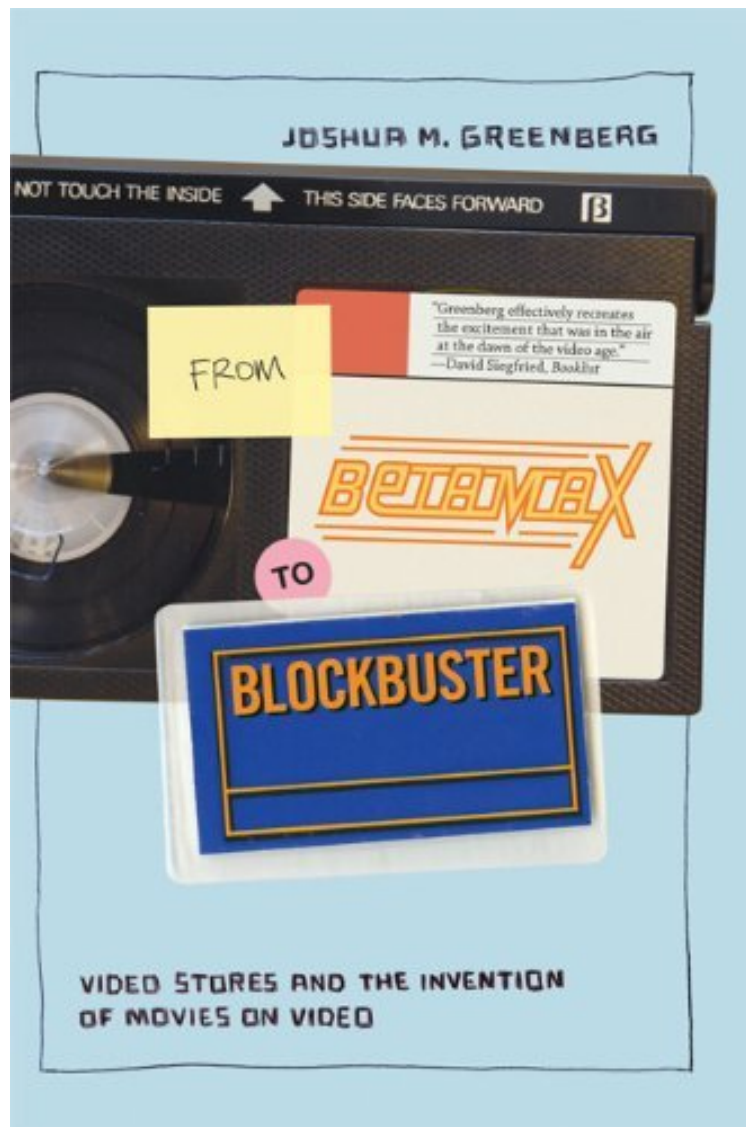


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From Betamax to Blockbuster: Video Stores and the Invention of Movies on Video (Inside Technology)

Joshua M. Greenberg

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Joshua M. Greenberg : From Betamax to Blockbuster: Video Stores and the Invention of Movies on Video (Inside Technology) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised From Betamax to Blockbuster: Video Stores and the Invention of Movies on Video (Inside Technology):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A great history of the VCRBy Joshua GansVideo cassette recorders may be a couple of generations behind the times but the history of their adoption turns out to be quite fascinating.

Written by Josh Greenberg, *From Betamax to Blockbuster: Video Stores and the Invention of Movies on Video* is a very accessible and easy to read history of two decades or so of a ubiquitous household product. What is really interesting about Greenberg's treatment is the emphasis, not on the technology, but on the social context for its adoption. VCRs were initially released for what we now call 'time shifting.' But it turned out that a fairly sizeable group of television and movie obsessed hobbyists were instrumental into turning it into something more; a new way to distribute movies in particular. (A few years ago, I benefitted from a similar hobbyist community that managed to hack Tivo for Australia). Indeed, it was this more than anything that led to the demise of Betamax and the victory for VHS because the former could only initially play tapes about one hour long. The desire to consume movies led to video stores that iterated between several business model attempts before settling on a library model. But at the same time, the video store facilitated a community of shared recommendations that stimulated the demand for movies further. There is much more in the book. If you are interested at all about the social drivers of technology adoption, this book is a must-read.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. An Enjoyable Read about the History of film, from "Betamax to Blockbuster" By Conor K McMahon This was an interesting read. There were some dull, dry parts, but for the most parts it was very insightful. I especially enjoyed learning about the culture of VHS swappers. Very, very fascinating. Also, considering I used to work for Blockbuster, I learned some things I hadn't known earlier. If you are a film junkie, and especially enjoy learning about the history (and unknown history!) of this great invention, this is the book to read. If you enjoyed this and enjoy the history of film in general, you may also like Neal Gabler's "An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood", which I enjoyed even more.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Nostalgic Look-Back At The VHS The Video Store By Brian Gagnon Before Blu-ray, before DVD, before Hulu, before Netflix, before Redbox, there were things such as Betamax, VHS, the players that played them, and the video store. Both are chronicled here in fine detail. Their beginnings, the epic video store openings, the conventions that centered around them, the advertisements encouraging families to buy one..... It's all here and this book covers them all. Thankfully, the author stops just when the first 5 entities I mentioned started gaining power. So, you won't have to worry about your parade getting rained on and your nostalgia getting drenched.

The first video cassette recorders were promoted in the 1970s as an extension of broadcast television technology -- a time-shifting device, a way to tape TV shows. Early advertising for Sony's Betamax told potential purchasers "You don't have to miss Kojak because you're watching Columbo." But within a few years, the VCR had been transformed from a machine that recorded television into an extension of the movie theater into the home. This was less a physical transformation than a change in perception, but one that relied on the very tangible construction of a network of social institutions to support this new marketplace for movies. In *From Betamax to Blockbuster*, Joshua Greenberg explains how the combination of neighborhood video stores and the VCR created a world in which movies became tangible consumer goods. Greenberg charts a trajectory from early "videophile" communities to the rise of the video store -- complete with theater marquee lights, movie posters, popcorn, and clerks who offered expert advice on which movies to rent. The result was more than a new industry; by placing movies on cassette in the hands (and control) of consumers, video rental and sale led to a renegotiation of the boundary between medium and message, and ultimately a new relationship between audiences and movies. Eventually, Blockbuster's top-down franchise store model crowded local video stores out of the market, but the recent rise of Netflix, iTunes, and other technologies have reopened old questions about what a movie is and how (and where) it ought to be watched. By focusing on the "spaces in between" manufacturers and consumers, Greenberg's account offers a fresh perspective on consumer technology, illustrating how the initial transformation of movies from experience into commodity began not from the top down or the bottom up, but from the middle of the burgeoning industry out.

From Booklist *Starred* When the Betamax VCR first came on the scene in the late 1970s, it was marketed strictly as a time-shifting device for recording off-the-air television. Soon, however, a group of cultlike enthusiasts called "videophiles" began to trade movies and other content they had recorded, usually through crudely published, limited-circulation newsletters. Videophiles were eager to bring the experience of the big screen into the comfort of their homes, but with Hollywood reluctant to release control of its movies on the new medium, it was mainly adult films that initially broke into the rental market. Greenberg rewinds the movie-rental phenomenon back to when mom-and-pop entrepreneurs with a pioneer spirit took a chance on a new technology and a culture of movie fanatics to create a successful new business -- the video store. The video rental store became a social gathering place for movie buffs to share knowledge, trivia and their love of the cinema, until family-friendly Blockbuster all but killed off the local video store with its seedy back room. Greenberg effectively re-creates the excitement that was in the air at the dawn of the video age. --David Siegfried

Josh Greenberg has given us a new way of viewing what we thought was a familiar story: the widespread adoption of the video cassette recorder in the home. Instead of just being about watching the Tonight Show the next morning, the device became the platform for collecting, archiving, sharing, and learning from a vast archive of film and video. The VCR permanently altered the American mediascape and Greenberg shows us why and how. (Siva Vaidyanathan, author of *Copyrights and Copywrongs: The Rise of*

Intellectual Property and How it Threatens Creativity) This is an important study of consumers' adoption of the VCR that advances current scholarship on the VCR revolution. Greenberg's book is original and thought provoking. (Frederick Wasser, author of *Veni, Vidi, Video*) Greenberg effectively re-creates the excitement that was in the air at the dawn of the video age. (Booklist) About the Author Joshua M. Greenberg is Director of Digital Strategy and Scholarship at the New York Public Library.