

The Short Life, Slow Death, and Broad Impact of Betamax

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Moving Image & Sound: Basic Issues and Training

Annotated Bibliography

Below are a series of works dealing with Betamax in some way, many of which were consulted for the attached paper. They have been sorted into categories which are ordered alphabetically.

Note that there have been no book-length works written specifically about Betamax. While many of the articles, websites and other shorter pieces listed below do focus completely on Betamax, most of the longer works are much broader, generally covering a variety of VCR/home video formats and topics. All of the works listed do have some relevance to Betamax, often devoting a section, a chapter, or even a page or two to the format.

Basic/Technical Histories: Video/VTRs/Betamax

Bailey, J.D. "Emergence of the home video market." in E.A. Lazer, ed. *Guide to videotape publishing*. White Plains, NY: Knowledge Industry Publications: 1986.

Fox, B. "Videocassettes – Past, present and future." *Intermedia* 11:4(1983): 18-21.

Lardner, James. *Fast Forward: Hollywood, the Japanese, and the Onslaught of the VCR*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1987.

Broad overview of VCR history – significant focus on Betamax case and the format war. Very well researched with many interviews with people involved. Cited as a source in most subsequent works.

Lardner, James. "Romancing the cassette." *Video* Oct. 1988: 60-65.

Lyons, Nick. *The Sony Vision*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1976.
Published not long after the release of Betamax in the US and before the release of VHS, this is a fascinating time capsule of the early days of home video.

Shima, Shigeo. "The Evolution of Consumer VTRs – Technological Milestones." *IEEE Transactions on Consumer Electronics*. 30:2 (1984): 66-80.

Contains a brief survey of the current state of VTRs, followed by an extensive bibliography of technical articles and patents covering the complete history of videotape up to that point.

Shiraishi, Yuma. "History of Home Videotape Recorder Development." *SMPTE Journal* 94:12 (1985): 1257-1263.

A technical history of VTR development, written by the developer of VHS.

Sugaya, Hiroshi. "Home VTR Made Possible." *Business Japan* June 1980.

Wasser, Frederick. *Veni, Vedi, Video: The Hollywood Empire and the VCR*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001.

A breezy general-audiences overview of video history.

Weinstein, Stephen B. *Getting the Picture: A Guide to CATV and the New Electronic Media*. New York: IEEE Press, 1986.

Contains a chapter on VCR history with sales figures and Betamax vs. VHS comparisons.

Wielage, Marc with Rod Woodcock. "The Rise and Fall of Beta." Accessed Nov. 18, 2008. <<http://www.geocities.com/videoholic2000/RiseandFall.htm>>.

The definitive history of Betamax, written by two early videophiles – Wielage and Woodcock published the magazine Videofax and Wielage was subpoenaed in the Betamax case.

The Betamax Case

Lardner, James. "Annals of Law: The Betamax Case – I." *The New Yorker* 63:7 (1987): 45.

Lardner, James. "Annals of Law: The Betamax Case – II." *The New Yorker* 63:8 (1987): 60.

Sony Corp. v. Universal City Studios, Inc. 17 January, 1984. Findlaw.com. Accessed 18 Nov. 2008.

The Supreme Court decision.

US House. Committee on the Judiciary. *Home Recording of Copyrighted Works* Hearing, April 12, 1982. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983.

Source of Jack Valenti's legendary "Boston Strangler" quote.

Betamax Fansites

Glasser, Ray. "The Ultimate Betamax Information Guide." Accessed November 18, 2008. <<http://www.geocities.com/videoholic2000/#betalists>>.

Remarkably comprehensive Betamax fansite – contains pictures of Betamax models, a technical essay on the superiority of Betamax over VHS, scanned issues of The Videophile's Newsletter, and more.

"Mister Betamax." Accessed 18 Nov. 2008. <<http://www.misterbetamax.com/>>

Features a wide variety of information on buying, fixing, and cleaning Betamax decks. Also features a helpful essay on the history of Betamax (<http://www.misterbetamax.com/TapeHistory.htm>).

Business Topics

Luh, Shu Shin. *Business the Sony Way: Secrets of the World's Most Innovative Electronics Giant*. Oxford: Capstone Publishing Limited, 2003.
Business history of Sony.

Nayak, P. Ranganath and John M. Ketteringham. *Breakthroughs!* New York: Rawson Associates, 1986.
Discussions of technological breakthroughs, includes a section on Betamax and home video.

Public Affairs Office, Electronic Industries Association of Japan. *Facts & Figures on the Japanese Electronics Industry, 1995 Edition*. EIAJ: 1995.
Includes helpful graphs illustrating patterns of Japanese VCR sales 1975-1995.

Spulber, Daniel F. *Famous Fables of Economics: Myths of Market Failures*. Hoboken, NJ: Blackwell Publishing, 2002.
Covers format war and Betamax failure.

Consumer/Professional Guides

The items in this section are all overviews of the current (at the time of writing) video landscape, for either consumer or professional purposes. Each features a section or a series of listings on Betamax equipment.

“The Betamax: How Well Does it Work?” *Consumer Reports* 42:5 (1977): 291.
An early look by Consumer Reports at the still-new video format.

Inglis, Andrew F. *Video Engineering*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993.

Lachenbruch, David. *Video Cassette Recorders: The Complete Home Guide*. New York: Everest House, 1979.

Lanzendorf, Peter. *The Video Taping Handbook*. New York: Harmony Books, 1981.

Maltin, Leonard and Allan Greenfield. *The Complete Guide to Home Video*. New York: Harmony Books, 1981.

Pasternack, Bill. *Video Cassette Recorders: Buying, Using and Maintaining*. Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Tab Books, 1983.

“Videotape Identification and Assessment Guide: Betamax.” Texas Commission on the Arts. Accessed 18 Nov. 2008. <<http://www.arts.state.tx.us/video/id/betamax.asp>>.

Miscellaneous

“Betacam PALsite.” Accessed 19 Nov. 2008. <<http://betacam.palsite.com/>>. *Website about Betacam history. Despite the name, not just about PAL format.*

Enticknap, Leo. *Moving Image Technology: From Zoetrope to Digital*. London: Wallflower Press, 2005. *History of moving image technology, including film, video and digital. Includes a few technical notes on Betamax.*

Morita, Akio. *Made in Japan: Akio Morita and Sony*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1986. *The autobiography of Sony’s founder.*

Newspaper & Magazine Articles – Betamax History

Presented chronologically

Waters, Harry F. with Ann Ray Martin. “Video’s New Frontier.” *Newsweek* 8 Dec. 1975.

“Sony to Fight Suit vs. Right to Copy TV Shows.” *Advertising Age* 47:47(1976): 74.

Schmedel, Scott R. “RCA to Market Matsushita TV Recorder With 4-Hour Tape, Rather Than Sony’s.” *Wall Street Journal* 31 Mar. 1977: 8.

“Sony’s US Unit Trims Suggested Price of Betamax Home TV Recorder to \$1095.” *Wall Street Journal* 15 Nov. 1977: 16.

Nulty, Peter. “Matsushita Takes the Lead in Video Recorders.” *Fortune* 16 July 1979: 110-116.

Bates, William. “How a ‘Video Revolution’ is Shaping the Future of Film.” *New York Times* 23 Nov. 1980: A1.

Harris, Kathryn. “Copyright Expert Looks Beyond Court Decision in Betamax Case.” *Los Angeles Times* 1 Nov. 1981: h3.

Greenhouse, Linda. “Television Taping at Home is Upheld by Supreme Court.” *New York Times* 18 Jan. 1984: A1.

Takiff, Jonathan. “Beta May Be Better, but Fewer Buying It.” *Chicago Tribune* 28 Feb. 1986: 64.

Woodcock, Roderick. "Sony's Beta Tugs Back." *Video* 10:6 (1986): 46.

Hartl, John. "Betamax Owners Can Relax: System is Saved from Extinction." *Seattle Times* 15 Nov. 1986: C7.

Landro, Laura. "A Last Chance? Beta Cassettes Get New Push." *Wall Street Journal* 26 Nov. 1986: 1.

Lachenbruch, David. "Video News – Sony Adds VHS." *Radio-Electronics* 59:9 (1988): 6.

Williams, Stephen. "Sony's Switch to VHS Format Doesn't Surprise Industry." *Newsday* 13 Jan. 1988: 45.

Lacitis, Erik. "Final Blow – Even Sony Chooses Rival VHS Over Beta." *Seattle Times* 21 Jan. 1988: D1.

Takiff, Jonathan. "Reports of Dropping Beta Much Exaggerated, Sony Says." *Chicago Tribune* 22 Apr. 1988: 94.

Newspaper & Magazine Articles – Betamax Legacy

These are all recent articles demonstrating how Betamax lives on in the public consciousness.

Bywater, Michael. "Farewell 2002: Betamax Sony hits the stop button." *The Independent on Sunday* 29 Dec. 2002: 19.

Connor, Michael. "The vital lesson of Betamax." *Worldbusiness* 2:3 (1996): 17.

"Die-hard Betamax fans refuse to surrender." *Minneapolis Star Tribune* 10 Apr. 1998: 21E.

Fanno, Wayne. "The Superior Technology of Betamax." *The Agricultural Education Magazine* 73:4 (2001): 18-19.

Foster, Alistair. "What exactly was Betamax? Ask your dad." *Evening Standard* 11 July 2006: 17.

Lewis, Len. "Betamax – the horror that dare not speak its name." *Financial Times* 15 Nov. 2006: 28.

Lewis, Peter H. "Also Loving and Losing: Betamax Fans." *New York Times* 2 Apr. 1998.

Schachter, Harvey. "Lessons gleaned from 'Beta' becoming a verb." *The Globe and Mail* 16 May 2007: C3.

"Sony puts Betamax 'out to pasture,' but a handful of 'betaphiles' cling to technology." *Charleston Daily Mail* 2 Sept. 2002: 2D.

Wilkes, David. "The fantastic fifty: Jubilee list of items that changed the way we live." *Daily Mail* 17 July 2002: 19.

Social Histories/Usage Patterns

Greenberg, Joshua M. *From Betamax to Blockbuster: Video Stores and the Invention of Movies on Video*. Boston: MIT Press, 2008.
New history of pre-recorded videocassettes. Contains significant work on early Betamax fandom.

Levy, Mark R. "Home video recorders and time shifting." *Journalism Quarterly* 58(1981): 401-405.

Levy, Mark R. "Time-shifting use of home video recorders." *Journal of Broadcasting* 27:3(1983): 263-268.

Levy, Mark R., ed. *The VCR Age*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications: 1989.
Anthology featuring articles about social impacts and importance of VCR technology. Nothing Betamax-specific, but some articles, particularly the Klopfenstein offer valuable information about Betamax usage patterns.

contains:

Boyd, Douglas A. "The Videocassette Recorder in the USSR and Soviet-Bloc Countries."

Cohen, Akiba A. and Laura Cohen. "Big Eyes but Clumsy Fingers: Knowing About and Using Technological Features of Home VCRs."

Dobrow, Julia R. "Away from the Mainstream? VCRs and Ethnic Identity."

Greenberg, Bardley S. and Carolyn Lin. "Adolescents and the VCR Boom: Old, New and Nonusers."

Gunter, Barrie and Mallory Wober. "The Uses and Impact of Home Video in Great Britain."

Klopfenstein, Bruce C. "The Diffusion of the VCR in the United States."

Levy, Mark R. "Why VCRs Aren't Pop-Up Toasters: Issues in Home Video Research."

Lindstrom, Paul B. "Home Video: The Consumer Impact."

Ogan, Christine. "The Worldwide Cultural and Economic Impact of Video."

Roe, Keith. "School Achievement, Self-Esteem and Adolescents' Video Use."

Rubin, Alan M. and Rebecca C. Rubin. "Social and Psychological Antecedents of VCR Use."

Sapolsky, Barry S. and Edward Forrest. "Measuring VCR 'Ad-Voidance'."
Shatzer, Milton J. and Thomas R. Lindlof. "Subjective Differences in the Use and Evaluation of the VCR."
Shinar, Dov. "VCR Narrowcasting in the Kibbutz."

Lowe, Jim. *The Videophile's Newsletter*. All issues.
The ultimate videophile guide – published by Jim Lowe beginning in September 1976. Extremely valuable chronicle of early Betamax/video fandom, focusing on time shifting, tape swapping, and other obsessive behaviors. Issues 1-6 are available online at <http://pages.prodigy.net/handel31/tvnpage.html>.

Technical Descriptions/Guides

Kihara, Nobutoshi, Fumio Kohno and Yoshio Ishikagi. "Development of a New System of Cassette Type Consumer VTR." *IEEE Transactions on Consumer Electronics* 22:1 (1976): 26-36.
The technical description of Betamax, written by its developers.

Kybett, Harry. *The Complete Handbook of Videocassette Recorders*. Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Tab Books, 1977.

Kybett, Harry. "Servicing Betamax Videotape Recorders, Part 1." *Electronic Servicing* 28:4 (1978): 22-33.

Kybett, Harry. "Servicing Betamax Videotape Recorders, Part 2." *Electronic Servicing* 28:5 (1978).
A two-part guide to servicing Betamax VTRs – I was only able to locate Part 1 for use in the paper.

Mandl, Matthew. *Maintenance and Repair of Video Cassette Recorders*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1986.
Maintenance guide for VCRs – contains a section covering Betamax-specific issues.

Shiraishi, Yuma and Akira Hirota. "Video Cassette Recorder Development for Consumers." *IEEE Transactions on Consumer Electronics* 24-3 (1978): 468-472.
The technical description of VHS, written by its developers.

VHS vs. Betamax

Prentiss, Stan. "VHS Meets Beta." *Popular Electronics* August 1981: 38-43.
A technical study showing VHS as superior in picture quality, Betamax in sound.

"Video Cassette Recorders: Key to the New TV World." *Consumer Reports* 43:9 (1978): 505-511.

“Video Cassette Recorders.” *Consumer Reports* 45:10 (1980): 590-594.

“Video Cassette Recorders.” *Consumer Reports* 47:5 (1982): 230-236.

“Video Cassette Recorders.” *Consumer Reports* 48:7 (1983): 327-335.

The four times Consumer Reports did head-to-head tests between Betamax and VHS decks.