

Who Remembers...Blockbuster Video?

Here is another installment in our *Who Remembers?* series. You can browse previous articles by using the search bar on the right or by clicking **here**. These articles are strolls down memory lane. In some cases, the buildings, but new businesses have replaced them. In other instances, the buildings or even the properties have been razed. Instead of a building, it may be a TV show, personality, or commercial that no one longer exists. Either way, it can't stop us from taking the Memory Lane stroll!

As always we would rather this be a discussion. No one knows this area better than those who grew up here! Please, leave constructive criticism, feedback, and corrections. We'd love to hear your anecdotes. Please share!

The other day I showed my daughter an image that had a cassette tape and a pencil in it that was captioned "Kids these days will never know how these 2 go together." It got me thinking about VHS or videotapes – remember "Be kind, rewind"?

It seems like a convoluted idea today, but the concept of going to a store to pay to borrow a movie or video game for a few days was once a common, accepted part of everyday life. In fact, hardly a weekend would go by without a trip to the video store to grab 2-3, or 6 movies, perhaps a game. Of course, you could get candy, popcorn, even soda to complete the concept of bringing the movie theater to your living room.

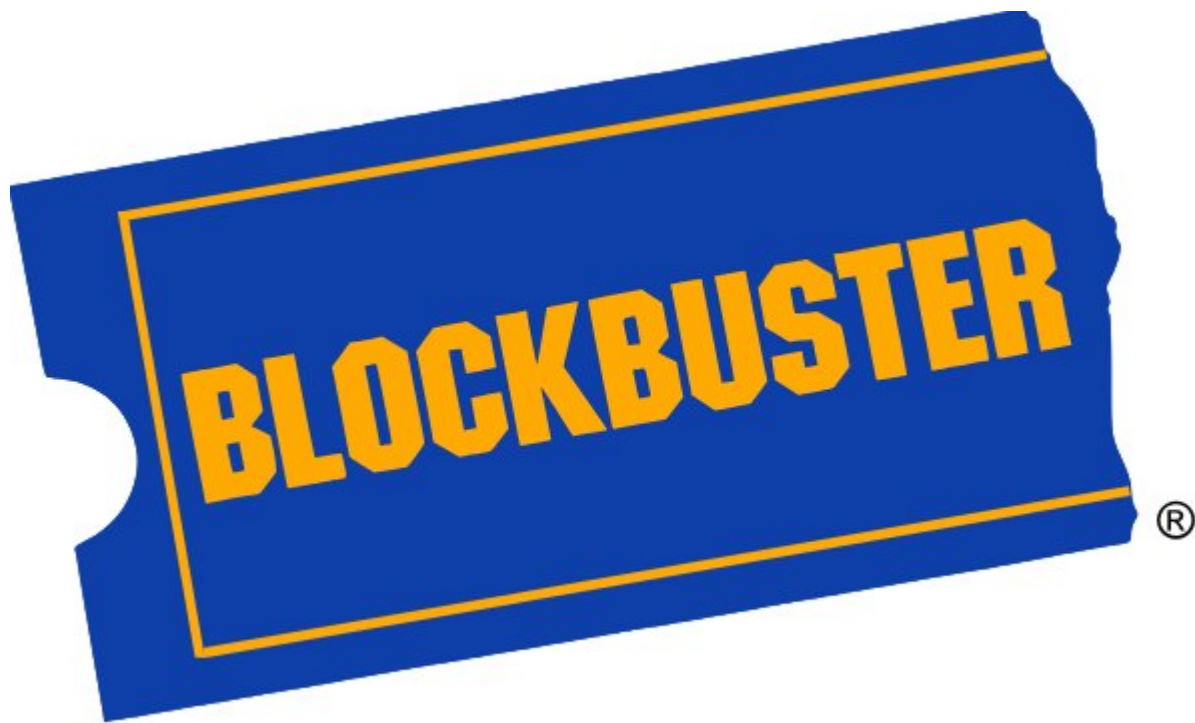


Ironically, the business model seemed to be one based on generating revenue on the reliability of human fallibility. Is it an urban legend that Blockbuster generated a significant amount of their revenue – even the lion's share – from late fees?

Why was this even a “thing”? For the younger generation, it may be hard to believe but there was actually a time when movie theaters had ushers. If you talked a lot or were generally disruptive during the movie, an usher would ask you quiet down and being asked more than once, could get you kicked out. You could even be walked down the aisle to an empty seat – which was needed because an usher had a flashlight in an era before you could simply bust out your cell phone to light the way.

When theaters began to eliminate the usher job – sending it into the bin with pinboys, the milkman, caller-ups or one of the other forgotten occupations and services – anarchy ensued and the atmosphere in a movie theate deteriorated.

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This allowed anyone and everyone to do whatever they wanted in the theaters and how many of us have had a movie ruined by disruptive people? All of us. Now, it is just accepted as part of going to the movie theater.

Since people got fed up with disruptive people, Blockbuster and other movie rental stores saw a need and in 1985, Blockbuster Video opened their first store in Dallas, Texas. By the early 90s and a bunch of mergers and acquisitions, Blockbuster spread like wildfire across the nation and had hundreds of stores and continued to open stores until its peak in 2004 when they were found the world over in their 9,000 stores – half of which were in the US alone.

How did they go from such popularity to their demise in 2013? Starting with video on demand services, and then automated movie kiosks like Redbox, and of course, Netflix they slowly struggled. Don't forget that when Netflix first started and was competing with Blockbuster they would mail you DVDs and weren't known for what they are famous for now: streaming movies.



Have a memory to share about Blockbuster video? What do you miss most? A topic to suggest for the next "Who Remembers...?" Comment below or send an email to infor@newbedfordguide.com.