

VCR sales boom; availability, stable prices bring films home

By Marianne Cassell
Staff Reporter

Americans are turning their heads towards the world of movies and VCRs. Videocassette recorders became popular about 10 years ago, and ever since then sales have been booming. Experts say that in 1981 1 percent of the market will own at least one VCR by this Christmas season.

Mike Keefe, assistant manager of Applause Video's 48th and O store, says "VCRs are not a fad. Sales were down last year, but there are continuously new lines coming out, and we're seeing a lot more in today's market." Recently Korea's SAMSUNG broke into the market with their own line.

So what's the big deal? Availability seems to be the key. VCRs are becoming more available, prices are stable and there's an increase in the number of movies being made for VCRs. Not only are VCRs becoming smaller and more versatile, but they're also becoming easier to run. VCRs themselves can be bought in most major department stores and rented from most corner convenience stores. Who would have dreamed that in 1986 you could fill up your gas tank, your plastic pop glass, and your spare time at the gas station around the corner?

Movies are also becoming more available. If you can't afford to see a new movie that's just come out, wait a few months, invite your friends over, and you can watch one three times in a row or frame-by-frame for half the cost. Films on just about any subject can be found, including the new "How To" movies. Julia Child can teach you how to cook, you can be taught how to golf, and there are also films on how to hunt geese, or keep your child safe in your own home. Next to these are the ever popular hit movies that are released following their box office debut, and favorite Walt Disney flicks from way back.

New offerings that will soon be hit-

ting video store shelves, if they haven't already, are "Miami Vice" and "Dallas" re-runs. Even the made for TV miniseries are finding their way to our fingertips.

The key terms in VCRs today are VHS and BETA. Sony was the first to market the VCR recorder and they marketed the BETA system. Big names in home electronics like Magnavox, RCA, etc., marketed the equally sound system called VHS, and a buyer must decide between the two. Says Keefe, "contrary to popular belief, BETA is not dying out. The only way that BETA will die out is if the manufacturers choose not to make the BETA tapes." Keefe says that this won't happen because of the companies that provide BETA brand tapes. Says Keefe, "VHS is following in BETA's footsteps in their new systems. VHS is just being sold by bigger 'household name' companies like Sears and JC Penneys, and people have grown to depend on and be loyal to those companies." In fact, BETA is backed by larger companies like Sony/Sanyo and

Toshiba, who give them more credibility. "Worldwide, BETA is more dominant. Nationwide, VHS is more dominant. "On the average," says Keefe, "VHS is found nationwide to fill 80 percent of the households where BETA fills only 20 percent depending on the area."

What else is there after VCRs? In the future world of VCRs are the new 8mm video cameras and recorders. As explained by the August 1986 issue of Video Review magazine, 127 VCR companies got together with the intention of standardizing VCR equipment on a worldwide basis. Thus, the 8mm video recorders, cassettes and camcorders evolved. The 8mm Digital Audio Video or DAV, combines up to 24 hours of over 80dB audio range and up to 4 hours of video on one cassette that looks a tad bit smaller than a regular recording tape. This system is being put out by Sony and can be found for less than \$1,000.



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