

OPINION

Free market at work with movie format

► High quality DVD technology successfully lures U.S. consumers

Predicting whether a new technology will become a successful consumer product can be tricky.

For example, the new high definition television is a giant step forward in picture clarity but has yet to catch the imagination of most consumers, probably because it is so pricey and they do not see enough added benefit over what they now have. In fact, the reception for HDTV has been so lukewarm that the government decided it must mandate it for future television sets in order for it to proceed in a timely manner.

Leaving out the debate over whether such a government mandate is right for a consumer product (it isn't), the fact is that most technologies must succeed on their own. The technology has to catch the imagination of consumers and be seen as either essential to their lives or a good value.

After the fact, it's easy to see why things caught on, but there is an even longer list of things that consumers rejected — products like the eight-track tape decks, which are now pretty much forgotten.

One new technology that has really caught on big time — much to the surprise of some analysts — is the DVD video format. Not only are DVD machines now sitting beside televisions in many homes but they are a popular feature on newer computers, where users can play very graphical games in addition to watching movies.

For the uninitiated, DVD discs are the size of music compact discs and offer a lot more space than the typical VHS video tape. This allows movie consumers to put "extras" like deleted scenes, documentaries, music videos and commentaries on the same disc as the movie, if they choose to do so.

Another big selling point of the DVD is that it is a digital format (like high definition TV) and therefore allows for significantly better sound and picture quality than video tape. DVD fans compare it to a movie theater experience — as long as one has a larger screen TV and a good stereo system. The difference is noticeable, however, even on "run of the mill" equipment.

Developers of the technology assumed that the extras and the higher quality would be popular with "videofiles" — the dedicated movie watchers who watch films repeatedly and can quote lines from them. But that is a pretty small portion of the consumer market — the key question was whether it would be adopted by the majority of consumers.

I must admit as an early



EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

adopter of the DVD format — back when it was hard to find movies to buy or rent in Yuma.

I had my doubts that consumers would put enough of a premium on picture quality and video extras to make it a success.

This doubt was increased when some major movie distributors resisted the format because they feared high quality copies could be made and because they didn't want to have to deal with dual formats — DVD and VHS.

But the answer came pretty quickly: that this was something that consumers not only wanted, but demanded. It has the fastest rate of acceptance of any consumer technology in history and in fact seems to be replacing VHS for movies, although for now VHS remains the TV recording option of choice because there is not yet an affordable DVD recording machine.

Some studios have reduced the number of movies they release on VHS, and movie rental stores are increasing space for DVD movies and reducing shelf space for VHS movies, a trend that is expected to continue.

The popularity of the format has resulted in a precipitous drop in prices, as usually happens with consumer electronics. Regular DVD machines that were once \$500 are now often selling for \$140 or less.

And movie studios that were once reluctant to get on board now are rushing to take advantage of the format, often offering special and more expensive collector's editions with lots of extras on them.

Research has shown that consumers really like the extras. Their favorite extra is the deleted scenes that didn't make it into the final movie. The extra content used to be pretty haphazard, but now movie studios are keeping the need for extras in mind as they do movies and producing special content.

The DVD revolution is evidence of the free market at work. When consumers see something they like and consider a good value, they will buy it — without any mandate from the government.

Terry Ross is editor of The Sun. E-mail: tross@yumasun.com Phone: 539-6870

WHEN ARIZONA WAS YOUNG Sheriff's job in early Yuma dangerous one ► James Dana didn't survive last confrontation on wrong side of river

BY FRANK LOVE

The Yuma County seat was in La Paz when James Dana was appointed sheriff to replace David King in January of 1868. Located about 100 miles north of Yuma near the river, the village was dying because the Colorado River changed course leaving La Paz some distance away. Residents were moving south to newly created Ehrenberg or to Yuma.

Then known as Arizona City, Yuma would become the county seat a year later. How much longer Sheriff Dana remained in dying La Paz is unknown, but he was in Yuma by November 1868. It was in that month a normally peaceful Texan, Bronco Bill Harbon, decided to get drunk and try to shoot Sheriff Dana.

A friend of Harbon's, Gilbert Welker, tried to warn him earlier that day to sober up if he hoped to stay out of trouble, but Bronco Bill ignored him. When Bill later entered Julius Samster's store and found the barber had quit and left town, he flew into a rage, firing his gun into the ceiling.

The sound of gunfire brought Sheriff Dana who demanded to know who was shooting. When Harbon denied firing the shot, Dana let him go, but had to face him again an hour later.

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Saloon and began bellowing that he would "capture the town before morning." Suspecting trouble from the drunk, Sheriff Dana visited his office to get handcuffs to use if he had to arrest Bronco Bill.

Entering the Jones' Saloon behind Harbon, Sheriff Dana told the inebriated cowboy to be peaceful. Bronco Bill responded by opening fire on the officer with his six-shooter. The sheriff responded with his gun. Within seconds, Harbon was on the floor, wounded twice by Dana's bullets. He was dead by morning.

Another argument between two men at a drinking party in January of 1870 led to a gun fight between party-goers, which brought Sheriff Dana to the scene. It ended with two men dead, another with a stab wound in the chest and a fourth with a badly bruised head resulting from it being struck with a six-shooter. After investigating, Sheriff Dana arrested Chico Fino and charged him with the two killings.

There was no newspaper in Yuma until 1871 when the Arizona Free Press began publication. Unfortunately, only two partial issues of that pioneer journal exist, so the story of the killing of Sheriff Dana in September of 1871 comes from other sources: James McClintock's book "Arizona: Prehistoric, Aboriginal, Pioneer, Modern" and the San Diego Union

newspaper of Sept. 28, 1871.

Sheriff Dana became involved when a Mexican woman's mutilated body was discovered in Yuma. Why Sheriff Dana suspected Indians of her murder is unknown, but he decided to take a posse led by Constable O.F. Townsend to the village across the river to question some Quechans.

The San Diego paper suggests that Dana wanted to search an Indian home for evidence. Why the sheriff and his posse crossed the river into California where he had no authority is not explained in either of the sources. If he believed Quechans were involved in the death of the woman, he should have called upon California authorities to investigate. Louis Jaeger, the pioneer ferryman who lived on the west side of the river, often acted in official matters involving people living there. It would appear that Sheriff Dana was out of his jurisdiction.

The Quechan villagers resisted the invasion. They have reasoned that since they were in California, Yuma officers had no right to be there.

A general battle followed with the posse fighting the family and relatives of the man Sheriff Dana wanted to question, a Quechan known as Big Charlie. Several Quechans were killed including Big Charlie, his mother and father.

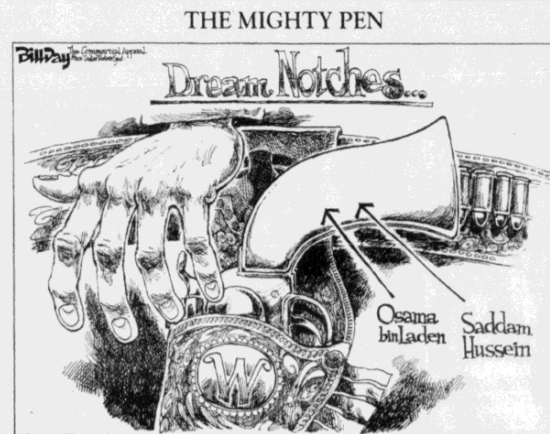
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die easily. Sheriff Dana ignored her, thinking that she was no threat. He was wrong. The woman suddenly grabbed an axe, striking the sheriff in the shoulder. He responded by shooting her, and turned his attention to other fighting going on around him. That was a mistake also because a cousin of Big Charlie fired an arrow at the sheriff, killing him. Before the posse could react and seize Dana's attacker, the Quechan fled.

McClintock's account of what followed is very difficult for this writer to accept. He suspects it is myth, but has no evidence it is untrue.

McClintock reported that the Quechan who killed Sheriff Dana managed to escape across the border into Mexico. The name of Dana's killer wasn't given in McClintock's book. It claims Yuma authorities decided they had to punish the sheriff's killer and told the Quechans he had to be put to death. McClintock wrote that the Quechan chief agreed and designated the Indian's brother to kill him. The book claims the Quechan was invited back across the border to attend an Indian feast. When he came, he was beaten to death with a club used by his brother. Do you believe that? I don't.

FRANK LOVE is a local historian.



Pigs pretty bright, but chickens OK, too

George Orwell was right about pigs. But he sold the chickens short.

In Orwell's "Animal Farm," the pigs lead a revolt to overthrow their human oppressor and take over the farm.

New research by British scientists indicates that nonfictional pigs are, indeed, pretty bright. Just as Orwell suggested, pigs demonstrate "cunning" behavior, use aggression to establish a social order and can exploit colleagues to obtain food.

But the same researchers say chickens aren't the dumb lackeys Orwell described. They are more akin to the industrious poultry from the animated film "Chicken Run," who build an airplane and quite literally fly the coop. It seems chickens learn from each other, can adapt their behavior and can navigate.

TORONTO GLOBE AND MAIL

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Debate different today

The Editor's Notebook by Terry Ross on Sept. 1 regarding the use of Colin Powell's philosophy for justifying conflicts was appropriate for our involvement in Desert Storm. At that time, we were confronted with a rogue nation's attempt to take control essentially of the world's oil supply.

The current debate is not about a rogue nation taking control of oil but rather an agenda of terrorism throughout the world. Hitler came to power in the 1930s and began to implement his Third Reich's agenda. At this moment in history, our political leaders had the opportunity to quickly stop him with minimum military and political effort but lacked the courage and political will.

Many claim that the coalition forces in Desert Storm failed to remove Saddam from power. However, the United Nations resolution was limited to only removing him from Kuwait, with the hope that would cause his downfall. Honestly, the integrity of the United Nations should be seriously questioned when they appoint Libya to chair their Civil Rights Commission and initially removed the United States as a sitting member. We should also consider how many member nations of the United Nations represent dictatorships or other rogue governments denying civil rights.

YOUR VIEW

Our readers are encouraged to voice their opinions on this page. Send them to: Letters to the Editor, The Sun, P.O. Box 271, Yuma, AZ 85366 or e-mail them to letters@yumasun.com

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There are those who argue that we need hard irrefutable evidence that Saddam or other rogue leaders are actually involved in terrorism or intend to use weapons of mass destruction (WMD) against others. Never mind that prior evidence and or events clearly demonstrate a past willingness to use such types of weapons. They would ignore common sense as part of the justification to eliminate what is clearly a worldwide terrorism threat to those in opposition. This is even an integral part of the liberals' rationale to revise history by arguing that using the atomic bomb on Japan was wrong.

The debate should not be based on concrete evidence connecting any dictator to supporting or covertly providing WMD to terrorist elements. The debate should be about whether we are willing to blindly accept

the use of WMD against us before we respond. Remember, liberals were quick to blame the current administration for failed opportunities by the previous administration. Are these same liberals and politicians publicly willing to be held accountable for their opposition to possible preemptive strikes?

We need to know which leader or politician is willing to passively accept blackmail by radical terrorist groups advocating their own religious interpretation of Islam. Consider this key fact of terrorism: radical terrorism has finally reached such a level that they recruit children to be active participants.

Certification important

Yuma Regional Medical Center's emergency certified physicians. How many of you would entrust your child's health care to an emergency certified physician if they had only taken a biology course in college? Then why entrust your children to emergency certified teachers in the classroom? Yes, they are certified: emergency certified! This means they have a bachelor's degree in some field.

Research shows it takes three years for a child to recover from being in the class of an ineffective teacher. Now, not all of these people are

ineffective and perhaps some who are regularly certified may also be ineffective. But if your first-grader is being taught to read by someone who has a degree in chemistry, I don't believe they have the same expertise as someone who has taken hours of instruction on how to teach reading.

If Yuma does not have enough qualified teachers, they need to recruit in areas that have an abundance of teachers. Ask your child's teachers if they are certified or emergency certified. It does make a difference in your child's education!

BETH MCKERNAN

32nd Street looks junky

Why is it every time someone rents out a piece of property on 32nd Street it becomes a junk yard or just looks junky?

It definitely doesn't say to newcomers or tourists that come to check us out: What a beautiful place to live, I think I would like to make this my home.

They are really making an effort in old Yuma to make this a nice place to live or visit. Can't we do something about 32nd Street for people who have to go by the junk yard area to get there. If they are going to use all of these rented pieces of property for junk, make them put a fence up high enough to cover the unsightly mess.

CAROLE MCKENZIE

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