

Dangerous Secret Special Toys

by Vesperae

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To have a Fetish is to be a Collector – a Collector of experiences, of memories, and of media and artifacts of all sorts. And like our experiences and memories, the media and artifacts that we collect over time typically originate from a wide range of sources.

Those over 40, like me, will especially know what I'm talking about, because most of us vividly remember the pre-internet days, when outside of a smoking relationship, content to entertain a SF could only be found on TV, radio, in print media, and for some, via candid smoking videos shot on the sly in public places. Many of those under 40 will also know what I'm talking about, but the "Hunter-Gatherer" approach to acquiring smoking content is an experience that anyone who became an adult as an internet user will never really understand.

I don't see either group as having any kind of "advantage" over the other. As with so many other things, I think that the change was just a tradeoff of sorts. It's fantastic to have such a wealth of content produced for all different kinds of niche SF interests available 24/7, but there was also something to be said for the time when you had to *work* to acquire your Toys, and having invested a lot of patience and effort, there was often great joy in plucking some new bit of smoking-related content from the zeitgeist and adding it to your hard earned Collection.

Before I'd ever seen a print publication devoted to the SF, or went online at home, in the late 80s and 90s I was doing lots and lots and lots of videotaping – local news stories on smoking, national news stories on smoking, cable news stories on smoking, late night blocks of television on stations and networks that I knew were prone to showing a lot of Public Service Announcements, cable movies with smoking, sitcoms with smoking, trashy daytime chat shows where smoking was used to make a "guest" look bad, and on and on. I filled up thousands of VHS videocassettes with garbage for those few moments when I caught something wonderful and rare and incredibly exciting, like an anti-smoking PSA with an attractive woman that I'd never seen before, or a network evening news segment where a very attractive young woman lights up a cigarette outside of an office building, then goes inside to get a chest x-ray.

And especially in the 90s, as the noisy initial wave of the so-called "War on Smoking" was the recurrent top story in the news over several years, there was much for someone with a Taboo Fetish for smoking, like me, to find very pleasurable on the airwaves.

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I also borrowed and dubbed, as well as purchased, numerous anti-smoking educational VHS videocassettes, as well as anti-smoking PSA "presentation reels," which are compilations of one anti-smoking PSA after another from a given public health organization and given period of time, and these are some of my all time personal stash favorites.

But what to do with all these media gems?

I invested in a second editing VCR with a flying erase head so that I could make clean video "loop" tapes of all of my favorite source material, and a dual stereo cassette deck with dubbing capability so that I could make audio "loop" tapes as well. And I also invested in a 4-channel stereo analogue "weekend party DJ" mixer from Radio Shack for \$60.

With all of these clunky, bulky, wonderful boxes of circuitry and wires running everywhere, I could watch a prolonged video loop of a single smoking scene or looped montages while listening to audio from up to three different sources. (Living alone at the time came in very handy.) And one of the things that I've learned about myself over the years is that really good smoking commentary audio can be just as exciting as – and in some instances even more exciting than – really good smoking video. There is nothing quite like sitting in the dark wearing ear bud headphones and having the voice or voices of your choosing talking about smoking inside your head while watching smoking video and smoking yourself. If you read my last, you will immediately recognize that this is "Version 1.0" of the contemporary multimedia SF play experience that I describe in my [May–June](#) column..

I still have countless boxes of smoking video loop compilations, as well as another good sized box chock full of audio loop compilations. A few years ago, I was doing some poking around online to see what, if anything, was available to allow a user to capture analogue video and audio to a digital format, and found one highly recommended peripheral by a company called [Grass Valley / Canopus](#)

. Given the economy, I've been watching my money pretty carefully, and haven't yet felt comfortable enough to invest in a new gadget of this relative expense, but I'm sure that sooner or later, I'll be acquiring one.

About six months ago, I made the extremely unpleasant discovery that the dozens and dozens of cheapo spindle bundle CDs I burned over the last five or six years to back up and save my SF content almost all suffer from "digital rot," or the condition where the inks used to coat the CD have started to break down, making the original laser etch unreadable, and therefore making the data lost. Poof. Gone. And yet, I have audio cassette tapes that are nearly 20 years old that sound just as good as they did when I recorded them, so there is certainly something to be said for primitive analogue technology. And I've learned not to waste my money on CDs. I'm all about big fat external hard drives now.

A few weeks ago, I came across a link to a great video on the BBC site that was essentially a commentary piece by an attractive young female smoker discussing why she really enjoys smoking and has no desire to quit. The only problem for a Collector like me was that the video display was deeply embedded and the url of the clip was coded to be inaccessible for download, so the only way to experience the clip was to load it on the site and watch it live. So

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I spent some time digging around with my different web browsers and media applications to see if there was some way that I could save a copy of the file to view offline. I didn't find any convenient way to access the full video, but as I was digging, I noticed a function of Quicktime that I had never used before – the ability to capture live audio. And in a high-tech / low-tech workaround, I discovered that I could use the built in microphone and speakers on my Mac, and if I was very quiet, could manage to get a pretty clean ambient audio file recording of the clip by doing it on the fly.

This eccentric little moment reminded me of the time that I had borrowed a "stop smoking" hypnosis videotape from the public library that featured female narration with huge Dark Side audio appeal, but I only had a portable cassette recorder and a microphone at the time. I ended up making an audio recording of the video tape by taking a pint size deli container, cutting a hole in the bottom of it the size of the microphone, taping the microphone to the hole in the container, and then taping the container to the cover the speaker on the TV. The resulting recording has a bizarre electronic buzz that actually just happens to work with the content of the narration for me, and even though this is one of my most humbly acquired Toys, it's still one of my favorites.

And then I remembered that my Mac has a mini stereo line input, and after adjusting a few System Preferences in the Audio panel, I dug my old tape deck and a stereo RCA to mini stereo line input cable out of storage, and grabbed my dusty box of smoking audio cassette tape loops off my top closet shelf. I was Over the Moon – it worked perfectly for digital capture of analogue audio! My SF VHS collection would still have to wait for the Canopus, but I could now save, clean up, and edit smoking audio favorites from the distant past and enjoy them in ways that I never had before, and in conjunction with other smoking media that I'd never juxtaposed them with before.

I went looking for the "stop smoking" hypnosis tape of humbly engineered origins right away once I discovered the audio capture function in Quicktime. And then I remembered that the tape had gotten eaten by a crummy tape deck, and I found the old deck, and sure enough, the tape was still in it. With steady hands and determination, I slowly extricated the mangled tape from around the heads and pinch rollers, and managed not to break it. Then I got out a pencil, stuck it into the closest reel sprocket, and slowly wound up the three or four feet of loose tape and pinched the creases flat so that it would load evenly. Once all of the mangled tape had been taken up in the cassette, I still had about 90% of the side of the tape which was unmangled, all of which was loops of various segments of the source, so I hadn't lost anything, because I could still digitize all of the source content and retire the fragile, yet hearty cassette that had been so thoroughly used and abused over the years.

There is something really exciting about this whole process for me. It's not just reconnecting with old memories and old feelings, which is profoundly erotic for me in and of itself, it's also taking those memories and feelings farther; and with the passage of time and further experience, I find new things to hear and enjoy and think about when I listen to these voices from the past now, and I also get this strange sense of timelessness. When you have a Fetish, time can connect in very strange and convoluted ways, and the past often persists and can have just as much urgency and prominence as the present has. And when differing moments

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in time coincide for us, the combination can be mind blowing.

One of the ways that the internet and modern technology makes living with a Fetish safer is by making content compact and easy to hide. Files can be saved online and off computer, are completely portable, and can be accessed virtually anywhere, and on a host of desktop and mobile devices. Prior to all of this ubiquity and efficiency, there were only tapes and files and boxes, lovingly stashed and organized, and which you could look forward to opening up and digging through whenever you were alone and felt like playing. So many dangerous secret special toys, and somehow perhaps even more fun somehow due to their sheer physicality and discoverability.

And yet, I know that I'll never get rid of the clunky analogue physical artifacts in my Collection, even if I digitally capture them all. I love having them in their original form just as they first came to me.

And if I get pancaked by a trophy wife texting in her luxury SUV tomorrow, and my family is left to go through my things, I'm sure that there will be items in the closet that will likely raise a few eyebrows. But that's O.K.

"She came. She was kinky. She had fun."

I can live with that.

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Vesperae's discussion and DS multimedia forum:

[The Sublime Desire of Cigarette Smoking](#)