel Normand, Larry Semon, Vernon Dent, and Fatty Arbuckle material, Will Rogers *as* Ford Sterling in a Keystone Kops parody, and Billy West and Oliver Hardy imitating Charles Chaplin and Eric Campbell. Chaplin, Langdon, Keaton, and Lloyd are here too, but the focus is on the unusual and the forgotten. The narration is continuous and esoteric (do you care who Monty Banks' stuntman was?) as it explains how gags were done and which obscure stars to look for, but students of comedy won't mind. For subsequent viewings, just turn down the sound.
—Ron Smith

Little Rascals on Parade

B&W. 1932-38. Spanky McFarland, Alfalfa Switzer, Stymie Beard. 95 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95. NTA.

Crisp, clear prints unmarred by cuts, splices, or commercials help preserve the somewhat fragile charm of the Little Rascals. This six-short compilation from the favored Spanky/Alfalfa era offers antiques filled with coy character comedy ("He-Man Woman Hater" Alfalfa courting precocious Darla Hood) and bizarre situations (two gross little kids playing the parts of midget gangsters are dressed up like babies so they can rob a party given for real little kids). Treading the line between cute and numbing, nostalgic and depressing, most of the shorts are fairly amusing—and the two mentioned near-classics.
—Ron Smith

Richard Pryor: Live & Smokin'

Color. 1971. 46 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95./LV. $34.95. Vestron.

I'll bet it wasn't even Pryor's idea to exhume this 14-year-old monologue—an off-night in an off-year. Shot at New York's Improvisation, it has neither the razor-cutting outrage of his later concert films nor the good humor of his mainstream movie roles. Virtually strung out on bitterness, Pryor clearly delights in knowing that the audience is united in one long uncomfortable squirm as he delivers dissertations on various shock-value topics, most having to do with sex and poopoo.
—John Walker

DIRECTORY

New Releases on Tape and Disc

The big news in this month's Directory is a trove of classic films from the '30s to the '50s—you know, old movies. Far from being musty artifacts, many of these gems are as involving and rewarding as anything produced today. And they're cheaper, too. Look for pricetags as low as $19.95, which is well below the original asking price for many of these titles. However, there is still no sign of price reduction for oldies at the rental counter.

The Silver Screen Edition label, making its Directory debut, has been formed by Prism Entertainment to compete with Kartes Video Communications in offering these $19.95 classics. Both companies make special efforts to find complete, best-quality negatives and prints, and to provide top-notch release copies. We screened one of Kartes' *Keystone Comedies* volumes and found the reproduction to be excellent. And Silver Screen's photography and liner notes are particularly impressive.

You'll find a pair of Bill Cosby tapes this month: *Bill Cosby, Himself,* a standup routine for grownups, and *Bill Cosby's Picturepages,* for preschoolers. Bill Murray's first serious dramatic performance, in an adaptation of Somerset Maugham's *The Razor's Edge,* got mixed reviews in the theaters—judge for yourself on video. *The Graduate* is making its second appearance on magnetic tape. CBS/Fox released and subsequently dropped it; now it's back under the Embassy aegis, this time in Hi-Fi stereo. Look for this more recent issue.

RCA/Columbia continues to release fine foreign films. Don't miss *One Wild Moment,* a French farce, and Ingmar Bergman's spellbinding *After the Rehearsal.* Pacific Video's *La Passante* and MGM/UA's *Gabriela* are also worth a look. Bio buffs will like Warner's *Sunrise at Campobello* (Franklin D. Roosevelt) and Prism's *The Gathering Storm* (Winston Churchill).

This month's "Video Collector" is devoted to Myrna Loy.

ADVENTURE

Alexander Nevsky. B&W. 1938. Nicolai Cherkassov, N.P. Okhlopkov. Teutonic knights battle serfs and warriors in 13th-century Russia. By Sergei Eisenstein. 108 min. Beta, VHS. (Russian, English subtitles). $19.95. Kartes.

Angels Die Hard. Color. William Smith. Small town invaded by bikers. 86 min. (R) Beta, VHS. $59.95. New.

Attock Force Z. Color. 1981. Mel Gibson, John Phillip Law, John Waters, Sam Neill. Locating a defecting Japanese official during World War II. 84 min. LV (side 1 CLV, side 2 CAV, CX). $29.95. Factory.

Bigfoot and Wildboy—Volume 1. Color. 1978. Ray Young, Joseph Butcher. Contains "The Secret Invasion," "Space Prisoner." 48 min. Beta, VHS. $29.95. Embassy.

Brody's Escape. Color. 1984. John Savage, Kelly Reno. WWII American pilot shot down over Nazi-occupied Hungary. 92 min. LV. $34.95. Vestron.

Brothers of the Wilderness. Color. 1984. George Randall, Charles Kivette, Mark Sawicki, Alina Szpak. Boy chooses between the wolf who taught him the mysteries of the forest and his parents. 60 min. Beta, VHS. $29 plus $2.50 s&h. Magic.

C.C. and Company. Color. 1970. Joe Namath, Ann-Margret. Mismatched lovers and motorcycles. 91 min. (PG) Beta, VHS. $59.95. Embassy.

Cattle Queen of Montana. Color. 1954. Barbara Stanwyck, Ronald Reagan, Gene Evans, Lance Fuller. Government agent investigates Indian disturbances. Beta, VHS. $59.95. Buena.

The Corrupt Ones. Color. 1967. Elke Sommer, Robert Stack, Nancy Kwan. Photographer unwittingly acquires precious medallion. 87 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95. Embassy.

Cyrano de Bergeroc. B&W. 1950. Jose Ferrer, Mala Powers, Edgar Barrier, Elena Verdugo, William Prince. Great scholar and poet, whose large nose brings him ridicule, falls in love. 112 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Silver.

Dead Wrong. Color. Britt Ekland, Winston Rekert, Jackson Davies. Drug-laden boat from Colombia heads into trap. 93 min. Beta, VHS. $49.95. Media.

Hit Lady. Color. 1974. Yvette Mimieux, Clu Galager, Joseph Campanella, Dack Rambo, Keenan Wynn. Female assassin in struggle for life. 74 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95. Prism.

Ice Station Zebra. Color. 1968. Rock Hudson, Jim Brown, Ernest Borgnine, Patrick McGoohan. Station at the top of the world guards top secret. By John Sturges. 150 min. (G) Beta (Hi-Fi). VHS (Hi-Fi Dolby stereo). $59.95. MGM/UA.

Inside Out. Color. 1975. Telly Savalas, Robert Culp, James Mason, Aldo Ray, Doris Kunstmann. Thief, former concentration camp commander recover stolen Nazi gold. 98 min. (PG) Beta, VHS. $59.95. Warner.

Invitation to a Gunfighter. Color. 1964. Yul Brynner, George Segal, Janice Rule. Gunslinger hired to kill outcast. 92 min. Beta, VHS. $59.98. Key.

The Little Drummer Girl. Color. 1984. Diane Keaton, Yorgo Voyagis, Klaus Kinski, Sami Frey, Michael Christopher, David Suchet, Eli Danker. Actress recruited by Israeli counterintelligence to trap terrorist leader. 130 min. (R)

Beta, VHS (closed captions). $79.95./LV. (cl. cap.). $39.98. Warner.

Long John Silver. Color. Robert Newton, Rod Taylor, Kit Taylor, Connie Gilchrist, Lloyd Berrell. Search for hidden fortune on Treasure Island. 109 min. Beta, VHS. $39.95. Gems.

Lovely...But Deodly. Color. 1982. Girl takes on school drug dealers. 95 min. (R) Beta, VHS. Vestron.

The Mackintash Mon. Color. 1973. Paul Newman, Dominique Sanda, James Mason, Harry Andrews, Ian Bannen, Michael Hordern, Nigel Patrick. Mission to stop traitorous master spy. 100 min. (PG) Beta, VHS. $59.95. Warner.

Monhunt. Color. Henry Silva, Mario Adorf, Woody Strode, Adolfo Celi. Syndicate tracks down supposed drug thieves. 93 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95. Media.

The Night of the Juggler. Color. 1980. James Brolin, Cliff Gorman, Richard Castellano. Psychotic kidnaps teenager. 100 min. (R) Beta, VHS. $49.95. Media.

Ninjo III: The Daminotian. Color. 1984. Lucinda Dickey, Sho Kosugi. Spirit of Ninja assassin drives girl to kill his enemies. 92 min. (R) Beta (Hi-Fi stereo, Dolby surround sound). VHS (Hi-Fi Dolby stereo). $79.95. MGM/UA.

Razorback. Color. 1982. Gregory Harrison, Arkie Whiteley, Bill Kerr, Chris Haywood, David Argue, Judy Morris. American searches Australian outback for missing journalist wife. 95 min. (R) Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi stereo). $79.95. Warner.

Sheeno. Color. Tanya Roberts, Ted Wass, Donovan Scott. Sheena defends her kingdom from evil prince. 117 min. (PG) LV (CX, closed captions). $29.95. RCA/Columbia.

Speciol Delivery. Color. 1977. Bo Svenson, Cybill Shepard. Ex-G.I., divorcee search for stolen money. 99 min. (PG) Beta, VHS. Vestron.

Stories & Fobles, Volume II. Color. Includes "The Emperor and the Abbott," in which a shepherd saves the Abbott from public embarrassment, "The Peddler's Dream," Beta, VHS. $49.95. Disney.

Storm Boy. Color. 1976. Peter Cummins, David Gulpilil, Greg Rowe. Boy must choose between pelican, aborigine friends, and outside world. 90 min. Beta, VHS. $49.95. Embassy.

Storytime Classics—Kothorine Hepburn's World of Stories. Color. 1983. "Jack and the Beanstalk," "The Musicians of Bremen," "The Nightingale," "The Emperor's New Clothes," "Tattercoats," "Beauty and the Beast." 78 min. Beta, VHS. Vestron.

The Stronger ond the Gunfighter. Color. Lee Van Cleef, Lo Lieh. Robber accidentally kills wealthy Chinese lord. 106 min. LV. $29.95. RCA/Columbia.

Tennessee's Partner. Color. 1955. John Payne, Rhonda Fleming, Ronald Reagan, Coleen Gray, Tony Caruso, Morris Ankrum. Gold miner befriends gambler. Beta, VHS. $59.95. Buena.

Carlin on Campus. Color. 1984. George Carlin in concert does "A Place for My Stuff," "Getting Through the Day," "Prayer," "Cars," more. 59 min. LV. $29.95. Vestron.

A Different Story. Color. 1979. Perry King, Meg Foster, Valerie Curtin. Two unconventional people, despite all odds, fall in bed. 107 min. (PG) Beta, VHS. $59.95. Embassy.

Toy Soldiers. Color. Cleavon Little. Friends of students caught in Central America attempt to rescue them. 85 min. (R) Beta, VHS. $69.95. New.

Treosures of Jamoico Reef. Color. Cheryl Ladd, Stephen Boyd, Roosevelt Grier, David Ladd, Darby Hinton. Search sunken Spanish galleon for gold. Beta, VHS. $59.95. World.

The Wild Ponther. Color. Spies, guerrilla fighters in Kung Fu combat. Beta, VHS. $49.95. World.

COMEDY

The Best of Mory Hartman, Mory Hortmon Volume II. Color. 1976. Louise Lasser, Greg Mullavey, Mary Kay Place, Graham Jarvis, Dody Goodman, Debralee Scott, Philip Bruns, Victor Killian, Claudia Lamb. Three Fernwood Flasher episodes. 70 min. Beta, VHS./LV. $29.95. Embassy.

Better Late thon Never. Color. 1983. Art Carney, David Niven. Struggling photographer, aging cabaret singer inherit 10-year-old heiress. 95 min. (PG) Beta, VHS. $59.98. Key.

Bill Cosby, Himself. Color. Cos in concert. 104 min. (PG) Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi stereo, closed captions). $59.98. CBS/Fox.

Bus Stop. Color. 1956. Marilyn Monroe, Arthur O'Connell, Hope Lange, Don Murray, Hans Conried, Betty Field, Eileen Heckart. Romance between cowboy and nightclub singer. 96 min. LV. $34.98. CBS/Fox.

Dinner ot Eight. B&W. 1933. Marie Dressler, John Barrymore, Jean Harlow, Wallace Beery, Lionel Barrymore, Lee Tracy, Edmund Lowe, Billie Burke, Madge Evans, Jean Hersholt, Karen Morley, Phillips Holmes, May Robson, Grant Mitchell. Park Avenue snob gives a dinner party. By George Cukor. 111 min. Beta, VHS. $39.95. MGM/UA.

The Emperor's New Clothes. Color. Art Carney, Alan Arkin, Dick Shawn. Two conmen plot to sell the Emperor new clothes. 60 min. Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi stereo, closed captions). $39.98. CBS/Fox.

The Flying Deuces. B&W. 1939. Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy, Jean Parker, Reginald Gardiner, Charles Middleton, James Finlayson, Harry Langdon. Ollie and Stan join Foreign Legion, then change their minds. 67 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Silver.

Gobrielo. Color. 1983. Marcello Mastroianni, Sonia Braga. Middleager starts complicated romance. By Bruno Barreto. 105 min. (R) Beta (Hi-Fi stereo, Dolby surround sound). VHS (Hi-Fi Dolby stereo). (Portuguese, English subtitles). $79.95. MGM/UA.

The Graduate. Color. 1967. Dustin Hoffman, Katherine Ross, Anne Bancroft, Mike Farrell, Richard Dreyfuss. College graduate, seduced by older woman, falls in love with her daughter. By Mike Nichols. 105 min. (PG) Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi stereo, closed captions). $59.95. Embassy.

Heortbreakers. Color. 1984. Peter Coyote, Nick Mancuso. Drama of modern male friendships. 98 min. (R) Beta, VHS. Vestron.

Hallywoad High. Color. 1976. Marcy Albrecht, Sherry Hardin, Rae Sperling, Susanne Kevin Mead. Four teenage beauties cruise the California coast. 81 min. (R) Beta, VHS. Vestron.

The Inspector General. Color. 1949. Danny Kaye, Walter Slezak, Barbara Bates, Elsa Lanchester, Gene Lockhart, Alan Hale, Walter Catlett. Salesman mistaken for inspector general by small Russian town. 102 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Silver.

Irreconciloble Differences. Color. 1984. Ryan O'Neal, Shelley Long, Drew Barrymore. Girl sues parents for divorce. 112 min. (PG) Beta, VHS. Vestron.

It Hoppened One Night. B&W. 1934. Clark Gable, Claudette Colbert, Walter Connolly, Roscoe Karns, Alan Hale, Ward Bond. Reporter, runaway heiress fall in love on a bus trip. 105 min. LV. $29.95. RCA/Columbia.

Keystone Comedies Volume One. B&W. 1915-16. Rosco "Fatty" Arbuckle, Al St. John, Mack Swain, Minta Durfee. Contains "Fatty's Faithful Fido," "Fatty's Tintype Tangle," "Fatty's New Role." 51 min. Beta, VHS (music soundtrack). $19.95. Kartes.

Keystone Comedies Volume Two. B&W. 1915-16. Rosco "Fatty" Arbuckle, Mabel Norman. Contains "Fatty and Mabel at the San Diego Exposition," "Fatty and Mabel's Simple Life," "Mabel and Fatty's Wash Day." 43 min. Beta, VHS (music soundtrack). $19.95. Kartes.

Keystone Comedies Volume Three. B&W. 1915-16. Rosco "Fatty" Arbuckle, Mabel Norman, Keystone Cops, Owen Moore, Mack Swain. Contains "Mabel Lost and Won," "Wished on Mabel," "Mabel, Fatty and the Law," "Fatty's Plucky Pup." 58 min. Beta, VHS (music soundtrack). $19.95. Kartes.

Keystone Comedies Volume Four. B&W. 1915-16. Rosco "Fatty" Arbuckle, Mabel Norman. Contains "Mabel's Willful Way," "The Little Band of Gold," "Mabel and Fatty's Married Life." 45 min. Beta, VHS (music soundtrack). $19.95. Kartes.

Keystone Comedies Volume Five. B&W. 1915-16. Rosco "Fatty" Arbuckle, Minta Durfee, Harold Lloyd, Charles Chase, Keystone Cops. Contains "Miss Fatty's Seaside Lovers," "Court House Crooks," "Love, Loot and Cash." 45 min. Beta, VHS (music soundtrack). $19.95. Kartes.

Keystone Comedies Volume Six. B&W. 1915-16. Mack Swain, Dave Morris, Cecile Arnold, Edgar Kennedy, Harry Gribbon, Chester Conklin. Contains "Ambrose's Nasty Temper," "Ambrose's Sour Grapes," "When

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Ambrose Dared Walrus." 54 min. Beta, VHS (music soundtrack). $19.95. Kartes.

Keystone Comedies Volume Seven. B&W. 1915-16. Mack Swain, Louise Fazenda, Mae Busch, Harry McCoy, Dell Henderson. Contains "Ambrose's Lofty Perch," "Ambrose's Fury," "Willful Ambrose," "Those Bitter Sweets." 46 min. Beta, VHS (music soundtrack). $19.95. Kartes.

Keystone Camedies Volume Eight. B&W. 1915-16. Sydney Chaplin, Mack Swain, Phyllis Allen, Keystone Cops. Contains "Gussle the Golfer," "Gussle's Day of Rest," "Gussle Tied to Trouble," "Gussle's Backward Way." 54 min. Beta, VHS (music soundtrack). $19.95. Kartes.

Kids from Candid Comera. Color. 1985. Allen Funt. Children's segments from *Candid Camera* series, with guest Muhammad Ali. 60 min. Beta, VHS. Vestron.

Let's Porty—Notional Bod Taste Comedy Finals. Color. 1983. Jackie Gross, Joe Restivo, Stanley Ralph Ross, Biff Manard, Don Hanvey, Jack Perdue, John Fox, John Graiman, Carrie Snow, David Tyree, Robert Schimmel, Richard Barsh. Comics compete for title of "World's Funniest Dirty Performer." 60 min. Beta, VHS. I.M.A.

The Loves and Times of Scaromouche. Color. 1976. Ursula Andress, Michael Sarrazin. Rogue in plot to assassinate Napoleon catches the eye of the Emperor's new bride. 92 min. (PG) Beta, VHS. $59.95. Embassy.

Meotbolls Port II. Color. 1984. Richard Mulligan, Kim Richards, John Mengatti, Misty Rowe. Summer fun at Camp Sasquatch. 87 min. (PG) LV. $29.95. RCA/Columbia.

Mr. Superinvisible. Color. Dean Jones. Researcher discovers invisibility. 91 min. Beta, VHS. $49.95. K-tel.

My Man Godfrey. B&W. 1936. William Powell, Carole Lombard, Alice Brady, Eugene Pallette, Gail Patrick, Mischa Auer, Alan Mowbray. Bum hired as butler puts heiress in her place. By Gregory La Cava. 95 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Silver.

No Smoll Affoir. Color. Jon Cryer, Demi Moore. 16-year-old photographer falls for 22-year-old rock singer. 102 min. (R) Beta (Hi-Fi stereo, closed captions). VHS (Hi-Fi Dolby stereo, cl. cap.). $79.95. RCA/Columbia.

Oh, God! You Devil. Color. 1984. George Burns, Ted Wass, Ron Silver, Roxanne Hart, Eugene Roche, Robert Desiderio. Angelic Almighty locks horns with Satan over a singer/songwriter. 96 min. (PG) Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi, closed captions). $79.95./LV (cl. cap.). $34.98. Warner.

One Wild Moment. Color. Jean-Pierre Marielle, Victor Lanoux. Divorced man seduced by teenager. 88 min. (R) Beta (Hi-Fi). VHS. (French, English subtitles). $59.95. RCA/Columbia.

Richord Pryor Live ond Smakin'. Color. Pryor in uncensored live concert at New York's Improvisation nightclub. LV. $29.95. Vestron.

The Sin of Harold Diddleback. B&W. 1946. Harold Lloyd, Jimmy Conlin, Franklin Pangborn, Lionel Stander, Rudy Vallee. Bookkeeper wins a bundle at the races. Includes football sequence from *The Freshman* (1925). By Preston Sturges. 90 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Silver.

Street Music. Color. 1981. Elizabeth Daily, Larry Breeding. Street singer, dancer help elderly neighbors. 88 min. Beta, VHS. Vestron.

Suppart Your Locol Sheriff. Color. 1969. James Garner. Drifter becomes sheriff of sagebrush town. 93 min. (G) Beta, VHS (closed captions). $59.98. Key.

Thot Darn Cot. Color. 1965. Hayley Mills, Dean Jones, Dorothy Provine, Roddy McDowall, Neville Brand, Frank Gorshin, Elsa Lanchester, William Demarest. A plea for help, scratched on a wristwatch, placed around the neck of a Siamese feline. 115 min. (G) Beta, VHS. $69.95. Disney.

The Three Stooges, Volume II. B&W. Moe Howard, Larry Fine, Curly Howard. "Uncivil Warriors" ('35), "Three Missing Links" ('38), "Micro-Phonies." 60 min. LV. $29.95. RCA/Columbia.

W.C. Fields Comedy Cavalcade. B&W. 1930-33. Three shorts: "The Golf Specialist" ('30), "The Dentist" ('32), "The Fatal Glass of Beer" ('33). 60 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Silver.

The Womon in Red. Color. 1984. Gene Wilder, Joseph Bologna, Charles Grodin, Gilda Radner, Judith Ivey, Kelly Le Brock. Boy chases girl. 87 min. (PG-13) LV, CED. $29.95. Vestron.

The Wamen. Color, B&W. 1939. Norma Shearer, Joan Crawford, Rosalind Russell, Joan Fontaine, Paulette Goddard, Ruth Hussey, Marjorie Main, Mary Boland, Lucile Watson. Men and wives. By George Cukor. 133 min. Beta, VHS. $39.95. MGM/UA.

DRAMA

After the Reheorsol. Color. Erland Josephson, Ingrid Thulin, Lena Olin. The theater, its delusions. By Ingmar Bergman. 72 min. (R) Beta (Hi-Fi). VHS. (English subtitles). $59.95. RCA/Columbia.

Angels with Dirty Faces. B&W. 1938. James Cagney, Pat O'Brien, Humphrey Bogart, Ann Sheridan, George Bancroft, Billy Halop. Two playmates: one a priest, the other a gangster. 97 min. LV. $34.98. CBS/Fox.

Birth of o Nation. B&W. 1915. Lillian Gish, Henry Walthall, Ralph Lewis, Mae Marsh, Wallace Reid, George Seigman, Spottiswood Aiken, Mary Alden, Walter Long. Southern view of the Civil War. By D.W. Griffith. 94 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Kartes.

The Blue Angel. B&W. 1930. Emil Jannings, Marlene Dietrich. Social decay. By Josef Von Sternberg. 105 min. Beta, VHS (German, English subtitles). $19.95. Kartes.

The Bostonions. Color. 1984. Christopher Reeve, Vanessa Redgrave, Linda Hunt, Madeline Potter, Jessica Tandy, Nancy Marchand. Faith healer brings daughter on tour. 120 min. (PG) Beta, VHS. Vestron.

The Caine Mutiny. Color. Humphrey Bogart, Jose Ferrer, Van Johnson, Robert Francis, May Wynn, Fred MacMurray, E.G. Marshall, Lee Marvin. Captain Queeg's instability during typhoon forces second-in-command to take over ship. By Edward Dmytryk. 125 min. LV. $34.95. RCA/Columbia.

Cal. Color. Helen Mirren, John Lynch, Donal McCann, John Kavanagh, Ray McAnally. Widowed librarian, restless young man. 104 min. (R) Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi). $79.95. Warner.

Careful He Might Hear You. Color. Wendy Hughes, Robyn Nevin, John Hargreaves. Child struggles to understand grownup world. 113 min. (PG) Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi stereo, closed captions). $59.98. CBS/Fox.

The Cold Room. Color. 1984. George Segal, Renee Soutenjijk, Warren Clarke, Anthony Higgins, Amanda Pays. Teenager relives horrors of Nazi Germany. 95 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95. Media.

Cauntry. Color. 1984. Jessica Lange, Sam Shepard, Wilford Brimley. Family fights to keep their farm. 109 min. (PG) Beta, VHS. $79.95. Touchstone.

Crimes of Possion. Color. Kathleen Turner, Anthony Perkins. Prostitute plays erotic power games. By Ken Russell. 101 min. (R) Beta, VHS (closed captions). $79.95. New.

The Darkroom. Color. Alan Cassell, Svet Kovich, Anna Jemison. Relationship between doctor, mistress, disturbed son. 96 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95. VCL.

The Evil that Men Do. Color. Charles Bronson, Jose Ferrer, Theresa Saldana. Killer is forced out of retirement to break Central American torture ring. 90 min. (R) LV. $29.95. RCA/Columbia.

A Farewell to Arms. B&W. 1932 Gary Cooper, Helen Hayes, Adolphe Menjou. Wounded World War I American soldier falls in love with British nurse. By Frank Bor-

zage. 78 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Silver.

Gaslight. B&W. 1944. Ingrid Bergman, Charles Boyer, Joseph Cotten, Angela Lansbury. Woman marries musician obsessed with finding her jewels. By George Cukor. 113 min. Beta, VHS. $39.95. MGM/UA.

The Gathering Storm. Color. 1974. Richard Burton, Virginia McKenna. Churchill's life, 1936-40. 72 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95. Prism.

Give My Regards to Broad Street. Color. Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr, Linda McCartney, Barbara Bach, Bryan Brown, Tracey Ullman, Ralph Richardson. Rock star discovers master tapes from his new album have been stolen. Music performances include "Yesterday," "Here, There and Everywhere," "Eleanor Rigby," "For No-One," "The Long and Winding Road," "No More Lonely Nights," "Band on the Run," "Silly Love Songs." 109 min. (PG) Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi stereo, closed captions). $29.98. CBS/Fox.

Golden Girl. Color. 1979. Susan Anton, James Coburn, Leslie Caron, Jessica Walter, Robert Culp, Harry Guardino, Curt Jurgens, John Newcombe. Untried female sprinter sets out to win three Olympic gold medals. 105 min. (R) Beta, VHS. $59.95. Embassy.

Grand Illusion. B&W. 1937. Jean Gabin, Pierre Fresnay, Eric von Stroheim. By Jean Renoir. 112 min. Beta, VHS. (French, English subtitles). $19.95. Kartes.

The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter. Color. 1968. Cicely Tyson, Stacy Keach, Sondra Locke, Alan Arkin, Laurinda Barrett, Chuck McCann, Biff McGuire, Percy Rodrigues. Deaf-mute enriches lives of lonely people in Southern town. 124 min. (G) Beta, VHS (closed captions). $59.95. Warner.

Heart of the Stag. Color. Bruno Lawrence, Terence Cooper, Mary Regan. Father, daughter, ranch hand in New Zealand outback. 94 min. (R) Beta, VHS. $69.95. New.

La Passante. Color. 1983. Romy Schneider. Two lovers, from prewar Berlin to present-day Paris. 106 min. Beta, VHS. (French, English subtitles). $59.95. Pacific.

The Last Laugh. B&W. 1925. Emil Jannings, Mary Delschaft, Kurt Hiller. Doorman becomes millionaire. By F.W. Murnau. 74 min. Beta, VHS (silent). $19.95. Kartes.

The Laughing Policeman. Color. 1973. Walter Matthau, Bruce Dern, Lou Gossett. Detective hunts down mass murderer. 111 min. (R) Beta, VHS (closed captions). $59.98. Key.

The Little Princess. Color. 1939. Shirley Temple, Richard Greene, Anita Louise, Cesar Romero, Arthur Treacher, Marcia Mae Jones, Ian Hunter, Miles Mander, Mary Nash, Sybil Jason. Waif finds lost father, helps him regain memory and will to live. 93 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Silver.

Made for Each Other. B&W. 1939. James Stewart, Carole Lombard, Charles Coburn, Ward Bond, Louise Beavers. Child of struggling couple becomes seriously ill. 85 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Silver.

Meet John Doe. B&W. 1941. Gary Cooper, Barbara Stanwyck, Edward Arnold, Walter Brennan, Spring Byington, Gene Lockhart, James Gleason. Tramp recruited by newspaperman and politicians to play "John Doe" in publicity campaign. By Frank Capra. 123 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Silver.

Mammie Dearest. Color. 1981. Faye Dunaway, Diana Scarwid, Steve Forrest, Howard da Silva, Mara Hobel, Rutanya Alda, Harry Goz. Story of adopted, abused daughter of Joan Crawford. By Frank Perry. 129 min. (PG) Beta, VHS. $59.95 (reissue). Paramount.

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington. B&W. 1939. James Stewart, Jean Arthur, Claude Rains, Edward Arnold, Guy Kibbee, Thomas Mitchell, Beulah Bondi. Freshman Senator shocked by corruption. LV. $29.95. RCA/Columbia.

My Therapist. Color. Marilyn Chambers. Adventures of sex therapist. 81 min. (R) Beta, VHS. $59.95. VCL.

The Natural. Color. 1984. Robert Redford, Robert Duvall, Glenn Close, Kim Basinger, Richard Farnsworth. Determination to achieve baseball superstardom. 134 min. (PG) LV (stereo, CX, surround sound). $34.95. RCA/Columbia.

The Night of the Generals. Color. 1967. Peter O'Toole, Omar Sharif, Donald Pleasence, Charles Gray, Tom Courtenay, Christopher Plummer, John Gregson, Philippe Noiret, Joanna Pettet. Three generals suspected of sadistic killing in Nazi-occupied Warsaw. By Anatole Litvak. 146 min. (R) Beta (Hi-Fi). VHS. $59.95. RCA/Columbia.

Of Human Bondage. B&W. 1934. Leslie Howard, Bette Davis, Reginald Denny, Frances Dee, Kay Johnson, Alan Hale, Reginald Owen. Cockney waitress captivates sensitive doctor. By John Cromwell. 83 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Silver.

The Outlaw. B&W. 1941. Jane Russell, Thomas Mitchell, Walter Houston, Jack Beutel. Legend of Billy the Kid. By Howard Hughes. 116 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Silver.

Partners in Crime: The Crackler. Color. James Warwick, Francesca Annis. Tommy and Tuppence track down forgers. 51 min. Beta, VHS. $24.95. Pacific.

Penny Serenade. B&W. 1941. Cary Grant, Irene Dunne, Beulah Bondi, Edgar Buchanan, Ann Doran. Childless couple adopt an infant, see their world crumble. By George Stevens. 95 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Silver.

The Pope of Greenwich Village. Color. 1984. Eric Roberts, Mickey Rourke, Daryl Hannah, Burt Young, Kenneth McMillan, Geraldine Page. Small-time thieves go for big score in Little Italy. By Stuart Rosenberg. 120 min. (R) Beta, VHS. $79.95. MGM/UA.

R.S.V.P. Color. 1984. Harry Reems. Hollywood novelist must survive a party in his honor. 87 min. (mature) Beta, VHS. Vestron.

Rachel, Rachel. Color. 1968. Joanne Woodward, Kate Harrington, Donald Moffat, Estelle Parsons, James Olsen, Geraldine Fitzgerald. Spinster schoolteacher's last chance at love. 102 min. (R) Beta, VHS. $59.95. Warner.

The Razor's Edge. Color. Bill Murray, Catherine Hicks, Theresa Russell, Denholm Elliott, James Keach. Search to find self takes man to Europe, the Himalayas. 129 min. (PG-13) Beta (Hi-Fi stereo, closed captions). VHS (Hi-Fi Dolby stereo, cl. cap.) $79.95. RCA/Columbia.

Roadhouse 66. Color. 1984. Judge Reinhold. Cruisin', makin' out, fast cars, fast women. 94 min. (R) Beta, VHS. $79.98. Key.

Rules of the Game. B&W. 1939. Marcel Dalio, Nora Gregor, Jean Renoir. Decadent social, sexual mores. By Jean Renoir. 105 min. Beta, VHS. (French, English subtitles). $19.95. Kartes.

Running Wild. Color. 1973. Lloyd Bridges, Dina Merrill, Pat Hingle, Morgan Woodward, Gilbert Roland. Opposing forces fight to save wild mustangs. 102 min. (G) Beta, VHS. $49.95. Media.

The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea. Color. 1976. Kris Kristofferson, Sara Miles. Merchant seaman, widow seek pleasure and sanctuary in each other. 105 min. (R) Beta, VHS. $59.95. Embassy.

The Sandpiper. Color. 1965. Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, Eva Marie Saint. Free-spirited artist meets traditional minister. By Vincent Minnelli. 117 min. Beta, VHS. $69.95. MGM/UA.

Santa Fe Trail. B&W. 1940. Ronald Reagan, Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland, Raymond Massey, Alan Hale, William Lundigan, Van Heflin, Guinn Williams, John Litel, Charles Middleton. Turbulent days before Civil War. By Michael Curtiz. 110 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Silver.

The Scarlet and the Black. Color. Gregory Peck, Christopher Plummer, John Gielgud. Irish priest, during WW II, devotes himself to saving POWs. 145 min. Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi stereo, closed captions). $59.98. CBS/Fox.

Scarred. Color. 1983. Unwed teenage mother turns to prostitution. 85 min. Beta, VHS. Vestron.

The Sleeping Tiger. 1954. Dirk Bogarde, Alexis Smith, Alexander Knox. Doctor's wife falls in love with violent patient. 89 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95. Corinth.

The Southerner. B&W. 1945. Zachary Scott, Betty Field, Beulah Bondi, Percy Kilbride, J. Carroll Naish, Norman Lloyd. Poor couple on Texas tenant farm. By Jean Renoir. 91 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Silver.

A Star Is Born. Color. 1937. Fredric March, Janet Gaynor, Adolphe Menjou, May Robson, Andy Devine, Lionel Stander. Self-destructive actor marries young movie hopeful. By William Wellman. 111 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Silver.

The Sterile Cuckoo. Color. 1969. Liza Minnelli, Wendell Burton, Tim McIntire. Lonely girl, shy freshman. 107 min. Beta, VHS. $49.95. Paramount.

The Stranger. B&W. 1946. Orson Welles, Loretta Young, Edward G. Robinson, Richard Long,

Martha Wentworth. Escaped Nazi war criminal turned school teacher. By Orson Welles. 95 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Silver.

The Strawberry Statement. Color. 1970. Bruce Davison, Kim Darby, Bud Cort, James Coco. Student revolution. 109 min. (R) Beta, VHS. $69.95. MGM/UA.

Streets of Fire. Color. 1984. Michael Pare, Diane Lane, Rick Moranis, Amy Madigan. Rock singer kidnapped. 93 min. (R) LV (stereo, CX, surround sound). $34.95. MCA.

Summer Magic. Color. 1963. Hayley Mills, Burl Ives, Dorothy McGuire, Deborah Walley, Una Merkel, Eddie Hodges, Michael J. Pollard, Peter Brown. Girl resettles her family in New England after financial disaster. 116 min. Beta, VHS. $69.95. Disney.

Sunday Bloody Sunday. Color. 1971. Glenda Jackson, Peter Finch, Murray Head. Loveless bisexual triangle. 110 min. (R) Beta, VHS. $59.98. Key.

Sunrise at Campobello. Color. 1960. Ralph Bellamy, Greer Garson, Hume Cronyn, Jean Hagen, Ann Shoemaker, Alan Bunce. FDR's battle to conquer polio, return to political life in the '20s. 143 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95. Warner.

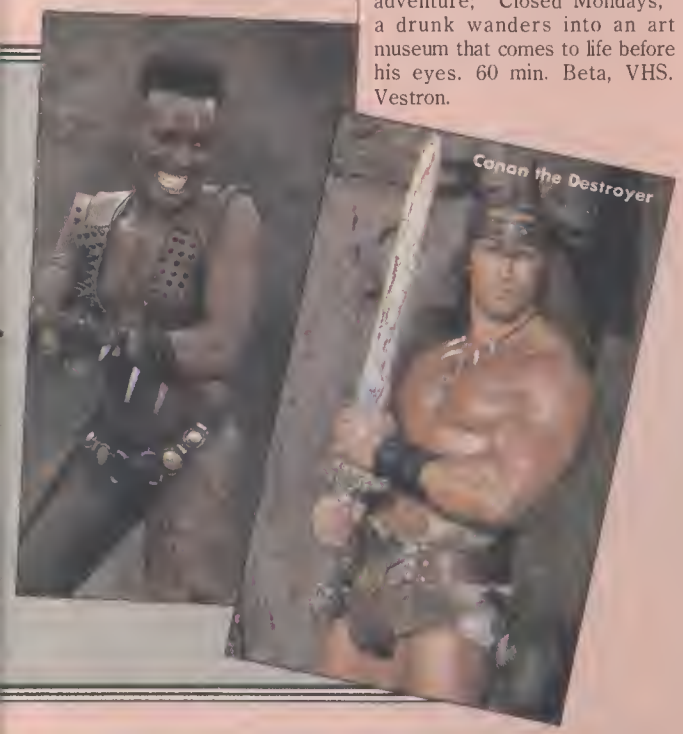
Terence Stamp. Lovers test the limits of sexual liberation. 91 min. (R) Beta, VHS. $59.95. Embassy.

Until September. Color. 1984. Karen Allen, Thierry Lhermitte, Christopher Cazenove. American tourist encounters Paris banker about to join his family on holiday. 96 min. (R) Beta, VHS (closed captions). $79.95. MGM/UA.

Witness far the Prosecution. 1957. B&W. Marlene Dietrich, Tyrone Power, Charles Laughton, Elsa Lanchester, John Williams, Henry Daniell. Man accused of murdering widow. LV. $34.98. CBS/Fox.

FANTASY and SCI-FI

Academy Award Winners Animated Short Films. Color. 1984. Includes Jimmy Picker's "Sunday in New York"; "Crac!," a glimpse at the life of a rocking chair; "Munro," a little boy in a man's army; "The Hole," conversation on a New York street; "Moonbird," a magical nocturnal adventure; "Closed Mondays," a drunk wanders into an art museum that comes to life before his eyes. 60 min. Beta, VHS. Vestron.



They Knew What They Wanted. B&W. 1940. Charles Laughton, Carole Lombard. He wanted to share prosperity, she wanted to escape poverty. 96 min. Beta, VHS. $34.95. RKO.

3:10 to Yuma. B&W. Glenn Ford, Van Heflin, Felicia Farr. Rancher escorts outlaw by train to stand trial for murder. 92 min. Beta (Hi-Fi). VHS. $59.95. RCA/Columbia.

Together. Color. 1981. Jacqueline Bisset, Maximillian Schell,

The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai. Color. 1984. Peter Weller, John Lithgow. Experiments open the door to the 8th Dimension. 103 min. (PG) LV (stereo). $34.95. CED. $29.95. Vestron.

Beany & Cecil, Volume VII. Color. Animated. Includes "20,000 Little Leaguers Under the Sea," "Malice in Blunder-Land," "Buffalo Billy," "The Dirty Birdy," "The Attack of the Man-Eater Skeeters," "Davy Crickett's Leading Lady Bug." 60 min. Beta (Hi-Fi, closed captions). VHS (cl. cap.). $24.95. RCA/Columbia.

Cinderella. Color. Jennifer Beals, Matthew Broderick, Eve Arden, Jean Stapleton. 60 min. Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi stereo, closed captions). $39.98. CBS/Fox.

Canan the Destroyer. Color. 1984. Arnold Schwarzenegger, Wilt Chamberlain, Grace Jones, Sarah Douglas, Olivia D'Abo, Mako. Queen Tamaris manipulates Conan into seeking magic treasure. 101 min. (PG) LV (closed captions). $34.98. CED. $29.98. MCA.

Dagger of the Mind/The Corbomite Maneuver. Color. William Shatner, DeForest Kelley, James Doohan, George Takei, Walter Koenig, Nichelle Nichols. Two episodes from *Star Trek* series. LV. $29.95. Paramount.

David Copperfield. Color. 1983. Animated. 72 min. Beta, VHS. Vestron.

The Empire Strikes Bock. Color. 1980. Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher, Billy Dee Williams, Anthony Daniels, David Prowse, Peter Mayhew, Kenny Baker, Jeremy Bulloch, Frank Oz, Alec Guinness, voice of James Earl Jones. The continuing battle to save the galaxy from Darth Vader and the Imperial Forces. LV (CAV, stereo, CX, surround sound, closed captions). $49.98. CBS/Fox.

The Enemy Within/Mudd's Women. Color. William Shatner, DeForest Kelley, James Doohan, George Takei, Walter Koenig, Nichelle Nichols. Two episodes from *Star Trek* series. LV. $29.95. Paramount.

A Family Circus Easter. Color. 1982. Animated. Billy, Dolly, and Jeffy discover why the Easter Bunny hides eggs. 60 min. Beta, VHS. $29.95. Family.

Felix in Outer Space. Color. Animated. Felix, Poindexter, Rock Bottom, and the Professor in outer space. 55 min. Beta, VHS. $29.95. Media.

Firestarter. Color. 1984. David Keith, Drew Barrymore, Freddie Jones, Heather Locklear, Martin Sheen, George C. Scott, Art Carney, Louise Fletcher. Child can torch things with a glance. 115 min. (R) LV (closed captions). $34.98. MCA.

Ghidrah, The Three-Headed Monster. Color. 1965. Yosuke Natsuki, Yuriko Hoshi, Hiroshi Koizumi, Emi Ito. Godzilla, Mothra, and Rodan defend Tokyo against Ghidrah. By Inoshiro Honda. 85 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Silver.

GI Joe: A Real American Hero—The Revenge of Cobra. Color. 1984. Animated. COBRA steals a top-secret laser core for deadly weather dominator. 99 min. Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi, closed captions). $39.95. Family.

He-Man and the Mosters of the Universe, Volume 2. Color. 1983. Animated. He-Man and friends battle Skeletor. LV. $24.95. RCA/Columbia.

Hercules. Color. 1959. Steve Reeves, Sylva Koscina, Fabrizio Mioni. Herc battles beasts, monsters, Amazon beauties for his beloved. 107 min. (G) Beta, VHS. $59.95. Embassy.

The Incredible Hulk, Valume I. Color. 1985. Doctor Robert Bruce Banner is transformed in times of stress into seven foot, one-thousand-pound Hulk. 70 min. Beta, VHS. $39.95. Prism.

It's a Wonderful Life. B&W. 1946. James Stewart, Donna Reed, Lionel Barrymore, Ward Bond, Thomas Mitchell, Beulah Bondi, Gloria Grahame, Henry Travers. Guardian angel gives charge a new sense of worth. By Frank Capra. 130 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Silver.

The Last Starfighter. Color. 1984. Robert Preston, Dan O'Herlihy, Lance Guest, Catherine Mary Stewart. 18-year-old video game wizard. 100 min. (PG) CED. $29.98. MCA.

The Magic of Doctor Snuggles. Color. 1985. Animated. Doctor Snuggles in a balloon race. 60 min. Beta, VHS. $29.95. Embassy.

The Man Trap/Charlie X. Color. William Shatner, DeForest Kelley, James Doohan, George Takei, Walter Koenig, Nichelle Nichols. Two episodes from *Star Trek*. LV. $29.95. Paramount.

The New Three Stooges—Volume VI. Color. 1965. Animated. "Stop Dragon Around," "To Kill a Clockingbird," "Who's Lion," "Foul Weather Friend." 30 min. Beta, VHS. $24.95. Embassy.

Puss in Boots. Color. Ben Vereen, Gregory Hines. Cat dresses up to gain fortune for his master. 60 min. Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi stereo, closed captions). $39.98. CBS/Fox.

The Snow Queen. Color. Lance Kerwin, Melissa Gilbert, Lee Remick, Lauren Hutton, Linda Manz. Boy and girl journey to ice palace. 60 min. Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi stereo, closed captions). $39.98. CBS/Fox.

Stor Wars. Color. 1977. Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher, Alec Guinness, Anthony Daniels, Peter Mayhew, David Prowse, Peter Cushing, Kenny Baker. Struggle against tyrannical leaders of the Galactic Empire. 121 min. LV (CAV, stereo, CX, surround sound). $49.98. CBS/Fox.

Toro, The Dragon Boy. Color. Animated. Taro's search for his mother, who has been turned into a dragon. 75 min. Beta (Hi-Fi). VHS. $39.95. RCA/Columbia.

Things to Come. B&W. 1936. Raymond Massey, Ralph Richardson, Cedric Hardwicke, Maurice

Braddell, Edward Chapman, Ann Todd. Early predictions of World War II, nuclear warfare, space exploration. By William Cameron Menzies. 92 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Silver.

The Warrior and the Sorceress. Color. 1984. David Carradine. Mercenary Kain meets two opponents and beautiful sorceress. 81 min. (R) Beta, VHS. Vestron.

Welcome to Pooh Carner—Volume 3. Color. Animated. Contains "Piglet Pride," "Roo's Great Adventure," "Snow Falls on Pooh Corner." 111 min. Beta, VHS. $49.95. Disney.

What Are Little Girls Mode Of/Miri. Color. William Shatner, DeForest Kelley, James Doohan, George Takei, Walter Koenig, Nichelle Nichols. Two episodes from *Star Trek*. LV. $29.95. Paramount.

Where No Mon Hos Gone Before/The Naked Time. Color. William Shatner, DeForest Kelley, James Doohan, George Takei, Walter Koenig, Nichelle Nichols. Two episodes from *Star Trek*. LV. $29.95. Paramount.

The Wind in the Willows. Color. 1983. Animated. Adventures of Mr. Toad, Ratty, Badger, and Mole; voices of Judy Collins, Charles Nelson Reilly, Roddy McDowall, Jose Ferrer, Eddie Bracken. 98 min. CED. $29.95. Vestron.

Zoam the White Dolphin. Color. 1974. Animated. Human family makes friends with dolphin family. 94 min. Beta, VHS. $29.95. Embassy.

HORROR

Children of the Full Moon. Color. 1981. Christopher Cazenove, Celia Gregory, Diana Dors, Jacob Witken, Robert Urquhart. Werewolf paterfamilias seeks a wife. 60 min. Beta, VHS. $29.95. Thriller.

The Confessionol. Color. 1975. Priest murders sinners. 104 min. (R) Beta, VHS. $59.95. Prism.

Cruise into Terrar. Color. 1977. Dirk Benedict, John Forsythe, Lynda Day George, Stella Stevens, Ray Milland, Frank Converse, Christoper George, Lee Merriweather, Hugh O'Brian. The discovery of a sarcophagus leads to tragedy on cruise ship. 100 min. Beta, VHS. $49.95. Prism.

Eyeball. Color. 1977. Model tracks down sadistic killer. 87 min. (R) Beta, VHS. $59.95. Prism.

Killer's Moon. Color. Anthony Forrest, Tom Marshall, Georgina Kean. Vicious killers on rampage. 92 min. Beta, VHS. $49.95. VCL.

The Monster Club. Color. 1981. Vincent Price, Donald Pleasence, John Carradine, Stuart Whitman, Richard Johnson, Britt Ekland, Simon Ward, Patrick Magee. Very exclusive club: people are dying to get in. 104 min. Beta, VHS. $39.95. Thriller.

Night of the Living Dead. B&W. 1968. Judith O'Dea, Russell Streiner, Duane Jones, Karl Hardman, Keith Wayne. Radiation storm causes corpses to rise and devour the living. By George A. Romero. 95 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Silver.

Nosferotu. B&W. 1922. Max Schreck, Alexander Granach, Gustav von Wagenheim. Story of Dracula. By F. W. Murnau. 63 min. Beta, VHS (silent). $19.95. Kartes.

The Pock. Color. 1977. Joe Don Baker, Hope Alexander-Willis, Richard B. Shull, R.G. Armstrong, Bibi Besch, Lee Holdridge. Wild dogs menace resort island. 99 min. (R) Beta, VHS. $59.95. Warner.

The Silent Screom. Color. 1981. Peter Cushing, Brian Cox, Elaine Donnelly. Pet shop with very unfriendly animals. 60 min. Beta, VHS. $29.95. Thriller.

Sleepowoy Comp. Color. 1983. Mike Kellin, Jonathan Tiersten, Felissa Rose, Paul De Angelo, Christopher Collet, Karen Fields, Katherine Kamhi, John E. Dunn. Killer hits summer camp. 88 min. (R) Beta, VHS. $69.95. Media.

The Terror. Color. 1963. Boris Karloff, Jack Nicholson, Dick Miller, Jonathan Haze. Soldier discovers strange doings in castle occupied by mysterious Baron. By Roger Corman. 80 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Silver.

Them! Color. 1954. James Whitmore, Edmund Gwenn, Joan Weldon, James Arness, Onslow Stevens, Sean McClory, Chris Drake, Fess Parker. Them are giant ants. 93 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95. Warner.

White Zombie. B&W. 1932. Bela Lugosi, Robert Frazer, Madge Bellamy, John Harron. Magician raises the dead to supply zombie plantation laborers. By Victor Halperrin. 73 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Silver.

Witching Time. Color. 1981. Jon Finch, Prunella Gee, Patricia Quinn, Ian McCulloch. Witch shows up for dinner, never wants to leave. 60 min. Beta, VHS. $29.95. Thriller.

INFORMATION

Bosic Art by Videa I: Painting. Color. 1984. Charles Haddock, instructor. Basics of drawing, design, color in painting. 120 min. Beta, VHS. $74.95. MasterVision.

Bosic Art by Video II: Drowing ond Design. Color. 1984. Charles Haddock, instructor. Classic technique, basic art skills drawn from intuition, the conscious, the subconscious. 120 min. Beta, VHS. $74.95. MasterVision.

Bosic Art by Video III: Color. Color. 1984. Charles Haddock, instructor. Principles of color. 120 min. Beta, VHS. $74.95. MasterVision.

Bosic Corpentry Series I, Constructing Stud Wolls, Tape 1. Color. 1984. George Giangrante, host. Components of stud walls, how to cut, measure, and form a wall. 31 min. Beta, VHS (closed captions). $34.95 plus $1.80 s&h. You.

Basic Corpentry Series I, Instolling Insulotion ond Sheetrock, Tope 2. Color. 1984. George Giangrante, host. Types of vapor barriers, how to install insulation, how to handle sheetrock, how to cut box openings. 32 min. Beta, VHS (closed captions). $34.95 plus $1.80 s&h. You.

Bosic Corpentry Series I, Principles of Poneling, Tope 3. Color. 1984. George Giangrante, host. How to start, glue, and nail. 25 min. Beta, VHS (closed captions). $34.95 plus $1.80 s&h. You.

Bosic Carpentry Series II, Instolling a Pre-Hung Daor, Tope 4. Color. 1984. George Giangrante, host. Alignments, using wood "shims" to insure the proper fit. 26 min. Beta, VHS (closed captions). $34.95 plus $1.80 s&h. You.

Bosic Carpentry Series II, Instolling o Lackset, Tape 5. Color. 1984. George Giangrante, host. Installing almost any lockset: locating and chiseling out the door, chiseling out the frame. 20 min. Beta, VHS (closed captions). $34.95 plus $1.80 s&h. You.

Basic Corpentry Series II, Installing o Suspended Ceiling, Tope 6. Color. 1984. George Giangrante, host. Components of a suspended ceiling, how they are used, how to square measure, cut, and install. 32 min. Beta, VHS (closed captions). $34.95 plus $1.80 s&h. You.

Bill Cosby's Picturepoges, Volume Two. Color. Cosby uses Picturepages to teach basic concepts like square/circle, the five senses, push/pull. Each lesson lasts two to three minutes. 55 min. Beta, VHS. $49.95. Disney.

The Bruce Jenner Winning Workout. Color. Bruce Jenner, Linda Thompson Jenner. Aerobics, calisthenics, stretching; 29-minute workout for beginners, 45-minute session for intermediates. 74 min. Beta, VHS. Active.

Citizen Kone. B&W. 1941. Orson Welles, Joseph Cotten, Dorothy Comingore, Everett Sloane, Ray Collins, George Coulouris, Agnes Moorehead, Ruth Warrick, Erskine Sanford, William Alland, Alan Ladd. Publisher's rise to power. By Orson Welles; includes photo essay by Robert L. Carringer covering story board sketches, set design, cinematography, makeup, memos on the Kane/Hearst controversy, 3-minute trailer. 119 min. LV (CAV, chapter stops, 5 sides). $89.95. Criterion.

Compututor. Color. Lessons for novice and experienced users of the IBM-PC, Apple IIe/IIc, TRS-80 Model 4/4p, over 40 compatibles; includes directions for operation and use of software, including dBase II, dBase III, Lotus 1-2-3, Wordstar, Visicalc. Developed by Chase Scientific. 12 parts. Beta, VHS. $39.95-$59.95 each. Embassy.

The Equestrians: 1984 Olympic Highlights. Color. 1984. Highlights of Equestrian Competition at the 1984 Summer Olympics. 90 min. Beta, VHS. $69.95 plus $3 s&h. ABC.

Hollywood Out-Takes & Rore Footoge. B&W. Bloopers, blunders, footage of Joan Crawford, Marilyn Monroe, Humphrey Bogart, W.C. Fields, James Dean, others. 84 min. Beta (Hi-Fi). VHS. $59.95. RCA/Columbia.

Judith Olney an Chacolote. Color. 1984. Techniques of cooking, decorating with chocolate; recipes include Chocolate Truffles, Chocolate Glazed Raspberry Cake, Mexican Chocolate Mousse, Chocolate Cabbage Leaves. 60 min. Beta, VHS. $39.95. Baffico.

King Kong. B&W. 1933. Fay Wray, Robert Armstrong, Bruce Cabot, Frank Reicher, Sam Hardy, Noble Johnson, Steve Clemente, Victor Wong, Merian C. Cooper, Ernest B. Schoedsack, James Flavin. Giant ape brought to New

York City. By Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack; includes documentary by Ronald Haver covering preliminary sketches, special effects, model design construction, script pages, budget, footage from "Creation," chief technician Willis O'Brien's earlier prehistoric film. 101 min. LV (CAV, chapter stops, 4 sides, audio track 1—dialogue sound track, audio track 2—commentary by Ronald Haver). $74.95. Criterion.

Mors and Beyand. Color. 1985. Fourth in the *Space Archive* series documents the Viking and Voyager missions to Mars and beyond; contains 500 stills, over 20 minutes of video (14 in 3-D) from the Viking missions, 100 Voyager stills of Jupiter and Saturn, data animation video, a 25 minute JPL film, "Voyager," 2 pair of 3-D glasses. 45 min. plus stills. LV (CAV, 3-D segment). $39.95. Vision.

Mousercise. Color. Upbeat exercises geared to children, preteens. 55 min. Beta, VHS. $39.95. Disney.

Triumph af the Will. B&W. 1937. Nazi Germany documentary with Hitler, Goebbels, Goering, Streicher, Himmler, Hess, others. By Leni Reifenstahl. 112 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Kartes.

Ultimate Fitness. Color. 1984. Deborah Crocker conducts timed exercises intended for men. 60 min. Beta, VHS. $39.95 plus $2.50 s&h. Esquire.

Victory at Sea Valumes VIII-IX. B&W. 1952. Narrated by Alexander Scourby; contains "Rings Around Rabaul," "Mare Nostrum," "Sea and Sand." 90 min. LV. $34.95. Embassy.

Victory ot Sea Volumes X-XII. B&W. 1952. Narrated by Alexander Scourby; contains "Beneath the Southern Cross," "Magnetic North," "The Conquest of Micronesia." 90 min. LV. $34.95. Embassy.

The World of dBase. Color. 1984. Guide to dBase III. 75 min. Beta (Hi-Fi). VHS. $39.95./LV. $29.95. RCA/Columbia.

MISC.

The Girls of Penthouse. Color. 1984. Centerfolds come to life. 60 min. LV. $34.95. Vestron.

MUSIC

Dovid Bowie. Color. In concert from his '83 Serious Moonlight tour: "Let's Dance," "Fashion," "China Girl," "Rebel Rebel," more. LV (stereo, CX). $24.95. Pioneer.

Elvis—Aloha fram Hawoii. Color. 1974. Elvis Presley sings "Suspicious Minds," "C.C. Rider," "Burnin' Love," "Blue Suede Shoes," "Blue Hawaii," "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry," "I Can't Stop Lovin' You," "Hound Dog," "I Can't Help Falling in Love with You," others. 75 min. Beta, VHS. $29.95. Media.

Glen Campbell. Color. 1977. Campbell and Royal Philharmonic Orchestra perform "Rhinestone Cowboy," "If You Go Away," "Wichita Lineman," "Good Vibrations," "Help Me Rhonda," "Surfer Girl," "William Tell Overture," "Southern Nights," "By the Time I Get to Phoenix," "Galveston," "MacArthur Park," "Amazing Grace," more. 90 min. Beta, VHS. $39.95. Prism.

Go, Johnny Go! B&W. Alan Freed, Jimmy Clanton, Chuck Berry, Eddie Cochran, Ritchie Valens, Jackie Wilson, the Cadillacs, Jo Ann Campbell, the Flamingoes. Promoter seeks unknowing winner of talent search. 83 min. Beta, VHS. $29.95. Music.

Judas Priest Live. Color. "Hellion/Electric Eye," "Riding the Wind," "Heading Out," "On the Highway," "Metal Gods," "Bloodstone," "Breaking the Law," "The Sinner," "Desert Plains," "The Ripper," "Devil's Child," "Screaming for Vengeance," "Hell Bent for Leather." 83 min, VHS. $29.95. Music.

Kool and the Gong. Color. "Celebration," "Tonight," "Ladies Night," "Too Hot," more. LV (digital stereo, CX). $24.95. Pioneer.

Night Journey. 1961. Martha Graham, Bertram Ross, Paul Taylor. Legend of Oedipus retold in dance. 29 min. Beta, VHS. $69.50. Home.

Rainbow Goblins Story. Color. 1981. Fusion guitarist Masayoshi Takanka performs live at Japan's Budokan theater: "Prologue," "Once Upon a Song," "Seven Goblins," "The Sunset Valley," "The Moon Rose," "Soon," "Thunderstorm," "Rising Arch," "Plumed Bird," "You Can Never Come to this Place." 60 min. Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi stereo). $24.95. Paramount.

Randy Newman. Color. In concert at the Odeon: "Short People," "I Love L.A.," "Sail Away," "Mama Told Me Not to Come," more. LV (stereo, CX). $24.95. Pioneer.

Rubber Rodea. Color. "Need You Need Me," "Anywhere with You," "The Hardest Thing," "How the West Was Won," "Theme from Rubber Rodeo." LV (8 inch, stereo, CX). $10.99. Pioneer.

Sound of Applause. Color. Steve Lawrence, Michel Legrand, Eydie Gorme, Shirley Bassey, the Lettermen, Vic Damone, Jack Jones. Live from Cannes, France. 60 min. Beta, VHS. $39.95. K-tel.

Takanako World. Color. 1981. Masayoshi Takanaka plays 8 selections, including "Blue Lagoon," "Ready to Fly," at various sport resorts. Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi stereo). $24.95. Paramount.

Toking My Turn. Color. 1984. Cissy Houston, Margaret Whiting. A story about aging. 87 min. Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi stereo). $39.95. Pacific.

Till the Clouds Roll By. Color. 1946. Lena Horne, Judy Garland, Frank Sinatra, Cyd Charisse, Gower Champion, Dinah Shore, Van Johnson, June Allyson, Lucille Bremer, Kathryn Grayson, Van Heflin, Tony Martin, Angela Lansbury, Robert Walker, Virginia O'Brien. Salute to Jerome Kern, with 22 of his songs. 120 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95. Silver.

Tina Turner—Privote Dancer. Color. "What's Love Got to Do with It," "Better Be Good to Me," "Let's Stay Together." LV (8 inch, stereo, CX). $12.99. Pioneer.

Tino Turner—Queen of Rack 'n' Roll. Color. At Harlem's Apollo Theater; includes "Nutbush City Limits," "Hot Legs," "Proud Mary," "Bitch Is Back," "Honky Tonk Woman," "Disco Fever," others. 60 min. LV (stereo). $24.95. Factory.

Whom! The Video. Color. "Wham! Rap," "Bad Boys," "Club Tropicana," "Wake Me up Before You Go-Go," "Careless Whisper," "Last Christmas." Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi stereo, closed captions). $19.98. CBS/Fox.

Yeaman af the Guard. Color. Joel Grey stars in the opera by Gilbert & Sullivan. LV (stereo, CX). $24.95. Pioneer.

Yessongs. Color. 1974. 1973 concert of the original Yes. 70 min. LV (stereo). $34.95. Vestron.

You Were Never Lovelier. B&W. 1942. Fred Astaire, Rita Hayworth, Adolphe Menjou, Leslie Brooks, Adele Mara, Xavier Cugat. Boy chases girl. 98 min. LV. $29.95. RCA/Columbia.

SPORTS

1958 NFL Chompionship Game. Color. 1984. Landmark 23-17 Baltimore Colts overtime victory over the New York Giants; 11 starters, including Frank Gifford, Sam Huff, John Unitas, and Gino Marchetti, later made the Hall of Fame. 47 min. Beta, VHS. $39.95. NFL.

1966 ond 1967 NFL Champianship Games. Color. 1984. 1967 Green Bay-Dallas Championship game was played in -13 degree weather; Packers' 1966 34-27 victory over the Cowboys. 52 min. Beta, VHS. $39.95. NFL.

Pro Wrestling Illustroted Presents Lards of the Ring Superstars ond Superbouts. Color. 1985. Wrestling's best. 60 min. Beta, VHS. Vestron.

The Star Ascending: The Dallas Cowboys 1965-69. Color. 1984. The Cowboys win over 70% of their games with innovative, flashy offense and Doomsday Defense. 124 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95. NFL.

Super Stars of the Super Bawls. Color. 1984. Profiles each game's MVP, outstanding players. 50 min. Beta, VHS. $39.95. NFL.

MYRNA LOY COLLECTOR

Ants. Color. 1977. Robert Foxworth, Suzanne Somers, Lynda Day George, Myrna Loy. Ants become killers. 88 min. Beta (Hi-Fi). VHS (stereo). $49.95. U.S.A.

The Bachelor ond the Bobby Soxer. B&W. 1947. Cary Grant, Myrna Loy, Shirley Temple, Rudy Vallee. Playboy wines and dines girlfriend's teen-age sister. 95 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95. Blackhawk./$34.95. Nostalgia.

The End. Color. 1978. Burt Reynolds, Sally Field, Dom DeLuise, Joanne Woodward, Kristy McNichol, Robby Benson, David Steinberg, Norman Fell, Carl Reiner, Pat O'Brien, Myrna Loy. Dying man tries various ways of committing suicide. By Burt Reynolds. 100 min. (R) Beta, VHS. $59.98./LV. $34.95. CED. $19.98. CBS/Fox.

From the Terroce. Color. 1960. Paul Newman, Joanne Woodward, Myrna Loy, Ina Balin, Leon Ames, Elizabeth Allen, Barbara Eden, George Grizzard. Poor boy's rise to financial and social success. Beta, VHS. $79.95. CBS/Fox.

The Jozz Singer. B&W. 1927. Al Jolson, Mary McAvoy, Warner Oland, William Demarest, Myrna Loy, Eugenie Besserer, Otto Lederer. Cantor's son goes into show business. Songs include "Mammy," "Toot Toot Tootsie." By Alan Crosland. 88 min. Beta, VHS. $59.98./CED. $29.98. CBS/Fox.

Just Teli Me What You Wont. Color. 1980. Ali McGraw, Alan King, Myrna Loy, Keenan Wynn, Tony Roberts. Saving a movie studio. 113 min. (R) Beta, VHS. $39.98 (reissue). Warner.

Mr. Blondings Builds His Dream House. B&W. 1948. Cary Grant, Myrna Loy, Melvyn Douglas, Sharyn Moffet, Connie Marshall, Louise Beavers. Couple builds dream house in the country. 93 min. Beta, VHS. $19.95 (reissue). Nostalgia.

The Red Pony. Color. 1949. Myrna Loy, Robert Mitchum, Louis Calhern, Shepperd Strudwick, Peter Miles, Margaret Hamilton, Beau Bridges. 89 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95. NTA.

Summer Solstice. Color. 1981. Henry Fonda, Myrna Loy, Lindsey Crouse, Stephen Collins. 75 min. Beta, VHS. $69.95. Thorn EMI.

Vonity Fair. B&W. 1932. Myrna Loy, Conway Tearle. Beta, VHS. $39.95. Buff.

SOURCES

ABC Video Enterprises, 2040 Ave. of the Stars, 2nd floor, Los Angeles, Calif. 90067 (800-445-3800).

Active Home Video, 211 S. Beverly Dr. #100, Beverly Hills, Calif. 90212 (213-274-8233).

Boffico/Breger Video, 915 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10010 (212-254-3900).

Blockhowk Films, One Old Eagle Brewery, Box 3990, Davenport, Iowa 52808 (319-323-9736).

Bueno Vista Home Video, 500 S. Buena Vista St., Burbank, Calif. 91521 (818-840-1859).

Movie **Buff** Video, 250 W. 95th St., New York, N.Y. 10025 (telephone n.a.).

CBS/Fox Video, 1211 Sixth Ave., 2nd floor, New York, N.Y. 10036 (212-819-3200).

Corinth Films, 410 E. 62nd St., New York, N.Y. 10021 (telephone n.a.).

Criterion, Box 2310, Santa Monica, Calif. 90406 (800-446-2001; Calif. 800-443-2001).

Walt **Disney** Home Video, 500 S. Buena Vista St., Burbank, Calif. 91521 (818-840-1859).

Embossy Home Entertainment, 1901 Ave. of the Stars, Los Angeles, Calif. 90067 (213-553-3600).

Esquire Press, Box 648, Holmes, Pa. 19043 (telephone n.a.).

Fomily Home Entertainment, 7920 Alabama Ave., Canoga Park, Calif. 91304 (800-423-7455).

Disc **Foctory,** 1680 N. Vine St. #415, Hollywood, Calif. 90028 (213-463-0091).

Video **Gems,** 731 N. La Brea Ave., Box 38188, Los Angeles, Calif. 90038 (213-938-2385).

Homevideo Exclusives, 2105 Lakeland Ave., Lakeland, N.Y. 11779 (telephone n.a.).

I.M.A. Inc., 5514 Satsuma Ave., North Hollywood, Calif. 91601 (telephone n.a.).

K-tel Video, 11311 K-tel Dr., Minnetonka, Minn. 55354 (800-328-5540).

Kortes Video Communications—VC 2000, 10 E. 106th St., Indianapolis, Ind. 46280 (800-428-6163, Ind. 800-692-6048).

Key Video, 1298 Prospect Ave., La Jolla, Calif. 92037 (619-459-0500).

Mogic Thumb Productions, 5427 San Fernando Rd. West, Los Angeles, Calif. 90039. (213-240-6041).

MosterVision, 969 Park Ave., New York, N.Y. 10028 (212-879-0448).

MCA Home Video, 70 Universal City Plaza, Universal City, Calif. 91608 (818-508-4315).

Medio Home Entertainment, 5730 Buckingham Pkwy., Culver City, Calif. 90230 (213-216-7900, 800-421-4509).

MGM/UA Home Video, 1350 Sixth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10019 (212-408-0600).

Music Media, c/o Media Home Entertainment, 5730 Buckingham Pkwy., Culver City, Calif. 90230 (213-855-1611).

New World Video, 1888 Century Park East, 5th floor, Los Angeles, Calif. 90067 (213-201-0741).

NFL Films Video, 330 Fellowship Rd., Mt. Laurel, N.J. 08054 (609-778-1600, ext. 301).

Nostolgio Merchant, 5730 Buckingham Pkwy., Culver City, Calif. 90230 (213-216-7900, 800-421-4509).

NTA Home Entertainment, 12636 Beatrice St., Box 66930, Los Angeles, Calif. 90066 (213-306-4040).

Pocific Arts Video Records, Box 22770, Carmel, Calif. 93922 (408-624-4704).

Poromount Home Video, 5451 Marathon St., Hollywood, Calif. 90038 (213-468-5000).

Pioneer Artists, c/o Pioneer Video, 200 W. Grand Ave., Montvale, N.J. 07645 (201-573-1122).

Prism Entertainment Corporation, 1875 Century Park E. #1010, Los Angeles, Calif. 90067 (213-277-3270).

RCA VideoDiscs, 1133 Sixth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10036 (212-930-4700).

RCA/Columbia Pictures Home Video, 2901 W. Alameda Ave., Burbank, Calif. 91505 (818-954-4950).

RKO Home Video, 15840 Ventura Blvd. #303, Encino, Calif. 91436 (818-906-1722).

Silver Screen Editions, 1875 Century Park E. #1010, Los Angeles, Calif. 90067 (213-277-3270).

Thorn EMI Home Video, 1370 Sixth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10019 (212-977-8990).

Thriller Video, 7920 Alabama Ave., Canoga Park, Calif. 91304-4991 (818-888-3040).

Touchstone Video, 500 S. Buena Vista St., Burbank, Calif. 91521 (818-840-1859).

U.S.A. Home Video, 7920 Alabama Ave., Canoga Park, Calif. 91304 (800-423-7455).

VCL Communications, 5730 Buckingham Pkwy., Culver City, Calif. 90230 (213-216-7900, 800-421-4509).

Vestron Video, 1011 High Ridge Rd., Box 4000, Stamford, Conn. 06907 (203-968-0000).

Video **Vision** Associates, 7 Waverly Pl., Madison, N.J. 07940 (201-377-0302).

Worner Home Video, 4000 Warner Blvd., Burbank, Calif. 91522 (818-954-6000).

World Video Pictures, 12401 Wilshire Blvd. #102, Los Angeles, Calif. 90025 (213-820-6100).

Video **Yesteryeor**, Box C, Sandy Hook, Conn. 06482 (800-243-0987).

You Can Do It Videos, Box 25060, Philadelphia, Pa. 19147 (800-524-0359).

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EYES ON: 25 INCH SCREENS

THE EDITORS TEST VIEW TOP-END MONITORS

Comparison tests are popular with readers because there is usually a winner, and of course the best is what we all want. But what is the best? If you've ever watched one of those beauty pageants where the contestants are judged by numerical scores, like us, you've probably disagreed with the result. Well, we have discussed the idea of a shootout between monitors or monitor/receivers here at VIDEO. Now we've bitten the bullet and done it—and we're pleased enough with the results to consider doing more such tests in the months ahead.

We assembled the best of the monitors we have tested over the last two years or so. Our initial requirements were that contestants should be 25- or 26-inch models that have been "Videotest"-ed. In alphabetical order, the models we compared were: Jensen AVS-3250 monitor ("Videotests," April 1983), Proton 602M monitor (March 1984), RCA FKC2600 monitor/receiver (March 1985), and Sony 25-XBR monitor/receiver (February 1985). We've excerpted our "Videotest" results and ratings for each monitor, below. You'll notice that *all* received excellent ratings. High quality is taken for granted in this test—we just wanted to give our personal preferences for the best of the best.

For years we've used a Sony KV-2501 monitor as part of our viewing-room system. Since we all knew it well, we brought it in as a benchmark. Though it did qualify as a competitor on the two criteria for entry, even Sony concedes that the XBR series outperforms the Profeel series, so we didn't think of it as a competitor. Only one qualifying monitor wasn't there: the NEC C25-900A. In many ways it is quite close to the Jensen that we included, so we don't think that we short-changed NEC.

The judges were our New York-based editors: Doug Garr, Editor; Richard Jaccoma, Managing Editor; Mark Fleischmann, Associate Editor; William Wolfe, Assistant Editor; and myself, Technical Editor. We chose that crew because we have often discussed the "what's best" question. When they've asked me, they've usually claimed I never give them a straight answer. We all prepared our ratings separately and reported on them separately. I haven't seen the others. There is one thing that I did weasel out of them: they now understand why I never give a straight answer. On any one criterion you can rank the performance of a group of like objects, but what weight is given to each criterion is a very personal matter indeed.

Test signals were supplied by an industrial-level B&K 1260 NTSC generator and a consumer-level Pioneer LD-1100 LaserVision player. We chose those signals because of their repeatability and high quality. We used test patterns from both sources and program material from the LV player. The criteria on which we rated performance were: picture sharpness, black level, accuracy of color, range of tones within the picture, how well the auto color circuit worked, ease of control operation, and body design.

What follows are our individual comments. We hope they help you to understand why *you* have to be the final judge of what is best for your needs.

—Lancelot Braithwaite, Technical Editor

The four units we "eye-tested" scored fairly high on overall color quality. My personal choices were the Proton (from a signal generator) and the Sony (from an actual picture, in this case an LV disc). In both instances, both TVs were superior to the other two, which came in an almost equally distant third.

We asked our panel the question "how well does auto color work?"—which was construed to mean how good are the factory presets? In most cases, very good. Most manufacturers strive for excellence in resolution and a happy balance in tint and tonal range; after all, they don't know whether you're viewing vibrant landscapes or flushed faces on soap operas. So when it came to viewing fleshtones, I could not have tweaked the Sony any better than the preset. The faces looked so real it was nearly frightening. On the other hand, I preferred the Jensen's brightness for white crystal artworks and the RCA for bronze sculptures.

I felt the Sony was the handsomest of all designs, but I'm a genuine sucker for the modern high-tech look. One thing that annoyed me about all but the Jensen: the controls are either in inconvenient locations or hard to use. Ever since the advent of remote control, companies have neglected this aspect of TV design. Bring back dial volume, I say.

—Doug Garr

Photos by Robert Mueller

DATA
Date of Videotest: December 1984
Suggested retail price: $1195, monitor; $199.95, SU-171 pedestal; $149.95, SU-172 cabinet (not shown)
Dimensions: 21-5/8 x 27-5/8 x 18-7/8 inches (h/w/d), monitor; 16-5/8 x 21-3/4 x 18-1/8 inches, pedestal
Weight: 99.25 lbs., without speakers or pedestal; speakers, approximately 3.4 lbs. each; pedestal, approximately 33 lbs.
Screen size: 25 inches, measured diagonally (square-cornered tube)

RESULTS & RATINGS
Horizontal resolution (picture sharpness): 400 lines, bandpass at CRT 5MHz
Video S/N (snowiness, luminance): 54+dB at input to green gun
Accuracy of colors: excellent
Overall picture quality: excellent
Overall performance: excellent

Our video beauty pageant helped me remember something I (and most people) spend lots of time forgetting: a video image is just an image, and not reality itself. That's *not* a man biting a dog you're looking at, it's an electronically produced image of a man biting a dog, a picture and, in the most elementary sense, a work of art. As such, video pictures are subject to the whims of individual taste and visual preference.

And boy, were they ever. As we viewed the various monitors, I was amazed at how often I heard one editor sputter to another, "What? You think *this* color's better than *that*? You think *that* picture's better than *this*?" Or words to that effect, always uttered with clear, "What're you? Crazy?" inflections. All of which made it even more impressive when we found areas of agreement. The Sony XBR was the hands-down winner in most categories, and I rated it highest in picture sharpness, color accuracy, tonal range, auto color control, and ease of control. Of course that last category is really impossible to judge fairly in a single afternoon—one really has to live with a piece of equipment for a good long while to pass informed judgment on its ergonomic virtues. I will be pleased to volunteer my services if Sony will volunteer its XBR.

I was also impressed with Proton's performance in most categories (I rated it a strong second) although I was surprised to find that Jensen passed it in picture sharpness. And I should note that I have based all my judgments much more on the pictures viewed from an LV video source than on the images from a signal generator—since I spend only a small part of each viewing day staring at test patterns.

And finally, in the area of body design I alone amongst the editors rated Jensen the highest. One editor thought it "looks like a coffin," but I found its 1950s-futuristic look clean, fanciful, and pleasingly *Jetson*-esque.

—Richard Jaccoma

On picture sharpness ranking the competitors is easy: Sony XBR, Proton, RCA Dimensia, and Jensen. That ranking held for both generator patterns and for program material.

On accuracy of color I waffle. We used three subcriteria to arrive at a single rating: intensity, vibrancy (color), and tint (hue). My final rating (because we couldn't leave any blanks) was XBR, RCA, Proton, and Jensen in that order. I still have misgivings. My final choices were based on the ability to get the most pleasing fleshtones. On other material the RCA and Proton exchange places.

On reproducing the deepest black level without compromising the other picture characteristics, the order was Proton, Jensen, RCA, and XBR. Going almost hand in hand with that was what we nicknamed range of tones. (You probably think of that as contrast.) There the order was Proton, RCA, Jensen, and XBR. Remember, though, that many monitors have a Picture control that modifies contrast, color intensity, and brightness together. Judging those two characteristics was relatively easy.

Then came the ease-of-controls question. That was tough because some of the competitors were monitors with no remote-control capability, some were monitor/receivers with remotes (and even remote control of picture characteristics), and the RCA was the heart of the Dimensia system, with lots of system-control capability. As pure monitors I favor the ones with continuous control of picture characteristics: the Proton, Jensen, and RCA over the XBR, which has electronically stepped settings. Within those groups the Proton and Jensen beat the RCA because their controls are bigger and easier to adjust. I liked the XBR's stepped controls more than others I've tried—the XBR has smaller steps than is usual.

The XBR permits you to control the picture characteristics from the remote, and that makes it convenient for casual viewing. I give the XBR the edge because of its smaller steps and ability to alter its basic color temperature from the remote. The RCA does not offer control of picture characteristics from its remote control—but if used in a Dimensia system, it offers so much control of the system that it is without equal. So on overall convenience the RCA edges out the XBR.

DATA
Date of Videotest: December 1983
Suggested retail price: $1050
Dimensions: 23-3/4 x 26 x 19-3/4 inches (h/w/d)
Weight: 75 lbs.
Screen size: 25 inches, measured diagonally

RESULTS & RATINGS
Horizontal resolution (picture sharpness): approximately 400 lines
Video S/N (snowiness, luminance): 50dB at CRT
Accuracy of colors: excellent
Overall picture quality: excellent
Overall performance: excellent

On body design my ranking is the XBR when used on its optional pedestal, Proton, RCA, and Jensen. By itself without the pedestal the Sony would drop to third position with the remainder of the order unchanged.

Auto color seemed to work best on the XBR, followed by RCA, Proton, and Jensen. On the overall rating I would choose the XBR in first place, then the Proton, RCA, and Jensen.

—Lancelot Braithwaite

Viewing four monitors at once—five if you count the Sony Profeel we used for reference—seemed a bewildering experience at first, but for this viewer it ultimately established two things beyond doubt. First, individual models have characteristics of their own that make them good at some things and only fair to poor at others. Yes, there is such a thing as a "good" unit or a "bad" one, but within a group of monitors of the same relative sophistication such value judgments can be misleading. Second, measurements and test charts aren't worth a hill of beans by themselves; they can only enhance the understanding one acquires by looking at *pictures*. Anyway, here are my observations/impressions.

The Sony XBR was clearly the finest and most versatile overall performer, though it topped my ratings list only in picture sharpness (chart and picture tests) and color accuracy (picture only). Choosing for second place was tough, but Proton won out as the best overall performer—though *it* topped only one list, range of tones (picture). RCA's Dimensia was next, and Jensen took up the rear. Each of the last three was a more idiosyncratic set than the Sony. Proton was the least bright and had a moderate tendency toward blue—a tendency that was pronounced to a fault in the Jensen. The RCA Dimensia went in the opposite direction: its tendency toward red enhanced warm colors and, oddly, left reds themselves (such as an apple in a fruit bowl) looking flat and one-dimensional. The Jensen had the characteristic of being almost painfully bright. For longterm viewing and for me in particular that spells trouble. I preferred the restraint of the Proton and the RCA, though the XBR was comfortably balanced.

The Sony did relatively poorly in the chart tests; it was the pictures that made it shine, and it was the color prejudices of the other three in particular that did 'em in. The XBR was sensitive to color nuance, almost painterly, and much less noisy than the others. It made nearly everything look good. Not unexpectedly, Dimensia excelled at warm-toned scenes and Proton (much more often) at cool ones. Since my color prejudice tends toward blue, I found Proton—with its fine black-level performance thrown in—consistently better. The Jensen ran last in most tests, though it was reasonably viewable in most of the

picture tests.

I found the RCA's top-mounted controls superior to the rest, albeit narrow (but I've little fingers). I also appreciated Jensen's relatively wide knobs, though like the rest it mounted them at bottom, which is not the best place for them. I disliked the Sony's newfangled control arrangement. Proton's simple lines and basic black coloring constitute the most elegantly simple and functional-for-viewing body design. (Note: I use the Proton 600M 19-incher at home and suspect I would prefer it to all the units tested save—*perhaps*—the Sony XBR.) —Mark Fleischmann

This comparison proves that when picking a monitor, sacrifice and compromise are inescapable. If you're going to the trouble and expense of looking at monitors in the first place—and not just ordering the all-American household name brand from a catalogue—you're probably most concerned with picture quality. But if you think the tube with the best picture is an eyesore, or if its controls are difficult to use, your final decision may be to sacrifice the picture for a set you can live with. Approached from this angle, I'd have a hard time choosing between the Sony and the Proton. Don't discount the others, though: each has strong points you might consider important. Also note that the following comments were most often based on the set's ability to reproduce pictures, not test patterns of color bars.

The hands-down winner in the picture-quality categories was the Sony. It produced the finest picture—the real job of a monitor—rating tops in picture sharpness and accuracy of color, and second in range of tones. Its ability to render natural, radiant fleshtones brought a chorus of ooohs and aaahs from the assembled editors. But I was not fond of either its styling or controls. Having clickstopped picture-adjustment controls seems a crime, since the finest of fine tuning cannot be done. If Sony—and the other tube manufacturers—are looking for the ultimate in controls, they should consider replacing the clickstopped ones with rocker switches that flow, rather than hop, from extreme to extreme. Having these picture-adjust options on the remote certainly is a step in the right direction, though. And while a comparison of the audio was not part of our test, it should be noted that the Sony's detachable two-way speakers produced the best sound of the four. Whenever possible, however, hook your monitor to your stereo system—you'll never switch back.

The Proton was a solid second. It led the pack in the black-level and range of tones categories, and placed just behind the Sony in the other important picture-quality areas. Especially pleasing was the Proton's tendency toward a light-toned—though not bright—picture. Reds and oranges were rich but not overwhelming; blues and greens were airy but not hazy. It has a straightforward design and is easy to operate since its controls are relatively large and well-spaced.

Not quite in the cellar was the RCA. Though I admired its high-tech microwave-oven look, it excelled only in reproducing reds and browns—and these often out-of-scale. Its controls were nearly impossible to adjust because they were placed so close together. Considering the estimable capabilities of the Dimensia system makes the RCA more attractive. Being able to control an entire audio/video system from a single remote is a dream come true, though a costly one and not without limitations—total interactivity is yours only if you have the entire Dimensia system.

The Jensen bottomed out in the overall ranking, though it finished well in the black-level category and had the largest—and therefore easiest to use—controls. The gap in picture quality between it and the Sony is significant. Still, it excelled when called upon to reproduce fine details—like the foamy "head" on a glass of beer or droplets of water on pieces of fruit.

Not surprisingly, the ranking for auto color mirrors that of general picture quality: Sony, Proton, RCA, and Jensen.

—William Wolfe

DATA
Date of Videotest: December 1984
Suggested retail price: $1300
Weight: approximately 100 lbs.
Dimensions: 21-3/4 x 25-1/4 x 18-11/16 inches (h/w/d)
Screen size: 26 inches, measured diagonally

RESULTS & RATINGS
Horizontal resolution (picture sharpness): 500 lines
Video S/N (snowiness, luminance): 53dB
Accuracy of colors: wide range with auto color, stable
Overall picture quality: excellent
Overall performance: very good

RCA FKC 2600 'DIMENSIA'

DATA
Date of Videotest: January 1983
Suggested retail price: $1030
Dimensions: 22-1/2 x 24-7/8 x 20-5/8 inches (h/w/d)
Weight: 92 lbs.
Screen size: 25 inches, measured diagonally

RESULTS & RATINGS
Horizontal resolution (picture sharpness): 400 lines
Video S/N (snowiness, luminance): 50dB
Accuracy of colors: excellent
Overall picture quality: excellent
Overall performance: excellent

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The portable peak (from top): Panasonic PV-9600; Canon VR-30A; Olympus VC-106; Hitachi VT8P; Minolta V770S.

OUR VIDEO 5TH ANNUAL PORTABLE VCR REPORT TO GO

BY RODERICK WOODCOCK

Forgive the would-be video shooter for his bewilderment at the glut of options that confront him this summer. When he walks into a video store he'll find the traditional choice between Beta and VHS further muddied by new choices between two-piece camera/recorder setup or one-piece camcorder, between half-inch Beta/VHS tape and the new 8mm format, between Hi-Fi stereo and split-track stereo or mono sound.

Influencing his choice will be the ever-shifting trends of manufacturers and retailers—especially the camcorder's rise and, already in one of the two half-inch formats, its dominance. In the Beta format camcorders already outnumber portable VCRs. In the VHS format the camcorder is still the new kid on the block—it took VHS designers awhile to figure out how to fit that big cassette into a one-piece unit without resorting to mini-cassettes and adapters—but whether VHS Movie will gallop ahead of the huge pack of VHS portables in another year's time remains to be seen.

This month's survey will cover the tried-and-true battery-operated portables that have prevailed since the late '70s. Look for a separate treatment of the newer Beta, VHS, and 8mm camcorders next month, along with news about the two-piece 8mm VCRs from Canon and Sanyo. Everything else—one-piece, two-piece, dockable, and convertible VCRs—appears in this month's chart as long as it uses a full-size VHS or Beta cassette and runs on battery as well as AC power.

Beta and Lots of VHS

Of the 43 machines listed, all but two—Toshiba's V-X34 and Aiwa's AV-50M—are in the VHS format. That's not surprising considering that, with the appearance of Betamovie last year, most of the other remaining Beta-format manufacturers have dropped their earlier two-piece portables in favor of the Betamovie camcorder. Sanyo, NEC, Sony, and Toshiba all sell Betamovie, but only Toshiba still makes a separate portable, the V-X34. The other Beta machine, Aiwa's AV-50M, is unique in other respects as well. Like the Sharp VC-363 and Mitsubishi HS-710 (both VHS) it has a built-in (rather than separate) tuner, though you can operate it in the field from a rechargeable battery. It's also a Beta Hi-Fi recorder, but only when run off its AC-bound Hi-Fi adapter/charger.

VHS Hi-Fi, which was just getting off the ground at this time last year, has expanded into the portable field as well with models by Panasonic, General Electric, Magnavox, Canon, Quasar, and RCA. With more than 40 portable VHS VCRs to choose from this year (although it's likely that number will shrink next year after the new VHS camcorders make their mark), chances are extremely good that there's a machine on the list that more than suits your needs and budget.

With full-size VHS camcorders just around the corner (and probably already in the stores by the time you read this), some readers may be wondering what advantages there are in buying one of the "conventional" portables on our chart. The reasons are many. For starters, in many cases you can buy a portable VCR today that, feature-for-feature, can match the performance and convenience of the most sophisticated table model. Consider the menu of features available on many of these portables: direct-access cable-compatible tuners, multi-event programming, on-screen programming, multi-speed recording, 2/3/4 or 5-video-head designs, noiseless still frame and frame advance, noiseless variable-speed slow motion, reverse play, high-speed picture search, cordless remote control, linear stereo recording/playback with noise reduction, VHS Hi-Fi, linear-track audio dub, sound-on-sound recording, video dub, video insert edit with audio, clean-cut "transition" editing, one-touch "instant" or "express" recording, hassle-free "docking" tuners, and battery-sized AC adapters.

That's more than enough to give most of the table models a run for their money. Another advantage to a full-featured portable is that if and when you do decide to buy a color video camera (more on them next month), you can select just about any camera and plug it in. There are some electrical incompatibilities between the VCRs and cameras made by one company and those produced by another (JVC versus Hitachi, for example), but in many cases you can overcome these mismatches using an optional adapter cable.

Shop carefully though, since many adapter cables allow you to run a camera with a 10-pin VHS connector on a Beta portable fitted with a 14-pin connector and still have the tape start and stop on cue. It's difficult to make adapters that allow all of a camera's special remote-control features to work on another brand of camera, so test the combination before you buy it.

Getting Systematic

Another advantage of the two-piece systems: their modular design means you don't have to buy more video equipment than you really need. If you never intend to record off-air programming, or plan on doing so only rarely, why pay for an exotic random-access tuner? Many portables sold by Magnavox, Panasonic, Quasar, Sylvania, G.E., and Canon are really the same machine supplied in a different configuration; some with just a simple AC

Photos by Vittorio Sorter

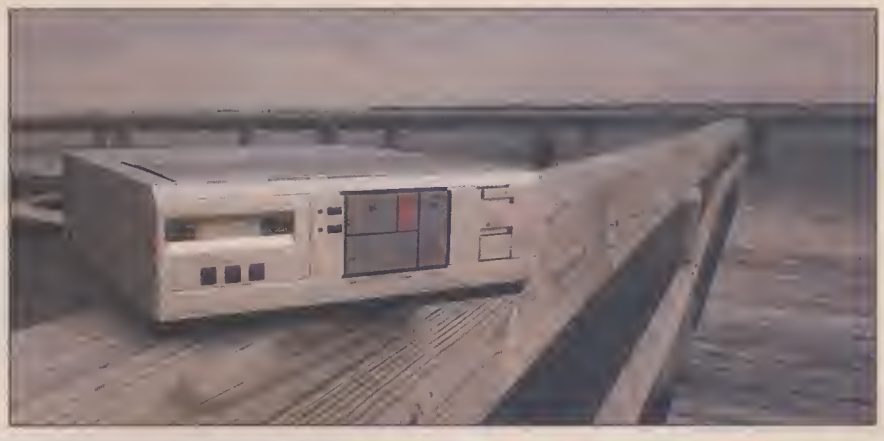
Toshiba V-X34

however, separate their portables and tuners into components so you can customize your system. We've indicated which are which in our chart, along with prices for each item where applicable.

In earlier years, some portable units were unpopular because of the hassle of connecting and reconnecting them after every trip outdoors. Most portable manufacturers, following RCA's lead with its "convertible" design of two years ago, have now adopted hassle-free "dockable" designs: you attach or disconnect the VCR

VCR MAKE & MODEL (Manufacturer)	SUGGESTED LIST PRICE	VCR DIMENSIONS[1]; WEIGHT	SPEEDS	VIDEO HEADS	TUNER/TIMER (Model: type; programmability; dimensions[1]; weight)[2]
Magnavox VR-8474SL (Matsushita)	$849 w/AC adapter	3½ × 8½ × 10½; 7 lbs.	SP, LP, SLP	2	None
Magnavox VR-8475SL (Matsushita)	$899 w/Tuner	3½ × 8½ × 10½; 7 lbs.	SP, LP, SLP	2	107 channel, 12 presets, 1 event/1 day; 3½ × 8½ × 10½; 5.9 lbs.
Magnavox VR-8484SL (Matsushita)	$1099 w/Battery	2¾ × 8½ × 10½; 7 lbs. w/Adapter	SP, LP, SLP	4	None
Magnavox VR-8485SL (Matsushita)	$1299 w/Tuner	2¾ × 8½ × 10½; 7 lbs. w/Battery	SP, LP, SLP	4	139 channel, direct access, 8 event/14 day; 2¾ × 8½ × 10½; 6.4 lbs.
Magnavox VR-8486SL (Matsushita)	N.A.	3 1/16 × 8 7/16 × 10⅜; 7 lbs. 5 oz.	SP, LP, SLP	4	Dockable; 139 channel, direct access, 8 event/14 day; 4⅜ × 8 7/16 × 14; weight n.a.
Minolta 770S (Hitachi)	$1015, V-770S VCR; $400, T-770S Tuner	3⅜ × 10 × 10⅜; 8 lbs. w/Battery	SP, LP, EP	5	133 channel, direct access, 7 event/14 day; 3⅜ × 10 × 10⅜; 7 lbs.
Mitsubishi HS-710UR	$750	9⅛ × 16¾ × 5 5/16; 15.4 lbs. w/Battery and Tuner	SP, LP, EP	4	Built-in; 105 channel, 16 presets, 3 event/14 day
Olympus VC-105 (Matsushita)	$995, VC-105 VCR; $485, VR-206 Tuner	2¾ × 8 7/16 × 10⅜; 7 lbs.	SP, LP, SLP	4	139 channel, direct access, 8 event/14 day; 2¾ × 8 7/16 × 10⅜; 4.4 lbs.
Olympus VC-106 (Matsushita)	$1165, VC-106 VCR; N.A., VR-208 Tuner	3 1/16 × 8 7/16 × 10⅜; 7 lbs.	SP, SP, SLP	4	139 channel, direct access, 8 event/14 day; 4 7/16 × 8 13/16 × 14; 7.5 lbs.
Panasonic PV-5800 (Matsushita)	$950 w/Tuner	3 7/16 × 8 7/16 × 10½; 7 lbs.	SP, LP, SLP	2	82 channel, 12 presets, 1 event/1 day; 3 7/16 × 8 7/16 × 10½; weight n.a.
Panasonic PV-8110 (Matsushita)	$1000 w/AC adapter	2¾ × 8 7/16 × 10⅜; 7 lbs. w/Battery	SP, LP, SLP	4	Optional
Panasonic PV-8500 (Matsushita)	$1350 w/Tuner	2 7/10 × 8½ × 10 3/10; 7.1 lbs. w/Battery	SP, LP, SLP	4	139 channel, direct access, 8 event/14 day; 2¾ × 8 7/16 × 10⅜; weight n.a.
Panasonic PV-8600 (PV-8100 VCR and PV-A860 Tuner) (Matsushita)	N.A.	2¾ × 8 7/16 × 10⅜; 7 lbs. w/Battery	SP, LP, SLP	4	PV-A860: 139 channel, direct access, 8 event/14 day; 4⅜ × 8 13/16 × 14; PV-A820 4 event/14 day timer also available

Minolta V770S



from the tuner in one quick operation. There are no cords to worry about—just lay the VCR into its bay or next to its companion tuner and the two pieces snap together for in-home operation. Convenience features like that make today's portables worthy competitors for the best AC-operated decks.

Other features formerly available only on high-priced table models include visual special effects (or SFX for short). But there are differences in the quality of the SFX offered by the different machines. All

FREEZE FRAME	SINGLE FRAME ADVANCE	SLOW MOTION	VISIBLE PICTURE SEARCH	REMOTE CONTROL	OTHER FEATURES
Yes (SLP)	Yes (SLP)	No	9X SLP	4-function wired	Audio dub; multi-mode display
Yes (SLP)	Yes (SLP)	Yes (SLP, 1/8th)	9X SLP	4-function wired	Audio dub; OTR—4 hours; multi-mode display; auto rewind
Yes (SP & SLP)	Yes (SP & SLP)	Yes (SP & SLP, 1/4th to 1/30th)	5X SP, 9X LP, 15X SLP	12-function wired	Dolby stereo; audio dub; multi-mode display; forward/reverse counter memory; auto rewind; tape-remaining indicator
Yes (SP & SLP)	Yes (SP & SLP)	Yes (SP & SLP, 1/4th to 1/30th)	5X SP, 9X LP, 15X SLP	26-function wireless	Dolby stereo; audio dub; video dub; sound-on-sound; forward/reverse counter memory; tape-remaining indicator; 60-minute power backup; OTR—4 hours
Yes (SP & SLP)	Yes (SP & SLP)	Yes (SP & SLP, 1/4th to 1/30th)	5X SP, 9X LP, 15X SLP	26-function wireless	VHS Hi-Fi Dolby stereo; linear audio dub; video dub; sound-on-sound; tape-remaining indicator; multi-mode display; OTR—4 hours; forward/reverse counter memory; auto rewind
Yes (SP & EP)	Yes (SP & EP)	Yes (SP & EP, 1/4th to 1/30th)	5X SP, 15X EP	19-function wireless	Stereo w/noise reduction; Instant Record Timer (IRT)—4 hours; video dub; audio dub
Yes (SP & EP)	No	Yes (SP & EP, 1/2)	Yes	13-function wireless	Picture control; battery or AC operation; counter memory; OTR
Yes (SP & SLP)	Yes (SP & SLP)	Yes (SP & SLP, 1/4th to 1/30th)	5X SP, 9X LP, 15X SLP	Wired	Dolby stereo; video dub; audio dub; multi-mode display; OTR; auto rewind
Yes (SP & SLP)	Yes (SP & SLP)	Yes (SP & SLP, 1/4th to 1/30th)	5X SP, 9X LP, 15X SLP	26-function wireless	Dolby stereo; multi-mode display; audio dub; video dub; auto rewind
Yes (SLP)	Yes (SLP)	No	9X SLP	4-function wired	Audio dub; multi-mode display; OTR—2 hours
Yes (SP & SLP)	Yes (SP & SLP)	Yes (SP & SLP, 1/4th to 1/30th)	5X SP, 9X LP, 15X SLP	12-function wired	Video dub; audio dub; multi-mode display; auto rewind
Yes (SP & SLP)	Yes (SP & SLP)	Yes (SP & SLP, 1/4th to 1/30th)	5X SP, 9X LP, 15X SLP	17-function wireless	Video dub; audio dub; sound-on-sound; Dolby stereo; multi-mode display; auto rewind; OTR—4 hours
Yes (SP & SLP)	Yes (SP & SLP)	Yes (SP & SLP, 1/4th to 1/30th)	5X SP, 9X LP, 15X SLP	26-function wireless	Dolby stereo; audio dub; OTR—4 hours; 60-minute power backup

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*Canon U.S.A., Inc., One Canon Plaza, Lake Success, New York, 11042, (516) 488-6700/1401 Industrial Drive, Elmhurst, Illinois 60126, (312) 833-3070/6380 Peachtree Industrial Boulevard, Norcross, Georgia 30071, (404) 448-1430/123 Paularino Ave. East, Costa Mesa, California 92626, (714) 979-6000/2035 Royal Lane, Suite 290, Dallas, Texas 75229, (214) 620-2641/Bldg. B-2, 1050 Ala Moana Boulevard, Honolulu, Hawaii 96814, (808) 521-0361. * "Dolby" is a trademark of Dolby Laboratories Licensing Corp. ® Saticon is a registered trademark of NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corp.).*

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HITCHCOCK

Unearthing the master's missing pieces

Lots of ooohs and aaahs greeted the return of *Rear Window*, *Vertigo*, and three other films by Alfred Hitchcock to theatrical re-release after years in legal limbo. And when MCA Home Video made its tape and disc release last year videophiles shared in the pleasure of rediscovering them. The MCA releases constitute the biggest missing link in the Hitchcock videography. Together with the flood of recent tape releases of Hitchcock's British-produced '30s classics—most notably Kartes Video Communications' $19.95 "Video Film Classics"—MCA has made it possible for collectors to assemble all Hitchcock's major works on a shelf, alongside earlier releases by CBS/Fox (*Notorious*, *Spellbound*, *Rebecca*), MGM/UA (*North by Northwest*), and Warner, which has just added *Stage Fright* and *I Confess* to its roster.

We'll never know what Hitchcock would have thought of all this, but he might well have approved. He made his films to be viewed repeatedly, and while his best always make a fine first impression, most of his movies don't begin to reveal all their interrelated secrets until the second or third (or seventh or eighth) look. On the surface the typical Hitchcock movie is a cunningly constructed tale of suspense told with a sense of humor that might range from the impish to the ghoulish. Look harder and the plot thickens to something deeper and more disturbing: an amorality tale told with images that make a more vivid impression than their ostensible roles in the plot may warrant.

Put several of these tales together and the images begin to make still deeper and more lasting sense. In Hitchcock, an on-the-road process shot of two people talking always reveals something significant about the characters that will determine what happens later. Primordial passions always emerge near pounding surf, as though the presence of something larger than themselves triggers characters into action. And birds are always harbingers of impending chaos or even death. In *The Birds*, the director got an entire movie out of that one visual motif—one that had been present in his movies since the 1920s. Having started in the '20s with silents, Hitchcock never abandoned his reliance on the visual, a habit that gives even his later films a kind of classical

Illustration by Lauren Uram

By Mark Fleischmann

purity that evokes the world of D.W. Griffith and F.W. Murnau more than it does his many film-school imitators.

Hitch's Salad Days

Yet it was Hitchcock who made Britain's first sound film. Though *Blackmail* (1929; the earliest of the Kartes releases) was ostensibly made for distribution as a silent, a last-minute decision to bring in audio equipment and reshoot a few scenes for a talkie version posed a whole new challenge for the young director: how to use sound. The story is about a young girl who knifes a lecherous painter in self-defense and covers up with the help of her detective boyfriend. Sitting guilt-ridden at the dinner table, she squirms unhappily as someone discusses the murder. Subjective editing of the audio track finally obliterates everything but the repeated use of the word "knife." But Hitchcock couldn't resist, as he told Francois Truffaut, "a sort of farewell to silent pictures. On the silent screen the villain was generally a man with a mustache. Well, my villain [the murder victim] was cleanshaven, but an ironwork chandelier in his studio cast a shadow on his upper lip that suggested an absolutely fierce-looking mustache!"

James Stewart ventures into through-the-lens voyeurism in 'Rear Window' (top); Grace and beaus in 'Dial M' (bottom).

Like the rest of the Kartes releases to be discussed, this one looks as good or bad as what I've seen on revival-house screens. Be forewarned that Hitchcock's earliest films are correspondingly the hardest to preserve, though Kartes is obtaining relatively good prints—far better than some of its $14.95 competitors. Like the originals, Kartes soundtracks tend to be slightly noisy but are intelligible, and the noise can be damped by a Dolby switch or your audio amp's high-cut filter.

The Man Who Knew Too Much (1934) was Hitchcock's most successful British film and the only one he remade himself. MCA's release of the American-made 1956 version means the pair are available for side-by-side home comparison. The basic plot follows a couple who stumble onto an assassination plot. To gain leverage over them, the would-be killers kidnap the couple's child, and the story is one of pursuit leading up to a climactic sequence at London's Royal Albert Hall where the assassination is to take place.

Hitchcock set the original's opening scenes in St. Moritz ("that's where I spent my honeymoon"), though the remake has the family vacationing in Marrakesh. The two most distinguished Hitchcock scholars, Francois Truffaut (whose book-length interview has just been republished) and Donald Spoto (whose books *The Art of Alfred Hitchcock* and *The Dark Side of Genius: The Life of Alfred Hitchcock* are the definitive works on the subject), both prefer the remake: It has the advantage of 20 years' evolution in film art and technology, and replaces the shootout that concludes the original with a new scene in the London embassy of the assassins' diplomatic target. Hitchcock chose the remake's much analyzed and celebrated wordless

continued on page 141

HITCH & SEEK

Even Francois Truffaut couldn't find 'em all, though Alfred Hitchcock made cameo appearances in every film he made beginning with *The Lodger* (1926). He needed some extra extras in a crowd scene—and the rest is history. Here's a list of what we could find, going alphabetically by video title. The sources are our own observation, backed up by a footnote in Truffaut's *Hitchcock*.

The Birds: He walks a pair of dogs. *Blackmail*: He reads a newspaper on the train. *Dial M for Murder*: His pic peers from a photo album. *Family Plot*: He's silhouetted behind a translucent glass door marked, ironically, "Registrar of Births and Deaths" (this was his last film and he died four years later). *Frenzy*: He's in the opening corpse-by-the-Thames scene. *I Confess*: He crosses the street atop a staircase (pictured in Truffaut's book). *The Lady Vanishes*: He's glimpsed in a rail station (look hard). *The Lodger*: He sits at a newsroom desk and later watches an arrest from a crowd. *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1955): He watches Arab acrobats from the back of a crowd. *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*: He passes Robert Montgomery on the street. *Murder*: He's on the street again. *North by Northwest*: He runs for a bus but misses it as the door slams in his face. *Notorious*: He drinks champagne at a party. *Psycho*: He stands on the sidewalk wearing a sombrero. *Rear Window*: He winds a clock in the composer's apartment. *Rebecca*: He walks by a phone booth inhabited by George Sanders. *Rope*: He crosses the street after the main title. *Spellbound*: He emerges from a crowded elevator. *Stage Fright*: He looks askance at Jane Wyman as they pass in the street. *Strangers on a Train*: He boards a train carrying a double bass. *The 39 Steps*: He passes in the street. *To Catch a Thief*: Hs sits next to Cary Grant on the bus. *Topaz*: He's in a wheelchair at the airport. *Torn Curtain*: He sits in a hotel lobby with his back to the camera and a baby in his lap. *The Trouble with Harry*: He quickly walks past John Forsythe's outdoor art exhibition in a long shot through a window. *Under Capricorn*: In a rare double appearance, he's at the governor's reception *and* on the steps of his mansion. *Vertigo*: Again, he crosses a street. *The Wrong Man*: He narrates the prologue. *Young and Innocent*: he stands outside the courtroom with a camera.

That's the lot. Now, if you're aware of any we missed, write in and spill it. We'll make this list definitive yet!

—Mark Fleischmann & Roderick Woodcock

WHAT'S AVAILABLE

Ingrid Bergman and Gregory Peck give the law the Freudian slip in 'Spellbound.'

The Birds
Color. 1963. Rod Taylor, Tippi Hedren, Jessica Tandy. 120 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95. MCA./CED. $19.98. RCA.

Blackmoil
B&W. 1929. Anny Ondra, John Longdon, Sara Allgood. 86 min. Beta, VHS. $44.95. Budget./$29.95. Dimensions./$19.95. Kartes.

Diol M for Murder
Color. 1954. Ray Milland, Grace Kelly, Robert Cummings. 105 min. Beta, VHS. $69.95. Warner./CED. $24.98. RCA.

Eosy Virtue
B&W. 1927. Isabel Jean, Ian Hunter. 60 min. Beta, VHS (silent, with music). $29.95. Dimensions.

Fomily Plot
Color. 1976. Bruce Dern, Barbara Harris, William Devane. 120 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95. MCA.

Frenzy
Color. 1972. Jon Finch, Barry Foster, Barbara Leigh-Hunt. 116 min. Beta, VHS. $39.95. MCA.

I Confess
B&W. 1953. Montgomery Clift, Anne Baxter, Karl Malden. 95 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95. Warner.

Jomoico Inn
B&W. 1939. Charles Laughton, Maureen O'Hara, Leslie Banks. 98 min. Beta, VHS. $35. Cable./$39.95. Buff.

The Lady Vonishes
B&W. 1938. Margaret Lockwood, Michael Redgrave, Paul Lukas. 96 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95. Blay./99 min. $49.95. Budget./97 min. $29.95. Dimensions./$29.95. Nostalgia.

The Lodger
B&W. 1926. Ivor Novello, Marie Ault. 91 min. Beta. $49.95. VHS. $52.95 (both silent with music). Yesteryear.

The Mon Who Knew Too Much
B&W. 1934. Leslie Banks, Edna Best, Peter Lorre. 84 min. Beta, VHS. $44.95. Budget./$29.95. Dimensions./72 min. $19.95. Kartes./75 min. $29.95. Nostalgia.

The Mon Who Knew Too Much
Color. 1955. James Stewart, Doris Day. 120 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95. MCA.

Mr. ond Mrs. Smith
B&W. 1941. Carole Lombard, Robert Montgomery. 95 min. Beta, VHS. $34.95. Nostalgia.

Murder
B&W. 1930. Herbert Marshall, Nora Baring, Phyllis Konstam. 92 min. Beta, VHS. $44.95. Budget./$35. Cable./$29.95. Dimensions.

North by Northwest
Color. 1959. Cary Grant, Eva Marie Saint, James Mason. 136 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95./LV, CED. $39.95. MGM/UA.

Notorious
B&W. 1946. Cary Grant, Ingrid Bergman, Claude Rains. 101 min. Beta, VHS. $59.98./LV. $34.98. CED. $29.98. CBS/Fox.

Number Seventeen
B&W. 1932. Leon M. Lion, Anne Grey, John Stuart. 64 min. Beta, VHS. $44.95. Budget./Cable.

Psycho
B&W. 1960. Anthony Perkins, Janet Leigh, Vera Miles. 109 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95./LV (CLV). $29.95. MCA./CED. $24.98. RCA.

Reor Window
Color. 1954. James Stewart, Grace Kelly, Wendell Corey. 113 min. Beta (Hi-Fi). VHS (Dolby). $59.98./LV (CLV). $29.98. CED. $19.98. MCA.

Rebecca
B&W. 1940. Laurence Olivier, Joan Fontaine, George Sanders. 130 min. Beta, VHS. $79.98. CBS/Fox.

Rope
Color. 1948. James Stewart, John Dall, Farley Granger. 81 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95. MCA.

Sabotoge
B&W. 1936. Oscar Homolka, Sylvia Sidney, John Loder. 76 min. Beta, VHS. $44.95. Budget./$29.95. Dimensions./$19.95. Kartes.

Secret Agent
B&W. 1936. Madeleine Carroll, John Gielgud, Peter Lorre. 81 min. Beta, VHS. $44.95. Budget./$29.95. Dimensions./84 min. $19.95. Kartes./Beta. $49.95. VHS. $52.95. Yesteryear.

Spellbound
B&W. 1945. Ingrid Bergman, Gregory Peck, Leo G. Carroll. 111 min. Beta, VHS. $59.98./CED. $29.98. CBS/Fox.

Stoge Fright
B&W. 1950. Marlene Dietrich, Jane Wyman, Michael Wilding. 110 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95. Warner.

Strongers on a Train
B&W. 1951. Farley Granger, Robert Walker, Ruth Roman. 101 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95. Warner./CED. $24.98. RCA.

Suspicion
B&W. 1941. Cary Grant, Joan Fontaine, Cedric Hardwicke. 99 min. Beta, VHS. $34.95. Nostalgia.

The 39 Steps
B&W. 1935. Robert Donat, Madeleine Carroll. 81 min. Beta, VHS. $44.95. Budget./87 min. $29.95. Dimensions./$19.95. Kartes./CED. $19.98. RCA.

To Cotch o Thief
Color. 1955. Grace Kelly, Cary Grant, Jessie Royce Landis. 101 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95./LV (CLV). $29.95. Paramount.

Topoz
Color. 1969. Frederick Stafford, John Forsythe, John Vernon. 126 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95. MCA.

Torn Curtoin
Color. 1966. Paul Newman, Julie Andrews, Lila Kedrova. 125 min. Beta, VHS. $49.95. MCA.

The Trouble with Horry
Color. 1955. Edmund Gwenn, John Forsythe, Shirley MacLaine. 99 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95. MCA.

Under Capricorn
Color. 1949. Ingrid Bergman, Michael Wilding, Joseph Cotten. 117 min. Beta, VHS. $34.95. VidAmerica.

Vertigo
Color. 1958. James Stewart, Kim Novak, Barbara Bel Geddes. 128 min. Beta, VHS. $59.95./LV. $39.98. MCA.

The Wrong Man
B&W. 1956. Henry Fonda, Vera Miles, Anthony Quayle. 126 min. Beta, VHS. $69.95. Warner.

Young and Innocent
B&W. 1937. Derrick de Marney, Nova Pilbeam, Percy Marmont. 80 min. Beta, VHS. $44.95. Budget./$29.95. Dimensions./82 min. $19.95. Kartes.

Sources

Blay Video (changed to Embassy Home Entertainment 8/1/82).

Budget Video, 1540 N. Highland Ave. #108, Los Angeles, Calif. 90028 (213-466-2431; 213-466-2432).

Movie **Buff** Video, 250 W. 95 St., New York, N.Y. 10025 (telephone n.a.).

Coble Films, Box 7171, Country Club Sta., Kansas City, Mo. 64113 (913-362-2804).

CBS/Fox Video, 1211 Sixth Ave., 2nd fl., New York, N.Y. 10036 (212-819-3200).

Video **Dimensions**, 110 E. 23 St., Suite 603, New York, N.Y. 10010 (212-533-5999).

Kortes Video Communications, 10 E. 106 St., Indianapolis, Ind. 46280 (1-800-582-2000).

MCA Home Video, 70 Universal City Plaza, Universal City, Calif. 91608 (818-508-4315).

MGM/UA Home Video, 1350 Sixth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10019 (212-408-0600).

Nostolgio Merchant, 5370 Buckingham Parkway, Culver City, Calif. 90230 (213-216-7900; 800-421-4509).

Paromount Home Video, 5451 Marathon St., Hollywood, Calif. 90038 (213-468-5000).

RCA VideoDiscs, 1133 Sixth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10036 (212-930-4700).

VidAmerica, 235 E. 55 St., New York, N.Y. 10022 (212-355-1600).

Warner Home Video, 4000 Warner Blvd., Burbank, Calif. 91522 (818-954-6000).

Video **Yesteryeor**, Box C, Sandy Hook, Conn. 06482 (800-243-0987).

PIONEER

Plattertudes

Ten Reasons to Purchase LaserVision

By Frank Lovece

Laser videodisc players can't record. That's the problem. Neither could the rival CED format—but there the inability was one shortcoming out of several. Here it could be the Achilles' heel to set a future-world Greek tragedy in motion, keeping the LaserVision medium from becoming anything more than a high-tech curiosity.

Must this be so? Not necessarily. Audio turntables can't record either, and their only threat isn't from tape, but from that cousin of the LV, the playback-only Compact Disc. Yet audio is more passive than video. It's one thing to lay back and listen to music, quite another to time-shift *Saturday Night Live* to Sunday morning. For the average person—who from all indications seems more interested in time-shifting than in playing back prerecorded fare—the video machine of choice must be the VCR.

For the video purist, however, the LV player is first choice—like a Ferrari, top-of-the-line and worth it. And now that Pioneer has just half-priced one model to a mere $299, it's not even all that expensive. Now, too, with the death of CED clearing the arena of much confusion, and computer-videodisc interfaces becoming increasingly cheaper and more versatile, the purist's preference may soon take a dip into the mainstream. If so, it'll be for a variety of good reasons.

Picture Quality

Videotape, video head configurations, and video-processing circuitry all have been improved over the years. Basic VCR technology hasn't. It is still an analog surface-contact system designed to produce video images no better than what the average TV can display. As a result, picture quality today isn't much better than it was nine years ago. In fact, many musket-toting pioneers who bought the first Beta-I recorders would argue that picture quality's grown worse. (Sony's Super-Beta represents a great leap in VCR picture quality, and the VHS camp is working on improvements of its own; see "What's New," elsewhere in this issue, for details.)

Laser videodisc players, on the other hand, don't much care about TV-set limits. They'll pump out 350 lines of horizontal resolution (a basic measure of image quality) even though most TVs and VCRs only measure as high as 270 on a good day. LV discs are designed, after all, less for TV sets than for video monitors, which can match an LV-disc image line for line. The first time you see such an image can be startling. It's as if someone adjusted the focus on the world and turned up the color.

The main reason for this is that the LV process uses direct video signals whereas VCRs use magnetically encoded signals. It's basically the same as the difference between using direct video-input jacks versus the usual RF connectors when you hook up your VCR to a TV. There's always less signal degradation when you go direct. Moreover, LV discs entail no physical contact between the program source (the videodisc) and decoding apparatus (the laser stylus)—countering the effects of wear.

LaserVision players work this way: Picture and sound information are digitally encoded on disc within billions of imperceptible indentations called micropits. These are arrayed in circular tracks 1.2mm deep beneath an acrylic layer. The stylus, which never touches the disc, fires a low-power helium-neon laser beam, 1.6 microns in diameter, that "reads" these embedded micropits. Depending on whether a disc is pressed in the one-hour CLV mode or the half-hour CAV mode, each of the circular micropit tracks contains from one to three TV frames. Either way, an LV disc can hold about 54,000 of these frames per side.

This "optical" playback system is much more efficient than a VCR's electromagnetic process. For one thing, it starts with a complete, direct signal and reproduces it without the signal leakage endemic to contact systems. Compared to even a very good VCR's picture quality, the resultant laser image is high fidelity for the eye.

Sound Quality

Which brings up a second laser advantage: its virtually digital-quality analog sound (which has been further upgraded in Pioneer's CLD-900 LV/CD combo player to genuine digital sound). Without tumbling into esoteric audio specs, let it suffice to say that even the most accomplished ear would find it a challenge to discern between a conventional laser videodisc, a CD, and a VHS or Beta Hi-Fi recording of the same program. (In fact, a CD player is nothing but a laser-videodisc player that didn't grow up.)

Top-shelf audio has always been the LV disc's most obvious strength. Even before lazy journalists overused the phrase "marriage of audio and video," LV enthusiasts were members of the wedding party. For nearly three years—from the late-'78 trickle-out introductions by Magnavox and Pioneer, to the first consumer stereo VCR

Vittorio Sartor/LV player pictured is the Pioneer LD-700

in mid-'81—stereo video was exclusively the province of LV disc players. It still hasn't been until the recent arrivals of CD players and Hi-Fi VCRs that any piece of home-audio gear could come close to LV sound quality.

Classical Programming

Of course, sterling sound is only a theoretical construct. It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing.

The "swing" in this case is the bounty of classical music and opera programming on LV. Only a handful of videocassette programmers specialize in classical programming, and only a few produce Beta or VHS Hi-Fi tapes. And except for Pacific Arts' *Huberman Festival* series and MGM/UA's well-meant but patronizingly titled *Who's Afraid of Opera?* releases, most of the *major* companies give classical fare only about as much space as on the average network-TV schedule. On LV, it's a whole 'nother libretto.

Pioneer's own labels, Pioneer Artists and Pioneer Imports, offer some three-dozen classical LV discs. A couple more crop up among the other 15 or so companies (including a couple of adult-movie programmers) that produce laser titles. The Pioneer catalogue includes Royal Opera productions of *Peter Grimes, Samson et Dalila, The Tales of Hoffman,* and *La Boheme;* Royal Ballet performances of *Swan Lake* and *La Fille Mal Gardee;* the American Ballet Theatre's Baryshnikov-directed *The Nut Cracker;* Gilbert & Sullivan comic operas; and concerts and symphonies by Horowitz, Perlman, and the Czech and London Philharmonic orchestras, among others. Few classical laser titles are duplicated on cassette, and the

Charting LV & LV/CD Players

Brand/ Model #	Video Functions[1]	Stereo Audio	Computer Interface In/Out	CD Compatibility	S/N Ratio: Video	S/N Ratio: Audio
MAGNAVOX VC8040GY	Frame/chapter search; time search (CLV). Via remote only: freeze-frame; forword/reverse frame advance, slow motion, scan; pause (CLV)	Analog w/CX; CX on/off. Via remote only: l/r channel selection	Yes	No	42+ dB	55dB; 70dB w/CX
PIONEER LD-660	Freeze-frame; forward/reverse frame odvance, slow motion, scan; pause (CLV)	Analog w/CX; CX on/aff; l/r chonnel selection	No	No	42+ dB	60dB; 70dB w/CX
LD-700	Frame/chapter search; time search (CLV). Via remote only: freeze-frame; forward/reverse frame advance, slow motion, scan; pause (CLV)	Analog w/CX; CX on/off. Via remote only: l/r channel selectian	Yes	No	Not specified	60dB; 70dB w/CX
CLD-900	Frame/chapter search; time search (CLV). Via remote only: freeze-frame; forward/reverse frame advance, slow motion, scan; pouse (CLV)	Digital; analog w/CX. LV: digital-analog selection & CX on/off. CD, via remate only: skip/track/index search & repeat play	Yes	Yes	Not specified	Digital: 96dB. Analog: 60dB, 70dB w/CX
SYLVANIA VP7400SL	Frame/chapter search; time search (CLV). Via remote only: freeze-frame; forward/reverse frame advance, slow motion, scan; pause (CLV)	Analog w/CX, CX on/aff	Yes	No	42+ dB	55dB; 70dB w/CX
TEAC LV-1000	Frame/chapter search; time search (CLV). Via remote only: freeze-frame; forward/reverse frame odvonce, slow motion, scan, pause (CLV)	Analog w/CX, CX on/off. Via remate only: l/r channel selection	Yes	No	Not specified	Not specified
LV-5000DS	Frame/chapter search; time search (CLV). Via remote only: freeze-frame; forward/reverse frame advance, slow matian, scan; pause (CLV)	Digital; analog w/CX. LV: digital-analog selectian & CX on/off. Via remote only: l/r channel selectian. CD, via remote only: skip/track/index, search & l.b. play	Yes	Yes	Not specified	Digital: 90dB. Analog: 70dB w/CX (without CX, not specified)

[1]Unless otherwise nated, in CAV (30-minute per side) made anly.

Performance specifications are *nan-standard,* and are af uncertain use. All chart informatian as per the manufacturers, not VIDEO test reparts.

ones that are generally aren't accompanied by librettos and scenarios as the videodiscs are.

Interactivity and Random Accessing

This is probably video's single most significant application, and it's exclusively the videodisc's. Narrative—be it a novel, documentary, pantomime, or anything else—has been linear ever since the beginning of civilization. The storyteller speaks, the audience listens. Stage performers may step into a feedback loop, absorbing signals from an audience and fusing them into the performance, but that's an indirect and informal process that doesn't affect where the linear narrative is headed.

Interactive video, on the other hand, is a mutant, the first of a new species. Interactive videodiscs are those designed to maximize such playback effects as freeze frame and random access to provide "branching": multiple paths, through any of which a viewer/participant can lead a narrative. A laser player's pinpoint-accurate search-and-retrieval capabilities make this possible.

What's the big deal about interactivity? Imagine a murder mystery, as in Vidmax's two *MysteryDiscs*, in which—based on your own choices and interests—you can draw the story to any of several equally "correct" solutions. Or imagine instructional videodiscs, such as already exist from a few programmers, that let you flip through TV-screen chapters and "pages" as you would through a book. Even at this early stage, interactive discs are already signaling a significant change in our perceptions—an active (rather than traditionally passive) relationship with television.

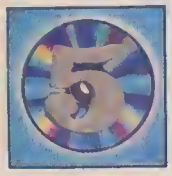
Horizontal Resolution	Audio Frequency Response (Hz-kHz) Analog	Digital	Remote Control	Other Features[2]	Dimensions (h/w/d, in inches); Weight (in lbs.)	Sugg. Retail Price
330 lines	40-20 +/– 3dB	—	All audio/video functions except power on/off, CX on/off	Interactive-disc compatibility; disc/segment repeat play; on-screen frame/chapter/time	4 3/4 × 16 1/2 × 16 1/4; 27 3/10	$799.99
350+ lines	40-20 +/– 3dB	—	None	Top-loading; disc-position indicator	5 5/8 × 20 11/16 × 15 9/16; 28 5/8	$299
350+ lines	20-20 (tolerance unspecified)	—	All audio/video functions except power on/off, CX on/off	Interactive-disc compatibility; disc/segment repeat; on-screen frame/chapter/time	4 3/4 × 16 17/32 × 16 5/16; 27 3/10	$799
350+ lines	20-20 (tolerance unspecified)	5-20 +/– 0.5dB	All audio/video functions except power on/off, CX on/off	Interactive-disc compatibility; auto LV-CD switching; disc/segment repeat; on-screen frame/chapter/time (LV); on-screen track/index/time/time remaining (CD); headphone jack w/volume control	6 5/8 × 16 9/16 × 17 5/8; 34 7/16	$1200
330 lines	40-20 +/– 3dB	—	All audio/video functions except power on/off, CX on/off	Interactive-disc compatibility; disc/segment repeat play; on-screen frame/chapter/time	4 3/4 × 16 1/2 × 16 1/4; 27 3/10	$799.99
Not specified	Not specified	—	All audio/video functions except power on/off, CX on/off	Interactive-disc compatibility; disc/segment repeat play; on-screen frame/chapter/time	16 17/32 × 4 3/4 × 16 5/16; 27 3/10	$800
Not specified	20-20 (tolerance unspecified)	5-20 +/– 0.5dB	All audio/video functions except power on/off, CX on/off	Interactive-disc compatibility; auto LV-CD switching; disc/segment repeat; on-screen frame/chapter/time (LV); on-screen track/index/time/time remaining (CD); headphone jack w/volume control	16 9/16 × 6 5/8 × 17 5/8; 35 1/5	N.A.

[2]All play both CAV (30-minute per side) and CLV (60-minute per side) discs, and both 8- and 12-inch discs. All remote controls are wireless.

Teac's LV-1000 ($800) is a top-end LV-only player with full-function remote.

The random-accessing capabilities needed for interactive video are not possible with videocassettes. First, imagine the time it takes to move a phonograph arm from the first song on a record's side to the last; then imagine the time it takes to do the same with an audio cassette. Now you understand videotape's limits and laser's big advantages. Given everything foreseeable about VCR technology, true interactivity is an advantage LV players will always have over videocassette recorders.

Some of the most prominent interactive discs include Optical Programming Associates' *First National Kidisc* and *How to Watch Pro Football,* Xerox's *Gardening at Home,* Video Vision Associates' *Space Archive* series, and Vidmax's two *Mystery-Discs.*

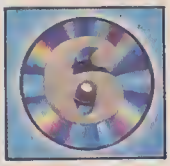


Computer Applications

Related to interactive capability is the gathering crowd of computer-videodisc interface devices. A year or two ago, these interfaces never got out much. Now they're all dressed up and ready to hit the town.

By interfacing a laser player with a computer, you combine the disc player's storage and playback capabilities with the interactive capacities of the computer. Depending on the interface—common models range from $85 to over $1000—these devices can let you not only alternate between computer and video images, but even integrate them or overlay them. You can create your own games, instructional programs, or artwork. The whole is greater than the sum.

Pioneer sells the most widely available interface module, the $250 model IU-04. The catch is that it's designed to work only with Pioneer's top-of-the-line LD-700 ($799) laserdisc player. Interface devices compatible with more and various players are available from Allen Communications in Salt Lake City; Micro-Ed in Minneapolis; New Media Graphics in Cambridge, Massachusetts; and Video Vision Associates in Madison, New Jersey, among other companies. While interface devices for industrial VCRs do exist as well, they're limited by VCRs' slow random accessing.



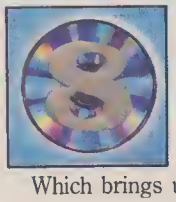
Software Storage Capabilities

Videodisc Publishing and Vidmax recently coproduced the best existing argument for the LV disc's capacious capacity, the *National Gallery of Art* disc (reviewed in "Video Clips," October 1984). Along with the history of the gallery and a tour come more than 1600 color frames, each literally a work of art. To cram all that into a book or a set of books would be prohibitive, expensive, and monstrous. But this $95 disc provides hundreds of laser-sharp reproductions in the space of one disc. You could freeze-frame a Bruegel all day if you wanted to study or simply display it. Try that with a VCR only if you're interested in burning out your video heads.

Software Durability

You'd also wear out the videotape, in that case—scraping off oxides until your picture'd look like you washed it in bleach. Videotape is relatively delicate, after all; it takes a lot less to mangle videotape than it does to warp a videodisc.

While LV discs aren't unbreakable, most scratches, blemishes, and fingerprints won't affect picture and sound quality at all. LV engineers routinely sneer at "laser videodisc cleaners" and say it would take a major cleft to throw the laser beam off its path. Manufacturers tend to be given to grandiose claims, of course—but the fact that the stylus never touches the disc indicates that the player, or the owner, will wear out long before the disc.



Ease of Maintenance

Which brings up a good question: Just how long will a laser videodisc player last? Again, because the reproduction process involves no contact between disc and stylus—the latter is the part that wears out quickest on a conventional audio turntable—a laser player's lifetime may be indefinite.

Pioneer figures that its lasers should last for several thousand hours of playing time—far more than anyone claims for video heads. In the meantime, you don't have to perform any videodisc equivalent of head cleaning. And since a disc player has fewer mechanical parts than a VCR, fewer things can break down.

Ease of Operation

The technology behind a laser player is forbidding, but operating a laser videodisc player isn't. Just plug in a videodisc and away you go. There's no need, as there was with the CED system, to pull out a disc's protective caddy. A laser player is eminently easy to use (comparable to a well-designed VCR).

Price

For all these advantages—and one notable shortcoming—LV players come cheap. Even Pioneer's low-end LD-660, at $299 suggested retail and as little as $250 in some stores, gives you high-fidelity stereo. At the $700-to-$800 suggested list prices of Pioneer's LD-700, Sylvania's VP7200 and VP7400, and Magnavox's nearly identical VC8010GY and VC8040SL, laser players are still cost-effective purchases.

Discs also come relatively cheap. Most movies and full-length music programs fall between $25 and $40 list, generally cheaper than their cassette counterparts. Pioneer's new 15- to 20-minute music shorts, at $11, contain the same programming as Sony's "Video 45s"—for $6 less apiece.

At these prices, LV discs don't *have* to record. They do what they do about as well as can be done, and though they don't give you time shifting, VCRs don't give you interactivity. If you're interested in *video* and not just television, the brave new whirls of LV are worth investigation.

Consumer Information Series

BOSE

VCR: stereo or hi-fi?

You can hear the difference.

by Dr. William R. Short

Project Engineer

The first article in this series discussed the importance of audio in your video system. As a fellow videophile, I want to elaborate on that topic, especially since there seems to be much confusion about the difference between stereo VCR and *hi-fi* stereo VCR.

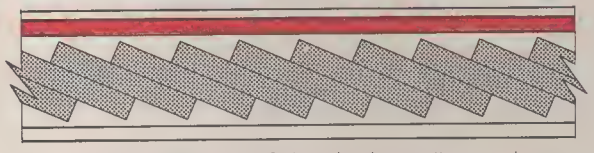
When video tape recorders were first introduced, the engineering emphasis was on picture reproduction quality. After all, there was nothing new about recording audio on magnetic tape. In the first VCR tapes, a very narrow track—about half the width of a track on a standard audio cassette—was allotted for audio. To make matters worse, VCR recording speed was about half the 1⅞ ips used in audio cassette recording. Naturally, the sound quality was not very good.

When VCR's became available for home use, audio quality still was not of major concern. One reason was that people used their VCR's primarily for "time shifting" network programming (frequently broadcast with poor audio quality) for subsequent viewing.

Today, however, VCR audio quality is playing a larger role. The advent of stereo TV, music videos and a wider selection of prerecorded material provides better listening options. And, of course, the sound capabilities of VCR hardware have kept pace with developments in software, in both VHS and Beta formats.

Actually, the first advance in VCR sound came when manufacturers divided the sound track into two channels for stereo recording. While this was an improvement, using the same overall track width to hold twice the amount of program material resulted in a noise level that was twice as high as before. The inherent limitations of the track width demanded further research.

Comparison of VCR and Hi-Fi VCR Tape Formats.



On conventional stereo, or 2-channel, videocassettes, sound is recorded on two narrow tracks located at the edge of the tape.

On new hi-fi stereo videocassettes, sound is recorded across nearly the entire width of the tape, using methods which allow simultaneous recording of video within the same area.

At last, big breakthroughs in VCR sound were realized with the creation of *hi-fi* stereo tapes and decks—first Beta Hi-Fi, then VHS Hi-Fi. Both systems use nearly the entire width of the tape for audio signals, without affecting video signals which are recorded across the same area.

The true significance of these technological advances is the dramatic improvement they can make in your home entertainment experience. But the full potential of the technology cannot be realized unless every component in your system measures up to stringent standards. And, speakers are the components that must meet the highest standards, since they ultimately must reproduce the recorded sound.

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We invite you to experience Bose speaker sound at any of our authorized dealers. They are now playing the Bose Music Video—a hi-fi VCR program which demonstrates the breakthroughs we've discussed. We think you'll enjoy hi-fi VCR. And we think that Bose speakers will help you enjoy it the most.

For more information on Bose products, and a list of authorized dealers, please write: Bose Corporation, Dept. VM, 10 Speen Street, Framingham, MA 01701.

Dr. Short holds an Sc.D. in Electrical Engineering from MIT.

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WEDDING SHOOTS

HOW TO BE THE BEST MAN WITH A CAMERA

A wedding in the family is a unique event—so if you're taping it, you get only one chance. Halfway through the ceremony is not the time to discover you've just run out of tape, your one-and-only battery has died, or the floodlights have burned-out bulbs.

The biggest distinction between amateur and professional photographers (or videographers) is their degree of preparation. Never assume anything. Make an extensive list of equipment you'll need long before you arrive for the shoot (and take more equipment than you may end up using—just in case; see the checklist on the following page).

In addition, experienced cameramen are never without a "ditty box" containing an assortment of useful connectors, fuses, adapters, and tools that can, on occasion, be crucial. An example is that inexpensive adapter that converts three-pronged grounded plugs into the more conventional two-pronged variety. Since you usually won't know the type, number, or location of the electrical outlets in the wedding location until the wedding day, also carry an arsenal of extension cords, multitaps, power strips, and adapters.

Setting Up

Arriving a couple of hours before the wedding (at least!) should give you ample opportunity to case the place and find out where all the electrical outlets are. You can also use that time to lay down extension cords—but be careful about where you place them. Avoid laying any cables across any corridor or hallway where the guests will walk; if you can't avoid this, then be sure to tape the cables down with several continuous lengths of wide gaffer tape. Don't leave any seams or gaps that could present a hazard for any passerby. If someone trips and gets hurt, he'll have every right to sue you.

Going to the rehearsal offers many advantages. Not only do you see the layout beforehand; you've got a chance to meet the bride and groom, best man, maid of honor, and clergyman (or justice of the

Steven Dolce

BY RODERICK WOODCOCK

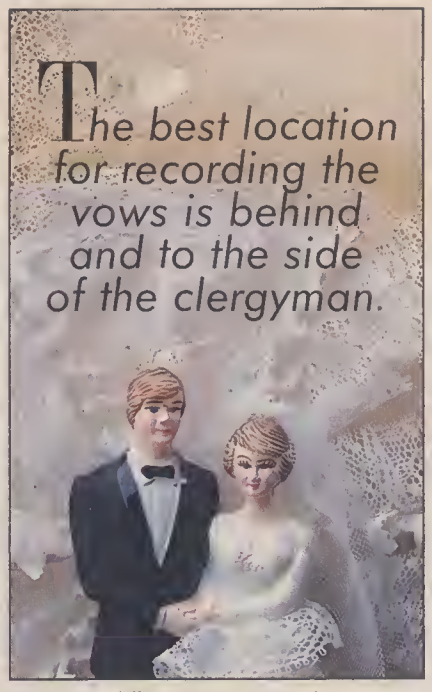
peace). It's especially important that you meet this gentleman before the wedding, get his permission to tape the ceremony, and tell him in detail how you will do it. Another reason to attend the rehearsal is technical. Since it's difficult to obtain good-quality audio of the bride and groom exchanging their vows during the wedding, a better procedure is to record the audio at the rehearsal instead. Most clergymen will take the couple through the entire ceremony at the rehearsal, so you can record that essential audio and dub it onto the finished tape later.

Once you've got a good idea of how the location will look, including any special installations you'll need to make, it's a good idea to outline the sequence of shots you intend to make. If you're so inclined, you can even create a "storyboard"—comic-book-like pictures that previsualize the composition of each shot—so that you and your assistants have a clear idea of all the essential shots that will give the finished tape a smoothly flowing continuity.

The Big Day

Be sure to arrive early enough to set up the equipment—as well as to capture some pre-wedding vignettes. Many amateurs forget that the story of a wedding day includes those little events, like the arrival of the bride and groom and their entourages. The bride usually arrives with her maid of honor and flower girls, while the groom will be with his best man and other friends.

Since you'll be busy with other things, it's often a good idea to bring in an assistant cameraman to serve as your "second unit," assigning him to get the minor candid shots. Trying to make a complete record of an elaborate wedding with a single camera just isn't professional, since it can't be everywhere at once. For example, if you've got your one-and-only camera locked onto a tripod near the front of the venue, after you've shot the procession coming down the aisle and taking their places at the altar (a mandatory wedding shot), it's nice to edit in a quick view of the assembled guests as seen from the back of the church. To get that shot, you must either abandon your spot at the front of the place and rip down to the back (creating a visible disturbance as you go), or have that



"second unit" friend make the shot for you. The second-unit camera can also be invaluable in shooting outtakes of the arriving guests. Needless to say, it will make editing much easier if your second-unit man is using your format of video gear.

The Ceremony

Be ready when the ceremony begins.

The best location for the camera recording the vows is behind and just to the left or right side of the clergyman. The camera should look over his shoulder at the bride and groom when they reach the altar. Using the zoom, follow them as they move up the aisle to take their positions before the holy man.

It's important that you see their faces and observe their expressions during the ceremony. If there isn't enough natural light available to illuminate their faces, provide supplemental illumination—but not the intimidating beam of a head-on spotlight; one or two floodlights on stands, aimed at an angle to the ceiling, should get rid of any harsh shadows. Turn these lights on *before* the procession has started down the aisle to avoid jarring the congregation or disturbing the ceremony.

Floodlamps have been known to burn out—sometimes with a loud bang. Using fresh bulbs during the ceremony will usually guard against this catastrophe. Most pros keep a small written log of the length of time bulbs are lit during each shoot, discarding them long before they expire from old age on their own.

Regardless of the ceremony's length, there is simply no way an extended wedding can be successfully shot using a hand-held camera. A sturdy tripod is essential. Select a position that gives you the shots you want without being obtrusive.

Once the ceremony begins, pre-set the camera for a focal length that includes both the couple and the minister in a neat, but not overly tight, framing. Lock the tripod head down carefully and without vibration (a fluid-head tripod helps a lot here—they're expensive but can be rented for the occasion) and then crouch or sit down. There's no need to keep your eye glued to the viewfinder throughout the ceremony—that can be distracting too. A more efficient way to monitor the taping is using a small color monitor located just below the tripod, plugged into the video output of the VCR. It can be operated either by battery or AC, depending on what equipment you own and whether there's a convenient AC outlet near the camera position. At an appropriate moment during the ceremony, it is permissible to pan off of the bride and groom and shoot a few reaction shots of their parents sitting immediately behind them. Pan slowly and smoothly, holding it just long enough to get the shot, then return slowly to your original framing of the bride and groom.

If you enlist the clergyman's assistance beforehand, he may agree to wear a small clip-on microphone during the ceremony. These units, worn by network anchormen, are small and unobtrusive and are usually sensitive enough to pick up his words as well as the reaction lines of the bride and groom. Clip the unit on carefully so the audio won't be obscured by the sound of moving cloth or ruffled vestments. Another audio backup: place a good audio-cassette recorder with a built-in omni-directional microphone on the floor between clergyman and couple. Carefully placed, it shouldn't get in the way of the ceremony and can provide you with an insurance policy against your other audio sources going bad. Weddings held outdoors present special audio problems. Make sure your microphones have windguards or foam socks to squelch any annoying interference.

Depending on the denomination of the couple, there may be additional ceremonies (like signing the register) to be performed—and recorded—which take place elsewhere in the house of worship. Here's another job for your second-unit man. You can keep your main equipment in place while he shoots this secondary footage, leaving you to resume taping the return of the bride and groom to the altar and their wedding march out of the church.

continued on page 144

THE PRO'S CHECKLIST

- ☐ Camera(s)
- ☐ Portable VCR(s)
- ☐ Batteries
- ☐ Battery recharger/AC adapter
- ☐ Tripod
- ☐ Lights (on stands and on video camera)
- ☐ Lighting stands
- ☐ Boom microphones
- ☐ Clip-on microphones (Lavaliers)
- ☐ Spare batteries for microphones
- ☐ Assorted AC extension cords
- ☐ AC "cheaters"
- ☐ Audio extension cords
- ☐ Earphones or headset
- ☐ Small color TV monitor
- ☐ Super High Grade videotape
- ☐ Gaffer tape
- ☐ RF cords, video and audio cables
- ☐ AC multitap or power strip
- ☐ Portable audio-cassette recorder
- ☐ Mobile equipment cart (optional)

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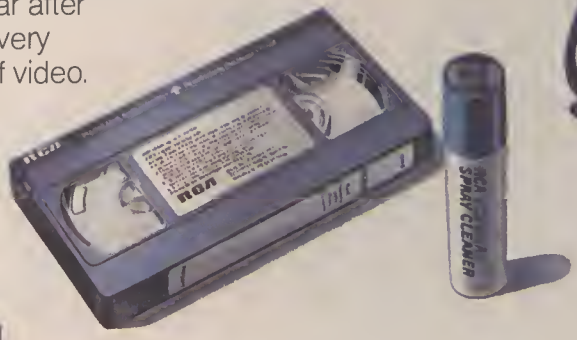

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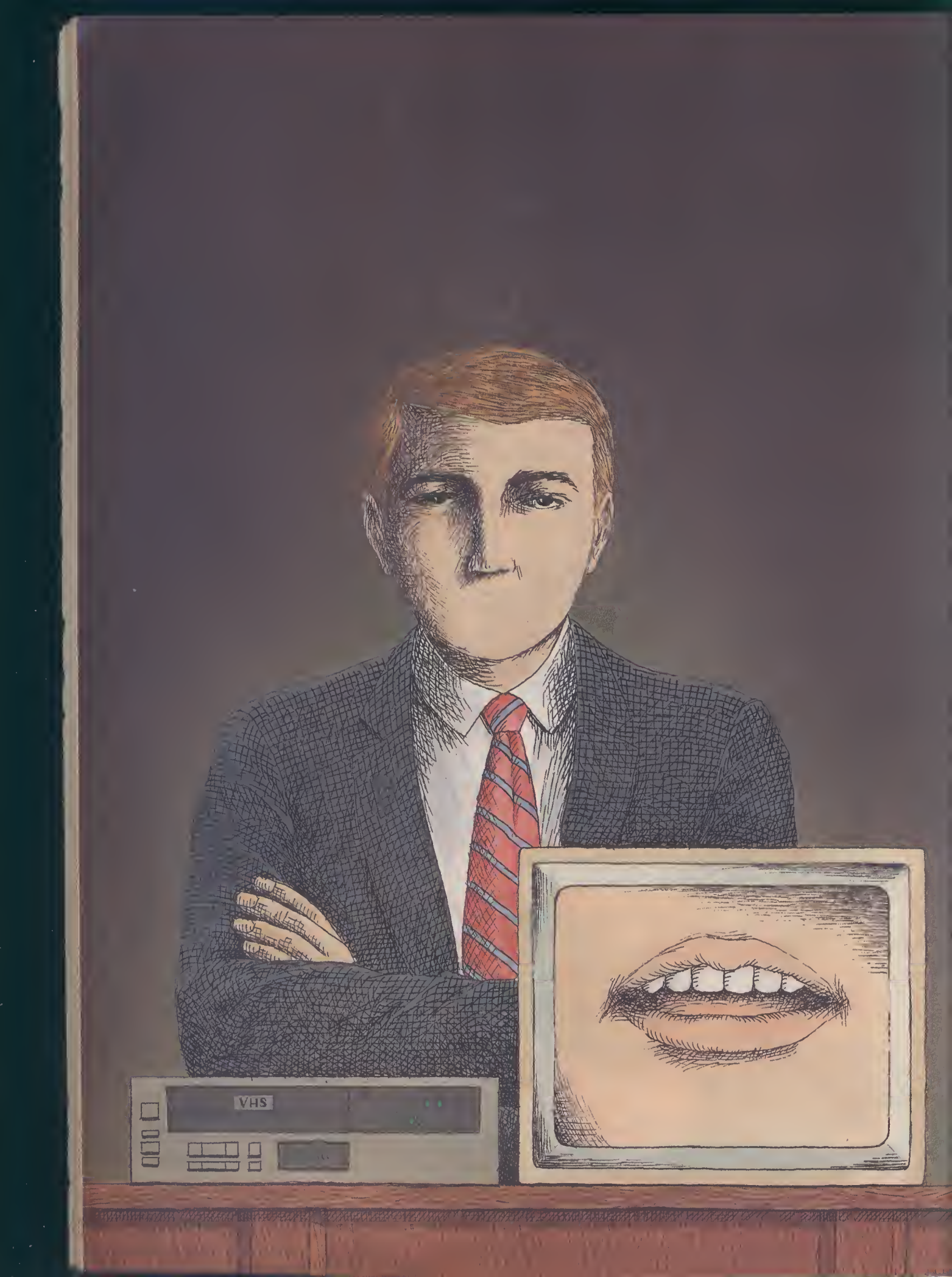
RCA Video Accessories


VHS

BUYER BEWARE

Things your VCR salesman won't tell you

The video store was selling VCRs like there was no tomorrow. It was the week after Christmas in Manhattan, and this midtown site was unloading a variety of RCA, Mitsubishi, Sony, and Sanyo machines without so much as a sales pitch. In a half-hour's time the store sold four VCRs, each with no more than three minutes' conversation and explanation.

Things weren't always this frantic. In the days when the VCR buyer was an oddball (who was probably the first on the block with a microwave oven and electronic garage-door opener too), there was time for chatting. The price for even a moderately featured VCR back then was also well past the $1000 mark. But now, with VCR prices dropping under $500—and in some cases under $200—video chitchat isn't worth the effort for most salesfolk.

That can make things rough on today's VCR buyer. You won't always get the whole story from the salesman. You have to read the magazines, query your friends, and then dive head first into a confrontation with some saleshand who was probably selling shoes before he was manhandling video gear. While there's nothing wrong with asking the floor person for a few tips, keep in mind that he's there to make sales, not friends. So it's best to arm yourself with facts before making your move.

Towers of Babble

I spent several days hitting Manhattan's VCR hot spots and returned with enough information to write a CIA survival guide for search-and-destroy missions in the toughest electronics district this side of Hong Kong. Take the aforementioned midtown outlet. I had stood by inconspicuously watching how easily others became VCR owner statistics before I stepped up to the counter myself. Here's what ensued:

"I'm looking for a VCR. And I was wondering if you could answer a few questions. For instance, what's the difference between Beta and VHS?"

"We've got them both—Beta and VHS," the salesclerk said. "Which one do you like?"

"I'm not sure."

"Well, some people like Beta, others like VHS."

"Which do you like?"

"Oh, I like them both. One's just as good as the other."

"How do you feel about 8mm?"

"Like it lots."

The conversation didn't go much further. It didn't need to. He told me to look over their price list while he took care of another customer who didn't want to talk so much.

This was what he should have told me: that the differences between VHS and Beta run deeper than the faster recording speed of Beta (which according to its makers allows it to produce a better picture) and the different ways the two formats lace

BY MARTIN PORTER

Mel Furukawa

the tape around the tape heads. What really matters is whether your friends are Beta owners with whom you can swap tapes, or whether your local tape-rental shop stocks enough tapes in the Beta format to make such a buy worthwhile. If you are buying a VCR just to record off the air, neither of these will make much difference. But then it is important to know that while Beta brings a measurable improvement in picture quality, VHS offers a cost savings with its longer tape lengths (eight hours with the longest tape at the slowest speed, as opposed to Beta's five). 8mm, on the other hand, only allows a maximum recording time of 90 minutes and has yet to prove itself as a replacement for either of the half-inch formats.

So what's a VCR customer to do? You might try more of a boutique atmosphere, someplace where the sales clerks know a thing or two about video and have the time to answer questions. Prices tend to be a bit higher as a result. Then again, the information isn't necessarily that much better—at least, given my experience at another midtown spot.

This Week's Specialization

This store "specializes" in video. It caters mainly to the yuppie set that doesn't quite trust paying retail at nearby Bloomingdales but fears being ripped off at a store that specializes in "cash and carry" transactions. What you pay for attention at boutique video shops you often sacrifice in selection. This shop had five VCRs to choose from—one under $500, a couple around $750 and the other two over $1000. The salesman looked the part too. With his stylish suit and helmet-cut hairdo, he could have passed for a Wall Street hotshot. But what he really knew about VCRs could have fit into the inside pocket of a thin wallet.

Right off the bat he tried to sell me on specs. He compared the signal-to-noise ratio of one machine against that of another. Ditto for horizontal resolution. I have to admit that the numbers sounded impressive, although he didn't happen to have the competitive models in the store for an eyeball comparison.

"What I'm trying to figure out is whether or not I need more than two heads," I said, looking for a straight answer.

"Two heads are better than none," he countered.

I didn't laugh. "Are they better than four?"

"You really don't need four heads, to be honest."

"Then why do they make four-head units?"

"Well, four heads are better for some applications."

"Such as?"

"Recording at slower speeds, things like that."

"Do you have any four-head sets that I can check out?"

"Sorry, we're all out."

'I LEARNED A LESSON IN THAT VIDEO BOUTIQUE. NEVER TRUST A VIDEO SALESMAN WHO LOOKS TOO CLASSY TO BE A VIDEO SALESMAN.'

"What do you have?"

"We have some real nice two-head units that you might like."

I learned several lessons in that video boutique. (1) Never trust a video salesman who looks too classy to be a video salesman. (2) Never let someone talk specs to you unless you can make a visual comparison. (3) Find out what a store has in stock first, then start asking questions. And what should you know about the number of heads on a VCR? The more, the better? Well, yes and no.

In general, the more heads you have, the better your VCR will function with special effects. In other words, two heads are directed specifically to the chores of recording and playback while the additional heads are designed for tasks such as still frame, visual search, and slow motion. You might not care whether your still-frame picture has no noise bars sliding through the middle; you may be perfectly satisfied if the picture looks noisy when you are visually searching for the appropriate frame.

Don't believe video salespeople who say you need more heads to satisfactorily record at the faster or slower speeds. And don't be sold on specs alone. If you are looking at numbers, just make sure your VCR carries at least 40dB in video signal-to-noise ratio and 240 lines of horizontal resolution. Then have the salesman demo the two units side by side so you can try to detect the difference. Try to use your own tape and make sure the VCR isn't attached to any signal-processing device that would improve resolution or enrich colors.

The monitor to which the VCR is attached should preferably be similar to the one in your home. If possible, recreate your home viewing environment. That doesn't mean move in with your couch, but at least make sure the overhead lighting is equivalent and, if you intend to operate the machine from across the room, that the remote control will stretch the full length (if it's the wired type).

Ultimately, any VCR buy has to take your way of life into account, and that is where no VCR salesman can help. With all due respect to the few good salesmen, the great majority can't honestly answer questions like: (1) Do I really need a remote control? (2) Do I need LED displays? (3) Do I need 8-event/2-week programming? (4) Do I need front or top loading? (5) Do I need a portable or tabletop VCR? These are all options you must consider for yourself. And here are some suggested ways to look at them:

(1) Are you lazy? Do you mind getting out of your seat to change channels? Do you enjoy watching commercials on your home videotapes and thus don't need such features as visual search? You need a remote control only if you expect to do a lot of picture shuffling without budging from your seat.

(2) Do you like the high-tech look? Is it important that your VCR clock and counter have digital readouts? That's about all that's important here. Do make sure the tuner/timer comes with a tape counter of some kind, though.

(3) How many programs do you plan to tape each week or during a two-week vacation? Do you want to forget about watching TV altogether and simply let the VCR do the time shifting for you? In short, how much programmability do you need? (Up to a year's worth is available. But does anyone really need it?)

(4) Where are you going to put your VCR? If it is to be in a rack or cabinet, is there enough room (at least three inches) for a top loader to load and eject tapes? If not, or if you plan to stack something on top of it, you need a front-loading unit.

(5) Are you going to make on-location videos with a camera? Are you going to take your VCR around on trips? Portables cost more. Don't buy one unless you need it, or don't have the shelf space for a tabletop model.

Where the quality salesman can help most is in matching needs to budget. His job is to help you consider value versus cost. What this means is that he should be able to quickly add up the number of features and frills a given VCR provides, divide it by the price, and figure out if it is indeed a better buy than other compatible machines in stock. He should also be straight with you about similar machines sold under different brands with different pricetags. This may be news to you, but just as auto makers and cigarette purveyors repackage the same products under different brand names, VCR manufacturers do the same thing.

Much of this is due to original equipment manufacturing (OEM) practices. Hitachi, for instance, sells its products to RCA which, in turn, sells it under its own brand name. Matsushita, which manufactures under its own Panasonic and Quasar brands, also manufactures OEM products for GE, Magnavox, Canon, and others—although the marketing companies maintain that machines are built to their own specifications.

Still, an eagle eye for button placement

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and feature combinations can save you a couple of bucks on the same machine. One good way to make comparisons is on paper—stack the features of one model's spec sheet against the other; if everything matches, odds are they are the identical machine. There is no tried-and-true way to do this, but the salesman has some responsibility to explain that a four-head stereo remote-control unit from Quasar is identical to the one he has advertised for $50 more from Panasonic.

Ultimately, a lot of this responsibility will fall on your shoulders. You should, for instance, make sure that if the model number isn't current (the only way to verify this is by watching the ads and reading the magazines) you shouldn't be paying top dollar for the product. Also, keep an eye out for the new Korean VHS machines that hit the U.S. this spring. The Korean manufacturers are just jumping into this business after reaching a licensing agreement with JVC for its VHS technology. The machines are full of frills and cheap, although they have yet to be lab tested. If you are only going to play rented tapes, you might also explore how much you can save by buying one of the new VCP (P for play-only) units being introduced.

And what about the new 8mm format? Get assertive with this one when you talk to your salesman. Don't let him sell you on "newness" alone. If he is up-front with you, he should tell you about the limited amount of recording time available with 8mm cassettes as well as the lack of rental titles. Be particularly wary if he says that support is "on the way"—never trust a salesman who doubles as a fortune teller.

Stereo Definitions

Another big choice has nothing to do with the picture but rather with the sound. Quality audio will cost you extra. Although the new Hi-Fi models offer near-digital-quality sound, they also carry high pricetags.

As for VHS split-track stereo VCRs, there isn't all that much difference in terms of audio quality between mono and dual-channel video sound. In other words—don't confuse VHS stereo with VHS Hi-Fi. The specs on split-track stereo units hardly approach those of Hi-Fi units, though they do at least give you the necessary jacks to tap your VCR into your audio system. You don't run into this problem with Beta since there never was such a thing as a Beta stereo machine (excepting a one-shot attempt with Dolby C by Marantz). The Beta folks went straight to Hi-Fi as soon as they could. If audio is important to you, Hi-Fi is your best bet—although you may want to wait until the price premium on this feature comes further down.

Speaking of price, if you are buying from an established dealer, you should have no problem. But if you are hitting the streets in search of the best price available, you might not necessarily find yourself across the counter from a dealer you can trust with your hard-earned cash.

As a result, you have no other choice but to resort to consumer guerilla tactics: it's always best to pay by check or credit card (though big-city discounters tend to prefer cash only). You can cancel an order using both. This assures you that, in the event your new VCR doesn't work, you will be guaranteed a new box from the dealer instead of the following refrain: "You'll have to send it to Secaucus."

If you think that sounds a little paranoid, consider this tale from the Naked City: A friend of mine recently bought a brand-new VHS Hi-Fi deck from a dealer he didn't know. The price was right and so was the dealer's location. He paid with American Express. Upon getting the unit home, he discovered that the Hi-Fi heads were inoperative. When he brought the unit back to the dealer, he was informed that it was "his problem" and that he had to "return it to the manufacturer for repairs."

Fortunately, my friend remembered that he had charged the purchase on his credit card and, being the crafty sort he is, he informed "Mr. Goodbuy" that if he didn't exchange the defective unit then and there, he would cancel the charge and keep the unit too. It didn't take more than a few minutes for him to get another box up from the storeroom.

You just have to know how to talk to those guys.

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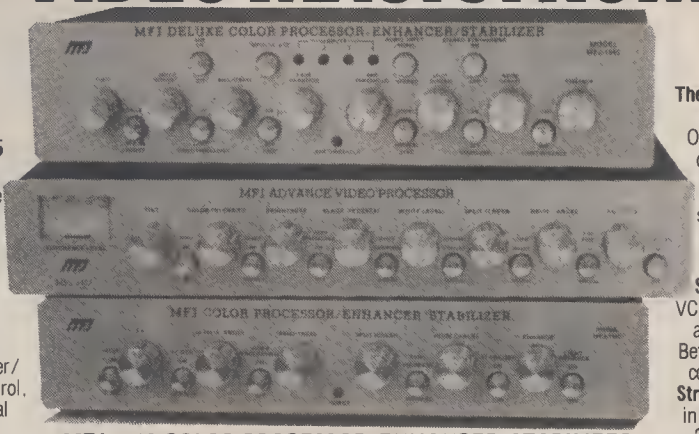

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No Strings Attached

Pinocchio on cassette

This seems to be the season for putting theatrical gems into video settings. Hot on the heels of MGM/UA's release of *Gone with the Wind*, Disney Home Video has done something program-conscious observers have hoped for since its announcement of a "Classics" line starting with the not-so-major release of *Robin Hood* some months back. Disney has gone into the vault and come out with a video version of *Pinocchio*—rated with *Fantasia* and *Snow White* as one of old Walt's trio of great feature-length masterpieces.

For the moment, the Disney people emphatically state that no other feature-length cartoons are slated for video, although they will unleash another seven "Limited Edition" collections of cartoon shorts this summer. But *Pinocchio*—until now seemingly forever trapped in that seven-year theatrical re-release schedule that introduces Disney classics to each new generation—is a story in itself. That's because it is a landmark in the animator's art as well as the product of a genuine American visionary: Walt Disney.

Snows of Yesteryear

After agonizing over *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and stumbling through all the pitfalls of full-length animation for the first time, Disney and his animators were rewarded with rave reviews. But Disney vowed to make his next project even better, with more liquid and lifelike animation, more drama, and an even more dazzling array of characters, backgrounds, and action sequences.

by Ron Smith

Disney, always a perfectionist, put in long hours on the new project, driving workers as hard as he drove himself. He was willing to spend a fortune on the finest equipment and allow animators weeks, even months simply to experiment with new techniques. It was exhilarating to work for someone who valued creativity, but it was also exhausting. After experiencing all those late-night sessions, it's no wonder Disney's animators planned to unionize—and actually struck the studio the following year.

Describing Disney's pursuit of excellence, animator Ward Kimball recalls that six months into the *Pinocchio* project Disney came up with "a different approach for the story—so all the work we had done for the first six months was thrown out and we had to start over again. And this was typical of Walt, compared to present-day producers whose bottom line is money. Walt al-

Photos © Walt Disney Productions

ways said, 'I can't take it with me, the only fun I'm ever gonna have is right here, making these pictures, and I'm gonna make 'em right!' "

For the right Pinocchio voice Disney chose child actor Dick Jones. Jones had amassed an impressive collection of "as a boy" credits. In films starring Fredric March, Tyrone Power, Cary Grant, and others he was the one who, in flashbacks, played the characters "as a boy." For a boy, the Disney studio was a dreamland. But it was a workplace too, and Jones remembers the Disney penchant for perfection. In an ocean sequence, the crew tried all kinds of techniques to get Pinocchio to sound as if he were speaking underwater. "They almost drowned me on that. They put me on my back and poured water in my mouth and almost drowned me."

To get an authentic happy feel for the songs, young Jones had to *act* the role of Pinocchio, not just read dialogue: "When we did 'Hi diddle dee dee, an actor's life for me' they built this set with a rolling road, put us in costume, and we had to go dancing down the road singing 'Hi diddle dee dee'."

Jones is now a real-estate agent. Cliff Edwards, the voice of Jiminy Cricket, is now dead. But were he alive, he'd have a different story to tell of Disney's feelings about perfection. Edwards was once a well-known singer, the man who introduced hits like "Toot Toot Tootsie Goodbye" and "Singin' in the Rain." He made millions. But in the '30s his career was in decline. Making *risque* records like "I'm Going to Give It to Mary with Love" and "Take Out that Thing," he was an unlikely choice for a wholesome Disney movie. But Disney wanted that distinctive voice. Even decades later, when Edwards' career was again on the downside, Disney didn't forget him. The company contracted him for a record of Disney hits.

The Beast Masters

During the creation of *Pinocchio* the studio looked like a natural-history museum. There were detailed studies of crickets (Walt's animators went through two- and four-legged models till he found one that was "cute enough") and there were clay figures of foxes and other cartoon animals. Most impressive of all was the five-foot whale skeleton with moving parts. Inside were working inflatable lungs so that animators could study the animal's movement and breathing. Like scientists, they studied the iridescent glow of the sea mammal's skin, and when they found they couldn't duplicate all the changing hues of the living breathing whale, they devised special photographic dye processes to turn the trick. The result, Monstro the Whale, was the "Jaws" of his day, an awesome behemoth.

Mystery and wonder are as plentiful in *Pinocchio* as moments of merriment and song. Wandering through it all is the child-hero, a blank-faced boy with a glassy wide-eyed gaze. He takes in everything with a child's sense of amazement, his mouth hanging open in surprise. Like most children he is awkward, laughed at for his clumsiness, and prey to the adults around him.

One reason why this film makes such an impression on kids is that they can identify with the hero, and with so many vivid, often frightening moments. There's Monstro, of course, splashing through a brilliant Disney sea of purple and blue, the never-ending lacework of foam splashing in the air, drool cascading around each fearsome tooth. There's also Stromboli, every child's image of a frighteningly large adult whose hand can cover a boy's head and whose huge lips and teeth can gobble a child up. And there are the vivid scenes at Pleasure Island.

Disney animator Ollie Johnston: "I think Pleasure Island is one of the scariest sequences—these kids turning into donkeys, you know. I think it's a terrific sequence and I'm sure it scared a lot of kids. But I think the pictures have to have strength like that to be lasting. It's not a matter of trying to be cruel—it's just telling a story that has more intensity."

Quite intense is the moment when Pinocchio sees a boy transformed into a donkey, sprouting long ears, the hands changing to hooves, the boy crying out in horror, "Mother! Mother!" But throughout the film young viewers react to scenes of potential danger that hold special importance to them. There's kindly old Gepetto—with a clock on the wall that shows a child with his pants down, spanked every hour on the hour simply for having his hand in the cookie jar. The child squeaks out "Ma! Ma!" up to 12 times.

And there's the fairy who turns Pinocchio into a real boy—making sure to first load up the poor kid with a conscience and the kind of lectures that most children accept with bewilderment and resentment. Every kid can identify with Pinocchio after they watch him being gently, firmly scolded by the fairy with "I'll forgive you *this once*, but *remember* a boy who won't be good might just as well be made of wood!" Even Jiminy Cricket gets into the act. "Make a fool of yourself," he complains, "*then* maybe you'll listen to your conscience!" Pinocchio can only stare with those big baby-blue eyes and skip through each new adventure on the way toward growing up into a *real* boy.

Get Happy

But along with real or imagined terrors, joys are an important part of childhood—and of *Pinocchio*. In fact, viewed on cassette instead of in a theater, *Pinocchio*'s happy scenes will stand out and its darker ones will seem just a bit less intense.

Animator Eric Larsen, now teaching animation techniques at the Disney studio, recalls, "We still look back at it as one of the most technically perfect pictures we ever made." Walt Disney once compared *Pinocchio* and *Snow White*, feeling that *Pinocchio* "technically and artistically was superior." And evidently Disney Home Video feels that of the first three, the "big three" (*Snow White, Pinocchio, Fantasia*), *Pinocchio* is the one to be presented first. Of course, another reason might be that *Pinocchio* was in the theaters in 1984 and would be ineligible for re-release for another generation.

But when you wish upon a video to be released, it makes no difference why it was released. *Pinocchio* is here, and not in a limited edition, either. He's back, no strings attached. And in the film is the theme song for all of Disney's work, the music that symbolizes the fantasy and imagination and magic in so much of the Disney movies. It's Jiminy Cricket singing "When you wish upon a star...your dreams come true."

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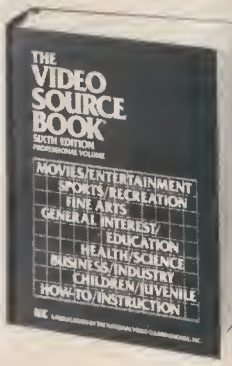

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NAD MTS Monitor/Receiver

VIDEO-TEST 297

The MR20 is NAD's first venture into video. It won't be the company's last, for two reasons: First, this set's quality and value earn NAD a place in the video world. Second, a few annoyances among its features leave room for improvement in subsequent models.

Description. As the model number vaguely implies, this is a monitor/receiver with a 20-inch flat-square tube screen. That screen, a few indicator lights, and a swing-down door make up the entire front panel. All controls are behind that door in recognition of the fact that most large-screen TVs are operated by remote control most of the time. Flip down the door, though, and the sleek black monolithic look gives way to a toystore of 32 well-chosen controls and jacks intelligently arranged in six functional groups: input selection, tuning and volume, audio controls, video controls, automatic picture controls, and miscellaneous.

On the rear panel are additional controls and jacks. These include RF, audio, and video inputs and outputs, connectors for external speakers, two unswitched AC convenience outlets, and user-accessible servicing controls. The remote-control transmitter's controls are mostly conventional (up/down channel select and direct-access numeric keypad, mute, power, and up/down volume adjust). But there is also an "RF" switch which steps through the three RF inputs, and a Quick-View switch for instant comparison of the last two channels you tuned in.

Photos by Les Morsillo

I began by admiring the MR20's clean look and complete control setup. My admiration paled as I first began to use the set, on human-engineering grounds. Then it recovered due to the excellent performance. But let's get my gripes—and some praise—out of the way first.

Operation. Assuming you will operate the set from its remote control, the design makes a lot of sense. Most of the front-panel controls and features that aren't duplicated on the remote control won't be used very often—why leave them hanging out to spoil the clean lines? If that assumption's false in your case, you may find yourself (as I did) wishing that the power, volume, channel-select, and perhaps input-select controls—the ones you will use in day-to-day operation—were accessible with the door shut. The controls are deeply recessed too—hard to see when the set is mounted below eye level, as it usually will be. (NAD will fix that in future production runs by silk-screening a control map onto the inside of the door.) However, I did soon learn the locations of the day-to-day controls, so this became less of a problem.

Editor's note: This test report was executed solely by Contributing Editor Ivan Berger because Technical Editor Lancelot Braithwaite was involved in designing the NAD MR20.

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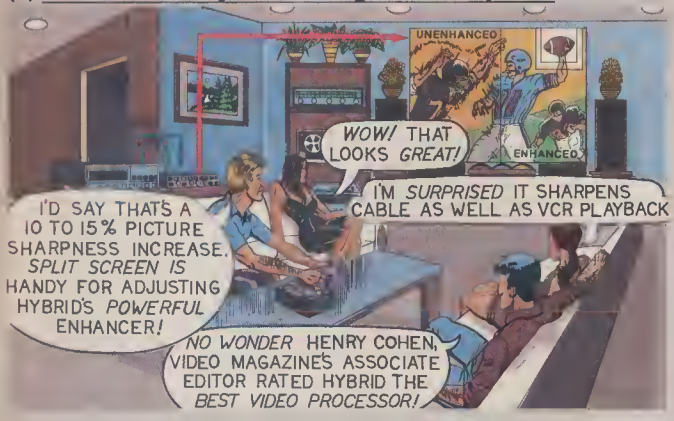

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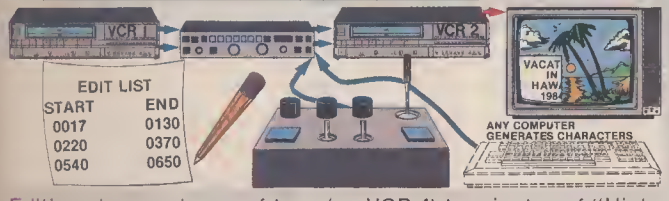

Editing changes hours of tape (on VCR **1**) to minutes of "Highlights" (on VCR **2**). Hybrid inserts fades/wipes at edit boundaries.

(A) Rewind both tapes. Zero both counters.
(B) Make an edit list. On VCR **1** note the counter reading at the start and end of each "Highlight".
(C) Roll VCR **1** to 0017 and put in play/pause.
(D) Put VCR **2** in record/pause. On Hybrid, press Fade/in
(E) Select a blue fade or wipe button on Hybrid (or a combination of buttons to build compound wipes.) Practice the effect by pressing Fade button in and out. Then fade out.
(F) Final steps: unpause **2**, unpause **1**, fade Hybrid in. E/T on.
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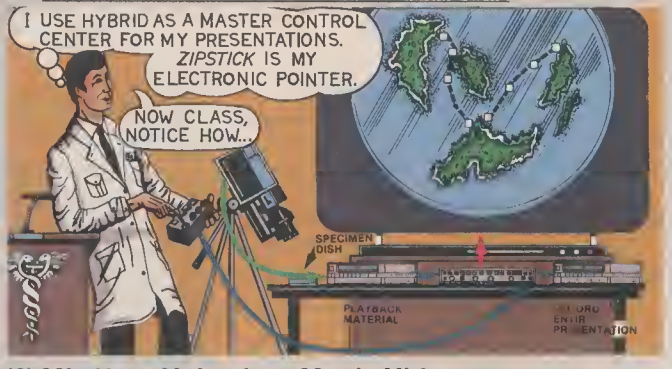

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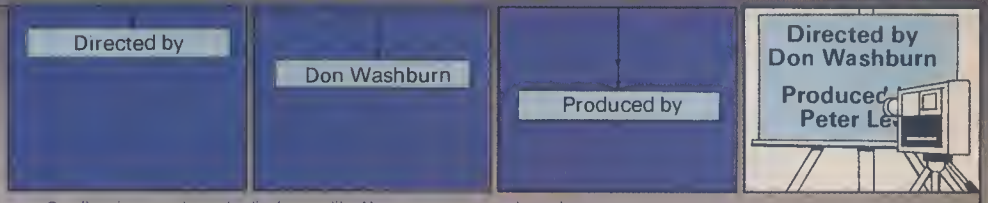
ZIPSTICK CONTROLLER, gives you 4 more unique special effects (optional)

(1) Spotlighting **How it works:** Your manual controls wipes to shape spotlight any shape. Translucency control reduces brightness of all areas outside the spotlight for proper contrast. Zipstick zips spotlight around the screen to highlight the person or object you desire.

Use spotlighting to single out and highlight a person or object with a fixed viewpoint.

(2) Scrolling It's a thin bright frame surrounded by black.
How it works: Your Zipstick scrolls frame down screen to expose your credits. Use with camera and easel.



Scrolling is a good way to display credits. Use your camera and easel.

Mounts next to Hybrid or on 6' cable.

Translucency Controls brightness of all areas outside the spotlight, from very bright, to deep gray.

Fade Picture fades/in to a Spotlight or fades/out to soft gray.

Zipstick Zips effects to any position on the screen.

Horizontal and Vertical Will manually converge wipes to shape spotlights.

Auto/Manual Switches select Auto/Manual operation of wipes.

A/B Switch Operates Hybrid A/B Switch.

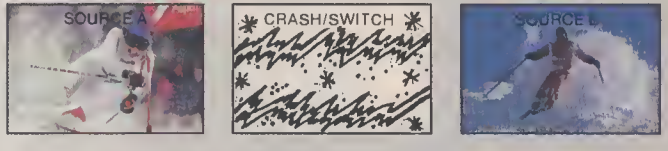
(3) Targeted Converge Presto! A wipe box shrinks to any target you choose left or right of center screen.
How it works: Select a target center with Zipstick. V, on Manual. H, on Auto. Turn Translucency to black, as you press Fade.

End your tape by converging to any dramatic event.

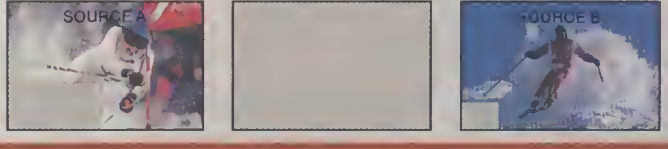
(4) Bouncing Ball Effect A tiny bright ball, an electronic pointer.
How it works: Zipstick zooms ball around screen as you point out details. Usually used with VCR in freeze frame or live with camera.

Use bouncing ball to point out a particular feature or detail. Especially good for fine details.

A/B Switch Methods Compared Most Video Processors have an A/B switch. And you switch source A to B by a method known as a "crash/switch" - an appropriate name!



Hybrid Gives You A Clean Switch Press X-CH fade - screen momentarily fades to a soft gray - then B fades/in. Glitch has been masked by the gray! You'll love this Hybrid exclusive.



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History of VIP Products Awards **Hybrid-8:** Most Innovative Video Design, Design Engineering Council, Electronics Industry Assoc., 1984 • Best Consumer Video Switcher S.E.G., Video Review Magazine, June, 1984 • Best S.E.G. System, Video Magazine, 1983 • Best Video Processor Value, Video Magazine, 1982 • Most Technically Advanced Video Processor, Video Swapper Magazine, 1981 • **Vaudio System Manager + RF:** Most Innovative Switcher Design, Design Engineering Council, Electronics Industry Assoc., 1984

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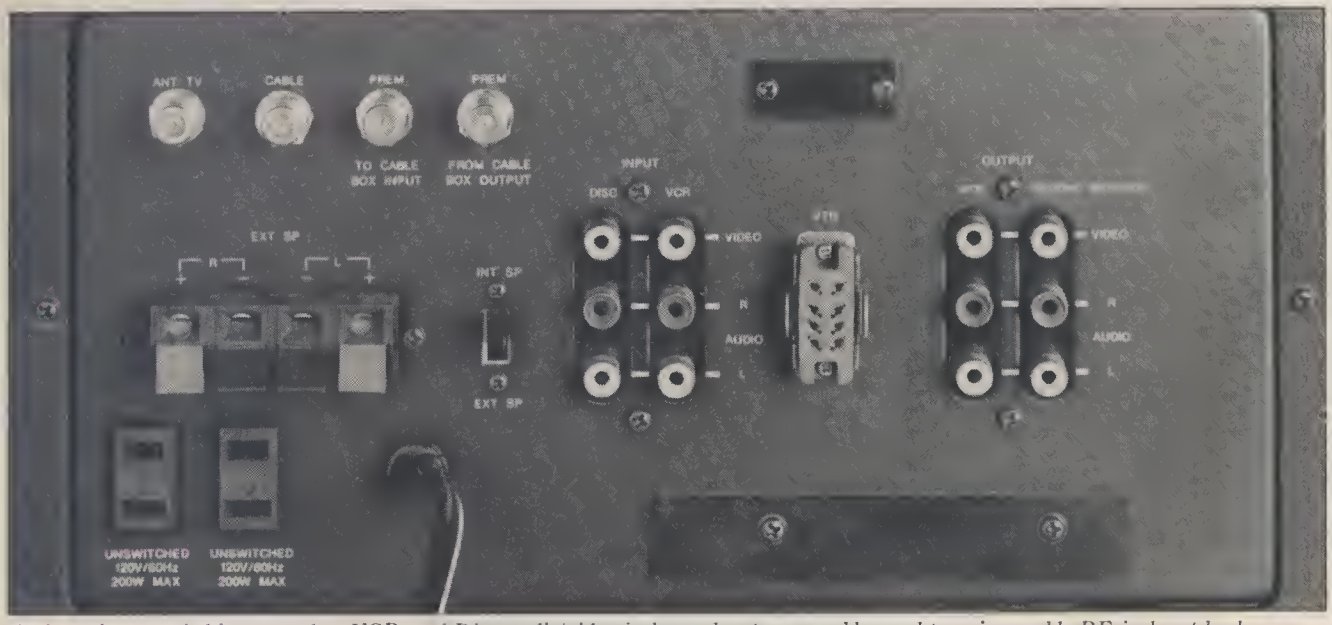

A clever input-switching setup has VCR and Disc audio/video jacks and antenna, cable, and premium cable RF jacks at back.

The remote-control system, designed as the set's main control setup, gave me some problems too. One was the narrow angle of acceptance of the infrared transmitter and receiver. You can operate most IR remotes acceptably by pointing them in the general direction of the set, even bouncing their beams off the ceiling—not so the NAD's, which must be pointed directly at the set. (This too will be fixed in later versions.) Another problem for me was the transmitter's shape, which seemed awkwardly narrow for one-handed operation; the channel up/down controls were awkwardly placed for one-hand operation too. (My problem with the shape may be my own idiosyncrasy, but my fiancee, with smaller hands, had the same misgivings.) And I would have preferred to have remote selection of audio/video as well as RF inputs—this way, you have to get up to switch to (but not from) VCR or disc, even though the MR20's sound and picture quality cry out for direct audio/video feeds from these sources.

The MR20's input-switching setup is unusual and, in many ways, exceptionally well-thought-out. There are three audio/video input-jack sets: VCR and Disc on the rear panel, Aux (with a video input-level

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Learn Illegal Switch prevents feedback (i.e., from VCR1 to VCR1). **Security Scan** sequentially switches up to 10 home security cameras. **Scan Rate** adjusts scan time. **RF 3-4** selects channel on VSM's two RF modulators

Tiny red LEDs light switchpoints.

FROM buttons - 10 program **sources.** 7 A, V sources 3 RF sources

TO buttons are 8 **destinations**

Button labels changeable

Special Mode Buttons: Memory Cells 1-4 instantly recall up to four specific hook-ups. **Memory Learn** stores your special hook-ups in memory. **Lights** adjust LED brightness. **New Lock Code** you change three digit code if learned by unauthorized persons. **Unlock, Lock** prevents tampering.

Back Panel View Shows 3 Matrix	
Video	Matrix 7 input, 8 output
Stereo	Matrix 7 input, 8 output
RF	Matrix 3 input, 6 output
Total:	10 in 8 out + 2 RF Mods

Figure 1: **Build A Four Camera Studio** Use VSM as a routing switcher, and Hybrid-8 as an S.E.G. Get great results.

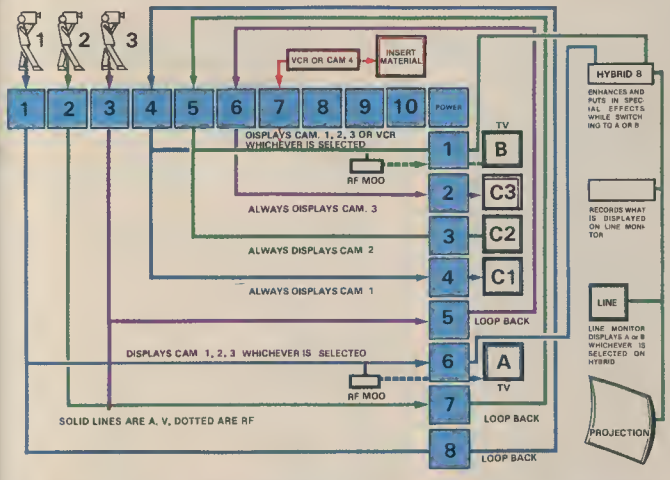


Figure 2: Same as *1*, but shows a production in progress.

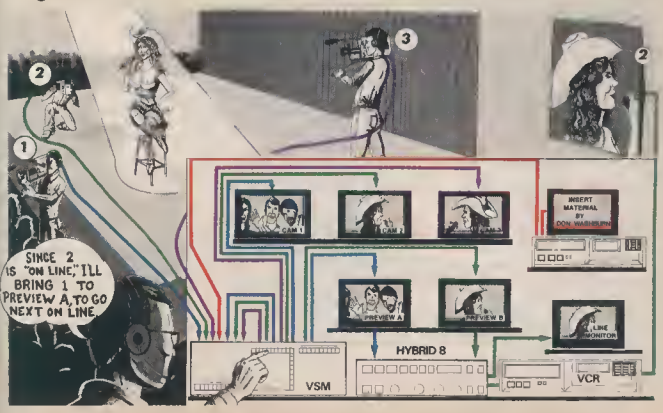
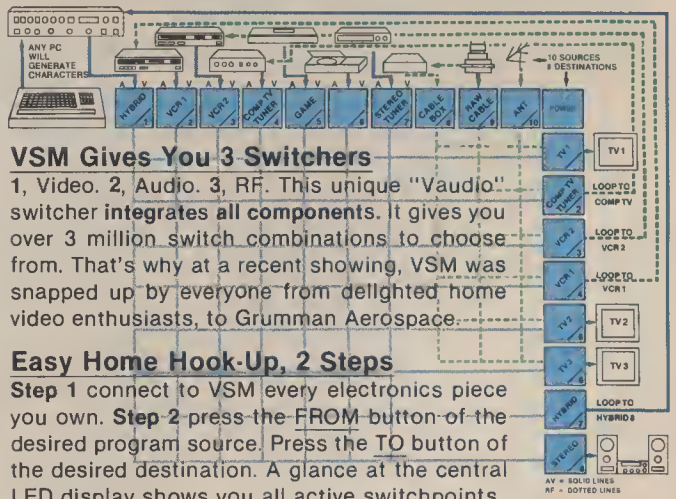


Figure 3: **A Super, Home Set-Up** Over 3 million switch combinations. Integrates all A, V and RF components.



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Easy Studio Should you wish, VSM beautifully couples with Hybrid-8 to yield a Four Camera Studio, as illustrated.

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control) beneath the front-panel flap. There are also four RF inputs: rear-panel ones for TV antenna, regular cable, and premium cable, plus a computer/game input beneath the front flap. In a clever design move, selecting either cable input sets the tuner to cable reception (which worked fine on New York's Manhattan Cable system), while selecting the antenna input sets up the tuner for the normal VHF and UHF frequencies. If you have a premium cable system that requires a decoder box, you needn't bother with external splitters and switches to use the decoder while retaining full remote control of the MR20. A rear-panel output feeds the incoming cable signal to the cable box, whose output is then fed back to the premium-cable input.

Great thinking so far, but it gets murky beyond this point. Research showed NAD that most users of monitor/receivers in this price and quality class will watch cable primarily, so the MR20 is always in cable-input mode when you first turn it on—a pleasure if you do watch this way, a pain if you do not. If you were previously watching a cable channel, the set comes on tuned to that; if you were watching anything else, the set will tune itself to cable Channel 3. Whenever you switch to the cable or TV antenna input, the MR20 retunes to Channel 3.

According to the manual, "This is done because pay-TV decoders and other video products usually contain an RF modulator delivering an output signal on Channel 3." Because the remote control can only select RF inputs, it would be convenient (though a betrayal of the MR20's performance) to watch your VCR or videodisc on Channel 3, via the antenna or cable inputs—whichever you didn't normally use for its intended purpose. But otherwise, the Channel-3 default makes little sense to me. In most areas no TV station is on the air on Channel 3 (or any other *specific* channel). Cable viewers won't normally watch through their decoder boxes as the MR20's tuner picks up cable channels very well. So the only input for which you need a Channel-3 default is the premium-cable one, which will always be used with a decoder box; and that's the only RF input which does *not* default to Channel 3! If all you watch is nonpremium cable you'll never notice this. But to me, it's as out of place as grammatical errors in a great essay.

The tuning scan is unusual too. It stops only at channels carrying a signal. As you scan, the stations slide into tune instead of popping in as they commonly do: in a fraction of a second the picture appears in noisy black & white, stabilizes, and colors and sound come on. If you like to scan channels in silence, you must judge from the first second or so of picture whether or not you want to watch; if you linger longer, the sound comes on—switching channels defeats the muting control.

You can't program the scan to eliminate channels you don't watch. On my cable system, that means flicking through 35 signals to find the 15 channels that have any interest for me. It also means marking time as the MR20 scans past my highest cable channel (36) through Channel 64 before jumping Channels 95 through 99 and cycling back to 2. (Solution: push the Channel-2 button.) On the other hand, not everyone is as restless a channel scanner as I; and that long wait above Channel 36 shows that the MR20 is ready to receive a lot of cable channels—69 of them.

Without cable, though, the MR20's unlimitable channel scan would be no problem. In Manhattan, for instance, one can reasonably hope to get seven VHF channels and about four UHF ones. Of those 11 channels, there are only two I'd never watch (both foreign-language stations), leaving little reason to censor the set's scan. Under those circumstances, the only real annoyance would be the several long waits (ranging from 2 to 13 seconds) as the set scanned through the relatively underpopulated UHF band.

Every other control function worked beautifully. The manual fine-tuning provision worked fine but may not be necessary for most viewers. On all the cable signals which give my regular TV problems, the MR20's automatic fine-tuning did as good a

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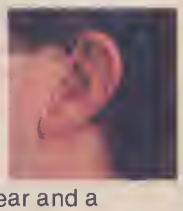

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job as I could manually.

The volume control's steps were small enough so that its operation sounded seamless; I never got the feeling, as I do with many sets, that the right sound level for me would fall in between its steps. Stereo and SAP (Second Audio Program) signals came in reasonably well, even when my antenna could not pull in a good picture (a function of its location, sandwiched between two buildings). There was a bit of noise when listening to broadcast stereo, but it was usually far from intolerable; and when it did become annoying, pressing the Mono button cleared it up.

The automatic color control worked well, bringing in natural fleshtones on all but a handful of programs and commercials, whose transmitted color (viewed with Auto Color off) proved extremely odd. When Auto Color is on, the manual picture controls' action is restricted but not completely shut out—just as I prefer it. The Optimum Picture Quality (OPC) control, which varies picture brightness according to ambient light, worked very well. Unlike some other sets I've tried, it neither under- nor over-compensated. The clickstops on the manual picture controls were at just the right places too. There was no clickstop on the Detail control but I didn't need one; I kept it most of the way up most of the time.

Intelligently, NAD gave the MR20 a quarter-inch headphone jack like those on home audio systems, instead of the small 3.5-mm ones found on most small-screen TVs and portable sound systems. Headphones that use the larger plug usually have longer cords, more appropriate for sitting a decent distance from this 20-inch screen; the larger plugs are more durable too. When a headphone is plugged in, the internal speakers and external-speaker terminals are silenced, but the line-level feeds to external amplifiers and VCRs are not disturbed.

More intelligence showed up on the rear panel. For starters, there are two AC convenience outlets, so you can plug in VCRs, disc players, cable boxes, and the like without a jungle of extension cords. Unlike some monitor/receivers, the MR20 has two sets of outputs in addition to its input jacks. The VCR outputs, with fixed audio level, can be used for convenient dubbing from disc to cassette, or to feed stereo or cable signals from the MR20's tuner to a VCR not equipped to pick them up directly. The Second Monitor outputs have variable audio level, controlled by the MR20's volume control, to feed an external amplifier or self-amplified speakers. There's also an eight-pin input/output plug for connection to commercial VCRs. There is no RGB video input.

A rear-panel switch either feeds the output of the MR20's stereo amplifier to the easy-connect external-speaker terminals on the rear panel, or feeds the amp's left channel to the speaker built into the left side of the set (the apparent speaker grille on the right side seems to be for ventilation).

Test Report: NAD MR20 Monitor/Receiver with MTS Tuner

DATA

Date of test: March 1984
Suggested retail price: $948
Weight: 65 lbs. approx.
Dimensions: 19-1/4 x 21 x 19-1/8 inches (h/w/d)
Power requirements: 120 VAC, 60Hz, 132W
Screen size: 20-inch FST, measured diagonally
Speaker size: single internal 4-inch speaker for left channel with stereo amplifier and provision for external stereo speakers
Type of tuning: frequency synthesis
Method of tuning: up/down scan on set, both scan and random access on remote
Multichannel TV Sound (MTS): yes, stereo or SAP (Second Audio Program) switch selectable
Cable readiness: 139 channels—2 to 13, 14 to 83, A to I, J to W, AA to WW to W+28, plus A-5 to A1 (will operate with HRC cable system according to manufacturer)
Remote control: IR wireless with controls for Power, volume Up/Down, Mute, channel Up/Down, 10-key channel random access, Q.V. (Quick View—last-channel recall), RF switching
Video/stereo audio inputs: 3—for VCR and videodisc (or second VCR) on rear, and Aux (adjustable video level) on front panel
Video/stereo audio outputs: 2—one set has fixed-level outputs for feeding VCR and the second set has audio level controlled by the volume control
Note: an 8-pin connector is provided which combines the 6 RCA jacks for VCR inputs and outputs, as used on industrial VCRs
Auxiliary stereo audio output: yes
Headphone jack: 1/4-inch stereo
External speaker connectors: yes
Internal audio amplifier power: stereo, 5 watts per channel

RESULTS & RATINGS

Picture sharpness: excellent, 1.8dB down at 4.2 MHz equivalent to over 370 lines
Snowiness; S/N, luminance: more than 56dB
Accuracy of colors: excellent (chroma S/N better than 48dB)
Convergence: excellent
Overall picture quality: excellent
Overall audio performance: excellent
Ease of operation: good (see text)
Overall performance: excellent

Performance. Nitpicking notwithstanding, the MR20's performance is top-notch.

The sound system's power level of five watts per channel is a good compromise between the usual miniscule TV sound systems and the extra bulk and cost that a larger amplifier would entail. How much power you need depends on how efficient your speakers are, how large your room is, and how loud you like to listen. For my own video listening (and Berger listens louder than Braithwaite does), I find my regular video system amplifier's meters reading one watt or less most of the time, though they do occasionally flick up to the 10-watt level when I'm listening attentively to energetic music. Using Infinity RS11 speakers—less efficient than my regular ones—I found the MR20's amp just beginning to distort perceptibly when its volume was turned full up, with no sign of distortion at normal listening levels. Bigger, more efficient speakers—if you have room for them—would make better use of the MR20's five-watt amps. Of course, the better the sound system, the more mercilessly it exposes any defects in the original signal's sound. My reference video system, with limited high-frequency response, masks most of the distortion which occasionally comes through my cable system. With the MR20, however, the distortion is glaringly evident unless I turn down the treble—even using only the NAD's internal speaker.

The picture was very sharp and clear. Video response was only 1.8dB down at 4.2 MHz, which is extremely good. At that rate response would not fall 3dB till the 370-line resolution mark. Signal-to-noise ratios were over 54dB for luminance (matched by only one or two other sets tested) and 48dB for chrominance (a new measurement on receivers, so no comparisons as yet).

Both brightness and contrast were the highest we have yet measured. This allowed the picture to be set for rich deep blacks and bright whites without compromising middle tones. This is a set on which you see not only detail but fine shadings. Differences in contrast and lighting between programs stood out. Color movies had the almost tactile richness, and black & white films the pearly look, that I expect from good prints in a moviehouse.

Conclusion. The MR20's features show a lot of intelligent thought, but their implementation is annoyingly just off the mark in some cases. That's even more annoying in a set whose performance is as good as this one's.

Sitting right next to the MR20 in my home is my own video component system, with a bigger 25-inch screen and none of the control problems that I complain of in the NAD set. And which one am I watching? The MR20. Quality counts (especially at NAD's less-than-astronomical prices). But I still wish the fine points of the control setup could have been just a bit more in keeping with this set's overall excellence. And in future models, NAD assures us, they will be.

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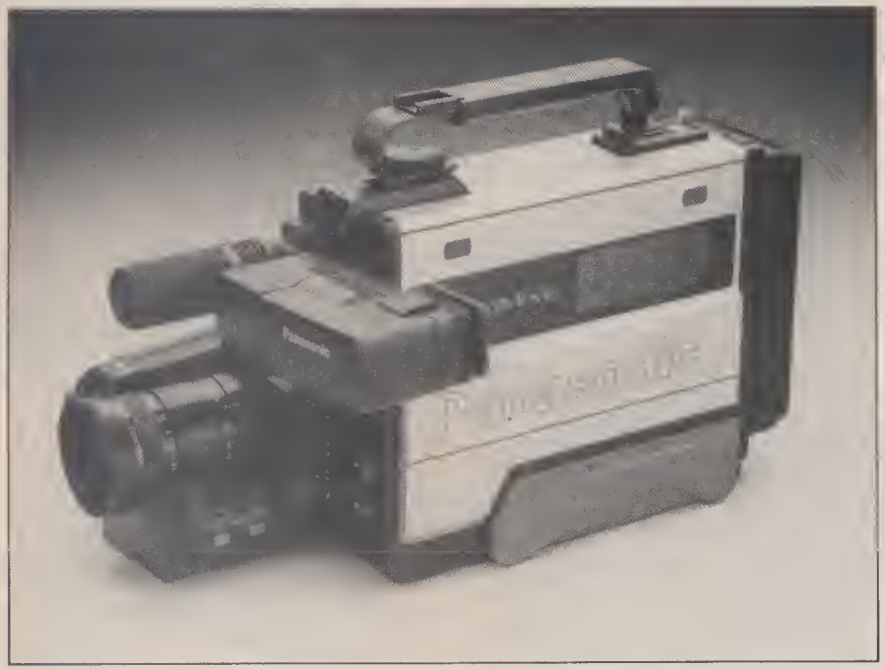
Panasonic Omnimovie Camcorder/Player



Ever since the days of the first portable VCRs, designers dreamed of a machine that would combine the camera and recorder in one unit. Back then portable VCRs weighed more than 20 pounds and cameras pretty close to 10 pounds. Such a combination wasn't practical. Slowly VCRs and cameras were made smaller and lighter, and manufacturers raced to deliver a "camcorder." The Beta camp got there first in 1983 with a 6-1/2 pound unit—but though it could record, it didn't play back. That meant using another VCR. VHS was (and is) the more popular format and few wanted to switch to Beta. Then in 1984 came the VHS-compatible (with an adapter) JVC VideoMovie, based on the VHSC compact cassette, and in late '84 the 8mm camcorder. Now, in mid-1985, there will be a VHS camcorder using a full-size (and full-length) VHS cassette.

Many of the VHS brands will have these camcorders—but they'll all be built by Matsushita. Panasonic, one of Matsushita's companies, will be among the first. We consider the first VHS camcorder so important that we're bending our rule about reviewing only production models. The latter won't be here for another few months. We are reviewing a working prototype at presstime (in early March). Panasonic knows what the final version will be and supplied both a list of planned changes and a mockup of it, whose picture appears with the review. What we reviewed looks like the GE camcorder, on the April cover. The changes are all in control placement and labeling—except that the rotary control originally used for a manual iris became a tint control, and the handle is now anchored at both the front and back.

The Panasonic Omnimovie offers a good mix of what's available on a standard camera and a portable VCR, but has no provision for recording from a tuner or an external video source. Among the bells and whistles on the camera section are continuous or one-shot auto focus, built-in dater, auto or manual white balance, 6X power zoom with macro range, and an electronic viewfinder with most indicators on-screen. The recorder offers recording and playback at SP (Standard Play) speed only, backspace editing, and the basic transport controls plus 3X forward and reverse scan. It may be powered by the supplied battery for up to two hours, continuously by the supplied AC adapter, or by a car-battery adapter which plugs into a standard cigarette-lighter socket. That last power source makes Omnimovie ideal for use in a vehicle because it can double for playing prerecorded tapes.

In short, the Panasonic can serve multiple functions but is not a complete replacement for a standard portable VCR with tuner. We've been using the term "camcorder" out of habit, but Panasonic prefers the description "camera recorder/player" to emphasize the unit's playback capability. We'll stick to the camcorder description because it is so much easier.

We'd normally spend a long time describing how the new machine works, but though the tape wrap is new, the head drum is similar to the one used in VHSC machines. It has four heads instead of three and the tape is wrapped three-quarters of the way around the drum instead of half way as in standard machines. Each head is used for the entire length of one pass, after which the head that is in the correct position to make the next pass takes over. During three revolutions of the head drum each of the four heads gets a chance to lay down one track; then the process gets repeated. Control and audio tracks, plus the erase function, are handled by stationary heads that maintain the same relative positions as on standard VHS machines so that the tapes are compatible. The diameter of the head drum of this machine is two-thirds of the size on standard machines.

Description. Omnimovie is relatively heavy. It weighs 7-1/2 pounds with battery and is reminiscent of early consumer video cameras, but a little taller. Styled in black and silver with a blue shoulder rest, its dimensions (not counting the detachable handle) are 7-1/2 inches high by 6-1/8 wide by 13-1/4 deep. The main portion of the body is only slightly larger than that of Betamovie. The battery slides onto grooves at the back; the handle and lens bulge out slightly on the right side (viewed from behind), and the electronic viewfinder (EVF) projects to the left although it can be swung down for carrying and stowage. The microphone is on a rigid stalk projecting forward over the lens.

At the back below the battery is a jack for the power and output connections, and next to it is a sub-mini jack for the wired remote pause. On its left side is just the cassette hatch, and on its right there are no controls except for those on the handgrip, which we'll get to later. On top are the handgrip, an eyelet for the carrying strap, and buttons for Eject and Battery release. Closer examination also reveals a hidden compartment that runs from front to back along the top outer edge. In there are the transport controls: Record/Play select, Fast Forward (Search), Play, Rewind (Search), Stop, and Pause/Still. For recording there is no need to enter the compartment, though, because when the machine is first turned on it is always in recording mode and in pause until you touch the run button. Also in this compartment are the Tracking control, Counter Reset, and Memory buttons plus three more for setting the date and turning it on. The date is recorded when it is on. The counter-memory button turns the other displays on and off.

On the front of the camera is the lens, of course, with its manual focusing and zoom rings. As usual, the release that lets you into its macro focus range is on the stubby lever on the zoom ring. Below the lens is a window for the auto-focus mechanism. The other image used in auto focusing is taken from the main lens. On the side, away from the grip is the auto/manual switch for auto focus plus a separate one-shot button for auto focusing in the manual

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mode. Farther back on the lens cowl are the Indoor/Outdoor switch, the Auto White Balance button, and a red/blue manual White balance control. In this area but on the front of the body are the Power on/off button and one for Standby to conserve the battery. Above it is the EVF which folds down for stowage. Next to that and almost above the lens is the fixed microphone with mini jacks below it for an external microphone and an earphone.

The EVF sticks straight out when in viewing position and a second joint allows you to rotate the eyepiece up and down for easy viewing. On its underside are screw-

Test Report: Ponasonic Omnimovie VHS Camcorder/Player

DATA

Date of test: March 1985
Suggested retail price: n.a.
Weight: 7.5 pounds with battery; battery 1.32 lbs.
Dimensions: 7-1/2 x 6-1/8 x 13-3/4 inches (h/w/d) not including removable carrying handle
Power requirements: 12VDC from battery, AC adapter, or optional car adapter cord
Image sensor: 1/2-inch Newvicon
Lens: f1.4, 6X (9-54mm) power/manual zoom with macro range
Filter diometer: 49mm
Minimum illuminotion: 20 lux
Optimum illuminotion: 1400 lux
Auto focus: yes, switchable to manual with one-shot capability
White bolonce: indoor/outdoor switch and auto white-balance button, plus manual red/blue tint
Irls: automatic plus backlight control button
Sensitivity: fixed
Viewfinder: electronic with on-screen indicators for battery condition, low battery, counter, counter memory, white balance, low light, tape not ready, dew, date if activated; LED in EVF window indicates record/pause
Viewfinder controls: screwdriver-type focus and brightness
Auto fade: no
VCR controls: all
Microphone: electret condenser built-in, accepts external microphone
Coble length: not applicable
Plug: not needed for camera but for output or AC adapter
Tape formot: VHS
Tope speeds: SP
Ploy speed select: not applicable
Still frame: yes
Frome odvonce: no
Slow motion: no
Speed ploy: no
Ropid search: see Cue & review
Cue & review: 3X approx.
Visible FF ond Rew: no
Fost forword/rewind time: 10 minutes for T-120 approx.
Remote pouse: built-in plus wired remote record/pause cable
Remote: see above, pause only
Seporote eject: yes
Counter digits: four in viewfinder
Counter memory: yes
Progrom stort locator/Index/cue: no
Audio dub: no
Video dub: no
Auto rewind: no
Stereo: no
Hi-Fi: no
Tuner: no
Output: picture in EVF; audio and video out with supplied adapter; or audio, video and RF (Channel 3/4) through AC adapter
Accessories: wired remote control, handle, audio/video adapter, battery, audio/video cable, AC adapter/battery charger, earphone

RESULTS & RATINGS

Horizontal resolution: 270 lines rated and measured
S/N, video luminance: 37dB, unweighted; 42.5dB, weighted (see text)
S/N, chromo AM: 38dB
S/N, chroma PM: 35dB
Audio frequency response: 100-8000Hz, −3dB
S/N, audio: 40dB, external microphone input
Audio distortion: 3.2%
Overall picture quality: excellent/average
Audio quality: average
Eose of operotion: very good except size and weight
Overall performonce: average

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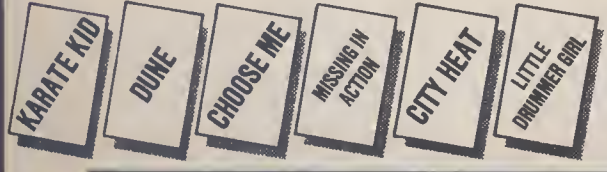

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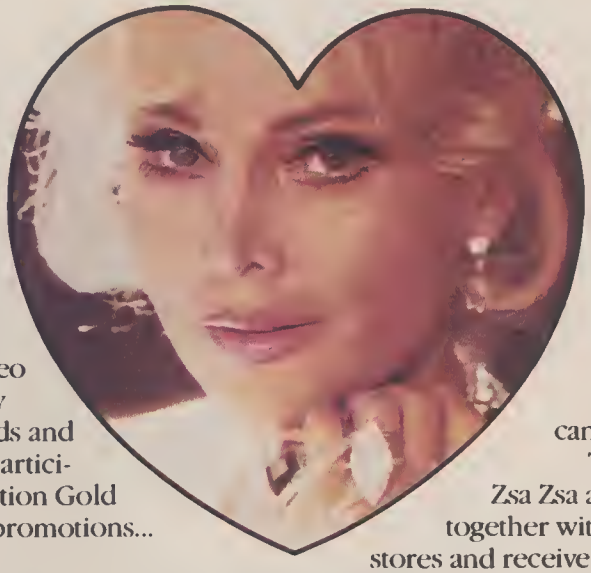

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driver controls for focus and contrast which are best left at their factory settings. The magnifier with eyecup flips up, but another lens makes the half-inch CRT viewable. A single LED tells whether the VCR is in run or pause mode and all the other indicators are on-screen. Legends and symbols give information on counter, battery condition, white balance, low light, low battery warning, date, dew, counter memory, and tape end or erasure-prevention tab removed.

The remaining controls are on the handgrip. If you slide your right palm through the adjustable security strap, your thumb falls naturally on the Run/Pause button. Under your index and middle fingers are the ends of the zoom rocker. Just behind it is the backlight control (BLC) button. Too far forward for easy reach is the Record/Review button, which lets you see the last few seconds of the previous take. The handgrip may be a little large for a small hand. The lens cap is secured to the security strap by a cord. The bottom of the camcorder is bare but for the tripod screw which we think is too far forward.

Operation. Cameras have been getting smaller and lighter over the last few years, so the first thing that you notice when you pick up Omnimovie is its size and weight. It is a bit bigger and heavier than Betamovie—but it plays back, unlike Betamovie. All its operation procedures are standard except that all the controls are on the same machine.

For recording you don't have to trouble yourself with anything but the external controls. The controls are all those you'd expect to find on a camera: focus, zoom, white balance, BLC, review, and run/pause. The only time you have to enter the control compartment is if you want to set and use the date imprinter. In playback mode, all the controls you'll want to use are in the compartment except the power switch. If you want to view a recorded tape on any TV you must use the AC adapter plugged into the rear socket. The RF modulator is in that adapter, not the camcorder itself. To view a picture on a monitor you may use the unpowered adapter, the car cord, or the AC adapter. The AC adapter is also used for battery charging and charges a single battery in 1 hour and 20 minutes. Battery life is 2 hours.

You will miss a few things. There is no provision for recording from a source other than the camera section; the scan speed is a slow 3X; rewind time for a T-120 cassette is about 10 minutes; and the only other special effect is Still. You may also miss the slower recording speeds, but we didn't. If something is worth recording with a camera, you'll want the best quality. That means using the SP speed with the best tape you can afford. It is nice that if you're not into recording from air or cable you can still play prerecorded tapes.

Performance. First rest assured that Omnimovie is compatible with standard

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VHS VCRs. We played tapes made on other machines through Omnimovie and vice versa with good results. In fact, our best S/N measurements were achieved with tapes recorded on other machines—37dB unweighted, 42.5dB weighted. That is almost on a par with other Panasonic VCRs. We were surprised, though, to record clean signals with a horizontal resolution of 270-plus lines through the camera. Other than on the soon-to-be-available Super Beta machines, we've never measured a consumer VCR with resolution that high. However, the pictures recorded through the camera were a bit noisy, 27dB at best. Since the sample we measured is one of two prototypes that have been kicking around the country since January, we won't swear Omnimovie can't perform better. The tested unit had traveled so much and been through so many hands and situations that we were surprised it worked at all.

On audio Omnimovie reproduced tapes made on other machines with a frequency response of 100 to 8000 Hertz, flat to within 3dB and to 10,000 Hertz at −10dB. Results using the external microphone jack were in the same range and those through the mic, while covering the same range, were not as smooth.

Conclusion. There is no question that Omnimovie does a respectable job of recording and playing on standard-size VHS tapes. It offers a modest number of useful features and is fairly easy to use. However, its size and weight are detractions. What we missed most was a way to record external video signals. (You can record external audio signals through the external microphone jack.) We're enthusiastic about its performance—but we'd like to see more features.

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Sharp VHS Hi-Fi VCR

VHS Hi-Fi was introduced by RCA with a midpriced machine, but many Hi-Fi models since then have been top-of-the-line units. Sharp has a high-priced model too, but the VC-487U is its midpriced entry.

Though this is a step-down model, Sharp includes its APSS (Automatic Program Search System), which uses quiet spots on the audio track to stop the VCR at those points. Other features include manual audio-level control, stereo linear track with Dolby NR, and controls concealed in a drawer. More surprising is what the designers left out. Search is recommended for EP (SLP) speed only. (It works at the other speeds but with large noise bars.) Microphone jacks, audio dub, and video insert edit are sacrificed along with slow and speed play, but what experienced users probably will miss most after search will be random-access tuning. Instead there is a 12-preset varactor tuner. Yet there is Hi-Fi sound, and for $300 less (at $1100) than the Sharp VC-489U/US ("Videotests," January 1985).

Description. The VC-487U is a charcoal-brown unit that measures 3-3/4 inches high by 16-15/16 wide by 15-1/2 deep. It immediately impresses you with its uncluttered appearance. On the left side of the front panel are the Power and Eject buttons. Next to them is the cassette hatch, above most of the few exposed controls. In the row nearest the hatch are large buttons for Play, Stop, Pause/Still, and Record, along with the window for the IR wireless remote and indicators for Hi-Fi, Dolby NR, and Timer. Below those buttons are small ones for Fast Forward (Search), Rewind (Search), Frame Advance, and timed one-touch recording. On what looks like a pedestal are the headphone jack and its volume control. The right half is occupied

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mostly by a large display plus channel up and down buttons. However, pushing the Sharp logo in the lower left corner causes a drawer to pop out in which most of the other controls are hidden.

In that drawer are two switches for audio-input selection, Dolby on/off, two more switches for audio-output selection, and the automatic audio-level on/off switch in the row closest to the inside. At the far right of this compartment are the sliders for left and right manual audio control. In the middle row is a rotary Sharpness control at far left, plus switches for recording speed, APSS, clock/timer setting, and Timer on/off. In the forward area are rotary tracking controls for play and still modes plus a lot of buttons arranged in two rows with some set off by a gold background. Outside the background are the TV/VTR (VCR), counter Reset and Memory, and Cue buttons. That lets you add cues that can be read by the APSS, and it actually creates small blank patches in the linear audio track. Within the gold background are the buttons for setting the clock and adding or deleting channels from the timer memory.

The bottom and sides are bare except for airholes, but on the top is a compartment with the controls for the preset tuner. For each preset there is a rotary bandswitch, a thumbwheel, and a rotating pointer. You must turn the bandswitches with a tool that resides in the compartment, and you may use the same tool to adjust the vertical lock for EP special effects. Though the tuner is a preset type, the channel display is electronic, and buttons provided make the display show the correct number and select the broadcast or cable channel sequence. There is also a button to clear all of the unit's memory—time, channel, and timer information. There's also an AFT switch.

The back of the unit is quite simple with its line cord and AC outlet, plus audio, video, and RF inputs and outputs. There is one switch back there for Channel 3/4 RF output selection plus a submini jack for camera remote pause. The controls on the IR wireless remote mirror the ones for the tape transport, adding Power, TV/VTR, and tuning Up and Down.

Operation. If you don't open the drawer with the special controls, using this Sharp would be little harder than using a common audio-cassette recorder. The only unusual external control lets you record the selected channel for 15, 30, 60, 90, 120, 180, or 240 minutes, and one of the displays tells you exactly what you selected. The only hard part would be setting the tuning presets.

If you do open the drawer, setting the clock, timer, tracking, and sharpness is easy. So too are the counter reset and memory, TV/VTR, recording speed, Timer, clock function, and Dolby. Selecting the audio source is just a matter of choosing between tuner, simulcast, or both audio and video from aux inputs. The other source switch lets you record audio without accompanying video. Similarly, you may choose to listen to either the linear or Hi-Fi audio. The other output selector lets you choose whether to listen to either the left channel alone, the right channel alone, or both at the same time (stereo). The ALC lets you decide whether you'll let the machine determine its own audio recording level or whether you'll take that responsibility yourself. The APSS operates if it is on, and if there is no cue where you want it to stop, you can add one with the Cue button. Taken one step at a time, the setup entails a minimum of confusion—so the VCR gets a high mark on ease of operation.

Performance. Here the Sharp falters a little. Its picture quality was just average with barely 240 lines of horizontal resolution and a weighted signal-to-noise ratio of under 42dB. On audio, the Hi-Fi track did quite well—but the linear tracks are just low-average. Hi-Fi frequency response covered the range of hearing at better than

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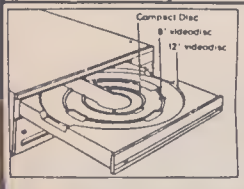

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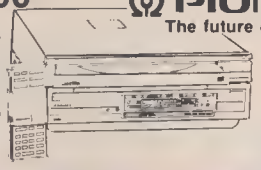

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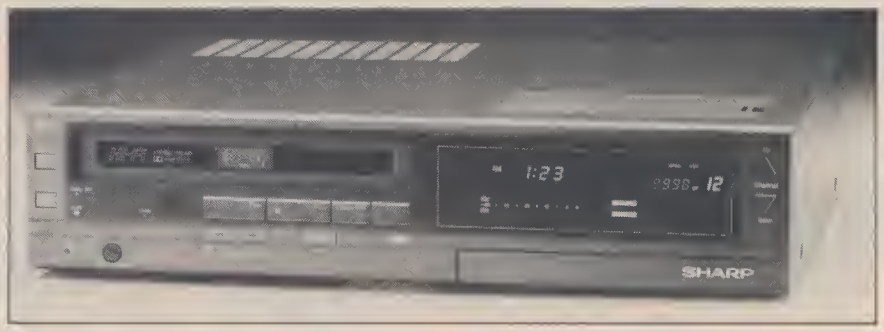

-3dB. Its dynamic range was 81dB and total harmonic distortion was 0.4 percent. The linear tracks reached a frequency response of 70-10,000Hz, but only within 10dB, and distortion was a lackluster 3.1 percent with S/N of just 39dB. Overall, linear audio is average.

Conclusion. For this midpriced model Sharp sacrificed mostly features, but in switching to a two-head system it has compromised video performance, and audio is just average. Wish as we might, VCR capability costs money. Sharp is offering a moderate level of performance, features, and ease of operation. Base your buying decision on your pocketbook and on whether the VC-487U makes its compromises where you are willing to accept them.

Test Report:
Sharp VC-487U VHS Hi-Fi VCR

DATA
Date of test: March 1984
Suggested retail price: $1099.95
Weight: 22 lbs.
Dimensions: 3-3/4 x 15-15/16 x 15-1/2 inches (h/w/d)
Power requirements: 120VAC, 60Hz, 45W not including load on convenience outlet
Tape format: VHS
Tape speeds: SP, LP, SLP (EP)
Play speed select: automatic
Still frame: yes
Frame advance: yes
Slow motion: no
Speed play: no
Rapid search: see Cue & review
Cue & review: 5X, EP only (see text)
Visible FF and Rew: no
Fast forward/rewind time: approx. 4 minutes for T-120
Remote pause: yes
Remote: 14-function IR wireless with controls for Power, TV/VTR (VCR), channel Up and Down, Record, Pause/Still, Stop, Play, Rewind, Fast Forward, Frame Advance
Separate eject: yes
Counter digits: four
Counter memory: yes
Program start locator/index/cue: yes, APSS (Automatic Program Search System)
Audio dub: no
Video dub: no
Auto rewind: yes
Stereo: yes on both Hi-Fi and linear tracks
Hi-Fi: yes
Noise reduction: Dolby NR on linear tracks
Tuning method: varactor preset
Channel selectors: Up and down scan on both VCR and remote
Preset method: rotary bandswitch and thumbwheels for each of 12 presets; electronic channel indicator set separately
Cable readiness: 2-6, A-W, 7-14, 14-83
AFT: switchable
Channel lock: yes
Timer: 5-event/14-day
Auto channel-change: yes
Accessories: remote control with batteries, audio cable, tuning tool, antenna cables and transformers

RESULTS & RATINGS
Horizontal resolution: 240 lines
S/N, video luminance: 38dB, unweighted; 41 dB, weighted
S/N, chroma AM: 45.5dB
S/N, chroma PM: 38.7dB
Audio frequency response: 20-20,000Hz, +0.3dB, -2.1dB, Hi-Fi; 70-9000Hz, -3dB, SP, 70-6000Hz, -3dB, LP, 62-5000Hz, -3dB, EP, linear
Dynamic range: 81dB, Hi-Fi
S/N, audio: 39dB
Audio distortion: 0.4%, Hi-Fi; 3.1% linear
Overall picture quality: average
Audio quality: very good, Hi-Fi; average, linear
Ease of operation: very good
Overall performance: average/good

SCI-coustics Stereo Enhancer

VIDEO-TEST 300

Progress in video image reproduction has not been happening in a vacuum. It has been accompanied by a reawakening of interest in natural reproduction of sound. First came a desire for wider frequency response in broadcast TV. Then, with the introduction of the VCR there came both wider frequency response and stereo. Next came the laser videodisc with wider frequency response, stereo, and a dynamic range wider than that on LP records. Triggered by Dolby Surround Sound in the movies, the latest race has been for sound reproduction that recreates a feeling of aural three-dimensionality. One of the latest devices attempting to recreate

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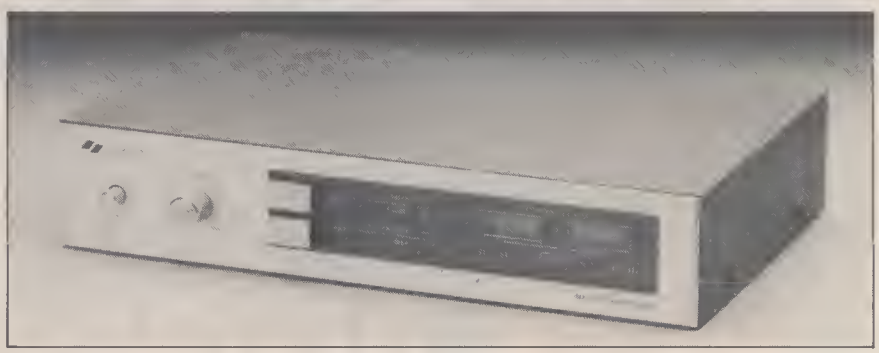

that feeling is the SCI-coustics IMX Dimensional Enhancer Model 100.

The IMX Enhancer departs from the trend of using additional audio channels to recreate sound dimensionality. Requiring only the two speakers normally associated with stereo reproduction, it uses continually variable phase manipulation, frequency tailoring, and selective amplitude changes to localize sound sources. (Most other systems attempt to recreate dimensionality by deriving one or two rear channels from the stereo information, and they increase the effect of the rear information by delaying the sound from the rear speakers. Those systems require additional amplifiers and speakers for the rear-channel information.)

Psychoacoustics is the science that studies how the brain perceives and interprets sound. The Dimensional Enhancer is based on these principles, which show that the signals received by the ears use the relative amplitude, ratio of direct to reflected sound, and frequency response to pinpoint the location of sound. Your brain can estimate the exact location of a sound even with your eyes closed.

Conventional stereo systems use only the relative amplitude of sounds from the left and right to help you determine direction. If the stereo speakers are not set up correctly, you can have a pingpong effect, with little sound appearing to come from directly in front of you. Most modern systems do not show this weakness if they are set up correctly. Ambience-extraction systems use the difference between the left and right channels, fed to a rear speaker, to enhance the "spaciousness" of the sound. Some go a step further and use the sum of the left and right channels (monaural), fed to a speaker in the center front, to disguise the "hole in the middle" effect. One system goes even further and synthesizes two rear-channel signals.

With all these ways of creating a multidimensional sound "image," there are many opinions about which is best. Some listeners seek the most realistic sound; others look for the most entertaining. These choices are a matter of taste rather than scientific accuracy. What we will describe from here on are the measurements we made and our impressions of the IMX system. There is no easy way to compromise all the things each listener seeks in an audio system. You must add your own impressions, listening to the IMX system compared with others firsthand. Its effect is subtle and quite realistic—but that may not be what you are looking for.

Description. The Model 100 IMX Dimensional Enhancer is a silverish or black anodized box that is 3 inches high by 14 wide and 9-1/2 deep. It weighs just 2-1/2 pounds. Its front panel has a black inset occupying more than half of its right side. To the left of the inset are a power button and a rotary control that determines the degree of enhancement. Within the black inset are two buttons one above the other. The top one selects the Enhance mode or lets you Bypass the enhance circuitry. To its right are lighted legends for those modes. The lower button selects whether the sound source will be taken from the receiver or tape input jacks at the rear of the unit. To the right of the front panel inset is a display that tells the approximate degree of stereo separation present in the enhancer's output.

The top, bottom, and sides are bare, and at the back are a power cord and four pairs of audio jacks strung out in a single row. The stereo pair nearest the left side of the unit is for the Input from your stereo receiver (or amplifier). It should be connected to one of the tape loops on the receiver labeled Record. The pair to its right, labeled Output, should be connected to the Play connection of the same tape loop on the receiver. Since this connection uses a tape loop on the receiver and many receivers have only one, the remaining jacks on the enhancer allow VCR connection, so you still can play tapes. The two remaining pairs of jacks connect to the recorder's inputs and outputs. The output connected to the Record input of the recorder feeds unprocessed sound so that the tapes you make are not enhanced. The enhancement occurs when you play tapes through the enhancer. These connections are also appropriate for video if your video system plays audio through your stereo receiver. It is fairly common to feed TV (video) sound into a receiver's Aux input to get the benefit of an audio system's superior amplifier and speakers.

Operation. If you connect the IMX Enhancer as the instruction manual suggests, you can play audio material unenhanced by just selecting the appropriate

input. If, for example, the audio from your video machine is on the Aux input, selecting that input gives you unenhanced sound. To get enhanced sound, select the appropriate tape monitor. (Some receivers have more than one tape loop.) Turn on the IMX and select receiver by touching the lower button, if it is not already in that position. The receiver indicator should be lit. If the Bypass indicator is lit, touch the top button so that the Enhance indicator is lit. Then adjust the Enhancement control for a pleasing effect. The channel-separation indicator will show how widely the channels will appear to be spaced.

Like every audio-reproduction system, this one has optimum listening positions. Assuming you are using forward-facing speakers, the best position is with your head centered between the two speakers, and far enough away from an imaginary line joining the two speakers so that the distance between your head and either speaker is about the same as the distance between the speakers. Another way of describing the "sweet spot" is that your head and the two speakers should form a triangle, with each side of the triangle being about equal length. The tone controls on the receiver should be set flat or for a natural tonal balance. Too much treble or too little bass tends to overemphasize stereo separation. Too little treble or too much bass tends to reduce channel separation.

If you touch the bypass control during listening, volume drops noticeably—so this is not a good way to compare enhanced versus unenhanced sound. You may play stereo audio tapes through the system with enhancement by selecting the tape input with the lower button, Input Selector. For all types of enhanced listening the speakers should face straight forward, not angled in, and they should be of the direct-radiating type, not the reflecting type that bounces some or all of the sound off a wall.

Performance. As we hinted in our introduction, judging the effect of enhancement is subjective. Let's say that the effect achieved with the IMX Dimensional Enhancer is quite pleasing—but it should be described as subtle rather than spectacular. Where other systems strive for the most emphasis between sound sources, the IMX tries to create a coherent whole. An analogy is that the sound image seems more like a hologram than a 3-D movie. This might sound like music to the designers' ears because it means they achieved their goal of realism, but to many of the people we talked to about the effect, it lacked the pizzazz of decoders like the Surround Sound M-360 ("Videotests," October 1983) or the Tate II by Fosgate (August 1984).

On the basis of bench tests, it is not possible to measure even simple things like stereo separation because the Enhancement control acts a bit like a stereo blend control that lets you fill the "hole in the middle." The output of the enhancer intentionally manipulates phase, level, and frequency response so that normal measuring methods are inapplicable. However, with mono sound fed to both channels we made some of the normal measurements. Frequency response is 20 to 20,000Hz +0.3, −2.1dB and signal-to-noise ratio was 81dB. But remember that as soon as a stereo signal is introduced, its internal circuitry starts modifying frequency response and other characteristics. So measurement or no, the effect gets boiled down to a subjective test: do you like the result? We have mixed feelings. Yes, the result is realistic. But as long as the dialogue comes from the appropriate direction music and most sound effects are artificial anyway, judging "correctness" is arbitrary. The IMX system can eliminate the "hole in the middle" at the expense of narrowing the sound stage, but it doesn't wow you. It is tame for video reproduction. For audio-only reproduction it is very pleasing and a worthy competitor among ambience-recovery systems—less artificial.

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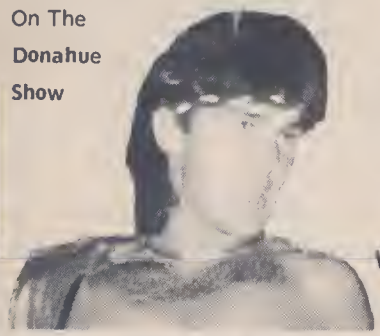

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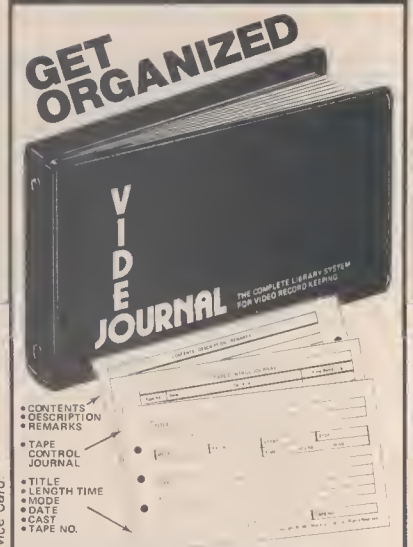

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Videotests

Conclusion. The IMX Dimensional Enhancer strives for accurate realism. To some listeners this is the highest achievement. To others it is everyday and mundane; they prefer fireworks in the audio even if they sacrifice accuracy. You may not know which you prefer. We suggest you listen to this and other systems before making a purchase. You may even find that you prefer the IMX for recorded music and a different type for spectacular movies like *Star Wars*. The suggested retail price of the IMX Model 100 is $199, about half that of the other processors we've reviewed.

Test Report:
IMX Dimensional Enhancer
Madel 100 by SCI-coustics

DATA

Date of test: March 1985
Make ond model: IMX model 100; other models available
Manufocturer: Sci-coustics, 10th fl., 1275 K St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20005; 202-628-2923
Function: to enhance the dimensional effect of stereo audio material by simulating depth and reducing the "hole in the middle"
Suggested retail price: $199
Dimensions: 3 x 14 x 9-1/2 inches (h/w/d)
Power requirements: 105-130VAC, 60Hz, 5W
Cose: metal with brushed aluminum (silver) or black anodized finish
Controls: Power, Input selector, Enhance/Bypass switches plus rotary Enhancement control
Inputs: 2 stereo pairs from receiver and tape deck
Input impedance: 50k ohms nominal
Outputs: 2 stereo pairs to receiver and tape deck
Output impedance: 600 ohms nominal
Roted lood impedonce: 10k ohms
Input to output valtoge ratia: 1 Typical; lower in Bypass mode
Moximum autput: 6 VRMS

RESULTS & RATINGS

Frequency response: 20-20,000Hz + 0.3, -2.1dB with mono source to both channels (see text)
S/N ratio: 81dB, measured
Tatal Harmonic Distortian: 0.4%, rated; 0.3%, measured, mono input to both channels
Intermodulation Distortion: less than 0.04% SMPTE, rated
Dimensional effect: subtle but accurate
Overall perfarmance: no comparison possible, patented process—subtle but very good

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Video to Go

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the remote control or through a similar keypad on the VCR itself, may appeal to some.

The Hi-Fi Question

And then there's Hi-Fi. While only one quasi-portable Beta Hi-Fi VCR exists (the aforementioned Aiwa AV-50M), there are now at least a half-dozen VHS Hi-Fi portables. While few users are likely to record VHS Hi-Fi stereo using a video camera (although that capability exists), the improved sound quality also applies to other recordings, even at the slowest speed. VHS Hi-Fi recordings, however, are not as flexible when it comes to editing camera tapes. Since the Hi-Fi audio signals are recorded directly beneath the video signals on the tape surface, you can't change them without altering the picture itself. Portables offering special audio features like audio dub and sound-on-sound recording therefore work exclusively with the audio tracks recorded at the top of the tape.

Some of the portables sold by Hitachi, RCA, Pentax, and Minolta offer stereo sound but don't use the Dolby noise-reduction process. Not to worry, though—they employ a high-frequency filter system that is compatible with any Dolbyized tapes you may be playing back.

Another popular feature, "insert edit" or "video dub," does replace the video and Hi-Fi signals simultaneously (leaving the linear audio undisturbed). You can use it to replace parts of your original tapes with titles or other effects to enhance the appearance of the finished tape. One machine, Toshiba's V-X34 Beta portable, offers the ability to insert a new segment of video over an earlier one either with or without the addition of new audio. That's the closest thing to a true "insert edit" on any consumer machine thus far, and it would be nice to see this versatility extend to other brands and models.

Despite the rising popularity of single-piece camcorders (especially those using full-size VHS cassettes), it's a safe bet that these more specialized (and more expensive) all-in-one units aren't about to swamp the demand for portables just yet. Most manufacturers will likely trim their lines a little to make room for the camcorders, and portables may diminish in number next year. But in the meantime, the selection of versatile and well-made two-piece systems is a generous one.

Hitchcock

continued from page 94

13-minute concert-hall sequence for screening at a 1974 tribute to his work by the Film Society of Lincoln Center. For this viewer the original is better paced and funnier—at least for the first two-thirds—and it stars Peter Lorre as one of Hitchcock's most civilized villains. Hitchcock always preferred to make audience identification—who to root for?—a complex and agonizing process to evoke the moral ambiguity of life itself, so the casting of villains could be as important as that of the heroes.

This was a strategy he had first used in *Blackmail*, where the leading man and woman frame the blackmailer for the murder and the latter dies in a chase scene set in the British Museum. And it was a strategy that backfired in his next film, *Secret Agent* (1936). The plot follows two British agents (John Gielgud and Madeleine Carroll) and a hired assassin (Peter Lorre again) to the Swiss alps, where they are to bump off a spy (Robert Young—dramatically cast against type). They do it, but only after killing the wrong man first. Hitchcock attributed the public's unfavorable reaction to the heroes' "negative purpose," but that doesn't explain why what worked in *Blackmail* didn't work again. Perhaps the element of premeditation does; not until the dark masterpieces of later years, such as *Rope* (1948) and *Psycho* (1960), would Hitchcock get away with making his *protagonists* premeditated killers. Notwithstanding this, Lorre is delightful as the lunatic Spanish assassin and Hitchcock's camera dotes over Carroll.

Now growing physically heavier and more introspective, Hitchcock continued nurturing his dark streak in *Sabotage* (1936), released the same year as *Secret Agent*. A beetle-browed London movie-house proprietor (Oscar Homolka) is a saboteur for the Nazis. Pressed by his superiors to step up the level of terror, he sends the young brother of his wife (Sylvia Sidney) to plant a time bomb in Picadilly Circus. Suspense builds almost unbearably as the boy is detained in his errand to deliver the film cans that contain the bomb, which had been delivered by its maker in the bottom of a birdcage with a note warning, "the birds will sing at 1:45." Never knowing the true contents of the film cannisters, the child boards a jammed bus and rides to his doom. Grief stricken at his death in the explosion, the boy's sister sits in the family theater watching a Disney cartoon containing the song "Who Killed Cock Robin?"

Though he lays on the brutal irony with a shovel, the pathos Hitchcock also provides in *Sabotage* makes it palatable as he balances brutality with humane subjective reactions. His use of the theater motif—important action often takes place in the family's living quarters, behind the theater—reminds theatrical spectators of how frail their own security can be from "sabotage" by sinister external forces. This movie marked the start of the director's most sophisticated use both of theater and bird imagery.

Young and Innocent (1938) is a minor film—but one littered with signposts pointing to Hitchcock's past and future. The

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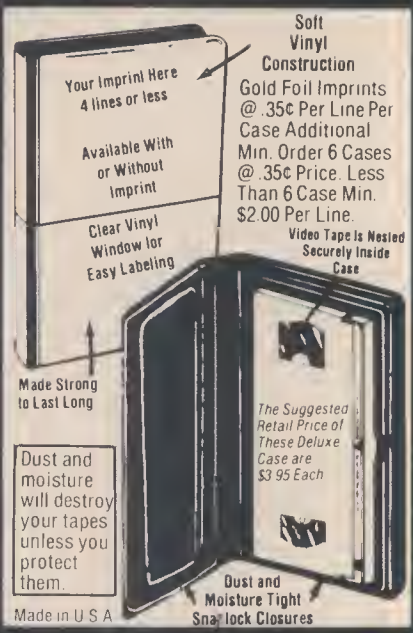

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plotline about a young man fleeing an unjust murder charge is more or less *The 39 Steps* (1935) revisited, minus that film's espionage angle (just as *The 39 Steps* is itself a dress rehearsal for *North by Northwest*). The hero is a screenwriter and the victim an actress—presaging *Stage Fright*, where an actress heroine tries to save someone else from a murder charge. And water imagery bulks large, both in an early scene where the real killer argues with his wife and later, when her body is found on the beach; Hitchcock would make thematic use of water in more than a half-dozen later movies.

In *The Art of Alfred Hitchcock* Donald Spoto points to other recurrent images: a scene in the woods recalls scenes in *Vertigo* and *North by Northwest*; the solicitor wears eyeglasses, a device later used by the visually obsessive Hitchcock to indicate both moral blindness and, in time-honored *Potemkin* fashion, fragility; a "cliffhanging scene in the darkness of a subterranean mine," Spoto says, "provides another parallel to *North by Northwest*, where an almost identical sequence occurs. It may also be compared to the clinging to rooftops in *Vertigo* and to the Statue of Liberty in *Saboteur*"—a later film not to be confused with *Sabotage*, and yet unavailable on video. Finally, the crane shot that swoops in on the eyes of the guilty drummer prefigures a similar (and similarly famous) one in *Notorious* when the camera's eye descends to rest on the key in Ingrid Bergman's hand.

The Mature Hitchcock

The five Kartes releases show a young Hitchcock developing the devices that would be his stock in trade forever after in a surprisingly consistent body of work. But while the mature Hitchcock—represented by another five releases from MCA and two from Warner—would stumble occasionally, it was in the latter three decades of his career that he produced his most enduringly profound work.

Rope (1948) was the director's first independent production following his break with producer David O. Selznick, to whom he had been contracted since coming to America in 1940. It is also his first color film and his most daring experiment in cinematic technique, composed in 10-minute takes that completely eliminate the cross-cutting that dominates nearly all other movies ever made in favor of the moving camera. The story concerns two implicitly homosexual men who kill for thrills—they strangle an old school friend, stuff his body in a trunk, and serve a buffet supper to his friends and family from atop the same trunk. The shocking story, and the megadoses of misanthropic humor Hitchcock pumped into it, were so wiltingly repulsive to audiences and critics that the director had it withdrawn from circulation. I think it's a masterpiece, but only when I'm in a bad mood. (Like the other four MCA releases, this one is an optimum video transcription of the theatrical re-release—beyond criticism.)

Alfred and Alma Hitchcock wrote most of the dialogue for *Stage Fright* (1950) themselves. The story follows a young actress (Jane Wyman) as she and her father (Alastair Sim) try to clear her friend (Richard Todd) from a murder charge. To do this she must trick the victim's widow (Marlene Dietrich) into betraying herself. This much-underrated film is Hitchcock's most straightforward meditation on theatricality, with most characters playing double roles. A cinematic curtain actually rises on the action, and the finale takes place on a stage—where a heavy "safety curtain" comes down on the killer's head.

All this symbolism to the contrary, the movie is shot through with whimsical humor, which is neatly balanced with suspense in the unforgettable carnival scene. And Truffaut to the contrary, Sim's droll humor is one of the film's highlights—though he's no match for the sophisticated charm of Marlene Dietrich, who does a few musical numbers. Hitchcock observers were amazed at the leeway he gave her in forming her image for the film as she insisted on, and got, the Josef von Sternberg-style lighting that accents her timeless, luminous beauty. Apart from a few missing frames, Warner's tape transfer makes this the best looking black & white Hitchcock video.

Less successful is *I Confess* (1953), in which a script devoid of warmth and humor and an alcohol-addled, stonefaced Montgomery Clift produce monotonously leaden results. The familiar story of a man wrongly accused of murder casts Clift as a priest, but beyond using the Catholic confessional as a plot device that prevents Clift from exposing the true murderer, the movie never explores the religious overtones involved; they just further weigh down the proceedings. However, Warner's black & white transfer is nearly as good as its treatment of *Stage Fright*.

But with *Rear Window* (1954) Hitchcock regained his footing with the help of scriptwriter John Michael Hayes (in the first of his four films with the director) and James Stewart, who in his second role for Hitchcock emerged as the actor who would come closer than anyone to becoming the director's on-screen representative. In *Rope* Stewart played the Nietzsche-influenced professor who unwittingly provides the philosophical underpinnings for the ghastly deeds of his two students—like Hitchcock himself, a manipulator whose manipulations have macabre results. In *Rear Window* Stewart is a photographer—a visual artist—grounded in his Greenwich Village apartment with a broken leg. His boredom and insatiable curiosity lead him into window-watching voyeurism and he sniffs out a murder that takes place across the alley from his rear-window apartment, using a telephoto lens as binoculars. Like the director, the Stewart character is misanthropic and distrustful of relationships—even with the stunning Grace Kelly. Hitchcock would continue to subvert Stewart's likable nice-guy screen persona (exemplified in Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*) in the remade *Man Who Knew Too Much*, where Stewart plays the cranky, domineering doctor and husband to Doris Day who "knows too much" but gets his comeuppance.

But with Hayes in his stable—arguably the best screenwriter he ever had, a warm counterpoint to the image-driven intellectualism of his method—Hitchcock waxed iconoclastic and decided to take a break and tackle the first straightforward comedy he had undertaken since *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* with Carole Lombard in 1941. The *Trouble with Harry* (1955) stars 79-year-old Edmund Gwenn and a host of other character actors—along with a young John Forsythe and a winningly perky 20-year-old Shirley MacLaine, in her film debut. Gwenn stumbles across dead Harry while out for a shoot in the woods of rural New

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England, and what to do, what to do? In a comedy of errors and indecision, Harry is buried, dug up, buried again, dug up again; and while there is a plot here somewhere, whimsy is the main point.

Truffaut and Hitchcock himself said it best. Truffaut: "The whole humor of the picture hinges on a single device: an attitude of disconcerting nonchalance. The characters discuss the corpse as casually as if they were talking about a pack of cigarettes." Hitchcock: "That's the idea. Nothing amuses me so much as understatement." Spoto has a somewhat labored suggestion about the film balancing "a Gnostic-Puritan ethic" and "a Judeo-Christian optimism" in its lighthearted juggling of sex and death. But it is Spoto himself who wisely quotes Forsythe's response to a prospective buyer of one his paintings: "Don't think I'm rude, but it doesn't matter to me what a critic says."

Comedy was the furthest thing from Hitchcock's mind when he made *Vertigo* (1958), his most autobiographical, most dreamlike, most morally searching, most emotionally revealing film. *Vertigo* is the only highly regarded Hitchcock film in which humor has no role. It is a deadly serious tale of obsession, a story of sex and death that isn't played for laughs. For the final time, Stewart was the director's stand-in as he played a police detective who retires following an incident in which his fear of heights results in the death of a colleague. He is hired as a private detective to follow the wife (Kim Novak) of an old school friend, and falls in love with her, only to suffer still more guilt when she falls to *her* death. When he spots her double on the street, he makes the woman over into a replica of his original blonde beloved—just as Hitchcock stubbornly, at times disturbingly, made over many an actress into clones of his beloved favorites, Ingrid Bergman and Grace Kelly. She pleads, "Couldn't you like me—just the way I am?"

As the story languorously unfolds, images of spirals underscore the vertiginous affliction of obsession: in the graphics accompanying the head titles, in Novak's hairstyle (Hitchcock was obsessed with women's hairstyles and had been caressing them with his camera since the '30s), in the winding staircase of the belltower where the woman's death occurs, in the circular camera movements that accompany more than one scene—especially the trancelike kissing sequence with Stewart and Novak. Novak's wooden performance is the subject of much disagreement, but about Stewart's there can be no doubt. His agonized looks are cinematic acting art at its best—straight out of D.W. Griffith.

Looking at *Vertigo* back to back with *Rope*, a novice viewer might be forgiven for wondering how they could have been made by the same director: one serious, compassionate, vulnerable; the other heartlessly comic and cold. With the publication of Spoto's *The Dark Side of Genius*, the Victorian gentleman who made both of them is finally pinned under the merciless spotlight of journalism and we can see, and struggle to understand, the contradictions that led to them. The book is a shocking compendium of perversity. Much has been made of the fact that the cinema's supreme manipulator was fond of cruel real-life practical jokes. Yet as Andrew Sarris writes in *The American Cinema*, "He insists, almost intolerantly, upon a moral reckoning for his characters and for his audience. We can violate the Commandments at our own psychic peril, but we just pay the price in guilt at the end. Hitchcock can be devious, but he is never dishonest."

Wedding Shoots

continued from page 104

While this is going on, he can be moving around to the front door of the church to shoot them as they come out of the front doors. That gives you time to strike your camera position inside the church and move your equipment to the reception site.

When you arrive at the reception, one of your first tasks will be to make the rounds of the bride's and groom's friends and relatives and get their comments on tape. Occasionally you may find some of these folks are intimidated by the camera and/or reluctant to be taped at all. Be persistent but polite, since their videotaped images will be of immense sentimental value to the bride and groom (and other relatives) later on, perhaps even after some of the older great aunts and uncles you tape have passed on. And there are many other obligatory reception scenes to capture: cutting the wedding cake, the groom's bridal toast, the bride throwing her bridal bouquet. Try to get as much as you can on tape: you can edit out the bad stuff later. If there's dancing, get a record of the bride and groom having their first round as a married couple.

Be careful with your equipment. Not only might it present a hazard to someone's safety—it is also new and interesting to lots of folks. You may have to firmly but politely remind a few guests not to touch your stuff. Children especially can be intrigued with your high-tech gear. Keep an eye on it.

Editing the Opus

Now comes the hard part! After shooting what could amount to a couple of hours of raw footage, you've got to distill it into a well-balanced, artistic, and above all *interesting* video recollection. It's a tough job, since you're editing a tape that's got to serve as both a historical record and entertainment at the same time. Avoid dullness if possible, even if it means cutting out some footage that an eager amateur would leave in.

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be too difficult to maintain that sequence in the final tape. Start by playing back the original tapes and making a log of what shots appear where and for how long. Better still, to avoid the risk of damage posed to the original tapes by excessive tape shuttling and threading, make backup copies of them immediately and use them to log all your shots. You can go back to the "master" tapes later when you're ready to assemble the final edit.

Since VIDEO has published several extensive articles on editing home videotapes in previous issues (the last, "Electronic Cut & Paste," appeared in September 1984), that subject needn't be rehashed. While consumer-level equipment can yield surprisingly good results if used properly, it's still no match for the flexibility and higher video quality available from more expensive industrial equipment. For Beta aficionados, there is the industrial Beta I SLO-340 "portable," an ungainly but serviceable 20-pound unit. It makes tapes that can be edited on corresponding SLO-383 Beta I editors, equipped with flying erase heads and two audio channels. Comparable results can be achieved with a Panasonic NV-8500 or JVC BR-8600, two industrial VHS VCRs that also offer the advantage of flying erase heads. Most consumer VHS portables can be used to create SP tapes for editing on these machines but, given the varying width of the video heads on many consumer portables, it's a better idea to stay with industrial SP machines or consumer decks that offer wide-head recording at the SP speed.

And of course there's always the celebrated (and expensive) 3/4-inch format that's in common use by your local TV station for electronic newsgathering. Some portable 3/4-inch recorders weigh as little as some half-inch machines and use comparably sized 20-minute cassettes. If you shoot on 3/4-inch, remember you'll be locking yourself into that format for editing as well. Editing time on completely equipped 3/4-inch editing bays is available for rental in most major cities, but it doesn't come cheap.

A mixed alternative to shooting everything in 3/4-inch or industrial half-inch is to use consumer-level equipment to generate raw footage and dub everything up to 3/4-inch for editing (including creation of the edited "master" tape), then copy that tape back down to half-inch for the client. Unfortunately, by that time the original tape has gone through three or four generations and may look mushy.

Words and Music

A professional production must have titles. Sure, you can use those built-in character generators found on many of the latest cameras, but the lettering tends to be plain and computerish. Better effects can be obtained from the more sophisticated character generators used by TV stations to create their on-screen graphics. Once again, there are rental facilities available that can help you create these more elaborate titles, superimpose them onto your opening scenes, then integrate that new footage into the production.

Often, though, the simpler and less expensive approach can be just as effective. You can create effective art cards on colored paper or clear acetate and rephotograph them. The wedding invitation itself can sometimes be used as a title card. Lay it on a background of artistically crumpled red velvet, draped by a flower or two, and then zoom into it so that the text can be read.

Apart from the marriage vows and maybe interviews at the reception, little of the audio must be in perfect sync. You can therefore replace or enhance the audio you've recorded for the rest of the scenes with appropriate music. If the soundtrack you picked up for "Here Comes the Bride" seems substandard, replace it with a better one from a record or later recording.

Make all your video edits first, however. Unless you're using professional equipment, it's generally a lot easier to make the audio fit the video than the other way around, considering that most of your editing will be "assemble" editing. If your equipment is stereo, you may be able to replace just one audio channel with background music, retaining the "ambient" sound of the original tape. Some other VCRs offer a "sound on sound" feature that allows you to mix an incoming audio signal with what is already there, combining both into a single track. A lot of your ability to carry out many of these tricks will of course hinge on the capabilities of your equipment.

The ultimate judges of your work are your clients—the bride and groom. Be sure to describe to them before the wedding exactly what you intend to shoot, outlining your storyboard and, if possible, showing them a previous tape. Make sure they fully understand what the format will be and have them sign a contract. Be responsive to their wishes to include certain shots (special guests or relatives, for example)—but also make sure they understand, once they agree to hire you, that you are in charge.

Thanks to tyro videographer Mike Clark of Los Angeles for his invaluable help and insights in preparing this article.

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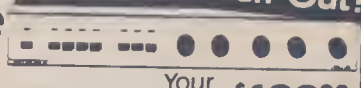

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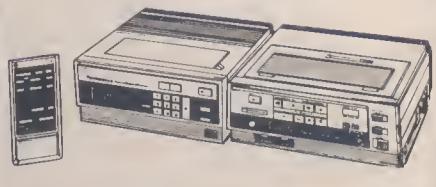

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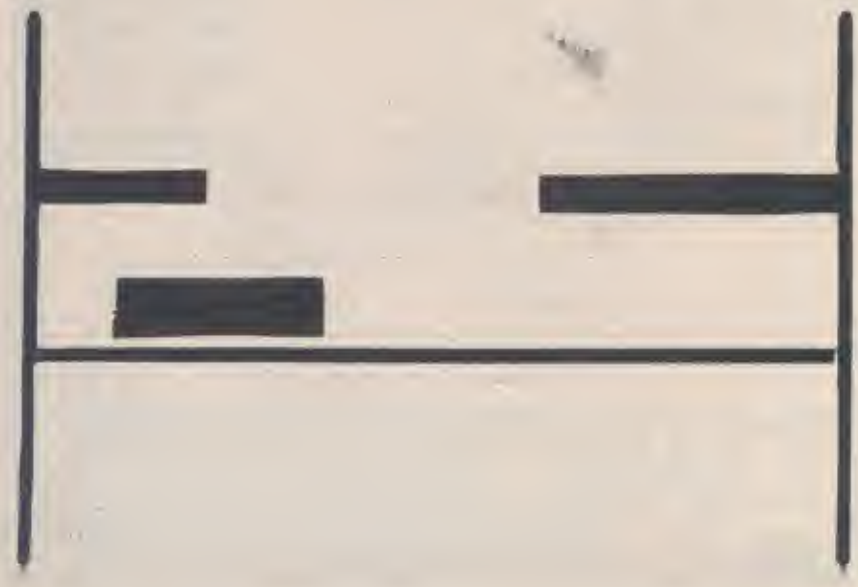

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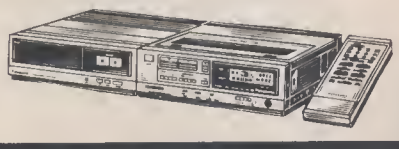

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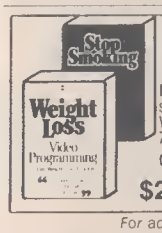

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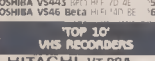

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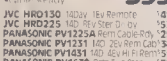

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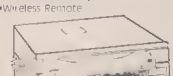

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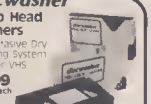

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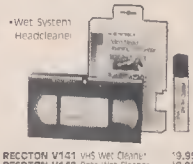

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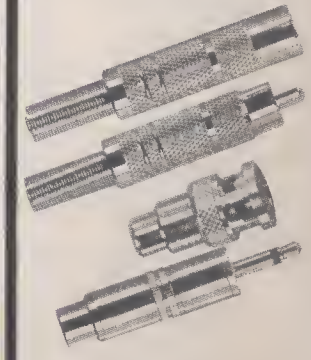

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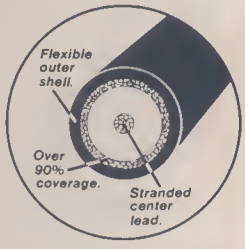

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Dateline Tokyo

Letter from Japan

by Ichiro Kakehashi

Ad It Up

I happened to notice the other day that the 'COM SKIP' key on my video remote control is wearing down. My new VCR is less than a year old, but the wear isn't surprising given the number of commercials we have to skip through here. We're talking about a trillion-yen business that button's going up against—that's $400 billion in TV advertising expenditures during 1984, according to Dentsu, the world's biggest ad agency. In 1982—the most recent year for which such numbers are available—the nine commercial TV networks that operate in Japan broadcast 40.17 million seconds of commercials —that's 465 *days* of words from our sponsor. Of that total, 26 million seconds or 301 days were devoted to spots for consumer products.

In Japan, consumer products include cigarettes, whisky, wine, beer, *sake*, and *shochu*, a potent brew somewhat more raw than sake and distilled from anything from barley to carrots. Among shochu's promoters, in one form or another, have been Sheena Easton, kimono-clad and lip-syncing "Strut," Miles Davis, and John Travolta, hustling—so to speak—a fruit-flavored concoction called "Tokyo Drink."

But I digress. The other 14.17 million seconds (164 days) of commercials were promotions for coming attractions—next week's movie, for example. That does not include the use of those insidious bottom-of-the-screen streamers which sometimes blot out the closeups during programs. It was no comfort to me to discover that 1982, a recession year here, was the year of the fewest commercial messages in a decade.

One alternative is to watch commercial-free public broadcasting on two channels of NHK, the Japan Broadcasting Corporation. We pay a monthly fee to get uninterrupted programming that is something on the order of uplifting or educational PBS shows Stateside. Once in awhile we'll get a rare gem —a classic like *Casablanca*.

Defining High-Def

High-definition TV (HDTV) is getting heavy emphasis in Japan. Toshiba and Hitachi are among the big names that have already come out with closed-circuit equipment that follows the technical specifications outlined by engineers for NHK, the Japan Broadcasting Corporation, which I'll come to in a minute.

In addition, though, the Matsushita Electric Industrial Company is ready to come to market (in May) with the TH21-H88GR, a 21-inch NTSC-format color set that the company says is about as refined as you can get within the NTSC limit of 525 scanning lines. Matsushita built a data-quality flat-faced picture tube into the set that has a phosphor dot interval of 0.55 millimeter. The drive frequency was raised to 6 MHz at 6 dB, from the conventional 7 MHz. The result is a virtually seamless 500-line picture which compares with the best comb-filter models, which insert another line between the signal passes to give about 420 to 430 lines. Matsushita intends the new sets, which are priced here at Y219,000 ($842.31 at the prevailing exchange rate of Y260 to $1), as multipurpose monitors. There are I/O terminals for audio and video equipment, plus eight-pin and 21-pin RGB terminals for computer equipment and peripherals, and a circuit that lets the viewer use the same remote control to trigger other equipment. A 28-inch version is to follow.

The NHK approach to HDTV is called MUSE for multiple sub-Nyquist sampling encoding. Engineers from the public TV network have been carrying the MUSE gospel to other countries—from Argentina to the Soviet Union—to encourage support for their method as a world standard. The idea of one world TV standard would be a boon to video lovers, because we would then have real international program compatibility.

The NHK method results in an image with 1125 scanning lines at a 60 kHz field frequency, on a display with an aspect ratio of 3:5 (vertical to horizontal). The United States has proposed a 3:5.32 aspect ratio, like movies, and Europe has proposed an 80Hz field frequency. The diversity of opinion led a study group from the International Radio Consultative Committee (The CCIR, which has its headquarters in Geneva) to review the NHK method; the conclusion was that it comes pretty close to satisfying everybody. One thing the NHK folks have done is add a conversion circuit that satisfies the European concerns about the field frequency, permitting a switch to 50 kHz. That resolves the problem of image elongation that shows up now when a PAL cassette is shown on an NTSC set. There is some doubt among engineers here, however, that a unified worldwide HDTV standard will emerge.

Laser Data

Another set of standards is in the works from Pioneer, which along with Philips is planning a September presentation to the International Electrotechnical Committee for use of their LaserVision technology as a data medium, called LV-ROM. The discs, 30 cm in diameter, are bigger than the 12cm CD-ROMs (Compact Discs used for storing data) and hold more material—1 gigabyte or a billion bytes, compared with the 550 megabytes of CD-ROMs. Pioneer is anxious to hasten standardization because, among other reasons, it must try to compete with the VHD/AHD disc technology originated by JVC. The VHD discs, 25cm in diameter, can store 2.54

gigabytes on a disk because they can use both sides. The JVC technology has other advantages, not least of which is an intermediary programming language that is compatible with virtually all personal computers—and VHD/AHD, unlike the LV method, is interactive.

Double-Decker

Sharp finally confirmed that it is selling a double-deck VHS VCR in the Middle East. It handles synchronized dubbing or recording off the air. Sharp spokesmen wouldn't volunteer any more information, emphasizing that the product is limited to a specific region. (See "Double Trouble," "Fast Forward," April 1985.)

Although the double-deck machines would have obvious advantages to those of us who swap tapes, and who like to re-edit to wipe out the pesky commercials or do other video composing, we're up against the program providers. The general curiosity about the Sharp product, although it was meant to be restricted to the Middle East, created enough of a swirl here that manufacturers have been forced into declarations to the effect that they wouldn't offer the equipment. The response is understandable given the video software industry's attitude about dubbing. Estimates are that as many as 1000 unauthorized dubbing shops are operating in Japan.

And no wonder. If we want to build our libraries by buying tapes, we have to do so at prices that average Y15,000 to Y29,000 a pop—that's $57.69 to $111.54, depending on program length and quality.

Expo-sure

I wrote several months ago about Sony's Jumbotron, the giant color TV at Tsukuba Expo '85. But there are many other video applications that would be worth seeking out now that the fair is under way. One is Matsushita's three-dimensional TV, developed for its pavilion.

It applies a combination of three two-inch projection tubes—one each for red, green, and blue—that are passed through a series of filter panels to provide the sense of depth when viewed through the windows of the display, but without those silly 3-D spectacles. The display is imaginary scenes of home life as it might have been in Japan a couple of thousand years ago, and was shot with five cameras, each at a slightly different angle. The tapes are synchronized by computer for replay to give the holographic effect.

The other exhibit is in the nature of a Video Hall of Fame. It is a replica of the first successful transmission using a Braun tube for television, the invention of Kenjiro Takayanagi, a former executive—now retired but still an advisor to JVC. Dr. Takayanagi is 86 years old, but he holds more than 200 patents in electronics, including the first double-head videotape recorder and the four-channel CD-4 stereo system. The equipment is a combination of a mechanical Nipkow disk for the transmitter, passing through a signal amplifier for video, vertical, and horizontal synchronization signals to a receiver using a round-faced Braun tube.

Blue No More

Update: Within two weeks after the March issue of VIDEO hit the stands in Tokyo, new city ordinances were put into effect that were indirectly responsible for taking some of the sleaze out of late-night TV here. Gone are the strip-poker games, *Tissue Time*, and how-to massage guides with nubile young lassies. Here instead is some of the most inane chatter and some of the most off-key music west of Point Barrow. The covering of the flesh was one side effect of laws that forced the massage parlors, no-pants bars, and similarly seamy businesses to close at midnight.

Video Bookshelf

by George L. George

Video Moviemaker's Handbook
by Frank Ledli Moore

The latest advances in video technology are discussed in this comprehensive manual. In addition to detailed descriptions of equipment and accessories, it offers step-by-step coaching in a wide variety of productions—home movies, dramatic shows, commercials, and educational vidfilms. (*NAL/Plume, N.Y.; $12.95.*)

The Divine Bette Midler
by James Spada

From her debut at New York's gay Continental Baths to international stardom, the Divine Miss M was shaped by her electric personality into a uniquely gifted entertainer. Spada's candid biography portrays a woman, both ambitious and insecure, still exploring the full scope of her talent. (*Collier/Macmillan, N.Y.; $24.95/11.95.*)

TV Movies 1985-86
by Leonard Maltin

A massive 1000-page paperback in its latest edition, Maltin's popular directory provides welcome guidance to TV viewers in its listing of 16,000 U.S. and foreign films. Stars, directors, plot summaries, and other useful data are included, together with knowledgeable ratings and candid commentary. (*NAL/Plume, N.Y.; $9.95.*)

Before Mickey
by Donald Crafton

The early years of animation between 1898 and 1928 are chronicled in Crafton's broad survey. He singles out such European pioneers as Cohl, Reiniger, Starevitch; their American counterparts Messmer, Bray, Fleischer, McCay; and the young Disney. (*MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.; $9.95.*)

Zeffirelli's Jesus
by Franco Zeffirelli

To the countless technical and artistic problems of filming *Jesus of Nazareth,* director Zeffirelli added spiritual concern for its Biblical accuracy. His journal reveals the unique combination of faith and aesthetics he brought to his epic production. (*Harper & Row, N.Y.; $13.95.*)

The Cotton Club
by Jim Haskins

Spotlighting the intimate—if uneasy—alliance between the famous nightclub's management and its gangster backers, Haskins delineates the glittering background of Francis Coppola's saga of Harlem in its heyday. (*NAL/Plume, N.Y.; $9.95.*)

Movies on Tape
by Tom DiNardo

The X-Rated Videotape Guide
by Robert H. Rimmer

Classified "G" through "R" in DiNardo's listing and exclusively "X" in Rimmer's directory, more than 1000 movies for all tastes are covered in these updated books. Detailed plot synopses, credits, and evaluations establish standards for informed selections. (*Running Press, Philadelphia; $3.95 + .75 handling/Crown, N.Y.; $15.95.*)

Hollywood and American History
by Michael R. Pitts

Noting that "fiction has long been a worthy partner of history in the search for verity," Pitts' filmography lists and analyzes over 250 features and shorts, providing extensive plot summaries and full production data. (*McFarland, Box 611, Jefferson, N.C.; $24.95.*)

Katharine Hepburn
by Sheridan Morley

Dietrich
by Alexander Walker

These superbly illustrated large-format volumes chronicle in informative and entertaining fashion the life stories of two legendary *grandes dames* of cinema. (*Little Brown, N.Y.; $19.95/Harper & Row, N.Y.; $29.95.*)

Planks of Reason
ed. by Barry Keith Grant

Stimulating essays on the horror film from *Nosferatu* to *Halloween* explore the nature and imagery of the genre. They stress increasingly sophisticated production techniques and evaluate the viewers' emotional response to intentionally disturbing visuals. (*Scarecrow, Metuchen, N.J.; $27.50.*)

Choices
By Liv Ullmann

In this moving memoir, the Scandinavian star shares her most personal thoughts and feelings about love and work. (*Knopf, N.Y.; $14.95.*)

VIDEO RETAILERS

Have trouble finding copies of VIDEO at your local newsstand? Want to know where to send a friend to pick up a copy? The following will help — it's a list of retail stores across the country, plus Canada and Puerto Rico, that carry at least 20 copies of VIDEO every month.

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People

Idol Chatter

by Lorenzo Carcaterra

Drew Friedman

Robert Blake is back. Again. After a self-imposed two-year vacation, Blake pops up in video stores this month with *In the Name of the Father: The Boom Boom Mancini Story.* In the two-hour movie, which aired over CBS last month, Blake portrays Mancini's dad **Lenny Boom Boom**, a promising fighter whose career was cut short by World War II. "It felt good, you know," Blake told VIDEO, "to be back working. I did this picture right after I did *Helltown* for NBC. Before that I did nothing. I mean not a damn thing. Didn't want to do anything. Couldn't really. So, I sold the big house and all the crap that goes with it and lived in a small cabin with my two kids. I guess I just had a lot of serious thinking to do." Obviously. **Doug McKeon**, the little brat from *On Golden Pond* (a video stiff), stars as Ray.

Lady Madonna: **Madonna Louise Veronica Ciccone**'s feature-film debut *Desperately Seeking Susan* goes video this month after a surprisingly respectable theatrical run. Feminists have not taken kindly to the anything-but-shy singer and MTV idol. "My videos aren't degrading to women, so why should anyone be upset?" she asks. "I don't get beaten or show any violence in them. I just act out the notion that a girl can have fun and be sexual at the same time." Sounds fair to *moi.*

Sidney Poitier's *Fast Forward* is another new video release that had a disappointing theatrical outing. The film is about eight kids from Ohio who come to New York to enter a dance contest. "All my life I've learned by trial and error. If I have a passion to do a thing, I try to do it and bring to it a fresh outlook." He tried. He failed.

He ain't heavy, he's my Big Brother: It took a while, but now you can see **George Orwell**'s dark vision of the future, *1984,* in the safety of your modern-day home. In 1985. "It's a heavy film," says its star **John Hurt** (catch him on video in *The Elephant Man* and *Midnight Express*). "It actually makes you sit up and take notice. It should make you aware of what individualism means and how easily it can be tampered with."

Danny Boy: In *Once Upon a Time in America* he has a small scene as a corrupt chief of police. In *Hide in Plain Sight* he plays an earnest, if stubborn, attorney. Now, in **Woody Allen**'s *The Purple Rose of Cairo,* **Danny Aiello** beats his wife **Mia Farrow** often enough to force her to seek a life filled with fantasy. "It was a tough role for me," the one-time union official says. "In all the years I've been married I never once touched my wife—without asking. Just a joke. Don't start writing letters. It's only a movie. Please, it's only a movie." If you still haven't placed Aiello's face, he's also the one who threw a kid off the roof in *Fort Apache: The Bronx.* "After that movie," he says, "every Puerto Rican in New York knew who I was and they all wanted to see me"—to start a fan club, no doubt.

There is plenty of truth to the rumor that MCA-Universal is planning to produce a *Miami Vice* video for MTV and video outlets. The hit NBC series, often referred to as "MTV Cops" by those who know such things, will use clips from the show with the usual hard-pounding Miami heat music. "There are a lot of exciting possibilities and directions we can go in," MCA Records executive Larry Solters says. "Once we choose one, we'll proceed with the video."

Cotton comes to video: Embassy has shelled out 4 million big ones for the pleasure of bringing us **Francis No-Ford Coppola**'s $50 million look at Harlem and gangsters, *The Cotton Club.* **Richard Gere** is listed as the film's star, but it's the music and two very different actors, **Fred Gwynne** and **Bob Hoskins**, who take home what's left of the prize. Fred (**Herman Munster** to you TV addicts) portrays **Big Frenchy Demange** while Hoskins (of *The Long Good Friday*) brings even more class to famed hood **Owney Madden**. "Most of our dialogue was made up as we went along," Gwynne admits. "Francis likes actors to wing it." And cameramen. And designers. And writers. And producers. And directors.

It's **Jack Nicholson** as **Elliot Ness** in the big-screen version of *The Untouchables,* and it's going to be fun. Till that happens, humor yourself watching Nicholson in *The Last Detail,* which has undergone a video rebirth lately. . . . **Orson Welles** will play **God** and **Mick Jagger** will be **the devil** in *Satan and Eve.* Talk about typecasting.

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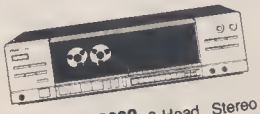

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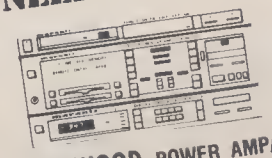

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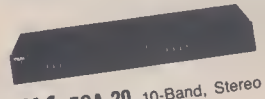

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Off the Air

The Last Word

Booze Ads: Get Smart

By Bob Brewin

Contending that beer and wine ads on TV and radio causes drunkenness makes as much sense as saying ads for Kellogg's Sugar Smacks cause diabetes. Sensible or not, an outfit operating under the acronym of SMART (for Stop Marketing Alcohol on Radio and Television) is besieging Congress to enact a ban on such ads because booze commercials "promote a dangerously glamorized view of drinking."

Much of the furor generated by SMART centers on the increasing teenage drinking that these folks claim is fostered by that readily identifiable enemy, TV. "We believe alcohol advertising works against efforts to discourage our children from drinking," National PTA President Elaine Stienkemeyer told a Senate committee earlier this year.

Well Elaine, instead of trying to beat up the broadcasters and in the process trespassing on the First Amendment, why don't you just turn the tube off! Instead of trying to get Congress to pass laws telling the TV, radio, and cable networks how to run their business (a complex process), why not have the PTA encourage parents to get their kiddies to do something worthwhile with their time, like read or attend band practice?

The answer to that one is simple: TV makes a great target, easy to blame for most if not all social ills, no matter what the causal relationship. As Senator Paula Hawkins said at that same hearing, "The easy thing to do, of course, is to blame the media. What we always seem to say is, the media glamorizes alcohol. That's why kids drink to excess. We sit our kids down in front of the tube for 27 hours a week, we let TV be a babysitter, and then —if our kids are messed up— we say television did it."

TV executives, looking at the possibility of millions if not billions of dollars in beer and wine ad bucks disappearing, reacted to this onslaught in predictable fashion. They draped themselves in their always ready-to-wear free-speech cloaks while at the same protesting a bit too much about their culpability. Eddie Fritts, president of the National Association of Broadcasters (an outfit Senator Bob Packwood once said "could not lobby its way out of a paper bag"), laughably told a Senate hearing that beer and wine commercials are used to "influence the decision of which brand to drink rather than influence the decision to drink."

Come on, Eddie. The beer folks are fighting with the soft-drink people for a share of the same disposable dollar. And if Coke and Pepsi show a bunch of hearty people having a fun time on the beach with their strappingly healthy bodies, Budweiser certainly isn't going to counter with an ad campaign depicting stoop-shouldered wimps belting 'em back in the local dive. No, the brew pushers enlist the services of retired sports heroes to extoll life with suds, implying barroom camaraderie and success on the playing fields of America are inexorably intertwined.

The broadcasters also waved their social-responsibility flag at the Senate, but ended up tripping on it. Frank Flynn, chairman of the Florida Association of Broadcasters and VP and general manager of WCTV/Tallahassee, told the committee that 34 Florida radio stations and 6 TV outlets aired 895 hours of public-service announcements last year cautioning against excessive drinking. Flynn proudly claimed that his industry is "part of the solution, not the problem." This sounded like a truly noble endeavor until Missouri Senator Thomas Eagleton asked Flynn, "How many ran in primetime, a paltry few?"

SMART seems to have the perfect apple-pie issue to back the broadcasters and the wine and beer industry into a corner. After all, what senator or congressman wants the electorate to think he or she advocates excessive drinking? Voting for a SMART ban on beer and wine advertising would not only be politically smart, it puts the pols on the side of the angels. Except the booze industry and the broadcasters have an apple-pie issue of their own: sports.

Flynn predicted the kind of ban proposed by SMART would eventually bring about the disappearance of sports from commercial TV because the brewers are the ones who pay the bills. Sports, Flynn warned the Senate, could "become the province of pay-per-view and cable"—but probably not commercial cable. Some of the SMART folk want to ban beer and wine advertising from networks such as ESPN. If this happened, the sheer existence of sports-heavy commercial cable services such as ESPN and WTBS could be threatened.

Arguments and counter-arguments like this will probably fly around the Congress for the rest of the session. I say both sides miss the point. I used to drink too much, waaaaaay too much. Not once in the 15 years I drank did a TV commercial make me drink any more or any less—probably because after a case of beer or so, it's hard to make out the images on the screen. What I do know is that most of the excessive drinking in this country is done by people who suffer from the disease of alcoholism.

Instead of attacking something peripheral to this disease—beer and wine commercials—I think it would be a good idea if the people who run SMART did something about educating the country about alcoholism: how to spot it, how to get help for the alcoholic, how to get help for his or her family. The broadcasters—now that SMART has their attention—can be a great help here. Alcoholism is a disease of denial, and not just for the alcoholic but society as a whole. Put those PSAs on in primetime. Get the SMART folks to work together with the broadcasters and come up with a terrific six-hour miniseries or primetime documentary on the disease of alcoholism. Then get Bud and Miller to promote the hell out of it so most of the country tunes in. That will do a lot more to combat the killer disease alcoholism than any ban on beer or wine ads.

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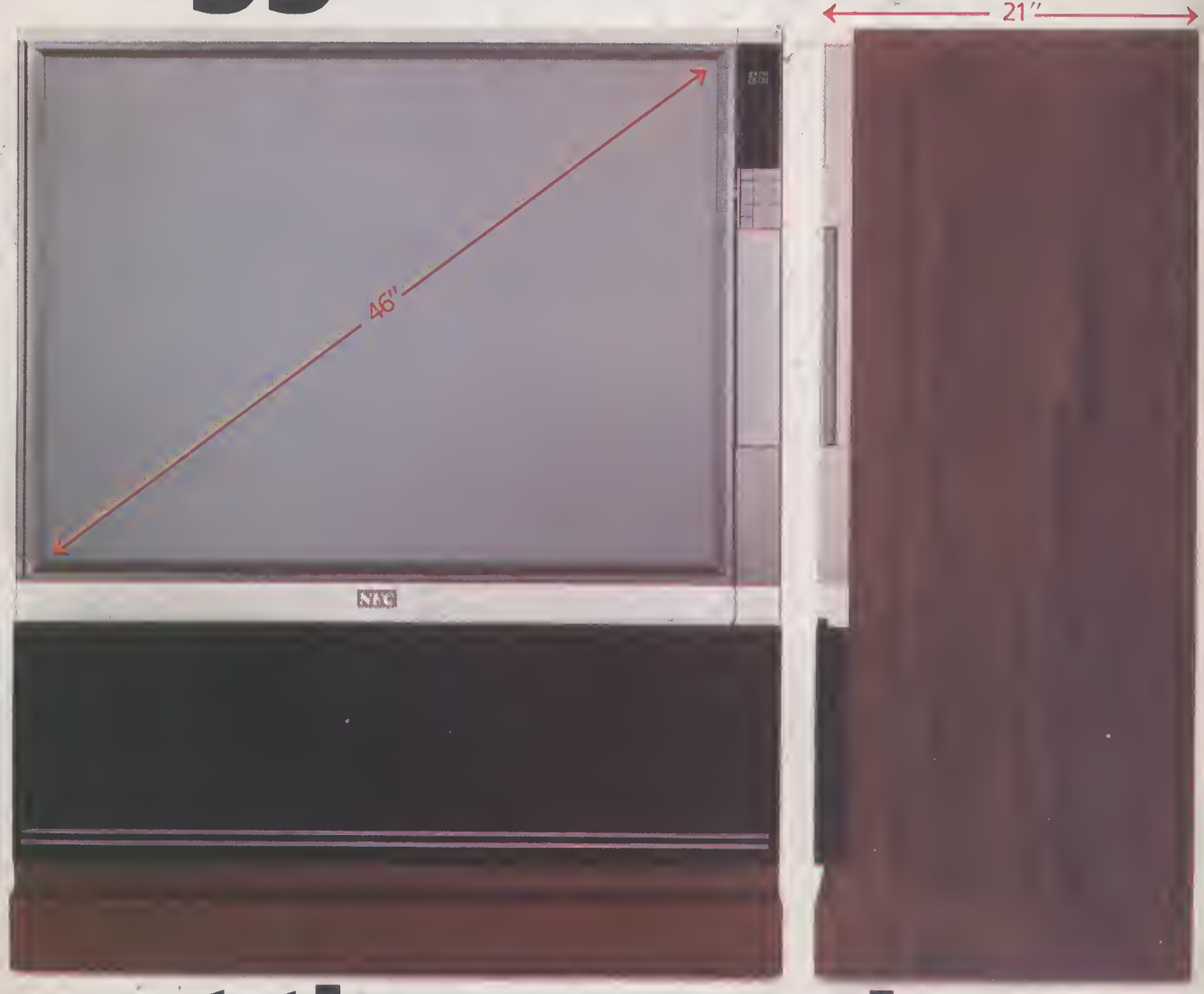

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