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MARKETPLACE

December 19, 2001 Wednesday

HEADLINE: Martin Kaplan, USC, discusses DVD players

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BODY:

DAVID BRANCACCIO, anchor:

You could always alter content with old-style VHS videotapes, like when you taped an episode of "Buffy" over the master tape of your wedding video. But digital video technology is making your ability to customize content a more subtle art, dare I say it? Joining me to discuss this and other media business and content matters is Martin Kaplan, associate dean of the Annenberg School for Communication at USC.

Hello, Marty.

Mr. MARTY KAPLAN (Annenberg School of Communications): Hello, David.

BRANCACCIO: This is fancy stuff that DVDs will be able to do?

Mr. KAPLAN: Yes. Very soon, a company called Trilogy entertainment will be releasing a product called Movie Mask. And with it, any home viewer will be able to alter the DVDs that they're watching in order, for example, to change the rating, so that sex or violence or language could be appropriate to somebody in their family, whether or not it was released with that rating.

BRANCACCIO: This is when my 12-year-old sees the billboard for that movie, "Not Another Teen Movie." 'I want to see it, Dad,' and then I notice that it's an R-rated movie, and I have to say no. This technology might be able to offer up a bowdlerized version.

Mr. KAPLAN: Yes, indeed. And it could do so now with about 500 titles for which they have done the programming, so that as you're watching, say, "Titanic," Kate Winslet's nipples will not be visible and...

BRANCACCIO: Wait, I need a G version of that.

[SOUND OF TAPE REWINDING]

Mr. KAPLAN: As you're watching, say, "Titanic," Kate Winslet's chestal area will not be visible, and if you're watching "The Matrix," if you so choose, instead of seeing bullet

holes, they can be masked by kind of "Batman"-style comic book inserts. It puts the power of the editor and the director and the final cut in the hands of the consumer, which, of course, drives directors and studios crazy.

BRANCACCIO: So Spielberg has his head in his hands over this notion that his cut of the film could be altered by Marty Kaplan in the privacy of his own home.

Mr. KAPLAN: Whereas, in fact, every viewer of every film is altering by, for example, speeding through a boring scene, putting it on pause to go to the bathroom or make popcorn. The reader, the viewer, the consumer is already a co-creator in the product. What the studios and the directors don't like is that any particular version might be available to others.

BRANCACCIO: What's the business model for this technology? Are they going to charge you for the template for each movie, or do you buy a box initially?

Mr. KAPLAN: You buy the initial software, retail 50 bucks--no doubt, cheaper on the street--which gives you the right to use all the stuff that they put on their online center, so that as new movies are released on DVD, the new technology to edit them is made available. In addition, you can buy for--retail for 300 bucks the developer's tool, which allows you to take any picture you have and create a new version. So, for example, if I want to put David Brancaccio in place of Tom Cruise, I can, for God knows what reason, do that, too.

BRANCACCIO: Marty, thank you very much.

Mr. KAPLAN: Pleasure.

BRANCACCIO: Martin Kaplan is also director of the Norman Lear Center at USC.

LOAD-DATE: December 20, 2001