

Just a Page for SFPA In Case

In case what? In case i don't do a real SFPazine this time, that's what.

I seem to have misplaced the mailing, and Jeff sent me a new one, but i haven't managed to get into it to continue beyond the few MCs i had managed to type before the former mailing disappeared.

So here's a page so i don't miss a mailing.

I'm sure that most of you have been to see *Lord of the Rings* by now -- we haven't. In fact, we haven't been to a movie since we went to see the "Jay and Silent Bob" movie. (Which we mostly enjoyed but agreed wasn't our usual thing.) We've rented some -- especially since we got the DVD -- but we haven't actually been to one. This is partly because Kate doesn't much like to go to movies in theatres and partly because the damned things are so expensive.

However, we got the DVD just after Chrstmas, and i installed region-free firmware the next day (we can now play discs released in England and Japan that we might not be able to get here: as an added effect, the new firmware also switches off the MacroVision copy-protection).

Since we got it, we have ented and watched *Mad Max*, *The Score*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Analyze This*, *Terminator 2* (Special Edition), *Space Cowboys*, the "director's cut" of *Leon* ("The Professional"), both recent "Mummy" films, *The Fast & the Furious*, *Crouching Whatsis Hidden Whosis* (fill in "Tiger" and "Dragon" as appropriate, i never can remember which goes where), *Monty Python & the Holy Grail* (which i hoped was the Special Edition with

the animated Legos singing, but wasn't) *Jacob's Ladder* and *Time Bandits*; I'm hoping to get hold of *Labyrinth* soon..

(By the way, i do not recommend *The Score*; if you want a decent film with DeNiro, try *Analyze This*. *The Score* is just plain Boring.)

Purchased, meanwhile, are *Iron Giant* (I swore a Mighty Oath back when i first saw it that that would be my first DVD) two Jackie Chan films in a twofer package (*First Strike* and *Rumble in the Bronx*), *Battle Beyond the Stars* and *Run-away Train* (RT was \$9.99 new at Blockbuster; i couldn't resist.)

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Our DVD is an APEX 1500, bought for \$88 at Wal-Mart. Not a bad machine. Some Advice: if you decide to buy one, shop around between various stores that carry it, checking the serial numbers on the boxes, to make sure that you get one that has a number beginning A1500XXXXX, B1500XXXXX, C1500XXXXX or D1500XXXX. Do not get one that begins with SV1500XXXX; units with serial beginning with just 1500XXXX are a toss-up.

Why am i being so picky about the serial number? If you get one with the A, B, C or D numbers i recommend, you can download a new copy of the firmware taken from a region-free Australian machine, make a CD-R of it (assuming you have a CD burner or know someone who does) and flash machine's firmware to not only make it region-free but to also shut of the MacroVision copy protection so that

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intended for the January, 2002,
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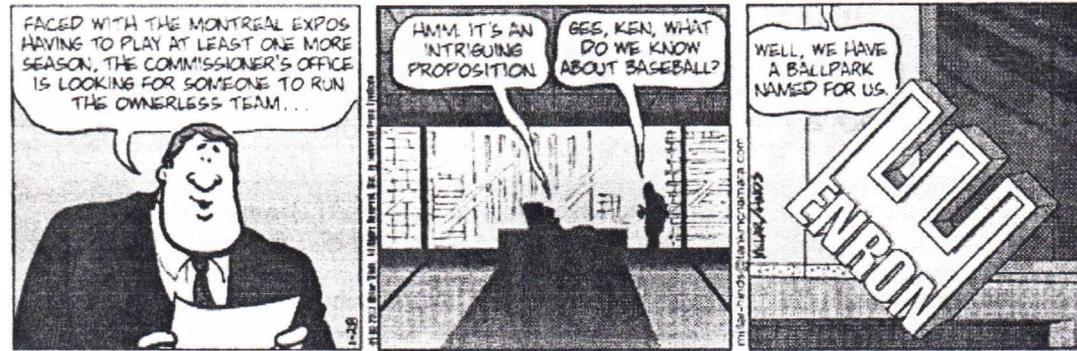
you can copy DVDs to VHS, if you were to want to do a silly thing like *that*.

How To Do It:

Get an APEX1500 with one of the recommended serial #'s.

Go to http://www.dvd-wizards.com/darrenk/Hiteker_1000/1000_firmware.htm, where you will find notes on the machine, and instructions for downloading the appropriate firmware.

Download the firmware, burn it to a CD-R or CD-RW in accordance with instructions, and then follow the instructions for flashing the firmware,



Vi-o-LA! The trick, she is done!

How will you know that it worked, absent someone to borrow Region 2 discs from and try them? Well, it should change the screen-saver your machine puts up when you wait too long on a static screen; that's the most obvious symptom. Some people report that the remote control works better after flashing -- I'm skeptical about this.

A quick test you can perform, however, involves copy protection. Before you flash the ROM, try to copy a disc to your VCR (this test is only valid using VHS; if you still have a Beta, don't bother to try this, as MacroVision doesn't affect Beta, anyway).

You should not be able to copy to VHS. Then do the firmware flash. Try again to copy to VHS. If all went right, the MacroVision has been shut off, and a perfect copy results.

One bugaboo that i have heard advanced is that most non-Region 1 stuff will be in PAL format, not the NTSC that the US uses. So i borrowed a copy of the Brit Season One "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" set from Bill Rich. On the box, it clearly said "Region 2, PAL".

Played just fine on my NTSC-only teevee.

I am of the opinion that the only difference between NTSC and PAL DVDs is the frames-per-second rate (and apparently the machine automatically corrects that) -- that the image-storage method used on the disc is, in fact, a computer-based compressed digital video image form that is neither NTSC nor PAL and that it's the machine you play it in that decides what comes out. (As a matter of fact, as has been pointed out to me, our machine's "Setup" menu includes a PAL/NTSC TV-type selector...)

On the other hand, however, there are indications that it may not properly decode PAL anamorphic-format discs. Have to find some to test, I guess.

The Latest in Our Series of Ludicrous Reviews

Found on Amazon:

Demolition Angel

Robert Crais

Good plot, poor vocabulary

Reviewer: A reader from Zanesville, Ohio

Demolition Angel has a good plot but the disgusting vocabulary detracts from the story. The frequent use of profanity makes the story unbelievable and gets in the way of the suspense at all turns. The author has put together a good plot with the potential for much suspense, and if he had a better vocabulary the book could be riveting. This book could rate 4 or 5 stars if the author knew the English language better and cleaned up the language.

