58. Allison Romano, "Can The Shield fix FX?," *Broadcasting & Cable*, 11 March 2002, pp. 16+.

59. See John M. Higgins, "Rethinking the off-net market," *Broadcasting & Cable*, 30 September 2002, p. 20; Allison Romano, "Off-net and off-the-mark," *Broadcasting & Cable*, 21 October 2002, p. 11.

60. *It's Garry Shandling's Show*, originally produced for Showtime in the late 1980s, was actually the first made-for-cable series to make this jump, as it also ran on Fox from 1988 to 1990.

61. John Dempsey, "Cablers prepare for rerun race," *Variety*, 26 March 2001, p. 28.

DERER KOMPARE

8
Acquisitive Repetition: Home Video and the Television Heritage

> Strangely enough, everything will be done in order to turn "flow" culture into a "lasting" commodity, or at least a product that may be used several times over . . . .[1]

The last two chapters have examined how televisual repetition has become a particular brand of culture, in the wake of the television heritage that has developed since the 1970s. Broadcast and cable syndication markets developed in response to these concerns, and series were increasingly crafted with the back end firmly in mind. Boutique television (on both broadcast and cable channels) fostered extensive framing and branding techniques, creating distinctive spaces for televisual repetition. Although the changing concept of the television heritage successfully secured these transmitted spaces, the television industry had far less success in exploiting the most significant new medium of the 1980s and 1990s: home video. While TV-related merchandise ranging from published episode guides to collectible plates had been effectively marketed during this period, the programs themselves remained, for the most part, only available through television; that is, through over-the-air, cable, and satellite broadcasting. Home video's primary medium, VHS tape, was portable, permanent, and easily accessible to most consumers, and while particularly well suited for film distribution and exhibition, it was incompatible for the mass distribution of entire television series. However, the rapid adoption of Digital Versatile Disc (DVD) technology at the end of the 1990s prompted a reconception of television on home video. The enhanced technical standards and new industrial practices developed for the new format allowed for the delivery of hours of television to consumers in small, tangible packages that also happened to look rather nice on a bookshelf.

The rapid development of television on DVD—becoming standard less than five years after the format's debut—should be seen in the context of the array of changes that affect how the medium is, and will be, financed,

produced, distributed, experienced, and linked with the rest of the culture. For the past two decades, the domestic set has been transforming, in fits and starts, from an analog, low-definition receiver of broadcast signals to a digital, high-definition, customizable multimedia portal, incorporating hundreds of channels, an augmented audiovisual range, and a greater capacity for interactivity. New technologies, business models, regulatory structures, programming forms, and modes of viewing increasingly mesh with the old, with widely varying, and often unpredictable results. Accordingly, it is impossible to gauge exactly what "television" will be in another decade or so (let alone by the time this book is released). However, it is clear that the centralized, mass-disseminated, "one-way" cultural institution that has held sway since the middle of the twentieth century is largely ceding to a regime premised instead upon individual consumer choice, and marked by highly diversified content, atomized reception, and customizable interfaces. While the development of boutique cable channels described in the last chapter is certainly a key part of this transition, their use of distinction is likely only a harbinger of an emerging media environment in which programming will be the result of direct viewer decisions (limited by corporate offerings, of course), rather than advertiser-supported general transmission.

These changes around television are also part of a larger conceptual shift across all media, as the aesthetic, technological, industrial, and cultural boundaries between previously discrete forms (text, film, broadcasting, video, and sound recordings) are increasingly blurred, challenging established practices and paradigms. As I have suggested throughout this study, technology, industry, and culture are not autonomous domains: each is shaped by the other in particular ways, helping construct particular media forms and practices in particular contexts. While repetition has long been one of the standard practices of media production and distribution, its specific application has varied considerably over time, and between different media forms and regimes. For television, changes in its practices of repetition began in the mid-1970s, as the previous chapters have discussed. The television heritage and the development of cable boutiques fostered the cultivation of the televisual past as a ready source of cultural and industrial capital. One additional mid-1970s event factors large in the development of televisual repetition: the introduction of home video.[2] Home video devices—in particular videocassette recorders (VCRs), but also video cameras (camcorders), laserdisc players, Digital/Personal Video Recorders (DVRs/PVRs), and Digital Versatile Disc (DVD) players—may differ in their specific functions, but they all have in common the primary innovation of video technology: the ability to selectively play back prerecorded programs.[3] In addition, and just as significantly, most of these devices can also record incoming audiovisual signals onto the fixed media of tape or disc. Whether playing or recording, however, video devices are physically

and culturally connected to television sets, forcing television—as both a technology and cultural form, to borrow Raymond Williams' description—into a complex new relationship that foregrounds its function as an audiovisual display device, rather than its more established role as a dominant modern cultural institution. This link destabilizes the direct presentation of scheduled television events, and enables people to use their personal media technology to create or access programming on their own terms, rather than stay locked to the fare and schedule dictated by the broadcasting industry.[4]

However, despite the ubiquity, unique qualities, and speed of acceptance of home video, and its critical importance to late twentieth-century media culture, it has been sorely understudied in the academy. Several important articles, collections, and books were published in the wake of the initial video expansion in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but as the devices became part of everyday life, scholarly interest in this area waned, and has been almost nonexistent when compared to the more established fields of film and television study, or even to recent emerging concerns like new media and the Internet.[5] This is unfortunate but not surprising given the dominant impression of home video as a "neutral" media tool. The VCR, for example, has sat in the public and academic imaginary largely as it does in our living rooms: quietly next to the set. However, each of these sleek boxes, ranging from the first VCR to the latest PVR, are not mere enhancements of media; they are *reconceptions*, profoundly altering our relationship with dominant media institutions, and with media culture in general. They are explicitly designed upon the premise of mediated repetition, and have thus added a significant new dimension to the concept of the rerun, and to the very concept of the media text.

While home video has been physically connected to television at the level of technology and everyday culture, it has ironically not been as critical to the television industry itself. Instead, the VCR has functioned largely as the primary domestic extension of the film industry, rather than as a supplement to television. As Frederick Wasser explores in his 2001 study of the relationship between home video and Hollywood, while the film industry first viewed the VCR with suspicion, it has since become its most crucial technology, fostering new markets for their products, and even providing the majority of their revenue since the late 1980s. By contrast, television's primary goal, at least in the United States, has always been selling potential audiences to advertisers, rather than selling programs directly to consumers. Accordingly, while there certainly were thousands of television-based titles released on home video during the last quarter or so of the twentieth century, they have been a decidedly marginal cultural form relative to both television, and to the film-centered home video industry.

The industrial and technological changes of the late 1990s and early 2000s considerably altered these relationships, as the boundaries

between media producers and distributors all but vanished in the age of consolidation, and the VCR largely gave way to the DVD player. As the last two chapters discussed, all six U.S. commercial broadcast networks are now part of larger mega-media corporations, and are as much sellers as they are buyers of cultural products. This has facilitated the synergistic "horizontal" exploitation of media properties across different forms and venues, enabling new revenue possibilities. Digital Versatile Disc (DVD) technology, introduced in 1997, has been especially critical in this regard. With much higher resolution sound and image than VHS tape, random access capability, a smaller size, and, most significantly, a larger storage capacity, the DVD has rejuvenated the home video industry, and has finally enabled television to achieve what film had by the mid-1980s: a viable direct-to-consumer market for its programming.

This final chapter investigates the culmination of televisual repetition: the DVD box set, a multiple-disc package containing an entire season's worth of episodes from a particular television series. First introduced by Fox with the release of the first season of *The X-Files* in the spring of 2000, the box set is a nexus point of twenty-first century media change, incorporating high technology, corporate consolidation, user convenience, and commodity fetishism. It extends the reach of the institution of television into home video to an unprecedented degree, and functions as an intriguing aesthetic object in its own right. It fulfills the decades-long relationship between television and its viewers, completing the circle through the material purchase—rather than only the ephemeral viewing—of broadcast texts. DVD box sets have become the ultimate bearers of televisual repetition, placing television programming in a more direct, repetitive, and acquisitive relationship with its viewers. I will examine how the distinctive physical and cultural qualities of the DVD box set have brought television's home video practices more in line with those of film, and have fostered an ideal of acquisitive repetition based on individual television viewers (or more specifically, fans) rather than stations, networks, or advertisers. DVD box sets are not only television-related merchandise; they function culturally (and increasingly, industrially) *as* "television."

Home Video as a Publishing Industry

In *The Capitalization of Cultural Production*, Bernard Miége describes three models of cultural production.[6] Two of these, publishing and flow, correspond with the film and television industries. Under the publishing model, firms produce media material for sale directly to consumers. Book publishers and record labels are the archetypal publishing firms, as they generate income by the sale of media in the form of tangible objects. As Chapter 1 described, the film industry has functioned as a publisher, as it has always made its products available to viewers on a paid

admission basis (i.e., one ticket, one screening), even after it had begun raising revenue through sales to television stations and networks in the 1950s. Although Sony, the manufacturer of the original consumer VCR, the Betamax, initially promoted home video in the 1970s as a means to record television programs (i.e., to capture broadcast flow), home video has also functioned predominantly as a form of publishing. Since the legal challenges to the domestic video market died down in the early 1980s, viewers have rented or purchased tapes or discs for home use, with the revenue split among retailers, wholesalers, distributors, and producers. Hollywood was initially uncertain about home video, as it had been with television in the 1950s, for upsetting their established business model, but it has since merged the new technology (and its concomitant modes of viewing) into its operations not only with minimal turmoil, but with increasing reliance.[7] Once the exclusive province of theatrical distributors and exhibitors, feature films are now routinely made available directly to consumers as tangible, obtainable home video objects (i.e., VHS tapes and DVD discs). Video releases initially generated only ancillary revenue for Hollywood studios, but since the late 1980s, domestic U.S. video sale and rental revenues have consistently outpaced domestic box office grosses. By the early 2000s, annual video revenue regularly doubled the take at the box office.[8] Accordingly, home video, rather than theatrical exhibition, is now Hollywood's primary source of profits.

The home video version of a theatrical film release is now an expected cultural artifact, its appearance taken for granted. The phrase "I'll just wait for the video" is a commonsense expression of this sentiment, indicating how effectively the film industry has used the consumer publishing model in adapting to the challenge of a new technology. In reexamining this history, it is important to note that the successful cultural and industrial confluence of film and video was facilitated by the symmetry between individual films and individual home video objects. Drawing on existent cultural relationships between readers and books, and listeners and sound recordings, a single film almost always fits on a single tape or disc, taking up about as much space as a trade paperback book, or, in the case of laserdisc and DVD, a single LP or CD. Tapes and discs are thus spatially congruent with existing fixed media forms, fitting easily into typical domestic settings on shelves, entertainment centers, and coffee tables. Accordingly, they are usually placed next to books and recorded music both at home, and in retailers, emphasizing their similarity as tangible media objects. Since the film industry was already adept at publishing, delivering specific titles to specific places for specific audiences, releasing their products on home video was thus not as disruptive a practice as they first feared, despite the major differences between public and private film-viewing experiences. Films on video are still marketed as individual texts, and around familiar theatrical elements: stars, genre,

release dates, auteurs, and "high concept." Home video has been, in part, a successful domestic repetition of theatrical film.

While the publishing model connects producers and consumers more or less directly (through the sale and rental of media texts), the flow model is premised on an exchange carried out completely within industrial bounds: between producers, broadcasters (and cablecasters), and advertisers. The syndication market examined in this book has historically functioned according to this model, with producers selling programming to broadcasters, who then sell access to hypothetical viewers—i.e., time within programming on their widely distributed channels—to advertisers. Actual viewers/consumers are irrelevant in the flow model, represented only by the statistical fictions of ratings and demographic data. Their ostensible role is to sit back and passively receive the programming and advertising sent out by stations, networks, and sponsors. As Eileen Meehan points out, unless you are directly participating in the ratings sample, your choice of programming is superfluous to the economic relationship between producers, broadcasters, advertisers, and the providers of ratings data.[9] In addition, while the publishing model treats media texts as discrete objects, the flow model is premised instead on the aggregate experience of broadcasting over time. Accordingly, television has long urged viewers to "stay tuned" in order to boost contact with advertisements across their schedule and regardless of program. While individual television episodes have a particular duration, and television series eventually cease production after a finite number of episodes, televisual flow itself never ends: there is always "more" television. This principle has been seen not only in the linkage of programs on an individual night of viewing, but also in promoting the entire network or station line-up, in attracting viewers to new fare in the future, and, most significantly for the current transition to home video, in sustaining interest in particular series for as long as possible, even long after that series has ceased production. Flow has been essential to television economics from the smallest local station to the most established cable boutique. As Raymond Williams famously claimed, "the fact of flow" is "the central television experience."[10]

Despite the centrality of flow to the business of broadcasting, however, licensed consumer products tied to particular broadcast programs have also been sold ever since radio emerged as a national medium in the 1920s. While these products have been varyingly successful, they have been only ancillary revenue sources, based on familiar characters and situations; they have not been copies of the actual broadcast texts themselves.[11] However, the VCR's recording function—designed and promoted by hardware manufacturers like Sony, who recognized a growing consumer desire for flexible broadcast schedules in the 1970s—exists precisely to harness broadcast flow, to produce copies of it for later viewing.[12] In capturing flow in this manner, domestic video recording

complicates the broadcasting model in two ways that expand the role of the viewer beyond their ostensible duty as hypothetical eyeballs.

Timeshifting, i.e., recording programs for later playback, destabilizes the relationship between advertiser, broadcaster, and viewer, separating the scheduled time from the viewing time. Accordingly, as advertisers and broadcasters fear, commercials are likely to be skipped on the eventual viewing of the recorded program.[13] However, timeshifting alone is generally only a postponement of broadcast flow; once watched, it is likely that recorded programs are not watched again. The actual acquisition of recorded programs is a less prevalent, but arguably more significant home video practice, whereby viewers assemble a collection—or more appropriately, an archive—of television from recorded broadcast flows. As detailed by Kim Bjarkman, video collectors regard television flow as available not only for ephemeral viewing but also for permanent safekeeping. In fact, they often consider themselves better caretakers of programs than producers or broadcasters, preserving the flow of broadcasting into tangible texts that can be collected, organized, maintained, and traded.[14] While the film industry, due to its successful adaptation of home video, has generally been successful in shepherding its collectors into renting or purchasing officially released video objects, the television industry, having built their business around the sale of time rather than of physical objects, has not been historically oriented towards such exchanges. In lieu of "officially-released" television on home video, unauthorized television collecting (via VHS) has flourished, albeit on the margins of television culture, with very little impact on the business of television. Even early on in the home video era, however, the fact that viewers like these wished to preserve their favorite television shows on video suggested that a *potential* market existed for commercially released (i.e., officially published) home video copies of television series. Accordingly, the owners and producers of television programming have established a small presence in the home video market. While television programs have been released on home video since the early 1980s, the dissonance between the flow and publishing models, coupled with the significant limitations of VHS technology, have complicated these attempts.

Unlike a film, which is nearly always experienced as one unbroken text, most fictional television is serial, presented in separate episodes. As the scheduling and advertising practices of television have long indicated, series are designed primarily for optimum modularity, adhering rigidly to specific formulas regarding program length (e.g., 30 or 60 minutes), daypart (daytime, prime-time, "fringe"), genre (sitcom, drama), and frequency of viewing (daily, weekly, annual). This has historically facilitated broadcast flow, standardizing the delivery of particular audiences to advertisers around particular genres and times, thus stabilizing television advertising markets, and establishing television brands for continued

exploitation as continuing series and as reruns. This formularity has also fostered the episodic form of television production and distribution, built around "seasons" of 13 to 26 episodes (the current standard season order for most prime-time programs on U.S. network and cable television). However, in a home video culture that has defaulted to a feature film, 2-hour program length—it is no coincidence that most blank consumer VHS tapes run exactly this long—individual television episodes are too short for one tape, while entire seasons, let alone series, much too long. While a typical Hollywood film currently runs just under 2 hours, a full season of a typical 30-minute Hollywood sitcom, without commercials, is the equivalent of nearly eight and a half hours. The available options for dealing with this issue on videotape have had to sacrifice either thoroughness, by releasing only particularly significant episodes (e.g., *The Best of The Honeymooners*) or physical space (by filling up retailers' and consumers' shelves). Each of these options has been problematic. For example, while the popular drama series *The X-Files* was a likely candidate for VHS release, its signature convoluted narrative arc complicated possible "best of" configurations. In addition, at 202 episodes and nine seasons, a complete release of *The X-Files* on VHS (with the standard two episodes per tape) would take up over 100 cassettes (10 feet of horizontal shelf space), more than all but the most dedicated viewers (let alone retailers) would likely obtain for completion.

In addition, as this book has examined, the flow model has assured that television programs have been ubiquitous on television itself in the form of reruns. Popular as well as obscure shows have long found syndicated homes on stations and cable networks. From the standpoint of the television industry, this combination of seriality and repetition has ensured that television series are distributed *on television*, generating syndication and advertising revenue across the schedule and throughout the years. Accordingly, rerun syndication has also functioned as an effective argument against the marketing of programs on home video. Why would a studio release a series on home video that was already widely available on television? Conversely, if such a release were successful, would that negatively impact the program's future syndication value? When this market uncertainty is factored with the difficult distribution decisions outlined above, it is no wonder that the home video presence of series television has been a much more circumscribed endeavor than rerun syndication. For example, while *Seinfeld*, one of the signature series of the 1990s, has been a solid rerun staple in local and cable television, generating well over $1 billion in rerun syndication fees, it has yet to be released on home video in any form.[15]

Although a relative few television programs have long been available on home video, they have never commanded a significant market share, primarily due to the factors discussed above. The contrast between television and film on home video is stark: while the majority of extant

feature-length Hollywood films released during the sound era have found their way to tape or disc at least once, the number of television series made available on home video represents only a tiny percentage of the output of the American television industry. This marginalization has been compounded by the fact that "television" has not been a common category in most video rental and sales outlets. Home video has long been industrially structured and culturally promoted as "film," with the vast majority of tapes and discs in the market drawn from theatrical features, and the very iconography of video retailing redolent with stereotypical Hollywood imagery.[16] Accordingly, the medium-specificity of television ceased to function as a viable genre in video rental stores and retailers, and its programs were generally folded into established cinematic genres.

Despite these significant barriers, however, television series have still been released to home video. According to Sam Frank's *Buyer's Guide to Fifty Years of Television on Home Video*, hundreds of different television series had been made available on commercial home video in the United States by the end of the century.[17] Most of these programs have had only small-run releases on niche distributors like Shokus, which specializes in little-seen series in the public domain from the 1950s and 1960s, or through mail-order clubs like Columbia House, which serviced relatively small market niches without having to win over retailers. Most significantly, virtually every series made available on home video during this period was only ever released in individual episode or incomplete collected configurations; only a scant handful were ever released in totality on VHS or laserdisc.[18] However, the introduction of DVD technology at the turn of the century provided a critical spark to the expansion of television on home video, due to several interrelated factors: the rapid, exponential growth of the DVD market, the unique properties and distinction of the technology itself, and the successful creation and exploitation of cult audiences. The culmination of these factors has been the season box set, the video object that successfully converted broadcast flow to published text, and finally crystallized television, and its repetiton, into a tangible form.

The DVD Effect

While we may often refer to the shiny boxes and tiny devices that we call "technology" as "revolutionary," they are ultimately only the physical manifestations of developments within existing social, industrial, and cultural formations. As Brian Winston states, "[T]here is nothing in the histories of electrical and electronic communication systems to indicate that significant major changes have not been accommodated by preexisting social formations."[19] Despite the ostensibly neutral science of the laboratory, technologies are social, produced from and entering into established contexts that facilitate particular uses while curtailing

others. Accordingly, it is certainly significant that the key media technologies of the past 50 years, ranging from analog audiotape to the personal computer to digital high definition video, have all centered on the issue of information storage and reproduction, helping foster the move away from "live" media forms, and towards the collection and repetition of existing texts. As Miège argues, these developments "may be essentially characterized as a confrontation between the publishing model and the flow model.... The stakes involved are considerable."[20]

As media industries have required increasing amounts of revenue from extant products in order to survive, and as media users have favored media that provide accessibility, flexibility, and choice, new technologies have facilitated changes in the modes of media production, distribution, exhibition, and consumption. Since the introduction of home video, cable networks, and video game systems to mid-1970s homes, domestic media consumption has expanded alongside new media technologies, incorporating not only the cultivation of new niche demographics (e.g., boutique channel viewers, video gamers), but also viable markets for the continued distribution of "old" texts in "new" configurations, including, most prominently, cable networks (as discussed in the last chapter) and home video. Although it wasn't the first home video technology, or even the first significant use of the optical disc format, DVD technology has reenergized this process of continual expansion and adoption. Accordingly, it is not only a "spin-off" or upgrade from VHS, but rather the first significant media format of the twenty-first century, and a major development in the history of media repetition.

The venerable VHS cassette has been around since 1976, a geological tenure in electronic media terms. Although efficient as short-term storage and playback media, VHS cassettes are also relatively bulky, and prone to dust collection. Like all forms of magnetic tape, VHS tape is also vulnerable to stretching, jamming, and image and sound drop-outs. Moreover, VHS tape is a poor long-term storage medium, with a relatively short lifespan. As a tape ages, the magnetic particles flake off, thus reducing fidelity, and polluting VCRs with the resultant dust. Nevertheless, since the demise of the domestic version of Sony's Beta format in the mid-1980s, VHS has been the only major format for domestic video playback and recording. While a significant upgrade, Super VHS, was introduced in 1987, and smaller formats were developed to shrink the size of camcorders, none of these have challenged VHS' command of the market. A major reason for VHS' market longevity despite its considerable drawbacks has likely been that its two predominant uses—the rental of feature films and the timeshifting of television programs—are all short-term activities. While video rental stores have had to manage their inventories carefully to balance high initial demand for new releases with a varied selection of older titles, most consumers have not had to similarly deal with a large amount of aging

VHS cassettes. Indeed, the bulk of VHS revenue has come primarily from rentals, rather than from purchases. For those "videophile" consumers most interested in acquisition and high fidelity, the only viable alternative to VHS at the consumer level was laserdisc, which maintained a slim hold on the high end of the home video market in the 1980s and 1990s.

This situation held sway until the spring of 1997, when DVD technology was introduced after years of development and delay. Since then, the DVD player has supplanted the VCR as the most quickly adapted electronic appliance in history. Despite a global recession in the early 2000s, DVD players have been on an exponential growth curve. As of this writing, they are present in over half of U.S. households, a landmark reached in less than half the time it took the VCR.[21] As a "must-have" technology, DVD received all the press, and increasingly, all the retail space, in the early 2000s, with VCRs and VHS tapes pushed to the margins in major retail outlets like Best Buy, Borders, Circuit City, and Amazon.com. Like the vinyl LP in the early 1990s, the VHS tape is an endangered species.

For the purposes of media reproduction and storage—i.e., high-fidelity repetition—DVD technology is not only "new"; it is also demonstrably "improved." Even the disc itself, and, more importantly, its packaging, have decided aesthetic advantages over their VHS counterparts. The DVD extends the 20-year reign of the slim, shiny 5-inch circle of the compact disc (CD), signifying the long-delayed arrival of video in a familiar, convenient digital format, and implying it will do for home video what the CD has done for home audio.[22] Similarly, the DVD case appears to be the logical merger of the VHS sleeve and the CD jewel box, with the height of the former and the width of the latter. However, unlike the open-bottom cardboard sleeve that provides minimal protection to VHS tapes, the plastic Amaray DVD "keepcase" offers snug security, effectively protecting the disc and presenting a clean surface, while taking up even less space on the shelf.

The state-of-the-art outward appearance of DVD is reflected in the technical specifications of the format itself. Optically encoded with binary data rather than the physical manipulation of magnetic particles, DVD reproduction is clean and vibrant against the fuzzy and muddled look and sound of VHS. This factor alone generated the initial "early adapter" boost from cinephiles, who appreciated a home presentation of films that was finally much closer to theatrical glory, with finer detail, deeper contrast, a wider color spectrum, a cinematic aspect ratio, and multiple-channel sound. In addition, the "random access" feature of DVD content has fostered an array of additional textual materials: stylish interactive menus, behind-the-scenes documentaries, theatrical trailers, audio commentaries, photo galleries, cast and crew biographies, storyboards, deleted scenes, and hidden "easter eggs."[23] Moreover, even when all of these enhancements and additions are factored in, DVDs offer a much

smaller package than either VHS tape or laserdisc. Several hours of high-fidelity audio and video signals can be held on one side of a DVD, tripling (or better) VHS' storage capacity while simultaneously improving upon its audiovisual quality. Thus, an entire film, and all of its additional material, can easily be experienced in high-fidelity glory without changing the disc or even getting up from the couch.

DVD has sparked a new approach to the video distribution of feature films, as the upgraded audiovisual quality and inclusion of extra materials has raised the cultural status of video releases both within Hollywood and in general. While discs still serve as functional copies of an original text, the additional features included on most DVDs amplify various elements of their central text, thus producing new media experiences.[24] Simply put, watching a DVD of a feature film is a distinct experience from watching it in any other form, be it in the theater, on television, or on videotape. The uniqueness of this experience has been exploited by the media industry, with most feature film releases containing more material than can be experienced in one sitting. Indeed, it could be argued that DVDs, rather than theatrical prints, contain the "final" version of the film. Accordingly, seizing an opportunity to reshape the home video market, Hollywood studios and other DVD distributors have emphasized sales more than rentals, promoting the idea of the DVD text as a collectible commodity. Led by Warner Home Video president Warren Lieberfarb's virtual crusade to promote DVD as a purchasable format, studios moved away from the two-tier pricing system that had maintained the VHS rental market since the early 1980s, and instead introduced DVD with lower, "day-and-date" pricing.[25] This made titles directly available for purchase by consumers at the beginning of the home video window (usually a few months after its theatrical release), rather than several months or even years later, as had been the case with VHS. The list price for new feature films on DVD was typically around $25 as of 2004, but standard discounts at major retailers typically lowered the actual sales price by several dollars, putting DVDs on par with CDs at $15–20, thus sparking greater purchases. In addition, retailers also dedicated much more space to DVDs than they had to VHS tapes by the early 2000s, adding availability to the format's affordability.

This general shift to *acquisitive repetition* has certainly indicated a significant change in the consumption of film, domestic or otherwise, and is a topic itself worthy of further investigation. However, DVD has had a more profound impact on the relationship between television and home video, as the crucial issue of the physical space taken up by television-based home video objects has now been effectively solved. While space has rarely entered into the study of domestic media consumption, it is a significant consideration for home video.[26] Recorded media throughout history are always designed for optimum convenience, a quality that ideally includes not only accessibility but also *modularity*: individual units

should be similar enough in dimension to others of its kind to facilitate mass production, mass retailing, and domestic storage. The mass production and circulation of publishers' libraries beginning in the late nineteenth century detailed in chapter one was only the first such expansion of industrialized culture into domestic space. Moreover, extensive media collections, so much a part of the modern domestic environment, require effective, aesthetically compatible storage. Whether the collections consist of books, LPs, CDs, VHS tapes, laserdiscs, or DVDs, users generally take care to store their media properly, ideally in some form of order. Indeed, as Bjarkman notes, the pursuit of "order," however defined, is actually one of the distinct pleasures of video collecting.[27]

Television DVD releases continue this history of modularity and efficiency. Each disk typically holds two to four episodes, thus condensing two (VHS) units into one. However, since a DVD case also takes up about half the shelf space of a VHS tape, this is actually a four-fold reduction in space. As discussed above, the DVD case also fits comfortably in existing storage systems designed for VHS tapes or CDs. Although this condensation has significantly reduced the space necessary for a large collection of titles, for television releases it still presents a considerable investment in space. For example, a complete collection of a long-running series, at a rate of two to four episodes per disc, could still result in dozens of separate cases.[28] The video industry's solution to this dilemma has been to amplify DVD's smaller dimensions, and restructure television releases around the season, rather than the individual episode. Programs are now released in this configuration as a *box set*: a single package containing several discs comprising an entire season. This practice, first effectively utilized by Fox with the release of *The X-Files: The Complete First Season* box set in 2000, has reconfigured the perception and retail prospects of television on home video.

The Box Set

Home video, like cable before it, was always premised in a large part on a marked distinction from (normal) television. However, this distinction historically applied only to the contents—the video text itself—rather than its packaging. Until the DVD era, home video objects were virtually identical, regardless of their content, once removed from their almost-as-austere protective sleeves. While packaging design has long been a critical part of book and sound recording marketing, it has only rarely been applied with as much attention to home video.[29] Since the primary revenue stream for video throughout the 1980s and 1990s was the rental trade, original packaging was most often replaced with an anonymous plastic box, with the text only indicated by a plain label on the standard black cassette. The shift to video sales prompted by DVD (i.e., as "sell-through") has necessitated a greater emphasis on packaging and overall

design, enhancing the ostensible aesthetic value of an object meant for permanent ownership and domestic display rather than only temporary use. As Pierre Loubet, Warner Media Services' vice president of advanced media sales, stated in 2002, "[s]ince people are now buying these products instead of renting them, the packaging has to communicate the value of the movie's experience and the quality and the quantity of the material inside."[30] When the text in question is itself a television series, this distinction must be made even more clearly; even popular television series have had to be distanced in this way from the "stigma" of their broadcast roots. As they have with feature film releases on DVD, extra features and stylish packaging add filters of meaning to the original episodes, and function as significant texts on their own. Their inclusion further promotes the idea that a DVD set is *better* than the broadcast version, that it offers a more intensive experience than is available anywhere on mere television.

By these new standards, Fox's *X-Files* box sets are landmarks of media design, successfully reformatting a familiar brand into a new configuration, repeating the text with every audible and visual element. The seven discs included in each set are arrayed in an unfolding stack of trays, thematically resonant with the series' signature labyrinthine narrative of government intrigue and unfathomable secrets. Images and quotations from the particular season are deployed around the trays and on the discs themselves in shadowy silvers and grays on a black background, adding additional layers of textuality for users to admire, and knowing fans to decipher. The entire package is encased in a darkly reflective slipcover, with images of lead characters Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) from that particular season, and a volume number on the spine. The set functions as an aesthetic object before it is even opened, let alone before a disc is played. It is as attractive as any well-designed hardback book, and, like the gaudy volumes of nineteenth century literature, just as striking on the aesthete's shelf.

This foregrounding of design extends from the packaging to the discs' content, which was methodically prepared for optimum distinction. In his review of the first set, videophile reviewer Bill Hunt of the popular Digital Bits website claimed he was "blown away at the quality of the image," which "puts the quality of the original network broadcasts to shame." He compares the discs' image quality to a particularly idealized exhibition space: "Unless you've visited a post production suite at Ten Thirteen Productions when one of the episodes was being edited, you've probably never seen *The X-Files* looking this good before."[31] While the image quality alone distinguishes these versions from both the earlier broadcast episodes and VHS releases, each set also includes the typical kinds of extras found on many DVD "special edition" releases, including the original Fox promotional spots; audio commentary from producers, writers, and directors; and behind-the-scenes shots. A 20-minute overview

of each season, *The Truth About Season One* (*Two*, etc.), featuring new interviews with cast and crew as they recall that particular season, is also included on each set, reinforcing the concept of the season as both cultural (this particular set of stories in these characters' lives) and industrial (this particular set of episodes produced at this particular time by this particular talent), and fostering the construction of an *X-Files* heritage. Evocative animated menus, accompanied by Mark Snow's theme music, and ending in an iconic freeze frame image from the episode or feature chosen to view, complete the stylistic thread connecting all the features. Like the interstitial material on TV Land and other cable boutiques, these menus unite the themes introduced in the packaging and culminated in the program and additional features.

While feature films had already been released on DVD with attractive packaging, *The X-Files: The Complete First Season* was the first time such considerations were applied to an entire television season, and ultimately an entire series.[32] The *X-Files* sets set a high standard for television on home video, and sparked the demand for more series to be released in this configuration. Accordingly, other distributors soon adopted it, with a similar design philosophy, and similar success. By late 2001, the box set had become the standard method for releasing television series on DVD. All of the sets released since then have utilized design elements pioneered by *The X-Files* box sets, including iconic packaging and menus, enhanced audiovisual fidelity (often incorporating widescreen aspect ratios and 5.1 channel sound), and the liberal inclusion of "special features."

While critics like Hunt have hailed the product design and content quality of these sets, good design doesn't guarantee good sales. Given the uncertainty about upsetting the possible syndication of these series, the pricing and marketing of such unprecedented media products had to be carefully considered. In order to test the market for television on home video, and to assuage the anxieties of broadcast syndication divisions, distributors prioritized programs with particularly solid—if not necessarily "mass"—followings: the so-called "cult audiences" (in industry-speak) who had proven to be loyal consumers of licensed merchandize in the past. As Chapter 5 described, this kind of devotion arose with the television heritage in the 1970s, but has had very few sanctioned outlets in mainstream society. By the late 1990s, active fan cultures had grown around series ranging from *The Avengers* to *Xena: Warrior Princess*, and the video collecting "underground" described by Bjarkman had expanded alongside them. As the "ultimate" edition of a favored television text, DVD box sets represented a significant means to attract these fans, channelling their engagement to "official," industry-released products.

Although Fox was the first distributor to release a long-running series as a box set, A&E was the first to successfully gamble with a cult audience, when it began releasing *The Avengers* on DVD in 1999 (albeit in episode collections—sold in individual discs or two-disc sets—rather than

box sets). The initial acclaim and success of their Diana Rigg releases prompted them to release the series' remaining episodes (as well as its 1970s sequel, *The New Avengers*). A&E subsequently issued many other "cult" titles, focusing primarily on other British imports, including *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, *The Prisoner*, *Secret Agent*, and several Gerry Anderson-produced science fiction series (e.g., *Captain Scarlet*, *Space: 1999*, *Thunderbirds*). With the exception of Monty Python, none of these series has had a high profile in the United States outside of esoteric fan circles. Indeed, most of them had had no extensive television exposure at all in this country. However, as borne out by A&E's successes with these titles, they do have just enough engaged fans to warrant carefully targeted DVD releases.[33] Moreover, A&E has advertised these releases precisely as "cult TV," dedicating an entire section of their online store under that description.

Like the "early adopters" of new high-tech products, fans can be counted on to purchase new DVDs, often as soon as they hit the market. Retailers have augmented this trend by offering large discounts for pre-orders and first-week purchases. Since most high-volume purchasing fans are also active Internet users, websites such as the Home Theater Forum, DVD File, and The Digital Bits have assumed a central role in channeling fan demands to the industry. DVD producers and studio video division representatives regularly read and even participate in these forums, attempting to understand and cater to their most ardent market.[34] Once box sets became the norm, fans pressed distributors for box set releases of their favorite shows. An entire website, tvshowsondvd.com, was even created to track television DVD releases, and help amplify fan requests. Once this fan demand was tapped, even series that had previously been released on DVD as individual discs, or in "best of" collections were reissued as season box sets.[35] A few major distributors, including Paramount, Sony and Warner Bros, even sought input directly from their potential fan consumers with online polls that gauged which of their series should be released in DVD box sets, with what additional features, and at what price. For example, while Paramount released the original *Star Trek* as individual discs (with two episodes per release) from 1999 to 2001, it shifted its strategy to season box sets for the remaining series in the franchise when overwhelming user demand for the configuration was indicated in its polling.[36] As Michael Arkin, Paramount senior VP of marketing stated in 2002, "this is how consumers are expecting to get TV series on DVD."[37]

However, even with ardent consumers on deck, product pricing has had to be carefully considered. Season box sets vary widely in price, but are typically between $60 and $100, with additional discounts of 20–40% standard on several online retailers. This is still a fairly significant investment relative to an individual feature film, and is particularly

so once an entire series is purchased; a complete collection of all nine *X-Files* box sets, for example, would cost over $1000 at their original list price. However, it has apparently been a cost worth bearing for those interested in acquiring the definitive edition of their favorite television series. Indeed, despite their relatively high cost, box sets have sold much better than VHS releases of television series ever did, if not at the same levels as the typical $15–20 film release.[38] Moreover, box sets are widely available even in general retailers like Target and Wal-Mart, with a market presence television releases had never attained on VHS. Indeed, as the shift to major retailers indicates, after established success with "cult" series, distributors began to release more mainstream programs like *CSI*, *ER*, and *Friends* as box sets; even *Seinfeld* is now scheduled for a DVD box set release.[39] In only a few years, DVD box sets of television series have become as expected as DVD releases of feature films.

The success of box sets has also apparently calmed the worries of television syndicators, most of which, as the last two chapters have addressed, are more firmly integrated into the same gargantuan media corporations. Rather than only function as draws for advertisers, television programs are now seen as multi-faceted properties that can spark several complimentary revenue streams. While Fox reportedly delayed the release of the first season box set of *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* (from September 2001 to January 2002) because of concerns about interference with its syndication debut, this issue seems to have dissipated since then.[40] Indeed, *Buffy* has sold extensively on DVD while still performing relatively well in cable and local syndication. Much more telling, however, has been the move to release ongoing series in DVD box sets well *before* their syndication sale. Many popular drama series are now routinely prepared for DVD release in the midst of their network runs, a strategy that would have been inconceivable during the VHS era. Paramount had no apparent qualms about releasing the first seasons of its ultra-popular *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* on DVD in 2003, while Fox successfully promoted the new seasons of its "real time" thriller *24* through the release of box sets of the previous seasons. As Fox Home Entertainment senior VP Peter Staddon stated in regards to *24*, "[p]eople are seeing the backend value of DVD and that there's a real revenue stream there that doesn't have to impact syndication."[41] Each of these series already function well as familiar, repeated cogs in their respective corporate machines, having run on traditional broadcast networks, and on cable networks owned by their parent corporations. Their release on home video adds another dimension to their repetition, effectively promoting the series' ongoing presence in popular culture. More significantly, such releases also call into question the nature of the "back end" in contemporary media. How long does a back end extend if

it is offered almost immediately after the front end? This key question remains very open at the time of this writing.

Tangible Televisual Repetition, or, the DVD on the Shelf

In the fall of 2002, Fox chairman Peter Chernin reportedly claimed that television on DVD had generated $100 million of revenue for his studio.[42] If true, this figure is certainly large enough to indicate that a significant shift has occurred in the relationship between television programming and home video. From an industrial perspective, it may have come just in time. As analyst Paul Sweeting of *Video Business* claimed, "DVD is becoming the new after-network market, filling the void left by a disintegrating syndication market."[43] There are indeed limits to the viability of the flow model, and publishing television on DVD is clearly an effective strategy to make up for that deficit, and expand into new markets. The television series box set is now an established media configuration, and is likely to function similarly to the back catalog of a record label: as a collection of fixed recordings that can be easily reconfigured and repeated.

While this financial windfall for media corporations comes at the cost of further dents in consumers' wallets, avid viewers—including media scholars—also benefit from box sets. It is important to acknowledge the real advantages gained by acquisitive repetition. Programs can now be accessed completely at the whim of the viewer, without waiting for a rerun airing, searching through commercial breaks, or travelling to distant archives. Moreover, they can be accessed in their entirety (or "better"), with scenes long deleted for syndication added back in, and images and sounds restored to a sharper glory.[44] Accordingly, DVD box sets absorb much of the rationale for VHS collections. While the material presented is not exactly the same as the original episodes (i.e., it has often been processed more than the originals were), it is presented complete, uncut, organized, pristine, and compact: all qualities sought by VHS collectors. Moreover, box sets often contain many features not otherwise available on television, including, in the case of Artisan's *Twin Peaks* season one set, materials produced by fans themselves.

In other words, DVD box sets provide the content of television without the "noise" and limitations of the institution of television; "television" removed from television and placed upon a shelf. Accordingly, DVD box sets are perhaps the ultimate form of televisual repetition under capitalism, crystallizing the concept of the ephemeral rerun into a physical commodity. The increasingly acquisitive aspects of media experience have not been adequately explored in media studies. People have long been examined in media studies as "spectators," "viewers," and "audiences," but much less so as "users," "consumers," and "collectors." As the expansion of home video markets, the consolidation of media firms and

industries, and continued technological shifts indicate, the latter categories are clearly claiming precedence in industry rhetoric and everyday experience. Media is increasingly experienced not as fleeting moments, or even only as repeated memories, but as obtainable physical (or virtual) objects in domestic (or virtual) spaces.

In the wake of innovative cultural artifacts like the *X-Files* box sets, home video has finally become, in the 2000s, a much more significant factor in televisual repetition, and the television heritage in general, than it was only a few years previously. As the television of the twenty-first century takes shape, perhaps the DVD box set is the twentieth-century medium's apotheosis. Perhaps the new flow of television—i.e., the new regime of repetition—is not only measured in time, but in commodities: in cultural objects sold to permanent media collections, alongside similarly mass-produced media artifacts (books, recordings, films on home video, etc.). As Raymond Williams argued, television is at once technology and cultural form; it should continue to be acknowledged and explored in all its variety.

Notes

1. Bernard Miège, *The Capitalization of Cultural Production* (New York: International General, 1989), 139.
2. I use the term "home video" to separate out dominant domestic applications of video technology from other functions, most notably in artworks and as surveillance tools. These latter forms have actually generated the bulk of critical thought on video technology since the early 1990s, while home video devices such as VCRs, camcorders, optical disk player/recorders, and (increasingly) home computers, have been largely taken for granted.
3. "Program" here broadly refers to audiovisual material recorded onto tangible media. This is to contrast with two additional terms, each attached to particular ends of the home video experience. I use "product" to describe programs as commodities in the market, as favored by the media industry, while "text" is used to indicate the meaning(s) constructed out of a set of signs by viewers and audiences.
4. I do not wish to over-romanticize this dichotomy. While VCRs and (especially) PVRs enable viewers to adjust the broadcast schedule to a certain degree, this certainly does not mean they "resist" television in general. Indeed, the successful use of a VCR or any other video device depends in no small part upon understanding and accepting the institution of television, e.g., in setting up to record a particular program at a particular time, or waiting until your favorite program ends before playing the movie you rented. As Frederick Wasser explains, rather than put all the power in the hands of viewers, home video technology has enabled both the media industry and viewers more flexibility in achieving their different goals. See Wasser, *Veni, Vidi, Video: The Hollywood Empire and the VCR* (Austin: University of Texas, 2001).

5. Some of the seminal works in this vein include Sean Cubitt, *Timeshift: On Video Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Julia R. Dobrow, ed., *Social and Cultural Aspects of VCR Use* (Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1990); and Ann Gray, *Video Playtime: The Gendering of a Media Technology* (New York: Routledge, 1992). Most recently, Frederick Wasser's *Veni, Vidi, Video* has offered the first in-depth academic history of home video's role in the US film industry.
6. Miège, *The Capitalization of Cultural Production*.
7. See Wasser, *Veni Vidi Video*, 132–184.
8. Statistics from Video Software Dealers Association, "Home Video Industry Hails a $20.3 Billion Year!," http://www.vsda.org/Resource.phx/public/press/january2003/jan09-03.htx.
9. Eileen Meehan, "Why We Don't Count: The Commodity Audience," in Patricia Mellencamp, ed., *Logics of Television* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 117–137.
10. Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (New York: Schocken, 1974), 95.
11. Typical licensed products have included novelizations, comic books, posters, toys, jigsaw puzzles, lunchboxes, soundtracks, and t-shirts.
12. See Wasser, *Veni Vidi Video*, 71–80.
13. While this was a major concern of advertisers, studios, and broadcasters early on, and was presented as such in legal challenges to home video, the courts were not convinced that timeshifting produced significant harm to the flow industries. However, the more integrated and prominent timeshifting functions of PVRs have recently revived this concern. See Wasser, *Veni Vidi Video*, 82–91 on the concern over timeshifting in the 1970s and 1980s. The tension between advertisers and PVR technology is covered in many trade and lay publications of the early 2000s; see the following for highlights of this debate: Paul Bond, "PVRs could magnify woes in TV ad market," *Hollywood Reporter*, 23 January 2002; Louis Chunovic, "The PVR Revolution: Mere myth or nightmare to come?," *Electronic Media*, 18 November 2002, p. 8; Tobi Elkin, "The Biz: PVR not yet a big ad threat," *Advertising Age*, 6 May 2002, p. 55; Marlene Edmunds, "Smart TV Impact Limited," *Variety*, 1 October 2001, p. 1; "PVR Feared in Home Entertainment," *Television Digest*, 26 November 2001; Joseph Ostrow, "PVRs a real fear factor for TV's ad community," *Electronic Media*, 16 September 2002, p. 9; Chuck Ross, "Zapping the Fast Forward," *Electronic Media*, 5 March 2001, p. 1; Patti Summerfield, "PVRs won't kill the TV ad," *Strategy*, 21 October 2002, p. 1.
14. Kim Bjarkman, "To Have And To Hold: The Video Collector's Relationship With an Ethereal Medium," *Television and New Media*, forthcoming.
15. *Seinfeld* DVD box sets are in production at the time of this writing, however.

16. Blockbuster Video's name and logo (an iconic movie ticket) suggests a cinematic experience, while one of the other top video chains in the United States is actually named Hollywood Video.
17. Sam Frank, *The Buyer's Guide to Fifty Years of Television on Home Video* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1999).
18. Almost all of these series were generally regarded as having loyal "cult" audiences, a factor that would be successfully reproduced and expanded with DVD. Paramount's *Star Trek* was the most prominent release of this nature, as all 257 episodes of the original series (1966–69) and its sequel, *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1987–94) were released on VHS by the end of the 1990s.
19. Brian Winston, *Media Technology and Society—A History: From the Telegraph to the Internet* (New York, Routledge, 1998), 2.
20. Miège, *The Capitalization of Cultural Production*, 145.
21. "DVD Drives Video Industry to Record-Breaking Year," *Business Wire* 8 January 2004.
22. By contrast, the LP-like dimensions and attributes of laserdisc (including the necessity to "flip sides" to experience its whole program) seemed to point to the past rather than the future; the format failed to attract 95% of the U.S. home video market.
23. Aside from the enhanced navigation interface (i.e., menus) and larger storage capacity, the look, sound, and features of DVD are virtually identical to its digital predecessor, laserdisc. However, laserdisc never reached more than 5% of U.S. households. Once hardware manufacturers and software distributors started to shift production to DVD, laserdisc's fate was sealed. Although Pioneer has continued to sell a combination laserdisc-DVD player, the format officially became obsolete at the end of 1999, when the last laserdiscs were pressed.
24. These features may also actively favor particular interpretations over others, as Robert Alan Brookey and Robert Westerfelhaus argue in "Hiding Homoeroticism in Plain View: The *Fight Club* DVD as Digital Closet," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19 (March 2002): 21–43.
25. "Day-and-date" pricing negates the quasi-exclusive window that video rental stores enjoyed during the VHS era. While new VHS titles would be released at higher rental prices first, which were then lowered several months later, DVDs are released with only one pricing window, for both retail and rental. See Catherine Applefield Olson, "Warren Lieberfarb, The Man Who Invented An Industry," *Medialine* 12 February 2003, http://www.medialinenews.com/issues/2003/february/cover0212.shtml; Brett Sporich, "DVD is crowned sell-through king," *Hollywood Reporter*, 9 January 2002.
26. For investigation of the spatial relationships between television, domesticity, and public space and discourse, See Anna McCarthy, *Ambient Television: Visual Culture and Public Space* (Durham, NC: Duke University, 2001); and

Lynn Spigel, *Welcome to the Dreamhouse: Popular Media and Postwar Suburbs* (Durham, NC: Duke University, 2001).

27. Bjarkman, "To Have and to Hold."

28. For example, the DVD release of *I Spy* has twenty-five volumes, the original *Star Trek* forty, and *The Twilight Zone* forty-four.

29. Special Edition laserdiscs, usually necessitating three or four discs, were often packaged in somewhat portentous layers of boxes and sleeves, while occasional "collector's edition" VHS releases would come packaged with an extra tape or book, or, in the case of a 1997 special release of *Fargo*, a snowglobe.

30. Qtd. in Daniel Frankel, "They're Judging a DVD By Its Cover," *Video Business*, 16 December 2002, p. 8.

31. Bill Hunt, "*The X-Files: The Complete First Season*," DVD review, *The Digital Bits*, 12 April 2000, http://www.thedigitalbits.com/reviews/xfilesseason1.html.

32. The remaining eight seasons of *The X-Files* have since been released in box sets every six months.

33. David Bianculli, "TV Lovers Want Their DVD," *New York Daily News*, 23 April 2002, p. 35.

34. Indeed, the amount and frequency of contact between producers and users on these sites is a rare (though not unique) example of two-way interaction in mainstream textual production, a practice also worthy of further investigation. See Kurt Lancaster, *Interacting with* Babylon 5: *Fan Performances in a Media Universe* (Austin: University of Texas, 2001) for more discussion of this phenomenon in contemporary media production.

35. For example, both *Friends and South Park* were released in season box sets (beginning in 2002) after their "best of" collections, which sold well (over one million copies each), were criticized by fans for being too incomplete. See Thomas K. Arnold, "Home video industry makes a bunch of old 'Friends'," *USA Today*, 30 April 2002, sec. D, p. 3; Samantha Clark, ed., "Spotlight," *Video Business*, 18 February 2002, p. 20.

36. Daniel Frankel, "Next Generation Begins its DVD Trek in March," *Video Business* 14 January 2002, 4; Bill Hunt, "My Two Cents," *The Digital Bits*, 19 September 2001, http://www.thedigitalbits.com/mytwocentsa46.html. Indeed, despite the waning appeal of the franchise's latest film and television releases, demand for older *Star Trek* in this format has been high enough to warrant a reissue of the original series in box sets (in late 2004).

37. Qtd. in Jill Pesselnick, "Picture This," *Billboard*, 19 January 2002, p. 72.

38. Season sets of *Friends*, *Sex and the City*, *The Simpsons*, *The Sopranos*, *Star Trek*, and *The X-Files* have been particularly successful, with each release selling hundreds of thousands of copies. See Dave Larsen, "DVDs are on the rerun," *Toronto Star*, 11 May 2002, sec. J, p. 5; Cindy Spielvogel, "Tis the Season of Sell-Through," *Video Business*, 20 August 2001, p. 24.

39. Scott Hettrick, "Seinfeld prepping *Seinfeld*," *Video Business*, 12 May 2003, p. 6.

40. Mark A. Perigard, "On DVD," *Boston Herald*, 13 January 2002, p. 43.

41. Qtd. in Josef Adalian, "Fox out front with '24' DVD," *Variety*, 15 July 2002, p. 1.

42. Paul Sweeting, "Tune in for the next episode," *Video Business*, 23 September 2002, p. 12.

43. Sweeting, "Tune in for the next episode," p. 12.

44. Although many DVD box sets have not presented such attention to fidelity, most not only have, but have also promoted these efforts in their advertising. For example, the *Babylon 5* box sets restored the series to the widescreen aspect ratio it was originally shot in (instead of the traditional 4:3 ratio that it actually aired in), and include all episode promos. The DVD releases of the BBC series *Doctor Who* have featured an unprecedented degree of audiovisual reconstruction, to the point of digitally converting kinescopes of 1960s episodes "back" to their original videotape look.