

Video Review

THE WORLD AUTHORITY ON HOME VIDEO

Ronstadt, Kinski, Moore and More!

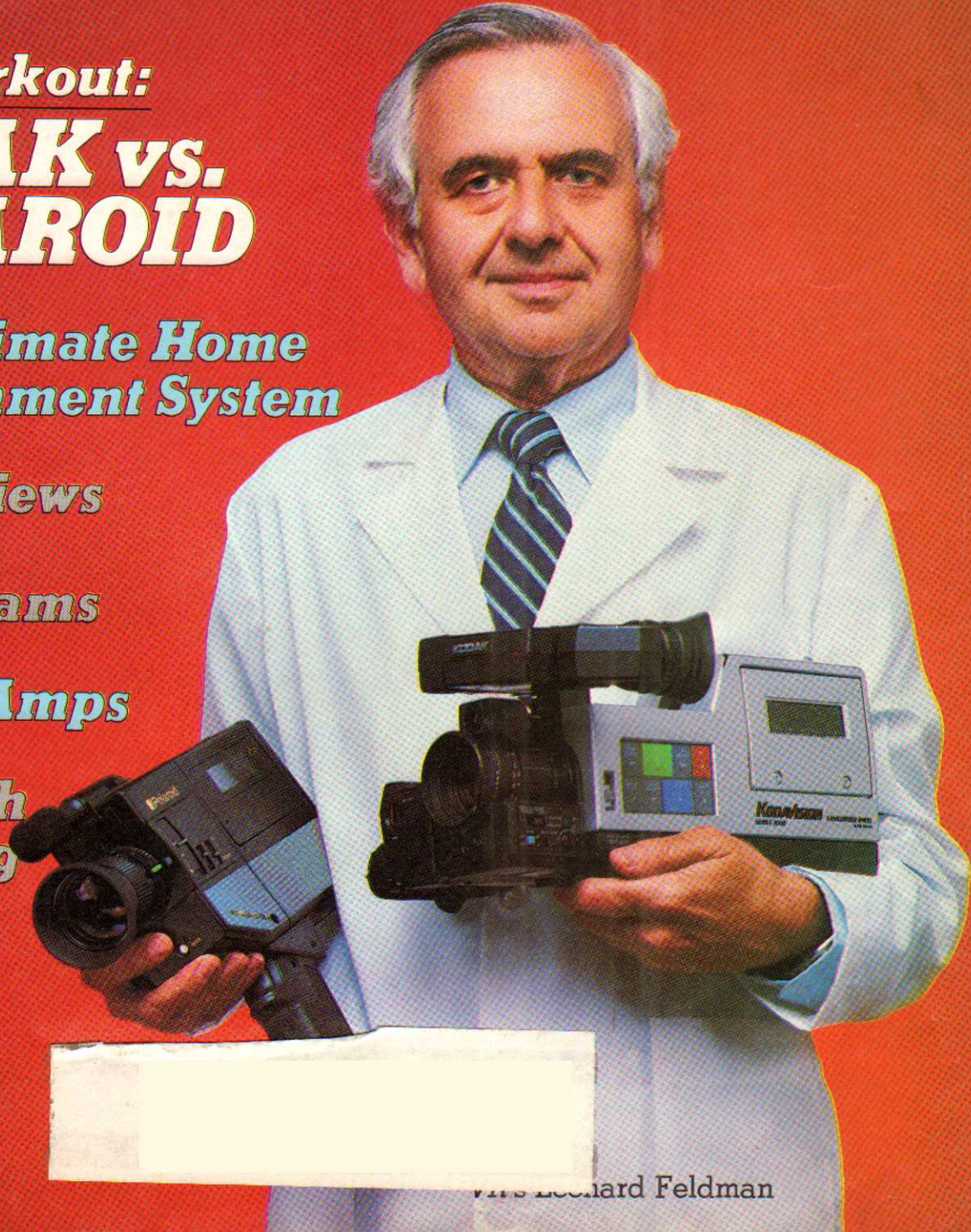
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KODAK vs.
POLAROID

RCA's Ultimate Home
Entertainment System

First Reviews
Of Stereo
TV Programs

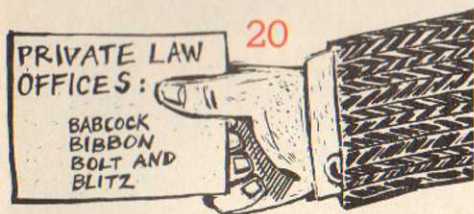
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Hal Roach
On Taping
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Samurai, satellites and missing software

VIOLENT DEBATE

Regarding the article "Wholly Wholesome? Classics Under Fire" in the July *VR* Newsbreaks section, I was both perturbed and amazed that a group of supposedly sane and responsible adults would make such a statement concerning Disney productions. I am 47 years old and I grew up, so to speak, on Disney fare when it was new. It was and still is great entertainment, and I and millions of others like me have managed to cope with the "violence" without any damage.

It is totally absurd and ludicrous and, I might add, idiotic for a group such as the National Coalition on Television Violence to take on Disney. There is violence everywhere of a much more damaging sort than Disney ever thought of presenting to us. I would suggest to NCTV that it grind its axes where it is really needed.

Disney too violent? Come on, NCTV, use your heads for something besides a hat rack.

William R. Finnell
Klamath Falls, OR

BUCK TREND

I have been looking over the new videocassettes that are coming out, and I am a bit perturbed that the trend in price seems to be one of going up rather than coming down. Now, I don't buy every movie that comes out on videocassette, but I buy enough that I know the number that I buy will be going down rather than going up. I salute Paramount for leading the way in lowering prices on the most popular movies and really don't understand why the distributors of these cassettes feel that the prices now have to swing back up.

It seems to me that the only thing that is coming out of all this is to increase the rental business and decrease the revenues that tape purchases bring in. It seems to be a losing battle; as the number of sales go down they raise prices so sales go down more, they raise their prices and so forth.

I personally like movies and collecting them, but I'm thinking that I'll have to go to an LV disc player to get the cost savings.

Correspondence addressed to Video Review is only answered in print in the Letters or Questions pages, space permitting. Sorry, no personal replies.

I personally think that more people would purchase movies if the price you had to pay were reasonable. When you rent movies, there is nothing there to show for it. It seems to me that everyone would benefit from lower prerecorded cassette tape prices.

Richard Hanners
Pittsburgh, PA

DISHING IT OUT

I recently became a subscriber to your magazine and was reading along fine until I got to the back of your magazine where I found Robert Gerson's "Looking Ahead" column. Robert Gerson is a joke and is living in a dream world if he thinks you can stop us (home satellite-dish owners). I live in rural southern Mississippi and was always very angry because there was no way I could get decent programming. I could only receive three—count 'em, three—channels all my life, so I decided to purchase a satellite system about a year ago. You channel-spoiled city dwellers wouldn't understand how much it has meant to me and others like myself.

I have written letters to HBO asking to let me pay for the service. But noooo. They won't take it. I would love for some HBO execs to live out here for a while just to see how they would spend their evenings.

Now they're talking about scrambling their precious signal. Ha! Every channel that's been scrambled so far, I receive clearly; don't ask how, and I hope HBO spends a zillion dollars on doing the same so I can laugh spending a few hundred on a decoder. If you think a code will stop me, I have friends in surrounding towns that work in cable offices (and I'm sure other dish owners do, also).

Daryl Bullock
Bassfield, MS

PRO VIDEO

First, my congratulations on the very best of video magazines on the market today from a very satisfied subscriber since your second issue. I look forward to each and every issue with bated breath. Keep up the excellent work.

Second, I feel I must register a minor complaint regarding the omission of information on that group of so-called industrial equipment that falls well within the price ranges of the current crop of "consumer" equipment. I feel that this does a disservice to your public and video "freaks."

Paul Ellenberg
Port Washington, NY

• You're right—we do not cover as much affordable "professional" video equipment as we'd like, largely owing to space constraints. We do publish an entire magazine on the subject, *VideoPro*, specially for the professional video community.—Ed.

SAMURAI SLIP

In your review of Akira Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* (August '84 *VR*) you stated that Toshiro Mifune played the leader of the samurai who protect the village. This is a mistake. That role was played by Takashi Shimura.

This may seem trivial, yet your description ignores the difference between the Mifune and the Shimura roles. Mifune is clown-like, drunken, head-strong and reckless, while the Shimura character is the epitome of controlled courage.

Ira Singer
Columbus, OH

MISSING SOFTWARE

I hope that this is not the only letter you get from readers who complain about the dropping of your videogame and computer-software sections. I am one of your many readers who own both a VCR and a home computer, and I liked those sections in your fine magazine. Your reviews and previews that those two sections provided probably saved me a fortune, just as your video section has.

Please return these sections and go back to being a complete magazine.

Jim Woodward
Delray Beach, FL

BOOK REVIEW

I bought the paperback edition of your book *Movies on Video*. It was fun, readable and well illustrated. But the best parts of the text were the reviews on the worst movies in each alphabetized chapter. At times I caught myself laughing loudly at the many amusing remarks.

I'm going to reread it, and keep on rereading it until my copy becomes worn and torn—and if it's too shabby, I'll buy another one. Thank you so much for a very good, enjoyable book.

Yvonne Joseph
New York, NY

• You're welcome. *Movies on Video* is available by mail order (\$10.95 plus \$2 shipping and handling), c/o *Movies on Video*, Viare Publishing, 902 Broadway, New York, NY 10010.—Ed. □

Bargain boon: VCR prices to plunge



US discovers Menudo (above) and other Spanish-language favorites.

HABLAMOS AQUI: US SPANISH VID

By Carl S. Kaplan

The pop group Menudo's US tour last year did more than delight millions of screaming Hispanic-American teenagers. It helped produce a boom in Spanish language video.

According to US census figures, there are presently 14.6

million Hispanic-American citizens in the US. Add approximately five million undocumented Hispanic workers here and the total Hispanic population in the US is close to 20 million—a potential audience that some producers are just discovering.

When the Menudo tour was announced, Embassy thought

the time was right to bring out its first Spanish-language tape. The company acquired the US rights to *Una Aventura Llama Menudo*, a kind of Menudoized *Hard Day's Night*, and sold 5,000 copies to fans in such top Hispanic-American population centers as L.A., Houston and New York.

Other tape companies have catered to Spanish speakers for some time. Media has over 50 Spanish titles, ranging from adult movies to kid vid—many of them American features dubbed in Spanish.

As for cable and broadcast TV, the Spanish Language Network (SIN), which broadcasts over UHF, low-power and cable channels, continues to grow rapidly. Founded 22 years ago, the company now claims to offer news and entertainment to 89% of Hispanic TV households in the US. It may soon, however, get some competition from ABC. Alone among the three networks, it plans to exploit the SAP capability of the new stereo TVs and broadcast Spanish over the audio channel for many of its programs.

Koreans to Cause Drop

By Robert Gerson

NEW YORK—Video fans may soon be treated to even lower prices for videocassette recorders. The reason: the introduction of Korean recorders.

By the middle of '85, Korean-made VHS VCRs, bearing the names of Gold Star and Samsung, and Beta models, marked Portland and Hyundai, will begin showing up on store shelves. The Koreans will be using low prices to entice US shoppers.

As a result, Japanese VCR makers will in turn lower their prices. Sony says it's reducing the price on its budget Beta model to under \$300 for the first time. On the VHS front, Hitachi says it plans to introduce a model for under \$400, which could be discounted for less than \$350.

Once this price-cutting starts, it may surprise many video fans how low it can go. Some industry experts are predicting that by the fall of '85, the bottom price on a VHS VCR will be \$250, and for Beta models \$200.

Cable to Cost More?

By Lucy Huffman

WASHINGTON—Cable TV subscribers beware: The cost of receiving all that specialized programming is likely to become higher. Such may be the outcome of recent Federal Communications Commission rulings giving cable system operators more control over how they can sell cable channels.

In the second ruling in less than a year, the FCC told operators recently that they now have complete control over which channels can go on what "tier" or level of service. The FCC said that cities can regulate only "basic" cable tiers, thus removing city control over the price to subscribers to receive premium and special cable channels and leav-

ing it up to cable operators.

This latest FCC decision caps a host of other FCC and Supreme Court rulings, each making cable operators less beholden to city officials for rate increases. Since these decisions are relatively recent, no price increases have yet occurred. Yet already, the nation's largest cable operator, Telecommunications, has pledged to eventually offer all satellite services in more expensive tiers.

VIDGAME TO GO ON

NEW YORK—Will owners of Atari VCS 2600 videogame consoles still be able to buy new game cartridges? That was the question posed by the recent sale of Atari by Warner Communications to Jack Tramiel, the former president of Commodore.

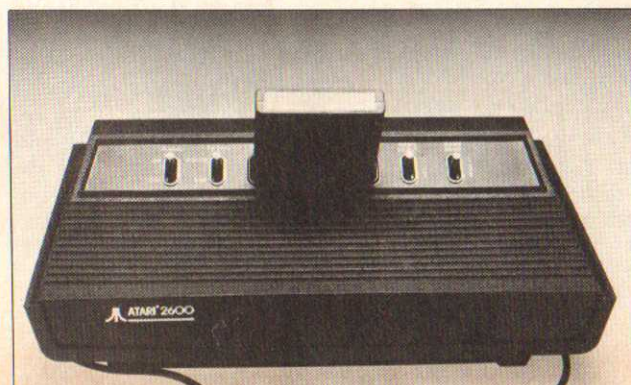
According to an Atari spokesperson, however, Tramiel is "very committed" to continuing

the VCS 2600 system and its games. As a matter of fact, some industry experts are predicting that Tramiel is so interested in selling games that he'll be practically giving away the game systems at rock-bottom prices.

According to the owner of one national video store chain, the 2600 console will be discounted in some stores this winter holiday season to perhaps as low as \$39. At present the console's list price is \$87, but a \$30 rebate brings the actual cost to \$57.

In regard to other Atari products, Tramiel has put plans for a new videogame console, the 7800, on hold, and there have been rumors that Atari's 600XL and 800XL home computers will be discontinued, to be replaced with a new line of Atari computers. (C.S.K.)

Playing for cheaps: the Atari 2600 game system for only \$39.95?



Safe to See? US Eyes No VDT Hazard

Is working on a computer video display terminal (VDT) hazardous to your health? According to the latest report from US government science officials, no. But some questions remain.

In response to the public's anxiety over the video terminal—the constant companion of many an office worker and home hobbyist—the House subcommittee on Health and Safety held hearings this spring on the safety of the new product. At one session, top government scientist J. Donald

visual problems, such as cataracts, that might result from working with VDTs. He noted, however, that there is a volume of evidence that VDTs can induce physical and emotional stress in workers. In that regard, he suggested to the committee that constant users of VDTs take occasional work breaks. Workers should also have their eyes examined before beginning prolonged VDT use, he said.

On the controversial issue of VDT effects on pregnant women,



At risk?: the controversy over VDT radiation still continues.

Millar, director of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, a division of the Center for Disease Control, testified that, based on scientific evidence, "we do not find VDTs to be a source of dangerous radiation." Dr. Millar added, too, that he knows of no long-term

Dr. Millar reported: "Although we do not see any physiologic mechanism whereby VDTs could impair reproductive function, as yet we do not have information to definitely rule out an effect of VDTs on reproduction." Millar said that his institute would soon study the matter. (C.S.K.)

NEW CABLE HORSES AROUND

By Jennifer Stern

Good news for TV watchers who thrive on freedom of choice. New programming is on the way from two new cable services and a syndicator:

•A pay-cable service, American Movie Classics (AMC), is the newborn sister of Bravo, the New York-based arts channel. AMC, scheduled to premiere service this month, will feature movies, and only movies, from the '20s to the '70s. It and Bravo will be sold to cable subscribers as a two-channel

package called The Rainbow Service.

•KTVT, based in Dallas/Ft. Worth, TX, has become the latest superstation. It offers a variety of programming including sit-coms, kids' shows and old and new movies, as well as *Texas Horseman's Report* and *The Fun of Fishing*.

•Opryland USA, the entertainment conglomerate whose name is synonymous with country music, has formed Gaylord Syndicom, a division which will develop shows for broadcast syndication. The company will



Sony's Mavica: stills standardized.

Video Photos Get in Focus

Electronic still photography, harnessing video technology to 35mm cameras, could be available by the end of '85, thanks to a standardization agreement recently hammered out after three years of study.

The move to the electronic camera was started in '81 when Sony first showed what it then called Mavica, a TV camera similar in design and size to a 35mm camera, which recorded individual color pictures on a magnetic disc contained in a plastic housing. Sony held off its plans for the product when other companies agreed to standardize disc size and so ensure compatibility among different electronic cameras.

The final standard, as hammered out by a group of 32 US, Japanese and European photo, electronic and tape manufacturers, is very much in line with what Sony displayed in the first place. It calls for use of a disc with a diameter of slightly less than two inches. The disc rotates once with each exposure and will be able to hold 50 pictures shot in a "field" recording mode or 25 higher-resolution shots. (R.G.)

New Oldies Treat for B&W Movie Mavens

By Seth Goldstein

NEW YORK—What's black-and-white and viewed all over? Old movies, that's what. Now that there are a respectable number of VCRs in American homes, there are a respectable number of VCR owners who want the kind of movies they just don't make any more.

Of course, B flicks from the '30s and '40s, many of them in the public domain, have been available ever since the first VCRs arrived in stores. But, for the first time, many grade-A pictures from that period are becoming available.

Key Video is offering 24 of the best from a very rich mother lode of Warner Bros. titles, including *Dark Victory* (Bette Davis), *I Was A Fugitive from A Chain Gang* (Paul Muni) and *Footlight Parade* (Cagney, Keeler, Busby Berkeley).

Why aren't these under the Warner label? Warner sold this part of its birthright years ago to United Artists, which in turn licensed them to 20th Century Fox Video, which turned them over to CBS/Fox Video, which passed them on to its subsidiary, Key Video.

The Warner goodies cost \$59.98. Less expensive and of greater literary appeal are six reissues from MGM/UA. Cassettes of *Treasure Island*, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Madame Bovary*, *The Good Earth* and *Little Woman* are pegged at \$29.95 at present. (S.G.)



Davis, Brent in *Dark Victory*.