

## **“E.T. Phone Home”**

### **How Your Old VHS Movies Could Be Worth More Than You Think**



These days we're spoilt for choice. At the click of a button you can choose from hundreds of movies and TV shows on Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and other streaming suppliers that are hosted "in the cloud".

But if we turn the clock back, it wasn't quite so easy.

Back in the day, your media library was all about those sacred VHS tapes that you'd collect, requiring you to dedicate vast amounts of cupboard-space to store them.

And so, to continue my occasional series of articles on how items from the past might add, if only a little, to your retirement pot or your estate, (see my previous articles on “Investments of Passion”, “Old Car Tax Discs” and “Estate Planning for Investments of Passion”), here's the next thing you might want to consider rummaging around in your attic for.

From its invention in 1976 until the DVD takeover in the late 1990s, the VHS video format ruled supreme.

Since then, however, VHS has been an unloved format, but now anyone who still has a collection of VHS videos from the 1970's and 1980's could be sitting on a “Blockbuster” of a treasure trove.

The most collectible "classic" VHS movies, like *Back to the Future*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, and *Ghostbusters* could be worth over £20,000 at auction.

So, if you have any unopened videos still in their wrappers, tucked away in storage, it's worth checking how much they are going for at auctions these days.

VHS auctions are still quite rare, but they are worth looking into, especially if you're sitting on a pile of hit movies like *Star Wars*, *The Goonies*, *Superman* or *Rambo*.



Obviously, the majority of VHS tapes are only worth a pound or two at most, but unopened, vintage VHS tapes with studio watermarks can sell for more than £5,000, depending of course upon the 'cult' factor of the movie.

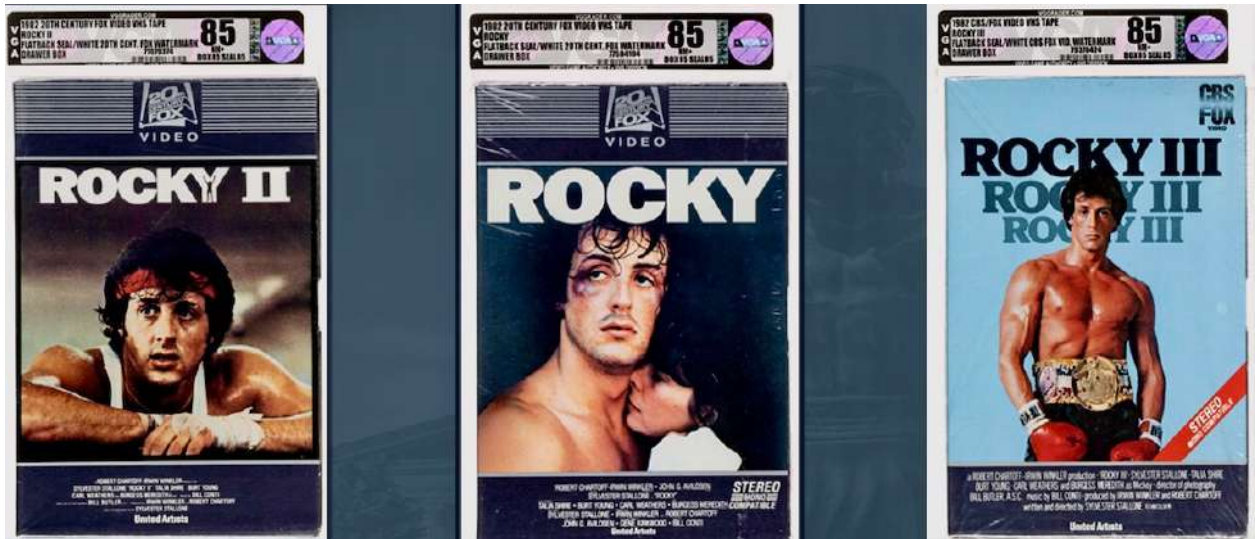
### Why Are VHS Movies Collectible?

There is a rise in the number of collectors, mainly in their thirties, forties and fifties, who grew up watching these films, and are now driving the value up, in a similar way to the increase in popularity of vinyl in the music industry. Formats that had been overlooked for years have again become part of popular culture.

A case in point would be the case of the *Rocky* videotapes, that were the centerpieces of a recent February 2023 VHS auction in the USA.

On Christmas Day 1982, when "Bubba" Kroeger was born, his father James decided to make a time capsule for him to open on his 40<sup>th</sup> Birthday.

In December 2022, when Bubba opened the capsule (or what his father called "a small gift"), he found that the trunk was filled with old magazines, tapes, road maps and more from 40 years ago.



Also in the capsule were three Rocky films, on VHS, that his father had included. They were unopened and sealed.

It turned out the VHS copies were the only known factory-sealed copies of the first three Rocky releases, making them extremely rare. The trilogy was sold at auction in February 2023 for \$53,750.

Other more recent sales of VHS tapes at auctions have sold for even larger sums, including Superman Beta (1980) which sold for \$40,000, Star Wars (1983) which sold for \$32,500, The Goonies (1986) VHS, which sold for \$50,000 and the aforementioned Back to the Future (1985) which sold for \$75,000.

The most valuable VHS tapes are those were released between 1977 and 1990 and still in their original factory shrink wrap.

What's valuable:

- Blockbuster films from the late 1970s - 1980s, released on VHS prior to the 1990's
- 1980's horror films
- Sealed tapes with a studio watermark
- Some early Disney copies that were released in the early to mid-1980's like Tron, The Black Hole and collections of early Disney cartoon shorts



So, if you have any 'vintage' unopened VHS tapes from this period, check with auction houses about the level of interest, and the current selling prices.

Now even though E.T. never actually said "Phone Home" in the movie (it was actually Gertie and Elliot who said it, as you [can see here](#) despite the fact it has become the most famous line from the movie), perhaps that VHS copy of "E.T. The Extra Terrestrial" from 1982 that you bought and never had time to take out of the packet and watch might just turn out to be worth a fortune.

