

TODAY'S QUOTE

"New capabilities emerge just by virtue of having smart people with access to state-of-the-art technology."

White House technology adviser
Robert Kahn

VARIETY

E
TUESDAY
June 24, 2003
R W B G Y

If you've been watching full-screen-only movies on DVD, you are missing the big picture. Cinema summer school is now in session.



WIDESCREEN

By Randy A. Salas
Star Tribune Staff Writer

It's an important scene in the 1998 film "The Mask of Zorro": Caught stealing a crucial map, Zorro squares off against his smarmy nemesis, Capt. Harrison Love. The adversaries brandish their swords and prepare to duel.

Well, they do in the widescreen presentation of the movie. In the version that has

been modified to fit a regular TV screen, Capt. Love (Matt Letscher) faces the tip of the vigilante's sword. Zorro (Antonio Banderas) is no longer in the picture.

Ever since widescreen movies became popular in the early 1950s, watching them on a regular TV set has involved a com-

promise. Theater and TV screens have different proportions.

It's an issue that has become more visible as DVDs, most of which have widescreen presentations, spread to the masses.

Full-screen-only DVDs have begun to proliferate, with stores such as Wal-Mart catering to the uninformed by using stickers on the package that proclaim "No black bars!"

WIDESCREEN continues on E10

LESSON 1

Transferring movies from the theater to the home, in general, is a compromise because movie screens have different proportions than a regular TV set.

Unaltered screen-captures from the two-disc special edition of "The Mask of Zorro" (Columbia Tristar, \$27.95) illustrate the two main ways it's handled.

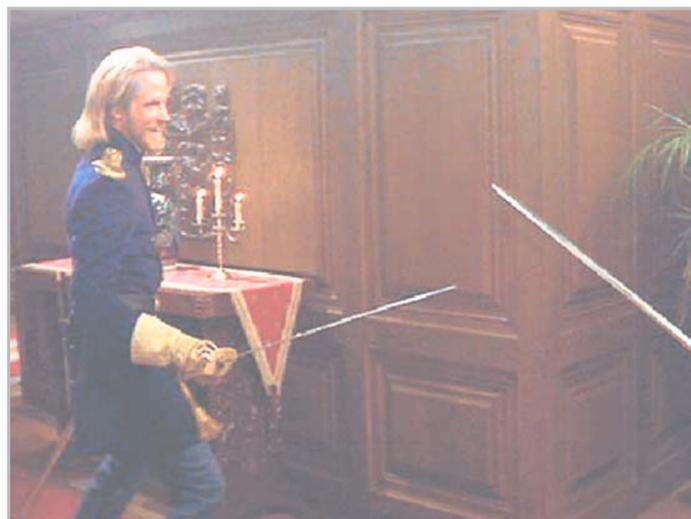


Matt Letscher, left, and Antonio Banderas in "The Mask of Zorro." Columbia Tristar Home Video

Widescreen

A widescreen presentation preserves the movie's original aspect ratio, 2.35:1 (2.35 times wider than it is tall), leaving blank space above and below the image on a 4:3-ratio TV screen. (These are not "black bars"; they don't cover any part of the theatrical image.)

Even though the overall picture is smaller, this viewing format is ideal because it doesn't truncate the movie image.



Pan and scan

A pan-and scan presentation modifies the movie's image — lopping off about 45 percent of it in this case — so that it fills a regular TV screen. A video editor chooses what part of the movie is shown by panning and scanning the image. Although the overall picture is larger, nearly half the movie is lost, especially noticeable in a film that has lots of side-to-side action.

DEET is buzzword in bug repellents

By Donna Halvorsen
Star Tribune Staff Writer

To slap or to slather. That is the question as more than a dozen species of mosquitoes buzz around Minnesotans this summer, looking for juicy pieces of unprotected skin to bite.

People who have grown tired of slapping have looked for repellents less harsh and less smelly than those containing DEET, an active ingredient in mosquito repellents since 1957. But while essence of peppermint or lemon grass might be more pleasant, studies show that botanical products don't have anywhere near the clout of DEET products.

DEET "remains the best deterrent," Consumer Reports said in its May issue. "Don't expect much from (non-DEET) repellents."

In lab tests of nine repellents, the magazine found two DEET products to be the most effective against mosquitoes and ticks: Ultrathon, developed by 3M, based in Maplewood, and Off Deep Woods for Sportsmen, made by SC Johnson of Racine, Wis. Both kept mosquitoes at bay for 13 hours. But Off Deep Woods for Sportsmen has three times as much DEET (100 percent) as does Ultrathon, and physicians urge using as little DEET as possible. Consumer Reports also found that Ultrathon kept ticks away for 10 hours and Off for seven hours.

HEALTH continues on E3

Multiplying like rabbits: Why so many this year?

By Karen Youso
Star Tribune Staff Writer

Grazing in the garden, chewing back-yard clover, rabbits appear to be hopping boldly about neighborhoods like never before.

But this year isn't really different from others, said Chris Goodwin, wildlife information officer for the Bell Museum of Natural History at the University of Minnesota.

A cry of "rabbit explosion" is heard every year about now, he said. But it's just the usual spike in numbers when the first broods of the season become adults.

SHORT TAKE

The weather is partly to blame. It's been wet and mild, and plants are lush, Goodwin said. Lots of food means lots of rabbits.

And suburban development — the kind of projects that make land useful for human habitation — helps rabbits thrive, too.

Beleaguered gardeners might try keeping rabbits out with a wire fence, 14 inches high and buried at least 6 inches.

Spray repellents, labeled for rabbits and available at garden centers and hardware stores, can be applied but must be re-

newed regularly. Other repellents include blood meal, bone meal, cayenne pepper or hot sauce with capsicum spread between vegetable rows or on the perimeter of the garden.

Homemade versions include mesh bags of human hair collected from salons (dirty, not shampooed) or slices of deodorant soap (Irish Spring is preferred) scattered about. Nondeodorant soap doesn't seem to work.

Karen Youso is at kyouso@startribune.com.



INSIDE

Backfence

James Lileks finds that a picture is worth a thousand words when readers deface the mug on his new column. **Turn to E2.**

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TOMORROW

Just neat books

Staff members review good reads that have crossed their desks, including one author's tales from a road trip, called "Passing Gas."