

Absolute cinematic perfection

By Karrie Carlson, Daily Journal Media, Jan. 6, 2024

Most of the home movies of me from early childhood are on Super 8mm film. The projector we used to watch them on is long gone and I have a container of reels. There is no sound, just our family doing family things in the 1980's.

I remember renting a VCR when I was school aged. It was large, cumbersome and we had to get up to push the buttons: completely primal by today's standards. We would rent the machine and a movie or two for the weekend, usually "Annie" or a Disney one. We were reminded to "Be kind, rewind" with a bright sticker on each vhs tape.

Eventually we got our own VCR. Once she had the hang of it, my mom recorded every TV show you can imagine. We had one of those gigantic satellite dishes in our yard to get channels at our rural Staples home. When you wanted to change the channel, you had to go outside to the dish and manually crank it to switch positions. We had bookshelves full of VHS tapes of "Care Bears," "Full House" episodes and Disney movies.

I don't remember our first DVD player, but I'm sure it was met with ooh's and aah's usually only reserved for fireworks on the Fourth of July. We rented DVDs, never giving a second thought of rewinding like the olden days of VHS rentals.

Cable television took over for cranking the antiquated yard dish. Eventually giving way to watching movies and shows on the computer monitor. The technology was wearing out more swiftly than the aparatices we were using to view the media.

Right now, I have more streaming platforms than I care to admit to (or even remember I have). I can view it on my TV, laptop computer, iPad or my phone. The options are endless — literally. I can watch at home, in the car, in waiting rooms, waiting for kids to get done with activities ... It is a constant viable option for entertainment. I should never feel bored or give much mind to waiting for others, because if I can't find something to watch, there is a problem.

But more often than not, I can't find something I want to watch. It's mere noise added to my world and something for my eyes to gaze straight through while my mind wanders. What used to be a sacred encapsulation of a family doing what families did in the 1980's is now so vast, I can't find what I'm looking for.

Blockbuster, Skogen's and Riverfront Video are all in the palm of my hand. I don't have to venture out to get a movie. It's here, all the time, and it keeps growing.

I wish I could explain to my kids the excitement and wonder of reeling that Super 8 film through a projector, finding the perfect wall or background to display it on and having a "light person" to control the wall switch so we could see the movie.

I will never forget the jerky, static movements of my sister and I riding our tricycles for the first time; birthday parties with school friends watching me blow out the candles; my first ballet recital; my mom pushing me on a swing or my sister and I giggling on Christmas morning ... Even if my mind has to travel to get to the memory holding the sound — absolute cinematic perfection. Nothing I have access to now, or in the next 45 years, will ever compare to those blurry, quiet masterpieces.

