

Selection Tool Review

Citation

Pitman, R. (2011). *Video Librarian Online: The Video Review Magazine for Libraries*. Retrieved from <http://www.videolibrarian.com/index.html>

Description/Overview

According to the *Video Librarian* website:

Video Librarian is the video review magazine for public, school, academic, and special libraries, as well as video fans who are interested in a wider variety of titles than what's found in the average video store. Written by staff, librarians, teachers, and film critics, *Video Librarian* offers over 225 critical reviews per issue, alerting readers to upcoming new releases of special-interest, documentary, and video movie titles. In addition, we inform our subscribers of video bargains (and free videos) and track technological trends.

Video Librarian Plus! adds online access, offering subscribers both the print magazine and online access to a searchable database of over 22,000 full-text video reviews, a searchable database of nearly 1,000 video distributors, breaking news, and a months in advance video release calendar. (*About Video Librarian: Overview*, 2011)

The print magazine has six issues a year. A yearly subscription is \$64. The print magazine plus online subscription is \$99 a year. The *Video Librarian* website indicates that *Video Librarian* is “[a]vailable through major subscription agencies (such as EBSCO, Popular, EVA, Black, W.T. Cox, etc.)” (*About Video Librarian: Subscription Information*, 2011). While *Video Librarian Plus!* members have access to both the print magazine and the online resources, there is free online access to a preview of the current issue as well as access to new DVD/Blu-ray reviews that are addendums to the current issue of the print magazine.

Audience/Library Description

As stated in the *About* section of the *Video Librarian* website, this tool is appropriate for those who select videos in any type of library setting, whether a public, school, academic, or special library. The types of videos that are reviewed range widely. Some are new releases, classic films, documentaries, and TV shows. The reviews of documentaries indicate the audience or audiences for which the item is appropriate, either by grade level or library type.

Critique

Strengths

The *Video Librarian Online* website appears to be very easy to use. Without access to the subscription-only features, it is difficult to determine the usefulness of those tools, but the print plus online package seems very desirable. With *Video Librarian Plus!*, librarians have access to

the print magazine as well as a database of reviews, distributors database, video news briefs, new releases calendar, a bi-weekly DVD/Blu-ray Selection Guide, and other online resources.

Based on the freely available reviews in the *New Videos Review* section (the addendums to the current print issue) of the Video Librarian Online website, the reviews function more as summaries but do end with whether or not the reviewer actually recommends the title for purchase. Each review also provides a starred rating. For example, one star indicates a poor rating, two is fair, three is good, and four denotes an excellent film. The reviews in the TV & Classic Film category also provide information about whether or not the film is deemed purchasable along with a starred rating. In the documentaries category, the reviewer provides information about whether the film should be purchased or not, gives a starred rating, and also indicates the audience or audiences for which the item is appropriate. Under the audience level heading, denoted by *Aud* at the bottom of each review, a K denotes Preschool-Kindergarten level; E is Elementary (grades 1-3); I is Intermediate level (grades 4-6); J is Jr. High (grades 7-8); H is High School (grades 9-12); P is Public Libraries; and C is Colleges & Universities. The inclusion of audience level is especially helpful for school libraries.

Weaknesses

Librarians need to be cautious that not all of the reviews are written by teachers or librarians. According to the *About Video Librarian: Overview* webpage, reviewers also include film critics. Several of the contributing writers listed write for Amazon.com. There is also a list of additional contributors, but there are no listed credentials.

Another weakness is that the reviews are mostly summaries of the content. It is difficult to determine why a title received three stars, for example, without a lot of commentary. While Amazon.com reviews are much more emotional, sometimes not as well written, and can be written by anyone, librarians should not neglect using Amazon.com reviews along with the reviews in *Video Librarian*. Useful information can be gleaned from customer reviews. For example, the review of PBS's *Elsa's Legacy: The Born Free Story* in *Video Librarian* (see the review in the *New Video Reviews: Docs & Other Reviews* webpage) indicates that it is a recommended documentary, but an Amazon.com review of PBS's *Elsa's Legacy: The Born Free Story* indicates there is a better version of the documentary that was filmed by the BBC, *The Born Free Legacy*. The customer review indicates that the BBC version is not available, but if it were, librarians would also need to consider this title.

Special Features

Besides the other features previously mentioned, another interesting feature is that librarians can submit DVD or Blu-ray titles for review. There are specific guidelines for submissions, however, which can be found in the *About Video Librarian: DVD/Blu-ray Submission* webpage.

Recommendations

The added value content available with the Video Librarian Plus! subscription package is

highly desirable. At only \$99 a year, the content found in both the magazine and online resources serve as valuable tools in the selection of DVD/Blu-ray titles for libraries with DVD/Blu-ray collections.

Pages Reviewed

About Video Librarian: Contact Us. Retrieved from

<http://www.videolibrarian.com/about/contact.html>

About Video Librarian: DVD/Blu-ray Submission. Retrieved from

<http://www.videolibrarian.com/about/submission.html>

About Video Librarian: FAQ's. Retrieved from <http://www.videolibrarian.com/about/faq.html>

About Video Librarian: New Issue Preview. Retrieved from

<http://www.videolibrarian.com/about/newissue.html>

About Video Librarian: Overview. Retrieved from

<http://www.videolibrarian.com/about/index.html>

About Video Librarian: Subscription Information. Retrieved from

<http://www.videolibrarian.com/about/subscription.html>

New Video Reviews: Docs & Other Reviews. Retrieved from

<http://www.videolibrarian.com/othervideo.html>

New Video Reviews: TV & Classic Film Reviews. Retrieved from

<http://www.videolibrarian.com/dvd.html>

New Video Reviews: Video Movies. Retrieved from

<http://www.videolibrarian.com/newvideo.html>

Video Librarian Online. Retrieved from <http://www.videolibrarian.com/>