

L.A. BEAT

BRIEFING



"JFK," starring Kevin Costner, will practically go straight from theater to videocassette. It will be available on May 20.

Warner Bros. wastes no time getting 'JFK' out

How fast can a hit film move from the theater to the video store? The prevailing wisdom in the business said the passage requires a couple of months for distributors to promote titles and for stores to order videocassettes.

Now, however, Warner Bros. is halving that with its release of "JFK," which is to appear in video stores on May 20. If other studios follow Warner's lead with their top movies, some big hits could virtually step from theater to store.

Instead of releasing "JFK," which opened in theaters in December, in a summer already crowded with big titles (including "Cape Fear" and "The Addams Family" in June, and "Bugsy," "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle" and, possibly, "The Prince of Tides" in July), Warner Bros. suddenly circled "JFK" back to late spring and jumped into a time slot where there is no competition.

Warner Bros. would not discuss its marketing decision. Jim Salzer, the owner of Salzer's Video in Ventura, theorized, "They saw an opening and dropped this into it."

He and other dealers said they saw no problem with speeding up release schedules.

"There's no need to have that long an ordering period if you know what you're doing," said Rich Thorward, the owner of four Home Video Plus stores in Bergen County, N.J.

"The shorter time is good because the film is fresh in people's minds, and with it just coming out of theaters, you get more bang out of the theatrical advertising."

Salzer and other video-store owners said they needed movies more quickly to satisfy customer demand for new titles.

— Daily News wire services.