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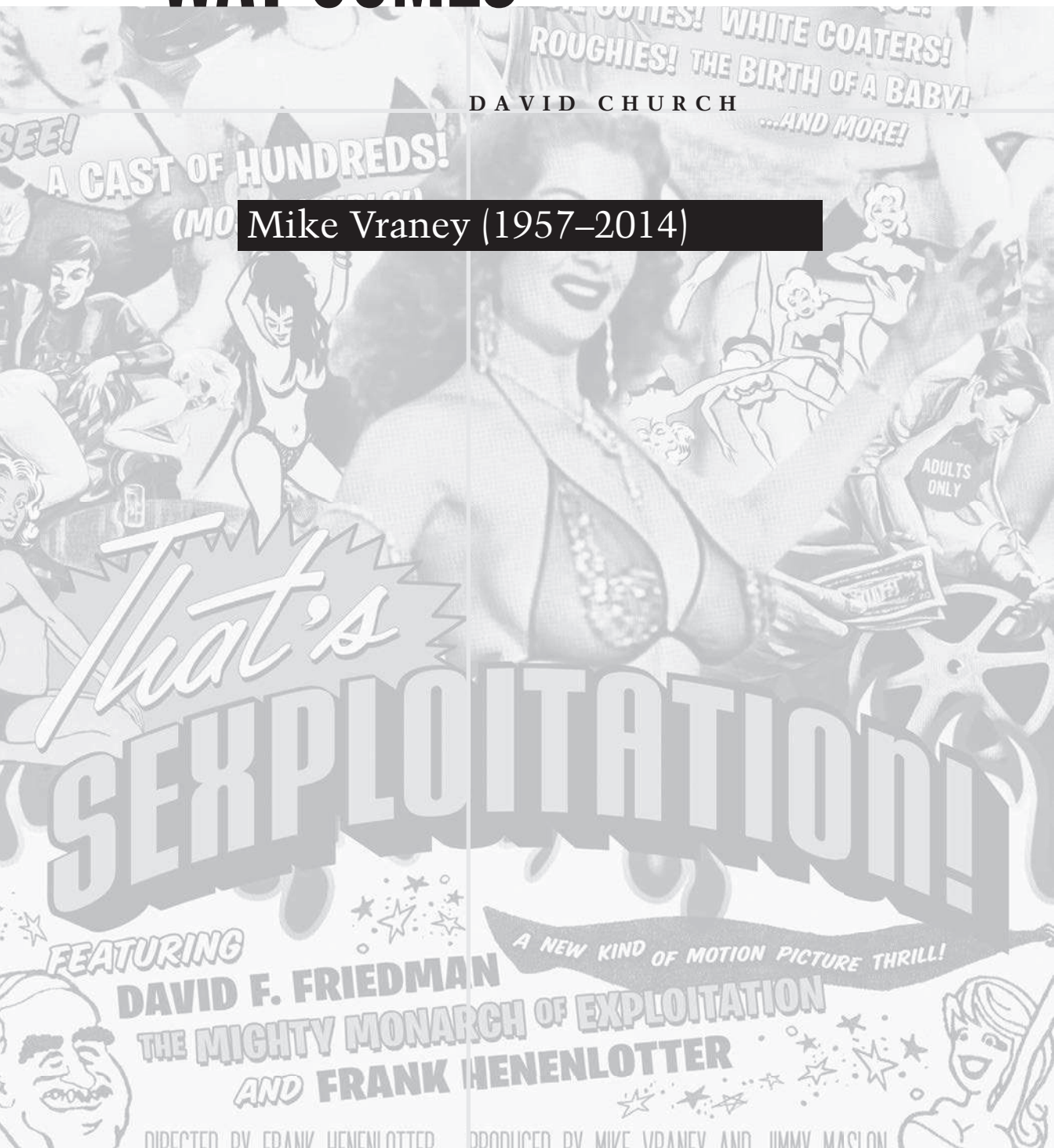
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SOMETHING WEIRD THIS WAY COMES

DAVID CHURCH

Mike Vraney (1957–2014)



In *The Death of Cinema*, Paolo Cherchi Usai suggests that the very writing of film history is contingent on the fact that films and their historical viewing contexts inevitably disintegrate and become lost over time. After all, if films never physically deteriorated through duplication and circulation, then there would be no need to write histories of historical change ascertained from filmic texts themselves. Although we might push back against Cherchi Usai's claims by arguing the need for histories written based on changes in film circulation and reception, he usefully posits that the "Model Image," which theoretically exists in a pristine state prior to the processes of degradation, is an impossible ideal, never something that can actually be preserved or reconstructed.¹ In this sense, he intriguingly sees the Model Image's counterpart in the pornographic image:

The lack of recognized artistic value . . . and the fact that such imagery is intended to flaunt the moral codes generally accepted in public life, make its destruction an occurrence not merely inevitable, but one that is quite taken for granted. While the Model Image is the abstract of unachieved possibility, its opposite is one that should have never seen the light in the first place.²

As Cherchi Usai suggests, then, the pornographic moving image is arguably one of the most central to the very notion of film history as a mode of discourse—a sort of structuring absence at the heart of most film preservation efforts—owing to the genre's highly ephemeral and often endangered nature. If the praxis of ethical film preservation can be described as making stable archival copies from the best available (typically celluloid) materials, with the least amount of creative reinterpretation of a film's supposed "originary" state, then the adult cinema corpus has been doubly neglected, not only by long histories of textual mutilation, but also by latter-day associations with home video circulation instead of archived celluloid masters.

And yet, if one were to ask most film historians, archivists, and serious cinephiles which independent video label is the most important or significant to our understanding of film history, one would be apt to hear the usual suspects: Kino, Milestone, Zeitgeist, Facets, or, perhaps most likely, the Criterion Collection. As one scholar suggests, for example, "beneath the Criterion banner one is still more likely to find a more eclectic collection of world cinema than in any other single home video collection."³ Nevertheless, although it may include avant-garde and art cinemas under its remit, Criterion's stated mission (according to its website) to release "important classic and contemporary films" is extraordinarily conservative from the standpoint of film historiography, because the company in effect reinforces existing film canons by issuing



Figure 1. Something Weird Video founder Mike Vraney.
Photo courtesy of Lisa Petrucci Vraney.

very few titles whose past or present cultural value and archival provenance have ever truly been in question.

Compared to these well-respected DVD sources, perhaps no other video company can claim to have offered a more substantial contribution to our ongoing historiographic endeavors than the Seattle-based mail-order outfit Something Weird Video (SWV), whose founder, Mike Vraney (Figure 1), died from lung cancer at age fifty-six on January 2, 2014. Strolling through the company's catalog reveals a glimpse of the thousands of films that Vraney rescued from historical obscurity and made available to a paying public: from the company's primary specialization in American exploitation, sexploitation, and hardcore adult films to its smaller collections of African American race films (by Oscar Micheaux, Spencer Williams, and others), 1930s–1940s American B-films, 1960s–1970s European and East Asian genre films (e.g., pepla, krimis, spy movies, Italian westerns), and all manner of ephemeral and nontheatrical short subjects, including striptease loops, soundies, educational films, industrials, and other forms of so-called useful cinema. Among the label's many compilations of short films, for instance, its long-running Nudie Cuties Shorts, Loops,

and Peeps series now boasts more than 370 two-hour volumes, a testament not only to Vraney's collecting acumen but also to the sheer volume of ephemeral erotica in need of dedicated patronage. Though SWV is more of a business enterprise than an archival project, Vraney's completist drive to indefinitely extend the afterlives of so many otherwise forgotten films through mass video reproduction represents a significant contribution to the scholarly and archival study of cinema and is all the more reason for us to observe his untimely passing.

Although film preservationists often state that 90 percent of American silent-era feature films have been lost (a figure more accurately placed at 70–78 percent, according to various estimates),⁴ we might ask whether the loss of many films from far more recent decades like the 1960s and 1970s is any less egregious and deserving of archival attention. Unlike many of the relatively innocuous ephemeral and orphan films that have received renewed attention in recent decades, however, most of SWV's stock in trade consists of various varieties of adults-only erotic cinema. According to collector and preservationist Joe Rubin, cofounder of the video label Vinegar Syndrome, essentially "complete" versions of approximately 40 percent of all heterosexual softcore and hardcore adult features are currently missing or lost, and original camera elements are lost for about 65–70 percent of such films. For all-male adult films, closer to 75 percent of complete versions are now lost, given the smaller number of prints struck and kept.⁵ Because many university and government archives have been hesitant to preserve such films, it is crucially important that archivists and preservationists pay close attention to the history and economics of the home video industry, a nontheatrical sector populated by films whose archival marginalization is so disproportionate to their historical proliferation. Although Karen Gracy observes that commercial and nonprofit archives alike consider questions of market value and "entertainment value" when assessing which films to prioritize for preservation (particularly given the expense of even minimal digital restoration, potentially recoupable through a DVD or Blu-ray edition),⁶ too many archives pay lip service to the need to preserve all films, regardless of politically and aesthetically questionable content, but, in actual practice, are still apparently content to ignore the problem of adult cinema's archival neglect until advanced decay renders this oversight moot.

A decade ago, in this journal, historian Eric Schaefer described such films as "perhaps the loneliest orphans," because "many of the films have fallen out of copyright, and an even larger number were never even registered." As he astutely observes, the sheer proliferation of adult films over the decades can be attributed more to their diversity than to their similarities, allowing these films to serve as important indexes of

aesthetic strategies, social attitudes, and sexual cultures that no longer exist as such today. Although these films should thus be a priority for preservation, various cultural, political, and practical obstacles have made their preservation challenging. These include (among others) the low cultural standing of these films to begin with, the under-the-radar status of surviving records kept by producers and distributors, and the fact that a very limited number of prints often circulated for long periods in different iterations, making it difficult to discern which extant prints are worth preserving.⁷ In this regard, Caroline Frick's observation holds true for SWV that most "new" discoveries of past films derive from distribution prints that may be mutilated, retitled, or in other states of historical disrepair—not pristine prints preserved for posterity in official archives. As such, keeping multiple reproductions of a film in circulation, such as pirated prints and bootlegged transfers, may better ensure a film's existence than simply waiting for archive-ready original negatives or camera elements to be uncovered.⁸

In a wide-ranging 2012 interview, Vraney explained how his background as a comic book and 16mm print collector since the 1970s inspired his later business strategies. Just as comic book collectors seldom seek out individual titles in their own right and instead prefer to amass large runs of multiple series, Vraney banked on fellow fans' completism, rejecting criticism of his sometimes subpar source materials and transfers or of the label's titles that might eventually go out of print. "We [collectors] have it. I don't care if it's crystal-clear or not," he says. "That's just like this snobby game going on."⁹ His label, then, exemplifies the fact that cult video distributors have made the most substantial contributions in keeping alive a vast swath of cinema that most archives seldom collect (or at least seldom formally catalog and make available for access) on either political or aesthetic grounds—but at the cost of these entrepreneurs' sometimes cavalier treatment of the films themselves.¹⁰ For Vraney, access has superseded arguments about quality—an understandable argument from one of the pioneers of bringing significant numbers of exploitation and adult films to home video in the first place, before the rise of DVD effectively mainstreamed cinephiliac demands for uncut versions, correct aspect ratios, and pristine transfers. As Schaefer recalls,

in some instances Mike released films in which reels were not in the right order, or the prints were in horrific shape, but he wanted to connect the material with people who were interested in it. He didn't have an interest in history from an academic perspective, but he had a very strong collector's instinct that made him a *de facto* preservationist. In some ways, he can be likened to the old exploitation roadshowmen of the 1930s and 1940s with their sex hygiene

and anti-dope films. They were in it for a buck, but a few of them really came to believe in the “educational” mission of the films. Mike saw what he was doing as a business enterprise, but he also really believed that it was his mission to root out as many of these forgotten films as he could.¹¹

Thus Vraney’s business strategies for the films he preserved on home video would likely violate many film preservationists’ ethical commitments to high quality standards—and yet, following Frick’s argument, I would suggest that Vraney still practiced a highly valuable ethic of *access itself* in the face of such films’ overwhelming archival neglect.

Prior to entering the video business, Vraney worked as a teenage projectionist at several Seattle porn theaters in the 1970s before later managing a concert venue and a handful of punk rock bands—a musical aesthetic that helps explain SWV’s fast-and-cheap approach to releasing films whose apparent “weirdness” today is often rooted in their capacity to deliver unreconstructed “bad taste” pleasures in sex and violence that might well fall afoul of contemporary standards of political correctness. SWV began as a mail-order business around 1990 for Vraney to sell bootleg VHS transfers of the disused prints he collected from his theater connections. Once he began advertising in fanzines as a commercial enterprise instead of just as a gray-market trader, however, he had to begin seeking legitimate arrangements in cases where rights owners survived. When producer David F. Friedman first contacted him with a cease and desist order over one such pirated film, Vraney convinced the irrepressible showman to officially license several of his films to SWV on a trial basis. When that arrangement proved a success, Friedman convinced other producer–distributors (including Dan Sonney, Harry Novak, Bob Cresse, Louis K. Sher, and Arthur Morowitz) to license their films to Vraney. With only about one hundred (s)exploitation titles previously released on video, it was a vastly untapped nostalgia market. As the company’s reputation spread, other print collectors began selling their private archives to SWV or offering tips on where to find disused prints in film labs and warehouses, such as several semitrucks full of prints recovered from Movielab in New York City.¹² Using books like *The Psychotronic Encyclopedia of Film* and *RE/Search: Incredibly Strange Films* as his initial guides,¹³ Vraney quickly began tracking down which films existed and where they might be stored. SWV soon became the unofficial home of cult filmmakers like Herschell Gordon Lewis (from whose ramshackle 1967 paean to witchcraft, ESP, and LSD the company took its name and logo; Figure 2), Doris Wishman, Joe Sarno, Michael and Roberta Findlay, R. Lee Frost, and Barry Mahon. Says Schaefer,



Figure 2. Theatrical poster for the Herschell Gordon Lewis film *Something Weird*, the namesake of Vraney's video company. Hur-Lew Productions/Mayflower Pictures, 1967.

From my perspective, Mike's success was a combination of being in the right place at the right time and having an aggressively entrepreneurial nature. In many respects, he spoke the same language that these [exploitation filmmaker] guys did. They were all salesmen, they had a dash of the conman in them, they had a touch of contempt for their customers, and they were interested in making money. The more Mike put out through his catalogues and ads—and this was really the years before the Internet took over—the more his customers wanted to see. *Psychotronic Video* magazine began in 1989, and it served as an outlet for interviews and criticism—not to mention advertising for outfits like SWV. Mike was able to ride this bandwagon at the beginning but eventually he was helping drive it. *Psychotronic*, *Cult Movies*, and other prozines depended on SWV for content in the form of reviews and the like, and in turn they provided SWV with a platform for drumming up business, announcing new releases.

Although Vraney began SWV as an extension of his desire to collect “every goddamn movie that had naked people that wasn’t porno,” his early fears over a “mixed marriage of sexploitation and XXX” were eventually assuaged from the profits to be made by fueling “a completist phenomenon that similarly drives the collectibles market.” He henceforth moved into distributing hardcore adult features following his success with a line of Bucky Beaver’s Triple XXX Stags, Loops, and Peeps compilations, and the acquisition of more than three hundred 16mm and 35mm hardcore films from a Tennessee storefront theater chain. A separate SWV catalog, the *Blue Book*, appeared in 1997—by convenient coincidence, just around the release of Paul Thomas Anderson’s thoroughly nostalgic *Boogie Nights* (1997)—to foreground the company’s growing hardcore offerings while legally segregating them from the company’s less explicit stock.¹⁴ Although SWV was not the only independent video label to recirculate both softcore and hardcore forms of vintage adult cinema by the 1990s, it soon became credited as the most influential independent to promote such nostalgic tastes—especially at a time when the adult video industry’s major players were reeling from the overproduction of cheaply shot-on-video porn and more discriminating viewers began clamoring for the charms of bygone erotica.¹⁵

By focusing mainly on films likely to have been orphaned, Vraney could not only avoid potentially costly copyright negotiations but also offer a substantial amount of stock that was previously unavailable on home video. In its early years, SWV frequently released fifty to seventy new titles per year, effectively flooding the market with newly

rediscovered product as a means of firmly establishing the label's bonafides as a major player in the cult film world. As soon as new prints were located and acquired, telecine transfers were created and new tapes made available for mail order, with relatively little (if any) restoration work performed in the process. Although Vraney would eventually become interested in acquiring original camera negatives instead of just battered release prints—a long-term advantage once higher-definition transfers were required for the company's line of special-edition DVDs, pressed and distributed for regular retail sale by Image Entertainment since 1999—the majority of his catalog illustrated a preference for speed and proliferation over quality and curation. The selected films distributed by Image—which garnered significant crossover visibility for many otherwise obscure films in mainstream outlets like Tower Records—may have received new transfers for DVD,¹⁶ but SWV still generally uses its original film-to-VHS transfers for the mail-order DVD-R and download-to-own titles offered through its website. In this sense, SWV also pioneered a business model that has been adopted in recent years by the Warner Archive and other made-on-demand units at the major studios, allowing Hollywood to sell premium-priced DVD-Rs (transferred from unrestored prints and boasting few DVD bonus features) of their semi-obscure library titles that would otherwise be uneconomical to press in mass quantities for retail shelves.

Criterion adheres more closely to the preservationist ethics of nonprofit film archives by digitally preserving texts in as close to their originally intended condition as possible, with liner notes that often contain information on the source elements and restoration and scanning equipment. SWV mainly preserves by producing video copies of its acquired prints but does not generally practice detailed restoration.¹⁷ Criterion editions are renowned for their superior transfers, ample bonus features, critical essays, and stylish packaging—all intended to insist on the importance of particular films as rewatchable art objects—whereas SWV's plethora of candy-colored VHS and DVD releases, each crammed to capacity with random or indirectly related ephemera (e.g., trailers, shorts, educational films), beg not to be taken too seriously. SWV's *Kinky Couples Double Feature* DVD, for instance, boasts the sexploitation films *Unholy Matrimony* (1966) and *My Third Wife George* (1968), plus trailers for similarly themed sexploitation films; the 1948 *March of Time* newsreel *Marriage and Divorce*; the social-guidance shorts *Are You Ready for Marriage?* (Coronet, 1950) and *Engagement: Romance and Reality* (McGraw-Hill, 1964); a 1960s promotional short for Florida's film industry; home movies of a wedding at a Florida nudist camp; and a photo gallery of sexploitation movie magazines. By thus downplaying the relative cultural or aesthetic value of the individual films themselves, Vraney could better justify his own profit-motivated inclination to

provide quick access to many titles, in contrast to the Criterion model of recuperating a select few annual releases through carefully curated DVD and Blu-ray editions. And yet, including such a surprising miscellany of value-added historical paratexts on each release (which Vraney, always the connoisseur of vintage Americana, compared to the prize in a box of Cracker Jacks) can, through their vertiginous juxtaposition of different industrial forms and taste strata, also enhance a viewer's understanding of the twentieth-century American mediascape compared to simply including the paratexts specific to a particular film.

Tellingly, Vraney admitted that he thought most of his label's movies were "terrible" and had a hard time watching any movie more than two or three times. Much as he resisted ostensibly elitist criticism of his products' quality, he rejected attempts to analyze these profit-motivated films too deeply, finding them fascinating time capsules and hoping that fans would collect and champion their personal favorite films and filmmakers for their sheer eccentricity. Vraney's love of these films, then, was that of the "paracinephile" described by Jeffrey Sconce: the cult movie buff who ironically celebrates low-budget oddities for their badness or weirdness but who may not find more serious cultural value in them, except as campy documents of filmmaking desperation.¹⁸ Yet, as easy as it would be to write off Vraney's efforts as simply trying to capitalize on films originally made for crassly commercial purposes—Friedman once proudly dubbed him the "Forty-First Thief," in reference to the roving pack of exploitation film businessmen who peddled sex films across mid-century America¹⁹—SWV's initial resurrection of so many otherwise neglected films that might seem good for little more than ironic camp humor has not circumscribed more serious modes of aesthetic appreciation.

Indeed, when historians like Eric Schaefer began researching the classical exploitation films marketed to adults-only audiences until the mid-twentieth century, most of that filmic corpus had not yet been brought to home video until Vraney began his excavations. Although it took until film studies's mid-1980s turn toward "new cinema history" to begin seriously contemplating what it might mean to *do* film history without textual access to the films themselves, these same years also saw the rediscovery of early adult films as nostalgic fodder for home video catalogs and the fan cultures developing in conjunction with them. Schaefer recalls,

I had exchanged several letters with exploitation producer David F. Friedman in 1987 while working on my M.A. thesis. We lost track for a while when he moved from Los Angeles back to his hometown of Anniston, Alabama. We renewed our correspondence in 1991. That summer I had scheduled a



Figure 3. VHS footage of (from left) historian Eric Schaefer, Mike Vraney, and producer David F. Friedman investigating the films stored in Friedman's Los Angeles warehouse, July 1991. From supplemental materials on *The Notorious Daughter of Fanny Hill/The Head Mistress* special edition DVD, *Something Weird Video*, 2001.

research trip to L.A. and it corresponded with a trip Dave was making there to meet with Mike Vraney. He had agreed to meet Mike in L.A. to give him the negatives to *The Defilers* (1965), *A Smell of Honey*, *A Swallow of Brine* (1966), and other films to transfer. I arrived at Dave's warehouse on Cordova Street on a warm morning on July 16, 1991, to meet him

for the first time. As Dave says in the video that was shot [Figure 3], Mike was like a kid in a candy shop. From that point on for a decade or so, we were good friends. I would send him a box of blank tapes and he'd dub films for me. In turn, I wrote blurbs for SWV boxes and catalogues.

As one of the few scholars fortunate enough to conduct research from Vraney's collected archival materials, Schaefer's now-canonical "*Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!*" *A History of Exploitation Films, 1919–1959* arguably owes a debt to his friendship with Vraney during the company's early years.²⁰ These scholarly contributions made possible by Vraney's work have only increased in recent years, with several important studies of adult cinema forthcoming at the time of writing. Schaefer again:

On two occasions I made trips to Mike's home/archive in Seattle to go through the [Dan] Sonney material that he had acquired and other material he had collected. While the initial work on *Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!* was well underway by the time I met Mike, his continuing release of films I hadn't seen, and access to some of the documents in the Sonney material, added some additional texture to the work. And access to other material helped lay the groundwork for my continuing work on the history of sexploitation films.

As SWV's catalog has expanded over the years, far fewer adult films have effectively remained "lost," the company's periodic catalog supplements highlighting newly uncovered titles and continuing to tease fans and historians over what remains to be found in dusty attics and storage facilities. At the same time, even independent video companies that may be outwardly devoted to keeping vintage films indefinitely available must sometimes come up against the practicalities of their own limitations as for-profit archives—such as when their licenses to distribute certain films have expired, casting once accessible films out of print and back into shadow economies. Much as vintage adult films teased their original audiences by pushing the boundaries of what could be seen, today's exciting rediscoveries of past films can quickly transform back into tomorrow's obscurities as collectors snap up out-of-print editions and nonprofit archives continue to neglect such material. In this regard, SWV has tended to reproduce the tantalizing "peek-a-boo" strategies found in its most popular titles, with the ephemerality of these surviving texts activating an archival dance of revelation and concealment not unlike the striptease routines they so often portray.

Notably, the oft-subpar condition of surviving elements for many exploitation and adult films has made Blu-ray releases less appealing for video distributors. For instance, Vraney allowed a fifty-film licensing deal with sexploitation producer Harry Novak (Figure 4)—who, coincidentally, only outlived Vraney by several months—to lapse in the late 2000s because Novak's existing film elements were too dilapidated, owing to poor storage conditions, to justify retransferring for Blu-ray—a format that, compared to DVD, would more prominently display such flaws. As long as Blu-ray players remain reverse-compatible with DVDs, many examples of vintage adult cinema may remain effectively stranded on this earlier generation of digital videodiscs, their source elements too degraded to justify the leap to Blu-ray's high-definition capabilities.

Vraney, who had been hesitant even to make the jump from VHS to DVD, also faced wider industrial concerns during his final years at the company's helm. Although SWV has remained an industry leader among cult video distributors, the overall



Figure 4. Producer Harry H. Novak (left) and Mike Vraney (right) discussing business at the Boxoffice International Pictures offices, October 2005. From supplemental materials on *Wilbur and the Baby Factory/Tanya* special edition DVD, Something Weird Video, 2006.

collapse of the DVD market in 2008 made for more cautious business decisions. Following the influx of more conservative management at Image Entertainment, the retail distributor severely diminished the number of new special-edition DVD releases compiled with the SWV brand. Consequently reluctant to expend the time and money devoted to its earlier detective work, SWV has

announced far fewer newly rediscovered films in recent years, and the once common supplements to its mail-order catalog have become rare. Meanwhile, the label has moved into new revenue streams by licensing its accumulated content to video-on-demand providers like Comcast and Digidiv and also by producing its own in-house, feature-length documentaries like *Herschell Gordon Lewis: The Godfather of Gore* (2010) and *That's Sexploitation!* (2013). The latter film (Figure 5), hosted by the late Dave Friedman (1923–2011), has served as both men's swansong, its rather definitive-sounding title staking the company's claim on the filmic corpus that Vraney has excavated. Finished shortly before his death, Vraney went on a private good-bye tour, screening the documentary for his closest friends in the video business.

Today a younger generation of collector–entrepreneurs raised on SWV releases has followed Vraney's lead—some of them more earnestly invested in preservational



Figure 5. Theatrical poster for the documentary *That's Sexploitation!*, an in-house production directed by longtime SWV curator Frank Henenlotter. Something Weird Video, 2013. Poster courtesy of Jason Willis.

ethics. Since 2013, for instance, the recently formed (and aptly named) DVD label Vinegar Syndrome has picked up where SWV left off, releasing a slew of exploitation and adult films previously unavailable beyond their theatrical incarnations. As label head Joe Rubin explains, Vraney was a true pioneer in the independent video business, but one whose questionable treatment of his celluloid sources reflected something of a hiply ironic, bad-faith superiority over the texts themselves.²¹ Benefiting from the diminished cost of 2-to-4K digital scanning and restoration, Rubin insists that when original camera negatives are unavailable, even middling-quality release prints should receive significant in-house restoration and suffer no unethical alteration before their home video release, where they are often presented alongside interviews with academic experts like Schaefer and Linda Williams. Using Criterion-quality standards for films that Criterion wouldn't dare touch, up-and-coming labels like Vinegar Syndrome have thus combined Vraney's cultish eclecticism with a more respectful approach to film preservation befitting these films' ongoing academic reappraisal as more than just weird or campy oddities. Vraney may not have imagined that the sort of marginalized and ephemeral films he resurrected would ever receive such serious efforts at archival and scholarly consideration, but it is also hard to imagine such accomplishments occurring without his work.

David Church is the author of *Grindhouse Nostalgia: Memory, Home Video, and Exploitation Film Fandom* (2015).

NOTES

1. Paolo Cherchi Usai, *The Death of Cinema: History, Cultural Memory, and the Digital Dark Age* (London: BFI, 2001), 21, 25, 39, 101.
2. *Ibid.*, 81.
3. James Kendrick, "What Is the Criterion? The Criterion Collection as an Archive of Film as Culture," *Journal of Film and Video* 53, nos. 2–3 (2001): 137.
4. Caroline Frick, *Saving Cinema: The Politics of Preservation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 65; David Pierce, *The Survival of American Silent Feature Films: 1912–1929* (Washington, D.C.: Council on Library and Information Resources and the Library of Congress, 2013).
5. Joe Rubin, personal communication with the author, November 14, 2013. In this case, "complete" versions is a relative term, because these otherwise intact versions may still be missing opening or closing credits, a few seconds of material excised at reel changes, and so on. These versions are, however, still considered complete enough to see the whole narrative and are not, for example, missing entire reels or extant only in very fragmentary forms.

6. Karen F. Gracy, *Film Preservation: Competing Definitions of Value, Use, and Practice* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2007), 102–4.
7. Eric Schaefer, “Dirty Little Secrets: Scholars, Archivists, and Dirty Movies,” *The Moving Image* 5, no. 2 (2005): 80.
8. Frick, *Saving Cinema*, 173–75, 178.
9. Mike Vraney, interviewed in BigPoppaOnline, *Third Eye Cinema* podcast, May 6, 2012, <http://www.blogtalkradio.com/bigpoppaonline/2012/05/06/third-eye-cinema-5612-with-mike-vraney>. Unless otherwise noted, subsequent quotes attributed to Vraney derive from this same interview.
10. Schaefer, “Dirty Little Secrets,” 94–95, 98–100.
11. Eric Schaefer, e-mail correspondence with the author, June 27, 2014. I am grateful for his willingness to share his memories for this piece, and his subsequent quotes derive from this same e-mail.
12. Gene Ross, “Monsters and Naked Maidens: Cult Director Frank Henenlotter and Something Weird Video Unearth ‘Sexy Shockers from the Vault,’” *Adult Video News* “Alternative Adult” supplement, Summer 1993, 22–26; Ross, “A Round-House Punch from the New York Art Houses—The Ruffies,” *Adult Video News*, April 1994, 102–4; “Oh No!!! . . . Those Nice Clean-Cut, Wholesome Guys from Something Weird Video . . . into Bondage?” *Adult Video News* “A Special Look at Fetish” supplement, November 1994, 232; and Ross, “Harry Novak—Near to the Last of the Red Hot Papas,” *Adult Video News* “Alternative Adult” supplement, Winter 1994, 8.
13. Michael Weldon, *The Psychotronic Encyclopedia of Film* (New York: Ballantine, 1983); V. Vale and Andrea Juno, eds., *RE/Search, No. 10: Incredibly Strange Films* (San Francisco: RE/Search Publications, 1986).
14. Gene Ross, “Boogie Days and Nights Galore to Be Found in Something Weird Video’s New Triple-X Blue Book,” *Adult Video News*, January 1998, 377–80. Vraney would also credit Tim Burton’s biopic *Ed Wood* (1994) as a tremendous boon to his sales of low-budget exploitation films, in addition to fan guides like *Incredibly Strange Films*.
15. Gene Ross, “Sexploitation Films: The 60’s Sexplosion!!!” *Adult Video News*, March 1987, 82; John Paone, “Consumer Interviews, Part 2: Gene Ross of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania,” *Adult Video News Confidential*, May 1986, 22–23; Gene Ross, “Bell, Boobs, and Love Handles: Glamour Video,” *Adult Video News*, May 1988, 57–59, 70, 76–77; Ross, “Nudie Nostalgia,” *Adult Video News*, May 1990, 58–59; Ross, “Nudies and Roughies: The Exploitation Explosion,” *Adult Video News*, July 1992, 120; Ross, “Nudie-Cutie Shorts, Loops, and Peeps (5 Volumes),” *Adult Video News*, October 1991, 74 (quoted); and Ross, “Take Off Your Clothes and Get Naked!!!” *Adult Video News* “Alternative Adult” supplement, Winter 1994, 4.
16. Mike Vraney, interviewed by Noel Murray, “Mike Vraney,” AV Club, March 16, 2005, <http://www.avclub.com/article/mike-vraney-13920>.
17. On this important distinction, see Gracy, *Film Preservation*, 22. Gracy and others, however, acknowledge that, owing to the uncertain question of which archival elements constitute an “original” version, the lack of a stable definition allows “preservation” and “restoration” to mean many things to many different archival staff in actual practice; see *Film Preservation*, 141–67; Giovanna Fossati, *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film*

in *Transition* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 117–22; and Janna Jones, *The Past Is a Moving Picture: Preserving the Twentieth Century on Film* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 141.

18. Jeffrey Sconce, "'Trashing' the Academy: Taste, Excess, and an Emerging Politics of Cinematic Style," *Screen* 36, no. 4 (1995): 371–93.

19. See David F. Friedman with Don de Nevi, *A Youth in Babylon: Confessions of a Trash Film King* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1990).

20. Eric Schaefer, *"Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!" A History of Exploitation Films, 1919–1959* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999).

21. Rubin, personal communication with the author, November 14, 2013, and January 9, 2014; and Erik Piepenburg, "Smut, Refreshed for a New Generation," *New York Times*, January 23, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/26/movies/smut-refreshed-for-a-new-generation.html>.