

The Way They Were: The Prime of Miss Jean Harlow • Video: Fast & Slow

PREMIERE

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THE DEVIL AND DENNIS QUAID

SHOT BY SHOT:
MEL GIBSON IN
'LETHAL WEAPON 2'

'DO THE RIGHT THING':
SPIKE LEE GETS TOUGH

YAHOO! THE NEXT
BIG THING FROM
DOWN UNDER

CAN. \$2.50
U.K. £1.50



VIDEO

P L A Y B A C K

JOHN WATERS, EAT YOUR HEART OUT

GROSSER THAN LIFE

ANY HORROR-MOVIE DIRECTOR who has ever chopped an actor's head off or made one eat entrails owes a debt of gratitude to Herschell Gordon Lewis. Lewis is cinema's pioneer of puke, the first man to stage detailed human mutilations onscreen, beginning with 1963's proudly appalling *The Blood Feast*. Gorehounds have worshiped Lewis for years, but lately his work is reaching a whole new audience of unsuspecting victims via cable (on the Movie Channel) and home video. Recently released on Rhino Video is the director's personal favorite, *2000 Maniacs*, along with *The Wizard of Gore* and *The Gruesome Twosome*.

Why have Lewis's lower-than-low-budget flicks remained so popular? "It's one of the great conundrums of our time," he deadpans, then suggests that "contemporary horror filmmakers are too concerned with prosthetic devices and

the mechanical aspects of gore. We simply went for shock value."

Shocking, yes, but there's a bizarre sweetness to the gore in Lewis's movies. His camerawork dotes on smashed eyeballs and mangled brains with a kind of campy joy that latter-day imitators, such as Troma Pictures, can't touch. "We may have cut someone's heart out," he says, "but we did it with love."

Lewis's films are also distinguished by a unique acting style: bad. Not just normal bad, mind you; the performances are akin to those seen in the most surreal of children's-theater productions or in the rawest of public-access-cable shows. "Bad acting helps involve the audience," Lewis explains. "It turns the movie into a Punch and Judy show, so the audience is never threatened. I don't think Meryl Streep would have made any of my movies a success."

Streep or no, the films were quite successful in their day. Because of the generous share of the profits the producers offered theater owners, the

owners loved showing them. And Lewis was great at coming up with audience-grabbing campaigns. For *Monster a Go-Go* he promised "a way-out tale of a far-out monster" and summed up with the can't-miss tag line "You've never seen a picture like this—thank goodness."

Lewis is still enticing people with spicy language, although for the past fifteen years it's been in a different medium—direct-mail marketing. His last movie, unfortunately, was 1972's brilliantly demented *The Gore Gore Girls*, and he gets no royalties from his movies except for some music he wrote for them. Still, Lewis is far from bitter. If the proper financing ever comes through, he'd very much like

to make his long-proposed comeback movie, *Herschell Gordon Lewis' Grim Fairy Tales*, but he feels no great urgency. Maintaining a wryly amused distance from his reputation, he says he's neither proud nor ashamed of his movies. "They did what they were supposed to do. They went through the machine." **JIM FARBER**



COMMERCIALS ON CASSETTE

YOU DESERVE A BREAK TODAY

IT'S NICE TO WATCH A MOVIE without having to look at Joe Isuzu. That's one of the advantages of renting a movie—at least it used to be. Potentially annoying commercials have made their way onto the beginnings and endings of movies on videocassette. How long will it be before they start popping up in the middle?

In 1987, Paramount Home Video put a Diet Pepsi ad at the beginning of *Top Gun*, paving the way for about a dozen followers: on HBO, *Platoon* fell in line with Chrysler; MGM/UA's *Moonstruck* was stricken by Snickers; and Vestron's *Dirty Dancing* stepped in with two separate sponsors—Nestlé on some cassettes, Mountain Dew on others.

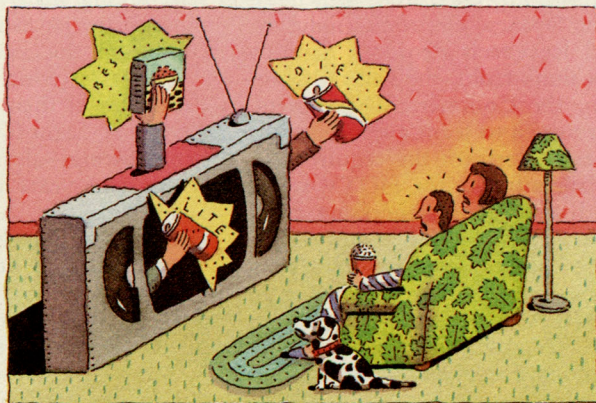
"We look at it as a marketing decision rather than an artistic one," says Eric Doctorow, senior vice president and general manager of

Paramount. This year, Pepsi ads have shown up at the beginnings of four of the company's videos, including "*Crocodile*" *Dundee II* and *Coming to America*. In return, Pepsi is featuring the movies in its television commercials. Doctorow expects the TV ads to encourage video stores

to buy more copies, "which will make renting the movies easier."

Do video companies really have our best interests at heart? "We don't want to pollute the video experience," says Doctorow. "The ads either make their debut on video or are different edits from the ones on network television." He notes that Paramount isn't making any money directly on the Pepsi deal—it's a barter.

Rick Markovitz, senior vice president at the advertising agency J. Walter Thompson, says that "the best thing about advertising on video is the environment," which he describes as "uncluttered."

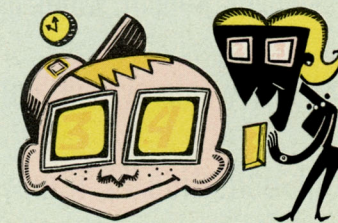


IT'S A FACT

VIDBITS

NUMBER OF STORES OWNED BY THE AVERAGE VIDEO RETAILER IN
 ●1982: 1
 ●1988: 6.8

AVERAGE VIDEO-STORE VISIT, IN MINUTES, IN THE
 ●MORNING: 6
 ●AFTERNOON: 8
 ●EVENING: 13



AVERAGE NUMBER OF HOURS A WEEK SPENT WATCHING VIDEOCASSETTES, BY
 ●CHILDREN: 3.4
 ●ADULTS: 2.3

AVERAGE NUMBER OF TIMES AN A TITLE (A HEAVILY PROMOTED MOVIE) IS RENTED: 110.7

JUDY ALK KARREN

Well, that's just how most consumers would like to leave it.

Home video executives from major studios don't believe that ads will ever actually interrupt movies on video, but some special-interest titles have already broken that barrier. Within the body of an exercise video for overweight women called *Women at Large: Breakout*, for example, there's an ad for Fitting Pretty queen-size panty hose (seems like a natural for Snickers). An Olympics preview tape from last summer called *Going for the Gold* had not one but two ads in the middle, both for Budweiser, and a recent instructional tape from the Los Angeles Lakers, *Fast Break*, broke for three Crush soft drink commercials: one at the beginning, one in the middle, one at the end.

For now, at least, if you're worried that Spuds MacKenzie is going to party all over your favorite movies, it seems you're barking up the wrong tree. But if that dreaded day ever comes, don't forget that VCRs have something TV doesn't: fast forward. **CINDY SPIELVOGEL**