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FILM

Adjust Your Tracking (Wienerworld)

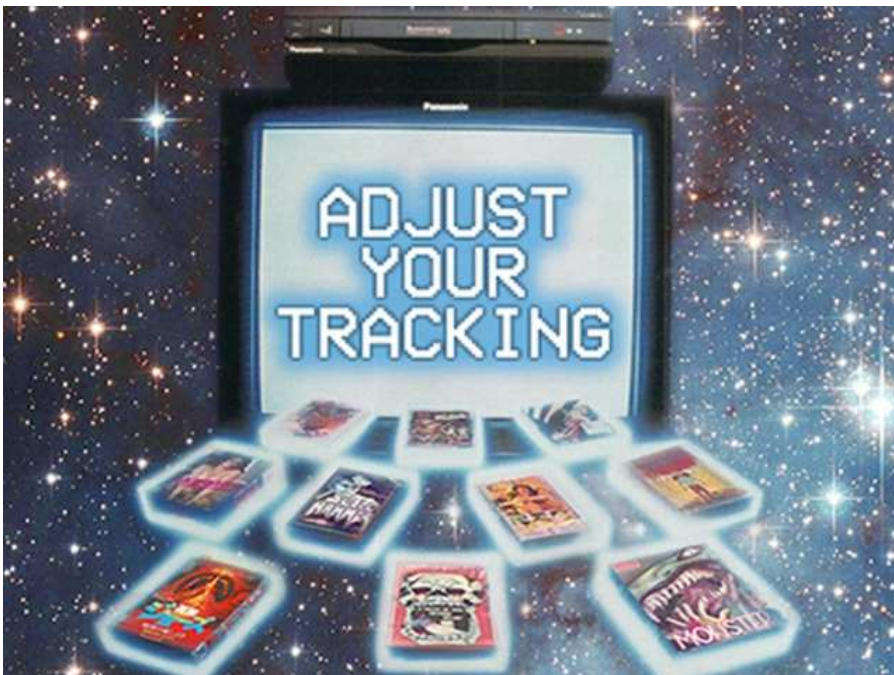
by PETE WOODS on Aug 22, 2014 • 11:11 am

1 Comment



If you know all about adjusting tracking then you lived through the video age, congratulations on surviving the frustration of fizzy screens and blurry images with lots of buzzing noise. Long before taking DVD for granted the video cassette and the clunky old top loading bulky players started a revolution by bringing movies into the home on demand (well once you had picked them up from the local video stores that sprung up all over the country). It was a fascinating age of discovery for many, especially us horror fans grabbing never before available films to watch in the comfort of our homes. Naturally what looked great did not last long and the term video nasty flourished with many films being withdrawn and a huge amount of titles which ended up on section 1, 2 and 3 DPP lists liable for seizure. Interest in these titles has been well documented by the recent and excellent Jake West documentaries Video Nasties & Draconian Days not so much leading to a renaissance of the format but certainly more people seeking the titles out. Some of us have been keen collectors of tapes since back in the day, picking up all the hard to get titles and continuing to do so. In the UK there is a big community found at sites such as the Pre Cert Video site

<http://www.pre-cert.co.uk/> and tapes can demand a large amount of money on the market. For example looking at E Bay right now Wrong Way on the Intervision label (a DPP 3 title) recently sold for £299 and rarest of tapes have actually gone for up to four figures.



Personally I am with Lloyd Kaufman of Troma who appears on Adjust Your Tracking and like to have the film in best quality with all the extras and the majority of my tapes have long gone. That would be heresy for many of the people who are featured on this great documentary and I am well aware that some of these titles will never be seen again. Most

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will either have been destroyed in landfill sites or be held in the hands of collectors (and let's not mention the problem of mould). Recently it is getting harder to find rarities and even charity shops and car boot sales are beginning to stop selling them and it is once in a blue moon that a gem unveils itself. The hundred or so people featured on this Kick Starter production directed with evident love by Dan M. Kinem & Levi Pereticare are real avid hoarders and drive all over the place looking for dirty attics full of old tapes and all the stores that have closed their doors since the Internet took over the way we watch films. They have many tales of their searches and just looking at the tape collections featured really makes you gasp. Along with them there are various people working within the industry from film makers themselves to people who write about film and run websites and all sorts of interesting characters.



I should point out that this is an American feature so many of the tapes are never seen in the UK and are on labels that are different from the ones we collected in England. That kind of makes it all the more fascinating though as there is a wealth of films nestled in the rooms of these obsessives that I have never even heard of. One guy has a massive extended basement that he has turned into a video store and actually has everything sectioned into genres and rents out just like the old stores did, in a word wow. My mouth was watering and it took me back to the time that I, like many others, used to literally spend ages hanging around in the old stores. The behaviour of collectors is discussed at length and they all have their own OCD way of displaying their titles that make perfect sense to them but probably won't to an outsider, something I certainly affiliated with. They also talk lovingly about collecting everything by certain labels something that is keenly done in the UK too. They are all in agreement about the label of excellence being Wizard, one that I am sure many collectors of bootlegs here would have had transfers from their stock in their collections. They talk about communities and friendships that have sprung up through social media pages and they all have some really great stories to tell which had me riveted.



One part that I found really intriguing was when they all talked about looking for the current holy grail of tapes, a film I had not heard of 'Tales From The Quadead Zone' (Chester Novell Turner 1987) and boy does this film by the director of 'Black Devil Doll From Hell' look like complete trash. Bidding wars were started on one copy of this that was won (slightly by accident as the winner expected it to go for more) for \$600. One fan had managed to find a copy for just over 3 bucks in a store too, that is what we call a lifetime score!

One thing I did not realise was that tapes are making a bit of a comeback, not seen this so much here apart from the odd promotional tape for films such as V/H/S/ but Lloyd

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Kaufman again admits that as fans demand they are happy to make a sale any way they can and movies like *The Toxic Avenger* may well be given a fresh tape release. I found myself glued to this 85 minute documentary and I am sure any tape enthusiast will be too as we over here also keenly look forward to our side of things being documented on the forthcoming 'VHS Forever Psychotronic People' film directed by Mark Williams which will be screening at the Scalarama film event in September.



There's stacks more too as far as Adjust Your Tracking is concerned as this double disc comes loaded with several hours of bonus features! First up are three short films. The first couple centre on those battling to keep their rental businesses going and unfortunately having to accept the inevitable and close them down. One in Staten Island had been open 26 years (and not raised its rental prices once in all that time.) These are quite sad and soon there won't be any such stores open on the high street and all they will be is fondly remembered nostalgia. The third is more of a success story about director Chester Novell Turner rediscovered by the featured fans of his *Quadead* and *Black Devil* Films and the re-release of them on DVD again. He had simply made and forgotten about them and is clearly surprised at the interest and fandom surrounding them, especially as he is long out the business. The good thing is that all this has encouraged him to think about a *Quadead* sequel too.

There's several behind the scenes features. The first sees the film makers taking a diversion from looking for video shops and going off to search for Bigfoot. I won't say whether they find it or not but with a bit of a budget they could possibly have gone on to make their own 'Night Of The Demon.' Then there's a couple of detailed Q&A sessions with them following festival screenings on their film and its interesting hearing about their path from collectors to actual directing a feature themselves. Then there are over 2 hours' worth of extended interviews and these are seriously entertaining too. Some of the anecdotes and insights given go from the profound to deliriously amusing and some of the people involved such as purveyor of sleaze 42nd Street Pete and belching, swearing black metal head Putrid make them almost worthy of having shows of their own.



Final segment is some deleted scenes and again these are not mere fluff to pan things out as they all tackle subjects close to the heart. First is one about cut boxes, this is the practice of cutting up cardboard video covers and inserting them in plastic boxes. It's a universal problem and hated by most collectors. America had more titles than the UK who only really had videos housed this way in the earlier days so they found it particularly annoying. There's a chat about the impact of legendary (fake) mondo movie *Faces Of Death* complete with director John Alen Schwartz and his girlfriend (odd couple). A section on the terrible overabundance of Jerry Maguire tapes found everywhere you go in USA (our equivalent would probably be *Friends* videos) and the batty people who have had literally thousands of them posted out to them! The scourge of Redbox video which from what I

understand is some sort of video rental machine only carrying the worse and most commercial films available. Next is a look at Scarecrow Video, the largest repository of video and DVD in America and probably the world. As the camera takes us around the vast fully functioning rental store, I don't mind admitting I almost came! Finally there's a small bit on shot on video (SOV) films that are quality wise awful down to budget but do deliver often with some over the top and enthusiastic gore (think along lines of Alex Chandon early titles such as Drillbit and Bad Karma). And there you have it, hours-worth of excellent nostalgic viewing.

I really enjoyed watching all of this and I have a feeling that it won't be long before I am all set for a repeat viewing, certainly of the main feature again. If you have any affinity with video tapes and movies this should definitely be of interest even if it has an American focus. I just hope that 'VHS Forever' lives up to the thorough and thoughtful coverage of the subject it has laid down when it too comes out

Viva le VHS!

(Pete Woods)

<https://www.facebook.com/AdjustYourTracking>

<http://www.wienerworld.com/adjust-your-tracking-the-untold-story-of-the-vhs-collector.html>

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SPENNY says:
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