



- [Home](#)
- [About](#)

- [Uncategorized](#)
- [Horror](#)
- [Comics](#)
- [VHS](#)
- [Collecting](#)
- [Weirdness](#)
- [Cartoons](#)
- [Groovy Stuff](#)

[Home](#) » [Collecting](#), [Groovy Stuff](#), [VHS](#), [Weirdness](#) » Indie Filmmaker Sean Mannion Looks to the VHS

Underground World to Help Shape His New Film MEME! But He Needs YOUR Help, too!

Indie Filmmaker Sean Mannion Looks to the VHS Underground World to Help Shape His New Film MEME! But He Needs YOUR Help, too!

Posted by [Lunchmeat](#) on October 2, 2013

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Guided to the culture based on its displays of passion, and convinced by an analog oriented event hosted by terrific Tapeheads Rob Hauschild of [Wild Eye](#) and Matt D. of [Horror Boobs](#), NY based indie filmmaker Sean Mannion has elected to set [this full length feature](#) against the backdrop of the underground VHS collecting circuit... but not in the way you might think. It's not horror or sci-fi or even some zany sexploitation romp. No, sir, Mannion's foray into feature film entails one woman's dramatic journey through the strange and surreal world of unanswered questions stemming from a mysterious VHS tape she's uncovered at VHS swap meet. Sounds intriguing, right? It is. Read on, my fellow Tapeheads, and learn why Mannion and his film [MEME](#) have decided to drift into the analog outskirts...

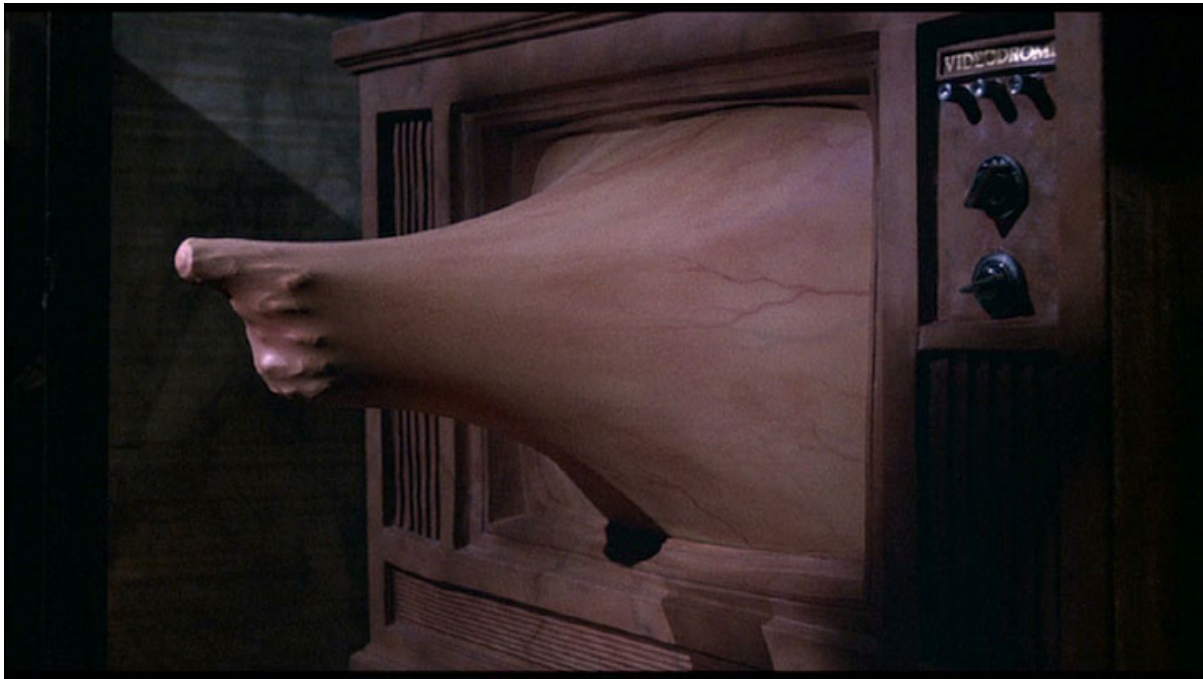


One of the many groovy VCR interior shots from the [Kickstarter promo video](#). DIG IT.

Can you tell us a little about your filmmaking history and / or how you got into making movies?

I've been making films for about 5 years now. I moved to New York City in 2008 (right after the crash, because I'm smart like that) to study film. I've always been a big fan of film. Growing up in the 90s with the home video revolution in full swing really enabled me to explore a wide variety of films.

One particular moment I recall is my uncle loaning me his copy of [VIDEODROME](#) when I was about 15. I fell in love with that movie and it continues to be a major touchstone for my work and influences what I make in subtle and significant ways.



You WILL make movies. You WILL be the NEWWW FLESSHHHH.

Tell us a little about MEME. What's the film all about? Can you give us an idea of the atmosphere, the feel? How did the idea come to you?

MEME is a film about a young woman seeking out the creator of an odd video tape she discovers at a video swap she attends with her boyfriend. The movie is a surreal drama. It takes a fairly typical young woman, Jennifer, and pushes her into an increasingly bizarre world until she comes out the other end a more independent, whole human being.

The film started out over a year ago as an outline I wrote in the middle of the night for a sequel to VIDEODROME. I had been hearing that they are planning a remake and I just thought that was a terrible idea, but I could see a sequel. Ultimately, though, the tone is closer to Cronenberg's [CRASH](#), a dark drama.



The main character Jennifer (played by Sarah Schoofs) gets all tangled up in some VHSecrets. Gonna be tough to rewind this bad boy.

This film is set in sort of VHS collector underground world. What made you want to set it in this sort of universe? What is it that attracts you to this subculture? Do you collect VHS yourself?

I am not a VHS collector myself, but I find myself drawn to people who are. I initially encountered VHS collecting when I attended Horror Boobs “VHS Possessed!” event at [NiteHawk Cinema](#) in Brooklyn. I was going as a long-time horror fan and was blown away by the VHS collectors I met, including [Matt D.](#) I was soon after that that I made a note to myself that VHS collecting would make a great element for one of my films.

My attraction to the community is the passion I see in it. I recently watched [REWIND THIS!](#) and I was enthralled by the passion of the interviewees in the film. The love for this format inspires me. It reminds me of what VHS meant to me as a kid. Being able to rent and watch films at home and repeatedly (I probably wore out a few copies of [TRANSFORMERS: THE MOVIE](#), when I was little).

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The flyer for the fateful night of analog inspiration for Sean. Matt D. exorcised a VCR at this dig. BOSS.

What are your personal views on underground tape trading, and the possibility of so many obscure and esoteric bits of information passing from one hand to another utterly under the radar? Does this have any bearing on the makeup of MEME?

I think that the underground tape trading phenomenon is great, because if it weren't happening I think we'd be losing a lot. Not that necessarily everything that is being saved under the radar is in and of itself important, but I think that saving the fact that it existed and the existence of the home video phenomenon is important. Particularly important as it was the start of everything that dominates our media consumption today. Hulu, Youtube, Netflix or Amazon Instant Watch, and even just watching porn on the internet all owe their existence to the revolution that happened with home video in the 80s and 90s.

As far as MEME, the themes of media consumption and creation have been prevalent in a lot of my films, but MEME is sort of the ultimate expression of these themes. So, it seems that going to this sort of source for freedom in a certain kind of media creation, VHS, is the ideal way to express these themes. In addition, VHS is physical. YouTube isn't physical and Hulu isn't physical. You can't really discover something there as a unique object. In talking to Matt D. of Horror Boobs, he made a great point that absolutely fits thematically with MEME: VHS tapes are different from tape to tape and each person who watches it leaves a fingerprint on the content itself in watching the tape. Each VHS tape we watch is a unique experience, because of everyone else who has ever watched the tape before.



A fantastic mock-up of what MEME might look like on VHS. Go, Sean, Go!!

You have a Kickstarter going right now. What's the goal, how long do you have, and what are some of the incentives? I see you got a VHS version on there, which is RAD.

Our goal on [Kickstarter](#) is \$16,000, a lot of money, but not much to make a film. We're keeping our budget very tight. As of today, Wednesday, October 2, we have 7 days to go until our time is up on [Kickstarter](#).

Most of our incentives are different ways to watch the film, and yes, one of those versions is a VHS bootleg of the movie. I thought that that would be a fun and thematically appropriate thing to offer. Other than just watching the movie every single backer gets exclusive access to some special video extras we've produced. Other incentives are things like getting props from the movie, pre-production materials to see how the film evolved, an invite to the screening of the final cut with cast & crew, or even a night of karaoke with me (which I'm told is a lot of fun).

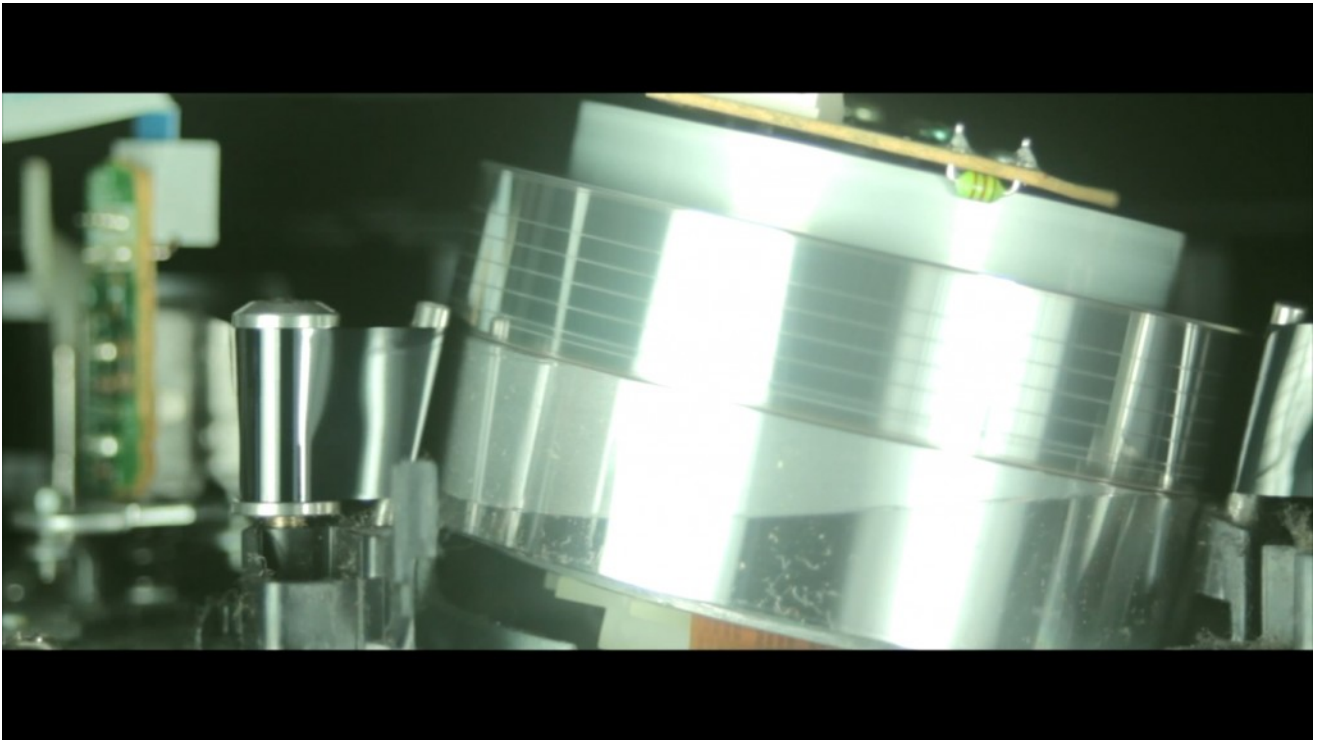


Star of MEME Sarah Schoofs reads the back of some big box adult fare for an inventive reward on the Kickstarter. Actually, a good deal of the cast reads porno copy from boxes. NOISH.

Why do you think it's important to preserve VHS?

Until recently I thought it was just a cool idea for people who love VHS. Recently, though, I learned just how many films are still only available on VHS and I realize that it's just as important to preserve them as it is any other kind of film. Regardless of the quality of the individual videos, I think it is important to preserve VHS to preserve that era that really made our modern media consumption a reality.

The example that I go to when talking about VHS is *THE RING*. I don't think that you can experience *THE RING* as well on a format other than VHS, because of its content. The first time I watched it was on VHS and that was great, but, as much as I love the film, it hasn't been quite as engaging watching it in other formats.



Annd here's another VCR interior shot from the promo video, just 'cause I think they look super-rad. They do.

Anything else you'd like to say to all the Tapeheads out there?

Come and check out our project! Send me a message and keep me honest about Tapeheads and VHS. While the VHS underground isn't everything MEME is about, I think we have a lot for you to get into with our project. The last thing I want to do is misrepresent the passion that I've seen in meeting Tapeheads and in seeing them in documentaries like *REWIND THIS!* And thank you for preserving this format whether you're doing it for the sake of preservation or just because you dig the movies... you're awesome.

Hey, Sean, you're awesome! We're stoked that you're stoked on our passion, and I'm sure any insight you might want, all you gotta do is ask. Us Videovores ain't shy! This film looks like it's going to be quite an interesting ride and I'm excited to see how the VHS collector world melds into the makeup of the film. But, in order to see that, they've gotta hit their goal! So, [be sure to groove on over to the MEME Kickstarter](#) and give a couple bones if you can. And if you can, go for the amount with the bootleg VHS incentive. It's mad groovy.

[Groove and Groove and Support Indie Filmmaking.](#)

Josh Schafer

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Designed by [Dale Compton](#)