

Tape

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less strain on the tape than does the VHS system. Blank Beta recording tapes sell for less money than blank VHS tapes.

VHS (Video Home System) was developed by Matsushita Electric, a Japanese firm that also owns JVC, Panasonic and Quasar. When VHS appeared on the market it offered two hours of recording time per tape. So began the long play wars between the two formats. It's now possible to record for eight hours on a T-160 VHS tape. Matsushita quickly licensed other companies to build the VHS system and these machines quickly flooded the market.

Tape does have some disadvantages when compared to video discs. Movies on tape are expensive although predictions are that the price will drop in the next year. Rentals provide an inexpensive alternative to outright purchase. Tape also wears out. Because of the rapidly spinning videohead magnetic particles shred from the tape causing dropouts which degrade the picture quality. Still frame and pause, features found on some VTRs, also cause problems. When the tape stops moving in the machine that videohead is still spinning at 1500 rpm. If a tape is left on still frame or pause for too long the spinning videohead can burn a blank spot in the tape.

Laser

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nals by the electronics inside the player and eventually displayed on your TV as a picture.

The sharpness of the laser disk image is almost double that of video tape and CED disk. The audio or sound information is also vastly improved over the other two formats. A stereo laser disk that has been encoded with the CX noise reduction system is capable of sounding much better than a FM stereo broadcast.

Unlike tape and CED disks, the laser disk will not wear — nothing comes in contact with it except a beam of light. A clear plastic coating covers the surface of the disk to prevent damage to the microscopic pits that lie below the plastic. Finger prints and minor scratches will not harm the image quality of the disk. Prices for the disks range from \$25 to \$60.

Despite all of these advantages, the laser system has been slow to catch on. The players are more expensive than a CED machine but are generally in the same price range as most VTRs that offer the same type of features.

Also, no recording is possible. It is a playback-only system.

Disc

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removed from its protective cover. In normal use the operator of the machine never has to touch the disk or remove it from its sleeve. This is all done automatically by the player. A built in stylus cleaner helps keep microscopic particles of dust, which could damage the disk, off the stylus. Although designed for many years of use the disks will eventually show signs of wear from the stylus.

The stylus eventually will have to be replaced due to wear.

The big advantage to the CED system is the low price of the player and a large selection of titles. CED disks cost anywhere from \$20 to \$50, depending on the popularity of the selection. A basic CED machine can be purchased for \$200. The more sophisticated players offer stereo sound and CX noise reduction. While laser buffs have a difficult time finding a variety of selections, CED owners find it much easier to fulfill their repertoire. About 700 titles currently are being offered in the CED format. Like the laser system no recording is possible.

Video battle goes to court

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"I'd guess there are several hundred people working on that problem," said Frederick Fehlauer, CBS Fox vice president and general manager.

"Lots research is being done in this area as we continue to grow. But most solutions that the industry has developed have been thwarted by other technology."

THE VIDEO SCUFFLE has jammed libraries between a rock and a hard place, said Jerry Furl, Farmington Hills Community Library audio-visual chairman and reference librarian.

"Because libraries are considered public places and not educational institutions, we can lend video cassettes, but cannot set up video cassette recorders for use in the library."

"It's a gray area, but technically, we'd be in violation of the copyright laws," said Furl, who is hopeful the Supreme Court will address the problem.

"It's really a thorny issue right now."

Where to buy video

VIDEO-RAMA, 35564 Grand River, Farmington Hills. Located in the Midwood Square shopping center. Phone 476-2350.

Sales and rentals of VHS tapes and machines. No disks in either format.

THE VIDEO CONNECTION of Farmington Hills, 25898 Middlebelt, Farmington Hills. Phone 474-5020. Located in the Chatham Square shopping center.

Sales of videotape players and cameras, rentals of video game cartridges and VHS tapes. Tapes can be purchased by special order only. CED disks are also available for sales and rental.

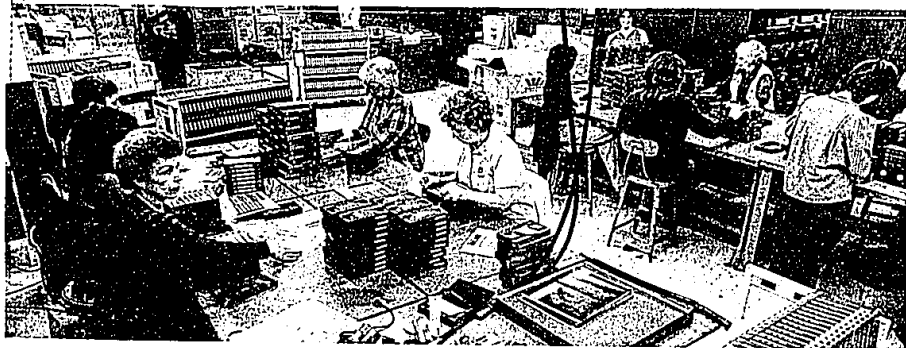
WORLD WIDE TV and Appliance, 34701 Grand River, Farmington. Located in the World Wide Center. Phone 477-8000.

Sales of TV, wide screen TV and video monitors. Videotape players and cameras can be purchased or rented. Sales and rental of VHS movies and

CED disks also available. Video accessories and blank recording tape are also available.

THE VIDEO STUDIO 35119 Grand River. Located in the K mart shopping center. Phone 476-1670. Sales and rental of VHS and Beta movies plus game cartridges. This is the only location in Farmington/Farmington Hills area that sells laser disks and players. CED disks are sold and rented. Video accessories, blank recording tape are also available.

FARMINGTON HILLS LIBRARY 32737 W. 12 Mile Road, Farmington Hills. Phone 553-0300. The library has 190 titles available in the VHS format. Tapes from the IIS to help you sort out your tax forms can be borrowed free of charge. A limited selection of laser disks are also available. The downtown branch of the library also has VHS tapes. Call them 474-7770 for more information.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

In CBS Fox's labeling room, workers put the finishing touches on video products. Tapes are matched with cartridges, labeled and shrink-wrapped for shipping. Lately, the biggest sellers are "An

Officer and a Gentleman," "Star Trek II — the Wrath of Kahn," "Jane Fonda's Workout" and "Blade Runner."

Video revolutionizes leisure

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For \$399, videophiles can buy a modular oak cabinet to house a TV, video cassette recorder or player, a video game, tapes, discs and accessories. It also can hide a spaghetti-like maze of wires.

Prices for both the equipment and films have dropped so sharply that today 42 percent of the American population owns a VTR (videotape recorder), said Frederick G. Fehlauer, vice president and general manager of CBS Fox in Farmington Hills.

CBS Fox, a state-of-the-art international firm owned by 20th Century Fox and the Columbia Broadcasting System, does mass duplication of video tapes, distributes video discs and videotape commercials and industrial programs.

"Between 4.5 and 4.8 million VTRs are in consumer use in the U.S. Last year, 2.6 million were sold. I don't think any of us would have predicted sales that high," said Fehlauer.

Affordability is largely responsible for the record-breaking sales.

"There's been a dramatic price reduction in hardware. At one time, RCA video disc players cost \$359 — they now sell for around \$199."

"When Sony introduced the Beta, it cost \$1,500. Today a basic VTR costs \$400. And I've seen them as low as \$329," Fehlauer added.

Beta and VHS movies range in price between \$39.95 and \$100. They can be rented at most video stores for about \$2 per night during the week and for about \$3 for a weekend.

Blank Beta tapes (for recording) are \$3 to \$4 cheaper than VHS tapes.

Video discs, which cost between \$15 and \$50, can be rented for about one dollar more than tapes.

While the vast majority of people rent tapes and discs, industry observers say lower prices may see one third of the market buying films by 1984.

In an experimental effort to bolster sales, Paramount Home Video recently

discounted two tapes — "Star Trek II: The Wrath of Kahn" and "An Officer and a Gentleman." Both sell for \$39.95.

Paramount also, for the first time, produced a Beta movie ("An Officer and a Gentleman") for \$29.95.

The combination of a low priced and a popular movie has resulted "in the most successful film ever sold in the industry," noted Fred Syerson, general manager of Video Studio in Farmington.

Video Studio's growth is testimony to the industry's explosive entrance into the local market. Its five metro Detroit locations boast more than 5,000 video club members who enjoy 10 percent discounts on rentals and sales of the store's 1,600 videotape titles and

400 video disc titles.

That's quite a spurt since Video Studio opened in Farmington two years ago with just 150 titles. Gross sales last year for Video Studio were \$2 million, enabling the company to open stores in Warren and Sterling Heights, Syerson said.

"The economy is working to our benefit."

"It's not that our business is recession-proof, but because the economy is so bad, people are making their homes entertainment centers," Syerson said. "They're buying Atari's, as opposed to sending their kids to arcades and they're renting tapes. It's much cheaper than taking the family to the theater."

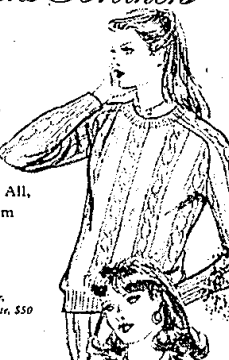
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