

## Ode to Video Warehouse by Amanda Adams

I was a kid in the '90s and early aughts in a teeny town in Northeast Georgia. Once robust with textile mills and manufacturing jobs, industry had slowly faded away, leaving most everyone we knew close to broke. Despite the piecemeal decline of an already small town, Toccoa had a relative bevy of video stores throughout the course of my formative years - maybe four or five. After childhood favorite Moovies (replete with a darling cow-themed store) closed and became a shitty Movie Gallery, my go-to video store became the Video Warehouse.

A dumpy storefront in a ramshackle strip mall, Video Warehouse was a small chain store (there were anywhere between 75 and 92 locations in the southeast in its heyday, depending on who you ask) that prided itself on new releases, as well as hard to find and classic titles. With garish yellow walls amplified terribly by bright fluorescent light, it felt like you were in a fish tank or maybe the waiting room of a really awful hospital. Ratty old posters for movies like *Armageddon* and *Rush Hour* lined the walls above the red rack shelving. It always smelled like a mix of mildew, cooking meat, and coconut oil in there – a byproduct of the leaky, crumbling drop ceiling and the shady tanning operation they had in the back. The carpet was threadbare and brown. The whole place felt sort of surreal and I was in love from the start.

New releases and popular rentals lined the outer walls of the store, but the real meat and potatoes of the place was the maze of genre shelves in the middle. I would always make a beeline for the horror section to gaze in terror at cases (I was, and still am, a huge chickenshit and it has taken me years to watch some of the movies whose covers I would ogle every week) like *The Gates of Hell* and *Dead Alive*. Thinking about the cover for *The Dentist 2* STILL freaks me the fuck out and I will probably never see it.

Once I would decide that horror was yet again too heavy, I'd let myself drift around, checking out the little islands of science fiction, independent, exploitation, and wrestling tapes. I'm the youngest of four; the baby of a family of much older, wilder brothers. By the time I was 10 or 11 I had the house to myself and my parents were so relieved to have a quiet, bookish kid around that I essentially had carte blanche to read and watch whatever the fuck I wanted. And oh boy did I. I have vivid memories of spending hours and hours at night (after my parents went to bed, natch) sitting on the floor, right under the TV, enthralled by movies like *3 Women* and *The Holy Mountain*. Seeing *Slacker* at 15 made me insufferable in a way that I have never recovered from. These new worlds were exciting and different and blew my little hillbilly mind – all for the low, low price of \$2.99 per movie!

By the time I was a sophomore in high school we had finally gotten internet at home (still pre-Netflix boom) and it became much easier to figure out what weird shit I wanted to watch that week (RIP relying on movie cover art). I'd find a director/producer/actor/whatever and rent as much of their work I could find in the store. Always drawn to outrageous camp (and nudity, duh), I'd find a deep, lasting love for the films of directors like John Waters, Russ Meyer, and Doris Wishman at the Video Warehouse. To be able to see so much so young was incredibly liberating and turned out to be crucial in shaping who I am now: a connoisseur of fine, esoteric trash.

Video Warehouse stayed open for a good while, finally shuttering around 2017. I was long grown by then and had already taken up with Atlanta's crown jewel video store, Videodrome. Nobody back home thought to tell me about it closing, so I didn't get to have any

sort of sentimental goodbye, but I will remember it fondly and often. RIP Video Warehouse, you were one of the greats.