

ADJUST YOUR TRACKING

Directed by Dan M. Kinem and Levi Peretic
(2103) VHSitfest DVD

If you're of a certain age, you tend to get all misty-eyed and nostalgic about the video shops of the eighties. Finally freed from the far-too-rare theatrical rerelease and spotty, heavily edited fare seen on TV stations, the world's motion picture legacy was suddenly at your fingertips. VHS and Beta heralded the clarion call of Watch What You Want When You Want. But here was the magical part: Back in the day, you would scour the local mom and pop video stores in search of a particular title . . . and walk away with something infinitely better.

Those who haunted neighborhood video stores would share in the joy of discovery on an almost daily basis. One could go on looking for a current release, only to discover an obscure gem, a long forgotten favorite or a shot-on-video practical joke that would deliver in untold ways. One would go to far-flung neighborhoods to check out what local video shops—many of which had a playpen in the back, attended to by moms out to supplement the family's income—and find such delightful trash treasures as *The Corpse Grinders* (1971) and *The Worm Eaters* (1977) for the first time on tape! Grindhouse and drive-in obscurities would find their second wind with their release to home entertainment. Truly, a golden age for the trash cinephile.

Oh, but the format? FORGET IT! Analog video tape would degrade almost instantly, leaving a blurry, hard-on-the-eyes image. While easier to dupe and bootleg to share with others, there was NOTHING that video tape had over digital. Tapes were heavy, took up shelf space and God forbid you leave them in a parked car in direct sunlight for more than a few minutes. They would melt into plastic goo, leaving you with a hefty \$75-\$90 fee from rental shops, who would send scary individuals knocking on your door asking where their missing inventory went.

Everyone knows what happened next: Blockbuster Video would come into existence, stocking hundreds of the most in-demand videos; independent and obscure film fare would fall by the wayside, effectively instigating a "book burning without fire" policy; Blockbuster Video would in turn bankrupt and force smaller, family-owned video stores to close . . . all of this coming to an end with Blockbuster Video eventually going bankrupt with the advent of computer downloads. If one wants some home entertainment today, one either subscribes to Netflix, troops down to the nearby Redbox vending machine or downloads off the Internet. In a few years, physical property of movies may be extinct altogether.

Which brings us to *Adjust Your Tracking*, the new documentary on the halcyon days of video. While addressing some of the above historical facts, this documentary instead focuses on the private collectors of obsolete technology. Yup, just as there's a certain brand of music fan who trolls thrift stores in search of vinyl records there exists a certain kind of person with a fondness for collecting dusty old VHS tapes. To each his own, but—this can get ugly.

Inherent with most collector mind sets is the notion of piggish ownership over everything else. This manifests itself in many unconventional ways, with said collectors laying out thousands of dollars for dusty copies of *The Care Bears Movie* (1985) with distaff color markings on the cassette. Why? BECAUSE THEY CAN!

Adjust Your Tracking proved to be quite a challenge for this reviewer, as I know many of the interview subjects personally. This had me alternately cheering and jeering the screen. I won't name any guilty parties, but the negative hygiene of some of the interview subjects positively wafted off the screen.

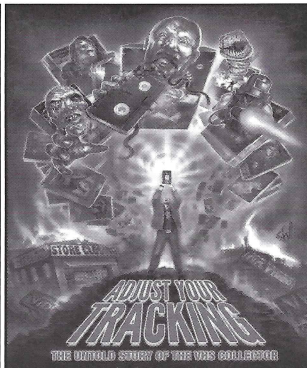
A joyous labor of love, like most DVDs and Blu-rays—both of which now face becoming obsolete very, very shortly—are the multiple extras found on this two-disc set. There are two full-length commentaries available to check out on this film, one with the directors, Dan Kinem and Levi Peretic, and one with producers Josh Schafer and Matt Desiderio, both of whom appear in the film.

Three are also short films, which in this reviewer's humble opinion are far more successful in addressing the enjoyment to be found in this medium than in the feature film itself. Especially heart-breaking is the 11-minute documentary *Video Shelf* about a small family video rental shop in Pennsylvania. Ran by a father and son, they relate how their pride-and-joy is losing money, and that they are keeping it open in order to benefit their small, folksy neighborhood. Push comes to shove, and the shop closes its doors.

It Wasn't in Vain, It Was in Staten Island, is a brief, six-minute short about Bayware Video, the last video store on Staten Island in New York. The store's owner relates the shop's history while it dies a slow and tragic death from liquidation sales.

The Ballad of Chester Novell Turner, the backyard auteur behind *Black Devil Doll from Hell* (1984) and *Tales from the Quadead Zone* (1987, see *Scream #28*), details how this misunderstood filmmaker would enjoy a revival of his features with art house showings across the land.

Foggy Mountain Breakdown is a rather disposable 10-minute short about the production team roaming through the mountains of northern California and southern Oregon. It's rather pointless, but they added it in anyway.



There is also footage of two question and answer sessions conducted in August of 2013 at Austin's Alamo Draft House with Kinem and Peretic, along with Bleeding Skull website founder Joseph Ziemba, one of the few horror movie internet reference sites that are actually worth visiting. There is also footage from the Back Alley Film Series in North Carolina, with Kinem, Peretic and Jay Morong.

There are also extended interviews, a whopping two hours-plus with sixteen separate subjects along with six deleted scenes. These run the gamut from the Dadaist video cut-up group Everything is Terrible (seek out their DVD compilations posthaste; they're among the most entertaining DVDs being produced today) campaign to get VHS copies of the Tom Cruise stinker *Jerry Maguire* (1996) into the hands of everyone who wants one. There is also an interview with *Faces of Death* creator John Alan Schwartz, whose grisly, specious film series went hand-in-hand with the home video experience and was an essential part of the VHS revolution. Why his segment was cut from the main feature is anyone's guess.

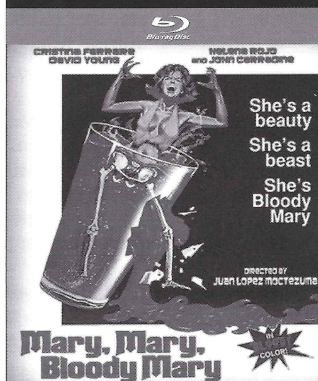
There is hope, the filmmakers say: another segment details the efforts of Scarecrow Video in Seattle, Washington, a massive repository of the international VHS community, where an incredible archive of films from all over the world is kept current and viable.

All in all, *Adjust Your Tracking* is an ambitious love letter to magnetic tape that includes both the good and the bad that this format had to offer. It's sure to wrench a tear for days gone by for those who remember those stores with handwritten signs tacked to windows with scotch tape from their childhood. If *Adjust Your Tracking* detours into the questionable and less savory aspects of current VHS culture, it's all part of a very complex story that as of yet is still being written. Dig in!

Greg Goodrell

MARY, MARY, BLOODY MARY

Directed by Juan López Moctezuma
(1975) Code Red Blu-ray



A brief description of the premise of *Mary, Mary, Bloody Mary* suggests a project far more coherent than the one that eventually hit theatre screens in 1975. Cristina Ferrare (known far more for her relationship with John DeLorean than for her thesping skills) is "Mary" (no surname provided), a successful artist enjoying the high life in Mexico and attracting the attention of wealthy patrons, handsome young men and wistful women alike. However, when she gets uninterrupted time alone with her various partners, she can never resist the urge to slash their throats and drink their blood. The Mexican authorities are understandably concerned at the string of serial murders, but Mary knows better than

anyone else that she's not responsible for *all* of them. As Ben Ryder, David Young plays Mary's best opportunity for a non-violent love affair, but he can't help but notice the glowering portrait of John Carradine on her wall. Indeed, "The Man" (as he is billed) is Mary's father, and he's on her trail.

It certainly sounds like a straightforward story, and the original screenplay (adapted by Malcolm Marmorstein from Don Henderson's story) managed to impress the producers (including Henri Bollinger, interviewed in the disc's sole supplement). Additionally, director Juan Lopez Moctezuma managed to create some strikingly atmospheric images with interior sets and the local geography and architecture alike. All of the elements of a classy and effective horror film seemed to be there—unfortunately, it seems as if nobody remembered to hire an actual film editor, as *Mary, Mary* is quite simply . . . all over the place. A deliberately misleading prologue that seems to set Mary up as a victim in an abandoned castle, Mary's first kill and the aftermath are thrown together in random sequence; fifteen minutes into the film someone remembers to supply a set of opening titles; we're given a gratuitous (and real) sequence in which local villagers stab a shark to death in retaliation for an attack on one of their own; Mary and Ben suffer a traumatic roadside encounter with The Man but are dancing at a local carnival without a care in the world mere moments later; etc. etc. Mary's vampirism is completely untraditional (she spends plenty of time frolicking—and killing—in broad daylight) and is vaguely explained as spot. For whatever reason people enjoy *Deadly Eyes*, enjoy it they do, and this release is more than welcome.

Shane M. Dallmann