"...I got Brando, Redford, Nicholson and Streisand!!! Bill Goldman'll do script, Paul Simon'll do the score, Lumet'll direct!!...I got em all...Committed!!...I got a double-tier tax deal with a negative pick-up waiting at the wings and all I need is you!!..."

White Ox Films: Funding the Future

WOMEN ALIVE!
Interview with Joan Shigekawa

Other Ideas: Ed Lynch
EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Friends,

This is the first issue of the INDEPENDENT GAZETTE. It is an extension of the work of the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers Inc. in New York and is published through the participation and volunteer work of its membership as a service to and reflection of the independent film and video community.

The independent community began in New York City; it had to. Whatever may be said about our city, it is brutally real. New Yorkers know that the problems are not going to go away by themselves. We are learning a hard lesson and that lesson is teaching us that the rebirth of our city (and our country) depends on the rebirth of the community. Like the city, independent film and video artists are not assured of survival. The mechanism for that survival can only be created by ourselves. And it depends as much upon our successful communication with one another (our willingness to help one another) as it does on successful communication between us and our audiences. The creation of the AIVF was the beginning of that process. In the last two and a half years as our numbers increased we have experienced the growth of our strength, a vital cross-flow of information, a sense of belonging and our development as a force for change. It has been a good feeling.

As independent artists we speak individually through our work. Collectively we speak through our community and this newspaper. But we don't just speak about our films and tapes just as we don't make films and tapes simply about the process. Our work reflects our lives and visions as well as the lives and visions of others, be it in narrative or abstract, documentary or theatrical form. In this respect, whether or not you are a member of the AIVF, or even an independent film or video artist, the INDEPENDENT GAZETTE can be your newspaper as well.

The INDEPENDENT GAZETTE has the potential to become an essential element in the growth of the independent community. But to do this it must be an accurate and representative reflection of that community; not just in the city, but the state and country. We need a broad range of input, ideas and opinion. I hope you will consider the GAZETTE your newspaper and use it as such. We are all independent and we must have another vehicle for that vital expression.

Ted Churchill

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The Association gratefully acknowledges those whose contributions made possible the 1976-77 Annual Awards Dinner for independent film and video.

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How then to acknowledge the legions of unpaid people whose volunteer energies have enabled the Association to survive and grow in its first two years? To list all those who have given of their time and intelligence is an undertaking too vast to consider. Members have made speeches, brewed coffee, answered phones, sat through six-hour meetings, donated their films or tapes to be screened, stuffed envelopes, drafted statements, served on the Board, been ruled out of order, driven across town and country in the middle of the night, formed committees, transcribed tapes, turned their living-room couches into beds, borrowed their relatives' tracks and typewriters, come to the Association meetings to speak and share their expertise...unsung heroes and heroines....
ORGANISM:
From Time Compression to Time Capsule
An Interview with Hilary Harris

Interview by Ted Churchill
Transcriptions and editing by John Hiller

Organism is a macroscopic view of New York City which makes as analogy between living tissue and the structure of the city. Traffic arteries are seen as the bloodstream circulating through the urban body and its skyscrapers as the skeletal structure. The city's avenues, streets, railroad lines, shops, markets, bridges, beaches and parades are seen as parts of a delicately balanced living structure.

TC: In terms of production, Organism is very unique. I'd like you to talk about how it was done technologically and what it meant to you.

HH: I got into film through abstract films. I like to bring that up because people don't think of me in that field since I haven't done abstract films for a long time. My second film, Generation, was a completely abstract film of a kaleidoscope pattern and a very key film for me; I learned a lot making it. It took me a year to make and it only lasts three minutes. It was, or sort of formed for me, a kind of "esteeve" basis for my approach to film.

I'm often doing research on a kinetic generator which I hope, eventually, will evolve and allow me to do abstract films again. But I'm not ready to do that now. This gets complicated because at the same time I set up the studio I emerged with this idea for a feature film on New York City. It was fourteen years ago, right around 1962. I have put together various sketches for that film. I've shown them. I had a Lincoln Center showing sometime in '66 and then showed them in a Parks Festival a couple of years later. It kept evolving, and I have copies of those work prints. It's kind of interesting—when I get to a certain stage, I do a quarter-inch track. I do my own mixing on quarter-inch. It's not like a perfect locked-in sync, but it's close enough since I'm not using tip-sync in the film. Then, before I tear the work print apart, I make a stop copy of the work print which mashes the track.

Anyway, the film hasn't changed in its basic intent, which is to capture, to try to capture, what a city is really about on a certain gut and cerebral level, a combination gut/cerebral level. It's an attempt to have a holistic view of where we are in the city. It doesn't attempt to be a document; it attempts to be an interpretation, a crystallization of reality, so that after you've seen it you can relate to the city better, you can understand it better. That's the theory. And you can also take responsibility for it; that's the ultimate idea. You know, we're in a place that we're creating every minute, and we have to realize that, and we have to realize that it's alienating but also something we have to take responsibility for. It's too easy to become alienated and rejected, and I want a sense of involvement with it. So I'm looking at a lot of positive and negative aspects of the city and trying to just grasp the physical complexity of it; just on that level, to show that we're all embedded in a symbiosis.

Now Organism represents one of the themes of the big film, what I call a time-space theme. It's the most distant view of the city that you can get. It's like one of those aerial shots of seeing the islands lying there surrounded by the water and just contemplating the physicality of it and the mechanistic life of it on a purely kind of mechanistic/biological level. I tend to think of the city as nature, a physical kind of nature. I don't make a dichotomy between the city and the country because it is a special kind of nature and it has beauties and I'm trying to bring up some of those beauties. I think that helps us to love it better and to relate to it better. So Organism looks at this very distant view and sort of gives you a super perspective which gives you a special relationship. In the big film, that will be one strand, one theme.

Now the next thing I want to do is on the work symbolics, the work activity, the incredible way that we all depend on each other for life and existence in the city. We sort of take it for granted that we can go out and buy paper, a pack of cigarettes, a pencil, just like that on the corner without thinking that maybe half a million people made it possible and that it's all a part of this enormous service system that has evolved for the city. It's going to be a kind of lyric view of it, but it will be a more intimate, down-to-earth view than Organism is. But it won't be as intimate as the other themes in the film I want to get to after that one. I want to get into a social and political aspect of the city—the human struggle to try to progress, to progress to be on a social level and citywide level, and then, lastly, the most intimate level, which is the personal, the struggle to become. To do that, I'm going to get into intimate discussions between people, probably all in off-screen dialogue, in a kind of poetic juxtaposition where the personal problems also reflect the broader social problems and they all interconnect and everything starts weaving in and out. But the theme of human struggle coming through it all and moving toward the climax of the film...we're led gradually toward an abyss of not knowing what the hell we're doing. And that's part of any creative process. I find when I do a film, I find a lot of people share that with me, that we're willing to go through a place where we don't know what we're doing, where the struggle, whether it's personal, social or aesthetic, is a blind kind of struggle, and the answers just don't come. We've got to be willing to suffer that anxiety, if we do the answers come out and then there's a rebirth of energy, a new seeing, a new integration, and then a kind of celebration as a result of that. And that's the philosophical structure of the film. A very difficult concept and one which will be interesting to get across. But film is a time/space/dimensional dialogue. I've done quite a few experiments with it, and I know I'm on the right track, but it's still quite a challenge to get it down.

Anyway, does that give you a sense of where Organism came from?

TC: It does.

HH: Where it wants to go?

TC: Yes. Your whole film, though, is not going to be in stop motion, is it?

HH: Oh, no. No. 11...as a matter of fact, I'm trying to get back to live action photography because the camera movement is one of the expressive tools of the filmmaker for me. And that's why Organism was quite frustrating at times and the reason I went to the extent of building some of the special equipment.

TC: Special equipment?

HH: Yes. The camera is basically a recording device, and the way we can get expression into that recording device is to move the camera, follow our subjects, work in counterpoint with the movement, in sympathy with the movement. Perspective, lens change, angles, and so on, all have to do with the aesthetics of cinematography and the expressive qualities that come through those decisions and choices. When we go into editing, it's again recreated through the movement possibilities of editing.

On the other hand, like during a stop-motion film like Organism, it got very frustrating for me not to be able to move the camera because basically you usually lock down a camera and look at a scene that's taking place. It has kinetic elements in it, but I was dying to do a sweep over the city with the camera and zoom in on some specific things and zoom back. So I built a tripod. In my original budget to the NEA, I actually put down something like twelve hundred bucks to develop a special rig. It took a lot more money than that to do it, actually. First of all, I built a camera, which is a bit unique. I didn't build the whole camera, just a drive for an old Newman-Stichler camera which has a nice steady pull down, a stationary registration pin, and it's a 35mm camera. By the way, this is almost all shot in 35. There are a few things that have been blown up from 16. But in this camera I put in a motor drive with clutches and timers and switches so I could select whether the camera was going to be... well, let me say this; what I could do with it was stop it in either shutter-closed or shutter-opened position. It gave me the option to have a time exposure at anywhere from two to twenty seconds on each frame of film. That's why you get these exposures at night. And I had two takers, one for the...
Some fiction and art—on unlikely combination. I don’t know if the galaxy contains such a story, but it would have been helpful as a model for this one. Though this is sort of an essay, and partly a story, it seems an attempt to talk about the weird things: a philosophical sketch of the life and times of the independent motion picture maker and artist (film and video are both motion pictures) on this planet, in this country, primarily in this New York City, at this time.

Of course, if I lack traditional credentials for a project this comprehensive, perhaps no one else has them either. A good generalist, like the mythical country doctor, is hard to find. As a filmmaker and cameraman, I did travel a lot, carrying through airpor
t-ports that I knew as well as the mountains. But in my part, the airports, offices, factories hospitals, churches, bars, and backrooms, catching images and interviews with Senators, bums, beauty queens, oligarch poolch-ers, truckers, and acidheads, I have as many prote
gysts, drug addicts, kids, cooks, fighters, rock stars, and countless other queer-and-straight, lost-and-found characters across the strange and lovely country we call America. That’s my resume, along with my own miscellaneous son-of-the-country back
cyard that began a stone’s throw from the Pittsburgh seed mills, a half of hard-eyed street-smarts, and a sociologist’s passions for figuring out what it’s all about.

My intention from the beginning was to make the following effort fun—at least as much fun as looking at you, me, and our technological art form with good humor. And that, it strikes me, is very serious busi
tness. On a field as broad and undefined as ours, the problem of composition is no less difficult than that of life itself. The extraordinary number of unruly parts of our Twentieth Century lives would tax the skills of President Ford’s Secret Service to wrestle them to the ground. I have no such馁awed or athletic ambitions. Instead, I admit to a need to share my experiences and perspectives, a need that is as funda
damental as any biological urge.

The need to discuss, the need to plan, the need to clarify, the need to understand what we are as craftspeople, artists and citizens is primary. Our own kine-kine(!) corner tends to be totally absorbing, especially because it is cooped to an ever-present need to survive. No matter how captivating our work is, it is not enough. We need to understand, to clarify our relationship to our culture (as it is) whose hot breath is never more than a few inches from the back of our necks, just so that we can work with our heads clear. It is not easy to do, and is generally put aside until there is enough time to do it right. When is that? Doctors cannot keep up with their journals, asphalt crews cannot keep up with the garbage men, who is who? Doctors cannot keep up with the packaging industry, scientists cannot even catalogue the newly synthesized sub
tances. Businessmen, politicians, and labor leaders play a policy gone of Blunders’s bluff and the honest mechanic has his and her hands in the air. No bad kid is needed to kick in our house of blocks. It is already down and we are all up to our knees.

Urgency is terribly subjective. The questions that we need to ask ourselves may have answers as remote and unknowable as the ozone layer, but no less serious. Is the “nuclear” already spilled, or just being spilled? Are the doonersayer creating hopelessness? Are the positivists silly Pollyannas? And why does “Who’s in charge here?” always get a laugh? Because everyone knows it as a question.

Our daily reflector, our technological mirror, tele
vision, should tell us something about an emergency. Walter Cronkite is “buddies” with half the country. His sedentary and inurbane image tells us that

he’s not really worried. Perhaps not, but that might well be more a function of his personal economics than any real confidence in the wisdom of his network. Behind his show is a philosophy that has more tight assults, more broken psychoses, more ulcers, and more suicides than all the daily soap operas combined.* Their daily executive diet of programming and advertising decisions is an embarrassment to one of our traditions: an honest day’s work.

When things are so obviously crazy, in the cultural sense, the hardest thing to do is to stay connected. There are so many good, solid reasons to think only about yourself. It is almost impossible to think global
ty, to remember that we are a space ship. If our own survival was as internally supportive as an organic farm, it might make sense to attempt to ignore the “big picture.” Our form is basically public, the public is basically changing. What is our part?

As citizens we took action and defeated the legisla
tion for an Independent American Film Institute, and we have worked for change in the proposed copyight legislation. If we understand that it is possible to defeat and change our government’s actions, then it is

rolled into a toll plaza that could handle less than half our sworn. Using my crafty, hard-won education on toll-booth flow, I took aim for the far right, knowing that most of the drivers think the automatic lanes are faster. They are, of course, because everyone thinks they are, they are not. My lane was much shorter but still 20 or 30 cars. I nudged closer.

The tireless collector, a young man of about 19, moved swiftly in and out of his booth working the change, the space, the different hands and windows with amazing speed. I slipped onto the concrete and offered a quarter. He reached for my hand but I had stopped, took the nickel and copper sandwich so quickly, so efficiently that just in order to do my quick pro quo I had to immediately release the brake and step off. But I have not had a day in which I had not miraculously fractured moment at his door, and
through my still hyper-sensitive, half-blown mind, a genuine time-honored acid flash.

That young, 19-year-old kid was not just a techni
cian, executing his winning personality on a dull, hard, repetitious job. Pay and time-cards had no meaning. He was wired into the whole contrap
tive mass of people, transportation modules and exhaust fumes. He had agreed to make the whole unforgivable American freeway nightmare his own. He didn’t want me to stop. He was in a mad, desperate attempt to help the nearly helpless through his toll booth, down the highway, out of their cars and into their homes. I slid off the concrete pad and burst into tears.

Oh God! What was it that allowed that kid to desert his own skin and take such a huge, preposterous mistake to his very own soul? It was a modern-day miracle because every elevator operator, taxi driver, cop, butcher, bus-boy, go-go girl and politician knows better. They don’t plug in because they already “know” there is nothing to be done. They aren’t con
tected. They don’t believe in change.

Well, as in most acid flashes, it tells you more about the viewer than the do. I did, and I cry for the heart, of a boy, or girl, who instinctively believes that there is something that can be done. If you live in the city long enough, you try to forgive the pervasive cynicism and want to love the people who are a part of your daily life just to avoid burning up in your own hot air. The American Dream, as it is traditionally conceived, can be very powerful indeed. And it was.

I admit to a day-to-day struggle to continue to care about what happens to the whole thing. For most of my life it has been the easiest thing in the world to feel a part of everything else: hunger, poverty, stupidity and all the nice things too. I feel pride in the profound humanity that New Yorkers showed during the massive blackout. It is not just what we have not remembered that we are the world’s greatest seaport and the Hudson is too filthy for swimming and fishing. I felt in personal, daily pain from the moment that Tricky Dick became my President. So it was natural for me to choose what I called the most powerful art form, film, for my vocation. It was easy for me to expect that I could help gear up for national enlightenment and social change.

It didn’t sound na ve then, although I didn’t go around saying all those things out loud. We hadn’t seen the biggest chapter of life’s Shames. (Chet) Henley did a memorial documentary on migrant workers exactly ten years after Morrow. The condi
tions were just as bad if not worse. Many of us were in those drones, and it affected our priorities. We were going to be able to show our intimate perceptions. And once those millions of Fellow-Americans saw what we saw, crystallized and carefully honed to show the un
varnished truth, they, and then we, would have to

*Remember shooting a piece with a well-known NBC newscaster who daily, with aplomb and perfect dead
pan, delivered the good and the bad news. Privately he worried that all the new, and huge, heavy buildings at 5th Ave. and 56th Street would collapse the earth’s crust and bury him.

NEWSLETTER DESIGNS AND OTHER IDEAS
by Ed Lynch
... That young kid in the booth had agreed to make the American freeway nightmare his own... He was in a mad, desperate attempt to help the nearly helpless through his tall booth, down the highway, out of their cars and into their homes.

As independents our choices cannot be any simpler than our culture, no more pure than the Mississippi. But we are and will remain victims of the "culture" as long as we do not have a vision, as long as we do not have reliable magic of our own."

stop making all those embarrassing mistakes. The logic, or the lesson, no matter if it was abstract, would be stimulating to action. In a time of peace, certainly in my lifetime (!), social justices would take enormous strides forward if not to some sort of mini-climax: bring up the music, light up the rainbows, and I'm off to heaven, I thought.

OK, it was childish. If bohemia has none of its peculiarities. We know better now. The sight of mob misery does not raise up misserianes, or even concerned citizens. People don't leap to action from their film and tape lessons. Even if it is a hand-held lesson.

My impression of the people who worked in the early years was that they had been seduced by film-the-power-and-the-technology, and not film-the-art-form. We were part of a very special documentation crew, based in the supermarket, where the more we knew about the character of the country, but we aren't finished yet, not all of us. Many people from that passionate time are still looking for a way to do some of the same things that we wanted to do then. I am. Government and business cynics who sinned through the sixties with nary a scratch are only now beginning to admit that something might be wrong with the country, now that something is wrong with the economy. They are frightened and are bad partners for change. They will build the Tower of Babel or anything else for jobs and profit. So I am only going to think that pragmatism is really short-sighted self-interest.

I've tried it. I have said to myself more than once that it is time that I thought about money, and that I should think about the future. Which is why I don't know what I really want to do. Why do I? No. Or unlikely. It didn't work for me because it required me to detach from thinking about the effects of what I was doing. I have been told that it is necessary to be a professional, and in that capacity, that definition, it is not "your problem" what the production is about. It is not the same degree of responsibility that an artist or an active citizen has. The professional assumes that the job is there to do, must be done, and if it is done well then it has been done right. That assumption gives deeper than the job, of course, straight to the heart of the country. If you can assume that there is a film or videomaking that can simply be plugged into, then Godspeed. I can't do that. In my first, blind, romantic love for anything that is film. I have instead a wholesale skepticism about a media approach to progress. Our history is too short, our technology too volatile. If we are to do our work well, then it must be coupled to a vision that is beyond a professional execution, beyond a political four years, beyond a middle-class lifestyle, and beyond being victims of our own technological country.

There was a similar structure, one that survives in remodeled cities and in the States. This last culture simple enough to understand and therefore it has the appearance of health. It was a survival culture. If you were a hunter you hunted and the daily need for food assured that you were a valuable member of the tribe. The same was true for the handsman or the witch doctor. We, no less than any tribe, are having to face raw survival situations. I know well the industrial function of film, the definition of film and video as a tool of the corporations. Our work cannot have the same, superficial logic. But neither is the "art for art's sake" argument enough. It demands a second part: what does it do? We must make clear that our work is not a luxury that is affordable only when there is extra cash. We must make clear to ourselves and to our much more complex "tribe" our function as motion picture makers and artists.

In my own approach to my work I have been careless of the definitions and the problems of art-oriented cinema and video. I am amply justified. Don't get me wrong. I have already protested a hundred times that I have a commoner's heart, and I know in my heart of midwifed heart that art, or ART, in its present cultural setting is shamelessly elitist. What did it have to do with me? I was afraid to come to New York, but more afraid not to. I didn't like to admit it, but it worried me not to know how smart they were in the Naked City, Pennsylvania never felt like home. I had not found a teacher, never met an artist, and never seen a life I admired. But I wasn't coming to New York to get something over on the folks at home. I did not especially want to get "way out." I was always more interested to see if everyone could take a step together than to see if I could take ten myself. I always knew that I could march by myself. The challenge was to see if we could march. I was sure that they knew how to march in New York. Otherwise how could they survive?

Surprise! Not only is New York not into group trips, it is unceasingly elitist in almost everything: food, clothing, music, dance, etc., etc., etc. And in the hip technological and communicative sense, cinema verité was the elite of the elite. It had the charisma of discovery and the power of mass communication. We knew what we were doing with our snazzy new Ektas and Nagras. Yes, there was even a self-righteous edge, and we used it. We loved and we helped people, but we also intimidated people, we tricked them, and used them more often than they used us. But we were in touch with magic. We, and when I say we I mean all those people who know who I mean, were the witch doctors, the medicine men (including some women), the media conjurers of the sixties. We had a heady brew in hand, and we just knew that the energy was too good to be fragile. Done with us. We understood. Woodstock was created by coincidence and not craft.

Enough romantic incantations have been sung to the Woodstock experience to make not only do the same. But it was probably the most magical event in our collective lives. Six years later we begin to understand that things can get lost, that our most powerful tribal experiences are not our own to repeat. Our government, both local and national, worked to destroy our magic. Even so the losses were mostly caused by our own ignorance. In any self-respecting tribe the one thing that is demanded of the witch doctor is that he or she be able to repeat the magic. Luck or coincidence is not good enough. Woodstock is less a lesson in the heart than to our albums. If we have an independent vision then it must be something that we understand well enough to be able to conceive, create in principle, and repeat. We can invite a festival into our own magic and then conjure it up again. Black Southern churches know that Sunday will be another great spiritual meeting. The congregation goes to that special place needing it, expecting it, and demanding it with full knowledge of the way it is done.

That kind of craft puts magic into the art of life. Our art must function like a vital organ. Our silly economic approach to art causes it to be cut out of our lives and our communities. Most of our "authen-

"ized" art is dealt back and forth between collectors, speculators, dealers, society editors, publishers, critics, admirers, and thieves, and then back around again at higher prices. It is silly that any of our art should inhabit museums, burglar-proof, estate, corporation corner-
donors and the climate-controlled basements of all three. It is anti-life to the extent that it is really art: the legacy of people who know and translate the spirit and genius of life. The whole syndrome is exactly like dealing in Wampum: It is the wretched thievry of the public soul. So it had nothing do with me.

Their empty thought. I had managed to avoid the illusiveness of connecting money and art (we did know about the potentially perverse and oppressive relationship between the church and the state, didn't we?) by simply working in the people's art. Even if it was art, it was all that was left as it didn't interfere with what I was doing. And to some degree it has been true. Despite serious threats by some members of the avant garde, with few exceptions the galleries have refused to deal in films and tapes. The economies have not been there. We are probably all the luckier for it.

What I suggest is necessary is that motion picture artists join hands with other artists to examine, discuss, and then to destroy our current way of "seeing" and working in art. What is needed is the freedom of the function of art for our own understanding, and then move toward a way of working that will exclude the corporate, the real estate, the rent collectors, and power brokers that stand between us and our communities and audiences. History will support us.

It would be handy if we could first agree on a definition of art. I am interested in an intellectually satisfying definition but I am more interested in finding a way to simplify the words and the concepts and thereby return the use of art to the people. Most people consider themselves to be totally excluded from their own art experience. The few that visit museums go with more of an attitude that makes us one of respect for the art and the simple understanding of life. If these people are to be included in an understanding of art, then it must be...
On February 2nd, I talked for an hour with Barbara Haaspiel of the New York State Council on the Arts. Barbara's job is "program associate," which, in the State Council, means something like program or department head. The Department in this case is film. Barbara has as much to do as anyone in New York with handling the activities of independent filmmakers.

We talked about a lot of things to try to get a picture of what the State Council is up to. It was by no means a definitive conversation, but Barbara did develop some ideas of how independent filmmakers can funnel their ambitions through a potentially helpful bureaucracy. We started by trying to define what the State Council does.

**BH:** The Council is mandated by law to do several things. One is that we are required to grant funds only to non-profit organizations, and we do that very big item, the word "non-profit organization." We're mandated to fund organizations as opposed to individuals. So occasionally what will happen is that individual will funnel into a non-profit organization, like the AIVF.

We're also mandated to distribute our money geographically. We have a requirement to spend 55 cents per person per county. But there's just not a whole lot going on in the arts, in, Wyoming County. Still, legislatively, the money must be spent there. Which means that people in New York City, where most of the filmmakers are, along with those cultural organizatons requiring large chunks of money, get cut off. One thing the Film Department doesn't believe in is cultural carpooling, but maybe we're going to have to start doing something like that, and maybe that's a way we can get around to helping individuals, particularly in film. If you wanted to send the New York City Ballet to Wyoming County, for example, that's an incredible amount of money. But if you wanted to send a filmmaker and his or her film there and screen it in the local library or movie theater, the filmmaker and the community would get a great deal out of it. We'd be able to fulfill our mandate of per capita spending.

What we're working toward in this ease is a kind of distribution system. This is an idea that's still mostly an idea. We've thought about forming a forty-city circuit in New York State. We figured that the state has about forty cities of the size that could handle independent cinema programs. It could go larger, but it would probably start smaller—ten cities, maybe. Filmmakers could make money on rentals and appearances; they might even go for a week's stint. If filmmakers could make $200 or $300 or $500 a day, plus travel and per diem, that might be a way to support their work, get some feedback and build an audience.

I have this idea—it may be an old, absurd idea—but I think movies should be seen in movie theaters. Our idea would be to take an off-night in a local theater—not a weekend night—of a program films made by independents in New York State, package a program of films interrelated with each other, and bicycle them around the state. The filmmakers could come in, talk about their films, get some reactions. It's great feedback for the filmmaker and it's great for the community to be able to develop a nucleus of independent cinema. But maybe we should define what an independent filmmaker is.

(Go into a long rap here in which a number of definitions drifted by. I had the strange sensation of not being able to remember my own name.)

**BH:** I find it sometimes a problem to define for people at the Council what an independent filmmaker is, because it gets to be very general, very broad. Let's define an independent filmmaker as someone who makes movies.

**TMcD:** That narrows it down nicely.

**BH:** Another question is this: you're an independent filmmaker, and you've gotten your CAPS, your NEA, your AIVF, or whatever—now what? This is a new community of people we're going to have to address ourselves to soon. We have to think about these people who have gotten grants, as well as the people who have not gotten grants. I think the distribution-exhibition circuit is a way to do that.

**TMcD:** What about television?

**BH:** Public television? There's not enough money there. There's exposure, but no money. I'm thinking about what you can get on public television as a way to get your film in your pocket. Perhaps one of the things we ought to do is to encourage public television since public television is easier to encourage than commercial television, and so on to show films. But right now, public television is struggling to keep stations on the air. So which way do we go? Are there any suggestions? We'd like to know. Knowing our restrictions—that we cannot't send money—we have to work with non-profit organizations, that we must concern ourselves with fiscal liability, geographic distribution, all those things. . .

**TMcD:** Well, what kind of suggestions do you hear?

**BH:** In a lot of ways, we're at the hub here; we hear the complaints, rather than all the answers. We sure know what the problems are. We develop solutions, not a lot of them, but some solutions over a period of years. With MERC, for example, we started with some super-8 equipment five years ago, and now we're into about $13,000 worth of all kinds of equipment: Super-8, 16mm, video, post-production. And in response to the people who work with the equipment and have need for it.

Another thing we've tried to do is help library systems expand and develop their collections of independent films. What libraries have to deal with is situations, that say, "Lowly film, 10 minutes, color, $50." What we do is send out consultants, librarians like Bill Sloan of the Donnell Library, who have an understanding of what's going on with independent films. That's a shorthand way of getting money back into the pockets of individuals.

**TMcD:** What's the best way for film and video people to get information about grants? Is there some kind of clearinghouse?

**BH:** There really isn't. We've prepared some foundation directories—what kind of foundations will give grants for what kinds of things—and that's available in our public relations office. The more things we hear about, the more we try to spread the information around. I must say that the film and video community is an open community; people like to share their information. It used to be that people were cloistered. Everyone was inventing the wheel all over again, but that's changing. Places like the AIVF should be funded, by us or somebody, to have somebody on staff to do some of the research and know what's going on. The Council doesn't have enough staff, that's why we cheered when the AIVF happened.

When the AIVF started, I was very excited, because I thought, at last, we have our own organization, a grass roots, self-help group. For example, when the NEA Bicentennial film grants came along, there was a central place to go and get a mailing list, so we get the AIVF's list to fill out the CAPS list. We had a way to let people know about these grants. We're still not reaching everybody, but this is the kind of thing the AIVF really helps us with—it's a forum.

**TMcD:** You've read a lot of proposals. What makes a good one?

**BH:** The basic thing is to tell what you want to do, why it should be a movie—rather than a book, say, and why you're the person to do it, what you've done in the past, and what you hope to do with it in the future. Distribution is sometimes a worry, but not so much with these NEA Bicentennial grants, because the Endowment has said that they're going to try to help with distribution. When they get maybe forty films made, they may want to do some kind of series on public television.

Another thing about the Bicentennial grants—they're matching grants, which means that the Council has to come up with the amount offered by the Endowment. We also do a lot of matching in other areas. Someone may call and say they need an editor; we may know that and-so-and-so is looking for work. There's also some county money around; old Bethlehem may want an historical film made. Something like the AIVF's membership and skills list is a good source for this kind of thing.

We're a state agency. It's all tax money. Everybody should have an equal opportunity, at least to know about the grants, to be in competition with everybody else. What it comes down to is serving the greatest number of people with the least amount of money. We don't have a Nielsen rating system to contend with, but we have to take service into consideration. We have to be terrible realistic about a state budget that has to be balanced. The New York State Council on the Arts is sort of born again every year. Every year, just as it has to be, the people in the Council for money, we have to apply to the Legislature.

**TMcD:** There was a time in the 60's when film school graduates could look to independent personal filmmaking as a viable vocation. The AIVF had just started; there was access to public television via things like PBL. What about the future?

**BH:** I think it depends on building audiences. Art Workers' Newsletter said recently that independent filmmakers earn an average of $600 a year from their films. Some make nothing, some lose money, the range varies widely, but $600 is spoken of as an average. So I guess if you look at it that way, it's not a viable vocation. But if we can get the audience interested—and this is not going to happen instantly—if we can get the audience interested in looking at something other than Jaws, or even something in addition to Jaws . . . I think that's one of the things the Council should do, is to help create that demand, whether it's through our forty-city circuit, or a two-city circuit, or getting more films on television. That would be a good beginning.

**BH**

**TMcD:** It's a business he said it's only a job he said it's my life

my organs hanging out of my mind dripping blood on celluloid my back arched paralyzed in defiance i've only just been burnt
Not a Pretty Picture:
A Transition from Documentaty to Low-Budget Fiction
by Martha Coolidge

Like many of us independent filmmakers, I have always wanted to make fiction films. The major deterrent was that the budget of a fiction film is prohibitively higher than that for a documentary. Distribution also posed a problem, as a non-feature-length fiction film must have a very specific purpose, i.e., a direct teaching film or an entertaining theatrical short. But in the last couple of years, I became frustrated with the limitations of the documentary form. Portraits I was making because I wanted to look deeper into people's lives without invading their privacy. I then got an idea for a small, part-fiction, semi-autobiographical film based on my own raps. I would have no privacy problem with myself, and the film would be fictionalized, using actors in an impromptu rehearsal setting as well as in straight fiction.

What began as a small film grew to feature length, and I learned a lot about working under a very special condition: low-budget fiction. This is the single element which makes this a genre different from any other. The LOW-BUDGET has very specific problems connected with it, particularly when it is a period film. This one was set in 1962.

To start with, a low-budget fiction film is often the director's and everyone else's first attempt. The problem, however, is that you don't have the experience which might make up for the lack of money in terms of fewer mistakes. In the case of Not a Pretty Picture (with eternal indebtedness to the people I met through AIVP), all the major positions on the crew were filled by professionals. In the positions particular to fiction films, such as props, make-up, sets, script and P.A.'s, we had more enthusiasm than professional experience. We were lucky in that the props and costumes of the period (which was no high point of fashion) could be found in our trunks, basements and in thrift shops.

Casting
I had made a fiction film since graduate school, and the bulk of my theatre acting and directing experience had been in college. I was nervous and I wasn't quite sure where to start looking for actors. I had a very specific improvisational process in mind, and the actors had to be young and non-union. Instead of putting out a notice in the paper, which I had found in the past to be often more frustrating than fruitful, I called friends of mine with theatre and acting connections and described to them who I needed. In this way the actors who I saw fit my requirements were highly recommended. I simply had to find the people I wanted.

Casting is a talent in itself, and certainly a major decision point for any motion picture. In this case I could not afford actors who had had a lot of film experience, I decided to look for the element which was the most risky in the film: the rehearsal improvisation and the use of the actors as people. As a documentary portraitist, this was an area I felt very sure of it. I knew that to have certain qualities as themselves to work in the rehearsal scene.

The most important roles were the woman who would play me and the rapist. I wanted a woman who had a similar experience and who would have certain qualities in common with me. The actor had to be a nice guy himself and be able to play a jock rapist. Both of these actors would have to externalize the process in which they rehearsed, as that would be the essence of the rape scene.

Instead of having the actors read, I simply had long talks with them. The first quality I looked for was something filmic about them, which is the same for documentary or fiction. I also needed an "excitement" from them about the film's idea which would show in the rehearsal and, for them, might make up for my lack of finances. They also had to be candid about their own lives on camera, which is especially difficult for actors who are by necessity conscious of their image.

I felt very lucky to find Michele Mancenti and Jim Carrington. They had worked and with each other before, which would help us in the rehearsal scene. It would be particularly helpful for Michele who had been raped under similar circumstances. I felt there was a great deal which could be released in Jim. This became more apparent in rehearsals. All the casting was dependent on how the rehearsals went, as I hadn't had anyone replace—no one was replaced.

Probably the most important move I made in casting was putting my own roommate from school, Anne, in the film to play herself. This move was based on her film as a documentary element of the film as well as her character. I felt that the additional layer of reality this added would reinforce the others in the film. Also, her extraordinary personality and humor had saved me that year, and to find an actress who could play that would have been impossible. And her personal feelings about that year became an important element of the film, for she totally expressed the pain resulting from non-communication in adolescence.

I needed one SAG actor, an older man. I found SAG very cooperate, as the AFPI who gave me a grant for the film has an understanding with them. The actor worked under the 150% deferral deal. What did become clear to me is the necessity for even more cooperation between low-budget filmmakers and SAG, as many kinds of low-budget production are still almost impossible.

Script
To further make the film a combination of reality and fiction, the script was built out of the experiences of many of the crew. All of us reinvented and improved until the script was completely constructed. This expanded the script beyond my own experience. The greatest limitation on the script, aside from not being able to afford an established screenwriter, was insufficient rehearsal time because I couldn't pay the actors. They were all holding down other jobs and we had a terrible time getting together. For non-film experienced actors and directors, rehearsal time is essential, and I'll never skip on that again.

Production
The film never would have been launched if it weren't for Jan Saunders. An experienced production manager is absolutely central to a fiction production, and doubly so on a low-budget production. Everything must be planned. Because we were trying to save money, we found certain things took more time, and all of this had to be taken into consideration. The competency and commitment of the camera persons, Charles Manenti and Fred Murphey; soundperson, Maryte Kavaliauskas; and gaffer, Nancy Scherber, were also major factors in the success of production.

One financial note—we used 7247. To compensate for their high cost, we had a lot of other expenses to make which costs more. In addition, I would guess that we spent a good extra hour to three hours lighting every day and that we spent on location. This kind of production time turns into real expense.

Shooting
One of the biggest problems and limitations of a low budget is not being able to have a set or moving cameras on location. The whole way of shooting the film is more limited. The scenes are broken down into shorter takes and often into closer shots. Now, even actors experienced in film would find this difficult, but they would have an easier time compensating for the resulting disruption of their performances. With inexperienced film actors, it only further inhibits and breaks up their concentration. This is a double burden on the actors and director in a low-budget film. The director bears the responsibility of seeing the consistency of the performances and maintaining the pace and flow. Also, according to shooting low-budget films with longer, fluid takes and more medium and long shots. Therefore, they experience a film shot and have to deal with more unscripted, and any jitter in a performance stands out even more.

Because the production of Not a Pretty Picture was so well organized, I was really directing for the first time. I had time to work with the actors on set and had time to deal with all of the last-minute details and specific acting problems that came up. The latter were usually a result of the actors' diverse working patterns or personality challenges.

Low-budget films are usually shot on location and shooting at exteriors often a real hassle; at different times we found ourselves surrounded by hundreds of people we weren't prepared to handle, in the middle of a knife fight, on a major bus route. Shooting was halted by the city, the police, engines, and at another time, by a Mr. Softee truck that wouldn't go away.

At the way we worked was very hard for all the actors. I had to prepare them for it. I also let them know the filming of the shots and why they had to move in certain ways. My feeling is that they are professionals and they need to know why they are working in. The cast and crew on this film were unusually close and very cooperative and respectful of each other. That made the production of

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Making Friends with Super-8

by Mark Mikolas

Mark Mikolas is co-owner of Super-8 Film Group, a production company, and co-author, with Gunther Hoez, of the upcoming book "Super-8"

In March of 1974, four of us left for Memphis, Tennessee, to film a music video. Many Super-8 film cameras were still being carried on by several rural Blacks in the Memphis area, all over 65 years old. There was a feeling that this disappearing form of music should be recorded before it fled the earth. A few cameras were found, and the cost paid for itself or not. We packed three cameras, a stereo recorder, a sync recorder, a lighting kit, a fluid-head tripod, a shoulder pod, repair kits, eight one-hour film cans, and all accessories—in the boot of a Toyota!

We traveled around western Tennessee and the fields of Arkansas for over two weeks, filming. When we returned, we had all of our film processed and written to begin editing. A month later we had completed our first film, Tell The Angels, directed by Mikolas and produced by Cleo Williamson and her friends and relatives.

The total costs—including all the expenses for the trip, all stock, tape, processing and writing (eight hours’ work for each project) and answering the phone—took us under $3,000.


Super 8? Home movies? Well, not exactly, quietly and steadily, this modest little medium has developed to the point where there is nothing that can be done in film that can’t be done with "spaghetti." What’s more important, you can own every necessary piece of equipment for complete double-system production for as little as $2,500. From then on, you are truly an independent filmmaker. You can make any film you want without the cost of the stock and lab. And in super 8, this is one-half to one-third the price it would be in 16mm.

The basic super 8 system revolves around one recorder which uses super 8 magnetic film. It syncs to a digital pulse, making virtually any off-the-shelf super 8 camera a sync camera with no modification. It can sync to a pulse from a super 8 projector, giving you intimate capability. It can sync to pilotone or AC line and can be used with a 16mm camera with a pilotone generator or in sync with any 16mm dubbing equipment of video chains. It has a built-in crystal control. Many super 8 cameras can be crystal controlled for $200, giving you a crystal sync. The recorder also puts out a 60Hz signal for transfer to 1/4" tape. With a four-track recorder, several small equalizers and a mixing board, you can do your own multiple sync-track mixing. After making the master track, the recorder can be synched to the projector and the track transferred to the magnetic stripe on original or print. The Super 8 Sound Recorder, of which we are speaking, costs $645 and requires no modification or accessories to do all of the above.

Want to get fancy? The Uher 134 can be purchased with a crystal sync generator for stereo sync recording. With a little customizing, the sync track can be left in track and can be channel two recorded on the balance stripe of super 8 film and it can be played back on a stereo super 8 projector. The magnetic stripe, by the way, has a frequency response of 40 - 12,000 Hz, at 4.5 EBU, and can surpass the quality of 16mm optical tracks.

A single-system camera with an unexaggerated frequency response of 50 - 12,000Hz with a 515B S/N ratio can be had for under $2,000. The Scheinder camera with a 6-66mm Schneider zoom, powered at a continuously variable rate from two to twelve seconds over its full focal length range, running at continuously variable rates from 2 - 70 fps with macro-focusing capability down to its front element, in-camera dissolve capability, fade control, automatic or manual exposure, interchange locations, double-system or crystal control capability and which weighs about the same and costs about one-half of an Eclair 200" magazine.

Lenses? How about a 2.5mm? Or a 6 - 80mm zoom (equivalent to about a 12 - 160mm lens in 16mm). Or attach your 400mm Nikon lens, which on a super 8 camera is about the same effective focal length as a 2000mm lens on your still camera. For $5,500 you can purchase a ten-place horizontal table with two picture heads that does everything a Steenbeck does... and more. (If you have a Kem, buy super 8 modules to convert it for super 8 use.)

But equipment is just tools. What about making films?

The designation “super 8” refers to the film width, 8mm, and the sprocket hole size and position. Beyond that, we are talking about a highly diverse field of film endeavors. In fact, in our attempt to characterize that world, we have had to define it by its diversity. Super 8 has brought the capability to film almost anyone. By doing so, everyone has gone off to make films for whatever reason, motivation, yearning or craziness that drives them. Neither Kodak, the professionals, the magazines, the equipment industry, the funding syndicates, the universities or the film clubs have much influence over the uses for super 8 filmmaking which people are discovering for themselves. Everyone traditional 16mm and 35mm filmmakers find in low-cost super 8 a medium which allows them free reign to use film in applications that never made financial sense before.

A kid in New Jersey built a rocket around his super 8 camera and obtained footage of the shot up and the parachute down. This footage found its way into network broadcast many times as the opening shot of a story. Maria Schender, apart from acting in Bertoluci’s 1990, bought a super 8 camera and made her own film about Bertoluci. From the rapids of Brazil to the schools of Red China, from amateur horror features (shot in super 8 “Cinemascope” 2.66:1) to some of the most avant-garde in filmmaking—no longer does one need to wait (perhaps forever) for that $100,000 grant. Imagine being able to shoot anything you want for as little as $1.60/m.

You can shoot about 50 hours of film for the price of one year’s tuition in film school. This sounds like the best way to learn cinematography? And speaking of film schools, if that’s your route, do you need 16mm to learn camerawork? sound recording? production planning? direction? editing? mixing? budgeting? In short, filmmaking? As long as schools are tied to 16mm (and one camera and recorder for each six students), the equipment sign-out list is the biggest obstacle to learning filmmaking. The university could equip everyone with super 8 sync gear for the full term on the same budget. And there would always be editing table space available. Everyone technique of standard film production could be taught and practiced. And, perhaps what’s most important, graduates could go on making films after graduation, rather than weighing the merits of an AFI versus Estes. How about a creative environment, with proposals and waiting for Unemployment checks. In fact, universities can teach super 8 filmmaking to students in all disciplines whose needs for data gathering, recording and documentation in later careers will necessitate an increasingly greater sophistication in media technology.

Super 8 can be contact printed, mass release printed through an intermitter, blown up to 16mm, transferred to all video formats, broadcast, front-projected or rear-projected and screened larger than most independent theaters can handle (using one of several models of arc and xenon projectors). What will the quality be?

Basically, what you make it.

Optical printing is possible, even full immersion liquid gate, but the super 8 filmmaker cannot rely on it without eating up most of his savings in the costs. Color correction? None. Fast original stocks without grain? No. Shooting super 8 at its ultimate quality is a unique challenge to the ambitious filmmaker. In no other medium does the end product depend on much of the original lighting and camerawork. Most sophisticated effects are best devised and executed in-camera. The super 8 filmmaker is a filmmaker. Everything but processing and printing is in his or her hands.

One rough guideline we have found: small budgets—small equipment—intimate films—small audiences: the true medium of personal filmmaking. Sell it to the networks! Deliver an enhanced, electronically color-corrected 2" Quad tape and they’ll never question its filmic origin, even if that original was pushed EF.

Color video is portable and so is 16mm. But camerapersons rapidly realize the difference between being able to take it with you and, with super 8, to have it with you.

Commercial possibilities? Everyone in the world who has used film but has not been able to afford it. The investment: a little money and lots of time.

Got a feature in mind? Shoot the pilot in super 8. Trying to document a process with a still camera and a tape recorder? Turn them in for a super 8 single-system camera (with money to spare to start filming).

Got a client who can’t afford a film this year? Sell him super 8 and make more of a profit on the job than you did in 16mm.

The film you always dreamed of making? What’s stopping you?

6/July 1976/Independent GAZETTE
WOMAN ALIVE!
An Interview with Joan Shigekawa

Interviewed by Ted Churchill
Transcription and editing by Tom McDonough

C. Tell me about the genesis of Woman Alive and how you were involved in it.

I was freelanceing as an independent producer. I guess it was the summer of 1973, and what happened was, I got a call on my answering service—Eldridge on NBC. He had given her my name. And I went and talked with them; they were going to do an hour version of Ms. Magazine for national public television. I went to talk with them; they asked to see my work. I screened my sample reel for the people at Ms. and their collaborators, KERA, the Dallas public television station.

At the same time, a whole lot of other people were going in and talking to them. We would run into each other flattering our films past the switchboard. We would try to share information with each other, because for a long time we didn't hear anything. Eventually, after a month and a half, they offered me the job, which was fantastic, because it was exactly the kind of thing I wanted to do at that time.

C. What was it about your background that got you the job?

I've been trying to figure that out since I started the show. You always wonder when you're just another name in the hopper. I still don't really know.

I'd been working since 1969 in film and television. My first New York job was as a secretary at CBS. I got a call, right out of Bryn Mawr College and I was thrilled. I was really sort of dim about it. The Women's Movement hadn't really started. The other day a woman asked me, "Did you always want to be a producer?" I had to tell her that when I started working, it never occurred to me that I could be a producer. I guess I would look around CBS and I didn't see any women producers. There were women who were forty year old production assistants, and that was the kind of job I wanted to have. It didn't occur to me that all the young men who were already production assistants were planning their careers as producers and directors, all following the men exec producers into the men's room and all that stuff.

They said they managed to work my way through it and out of it was by switching jobs. I left the job at CBS and went over to NBC as a secretary on the Today Show. Then I worked as field director of admissions at Barnard, and after that, I went back to CBS News as a researcher. By not staying in one place, I was able to get varied experience and move up.

Then two friends of mine got a chance to do ten half-hour films about the circus for $75,000—ten films for $750 apiece, and they wanted me to go in with them. That was 1963. I knew there was going to be a lot of work, and that the money obviously was going to be minimal. I asked them for an associate producer's credit, because that was the job I'd be doing. They were taken aback, but I got my first associate producer's credit.

Joan Shigekawa is a member of the AIVF and has worked for fifteen years in film, television, and theatrical productions. She is currently the producer of WOMAN ALIVE!, a National Public Television series produced at WNET in collaboration with Ms. Magazine.

I went on to do my first producing job at WNET, doing an hour weekly cultural magazine, videotape in the studio. And then I went to PPL, worked on dramas and theater. I did a lot of different things and learned a lot of different jobs.

One of the things that women can do that's harder for men is to slip back and forth between categories. If a woman has been a producer for, say, ten years, and there's an opening for an associate producer, she can go get that job if she's out of work. Whereas a man can't because he'd be embarrassed and would be an embarrassment to other men. A couple of years ago, while I was raising money for Woman Alive, I got a call from a network about an associate producer's job. They'd hire a producer—a man who'd been a network sales executive but wasn't strong in production. They knew they'd need a strong associate producer. So they were interviewing women who were already producers. That's all job kind of stuff, and that's television.

C. How was Woman Alive! a different production experience? Was there something special about getting the series done?

For the pilot, Susan Lester was the writer/associate producer and Sarah Stein was the editor. We had all had experience working in television bureaucracies and working as independents. But what was special was the chance to work with an all-woman film crew on a feminist project designed for television. And working with the women at Ms. Magazine was special—there were the feeling of excitement and real support. For the series, we tried to experiment with some of the usual ways of doing things. Take, for example, the line production jobs. We already had 200 resumes on file. We answered all of them. Usually, sending in a resume is like throwing it against a stone wall; nobody ever calls you back, nobody ever tells you if it's any good. You just have to stare at the phone and work your nerve to make the follow-up call. Another thing we decided to do was to not give away staff jobs before we had interviewed people. More than a hundred people at WNET applied for a job. Once you're committed to interviewing, you have to stay with it and give everyone an equal chance. We didn't interview anyone from the outside; we felt that women within WNET were starved for promotion and should have the first crack. The double whammy—and I was very naive about this—is that if you talk to 100 people about four jobs, 96 people are going to be disappointed.

And the same was true of the filmmakers. There were more than a hundred women filmmakers who called from the New York area alone. One of our priorities was that as many women as possible should benefit from this very small amount of money. We really made a commitment to the women in the independent film community and we saw about seventy-five people. During pre-production, we were screening sample films till eleven o'clock night after night. Throwing the doors open that way to a community which is not very visible. People had never seen us when what you're doing is a television program led to a lot of confusion. Some people thought it was like a great thing; money to make a film. But actually it was a television series that had a point of view, and with that point of view, certain things were "given". If you didn't agree with that point of view, you wouldn't do film in a different series. One of the givens is that women are changing; another one of the givens is that people don't understand that change, and finally, that the media stereotype of what the Women's Movement is all about is very narrow and biased.

C. Can you elaborate on that?

I: One of the things about being a woman on television—when you see them at all—it's that you're seeing a bad stereotype. Forty percent of American women work. If you look at television commercials, you'd think American women spend seventy-five percent of their time in the bathroom, and only about seven percent of their work. In a study by the United Methodist Church, you find that women are only about thirty percent of the images in dramatic series in prime time, that they are incapable of making decisions on their own, and they're just part of a support system. Very rarely do they actually supervise other people. In commercial television, nearly all the women are young. Men can be any age. With a few exceptions, like Maudie, the women are young. There's a whole thing about selling products and structuring shows around young women who are considered to be more attractive and also have more buying power. Men in these prime time dramas are concerned with big issues, with their careers. Women are concerned with domestic issues, romance, getting a man and keeping him. That stereotype prevails in all media.

The same is true in news. There was a study done by the American Association of University Women in '74; the statistics are staggering. They monitored a month's network news. In straight news stories, in over 5,000 stories, only 500 or so were about women. Of the number of reporters—there were about 2,400—there were 173 women. Of the women that were featured, they were often politicians' wives or victims of disasters. The television image of what women are out is extremely skewed. Commercials are the easiest target, but the thing that's really distressing is that the same distortion holds true in news and public affairs.

What we wanted to do in Woman Alive! was to break through that stereotype and show real women and what their lives were all about. All the films in the series had that point of view—real women in the process of change, or in the process of looking into their lives. We tried to go and talk to women that nobody in television ever talked to.

We felt in the course of producing Woman Alive! an enormous pressure to come in on budget, because
There's still this stereotype that women can't handle money, that they can't squander money on flashy things like Saks and blow the budget on a new hat. It doesn't matter how many times women come in on budget—and we did come in on time and on budget—there's always the suspicion, you're never fully scrutinized from all sides. The same was true for blacks for a long time, still is true to some extent. If a black show went over budget, they'd say, "Look at that, they really are irresponsible." If a man came over budget, however, you don't hear anyone saying that men don't know how to handle money.

Some filmmakers came to us with ideas that were very promising, but they were $20,000 ideas, or $30,000 ideas, and we had to say no, because we had only $16,000 for each twenty-minute segment.

One thing to remember is that this series started out as twelve one-hour specials at a budget in excess of two million dollars, an adequately funded program that would have three or four film segments—little ones, big ones, twelve films four to fifty-four. We ended up making ten films. Instead of twelve hours of magazine programming, we ended up with five—ten half hours, and on a production budget that was less than $800,000.

C: How long did it take you to find funding for the series? Why did you have problems?

S: In looking back on the production of Women Alive! I realize that of the three years spent in making the pilot and trying to fund the series, only ten months were actually spent in making films and taping. The rest was either spent trying to get money, writing proposals, or trying to get people to give us money. Increasingly, I have noticed that television is becoming more corporate in its relationship to stars and outside money—as business. And I don't think that's a very cheery omen for the future of those of us who want to do documentaries or experimental programming.

We began by thinking that any company interested in the way women were changing would be interested in underwriting this program. We were wrong.

As time went on, we were trucking around from corporation to corporation with our proposal, we kept hearing, "We'll pass on this. When they say to you "Good luck," you know it's all over. Most of the people who are corporate vice-presidents in charge of public relations, they don't really want to rock the boat. They're in business to make the company look good.

The first thing we encountered was real suspicion about the Women's Movement. Corporations have a lot of money invested in a certain image of women. Their commercials tell us what they think we are. They don't really want to be confronted with the change that's happening.

We also heard from the record labels that corporations are shy of funding public affairs programs. The corporations understand that you can't do a documentary about how women are changing without questioning things like the actuarial tables of insurance companies, why women have trouble getting credit, and jobs. And when it comes to the things that women are trying to change, and they're also the things that business is about. We were talking about public affairs documentaries, and they would ask, "Could we see the scripts for the films before they're shot?" We would say, "Well, there's no script. It's a documentary and we go out to explore. We can't give you a script before the film is shot and edited."

That was unacceptable.

Also a lot of corporations are not giving equal pay for equal work to women in their companies, and if they pretend that these inequities don't exist, just like they pretend possum, maybe the problem will go away, or at least they can stave it off. But if they shelve by sponsoring our series that they understand that they're vulnerable, then the women in their companies really might come after them.

There were scenes of the reasons. Obviously, some of the people legitimacy didn't like the first special, but those are some of the underlying political reasons for not funding the program.

If you look at what is funded, you find that a great deal of it is acquisitions, BBC acquisitions, programs that a corporation can look at in advance and decide whether or not it's safe for them. Or cultural programs—dance, music. But very few public affairs programs are funded by corporations.

So in the end what happened was that a one-hour magazine shrank to a half-hour magazine, and twelve hour programs shrank to ten half-hours. There was always a premise from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting for $400,000, pending support from other sources. After months of trying for other sources, we trimmed the concept to fit the available funds. After getting rejected and rejected and reject, we could think of only one way to save the situation, and that was a half-hour magazine.

C: You mentioned before that over 100 women filmmakers applied to Women Alive! from the New York area alone. It must have been difficult to decide who got to make films for the series.

S: We had to deal with limitations at every turn. When we were ready to go into production, a lot of people who were used to making TV films came in and said, "Tell me what you want me to do, I'll do it." But we weren't making assignments; we were trying to have a dialogue between two creative parties, to evolve a concept in which both the independent filmmakers and the programmers might have a common ground, a common understanding of what the project would be, and that's intuitive. Some came in with ideas that they thought we would like rather than ideas that they were excited about making a film about. And you could always tell. You could tell this was something they might be interested in doing, but as a job of work, not as a film they thought ought to be made. There was so much money and so little money that unless you really cared about the film you were making, it would be very hard to pull it off. We had a list of maybe eighty ideas that we wanted to explore, but we weren't assigning ideas. Someone would come in, we'd talk back and forth until we came up with something that we were really excited about.

Later on, geography became very important. Women are struggling to change all over the country; we couldn't just go on the air with nine films about New York City women and one from Oklahoma. Also, there's a tendency to duplicate yourself, to replicate your own age group in your choice of subject. At a certain point we realized we didn't have anything to represent teenagers or older women. In the beginning, it was wide open. Later on, the options for filmmakers diminished. We felt we had in these ten programs to cover a fairly wide spectrum.

There's something that, if you're an independent and you're working to yourself, is hard to understand, and that is often ten people will come up with the same idea. Ten years ago, for example, no one was thinking about making films about parents, grandparents—roots. Then about two years ago, you look around and a lot of people, through no conscious agreement, decided that it would be interesting to look at these things; it's just something that's in the air.

The same is true for films about women. Until you see maybe sixty proposals in a stack, it's hard to understand what's going on. Many people who were concerned three or four years ago about doing documentary and political films are now concerned about doing fiction films and working with actors, using the dramatic form. That's not anything that anybody dictated; it's just that it's time to try that.

One of the things about having a dialogue with that many people is that there are bound to be a lot of people disappointed, and who don't, who can't understand how the choices were made. The situations were made partly on an understanding of independent film production and money, and an understanding of the person's prior work. But it was very complicated. Sometimes the idea, though it was great, was wrong, and not right for the series within the parameters of the proposals, or the idea required more money than we had—or, again, geography. Sometimes an idea isn't really a twenty-minute film idea. Sometimes it's not even something you can articulate. I went through this quandary about how to get the word out, because there's this kind of paranoia about who knows what. We try to be a community, but there is this paranoia about jobs and assignments, sharing information or not sharing information. But when a hundred filmmakers can find you, it's no secret. We set up an elaborate system of screening films; more than one person would screen each film; people shared their notes. We also at the same time built an enormous talent file of women technicians from all over the country.

8/July, 1976/Independent GAZETTE
For you Film is only a show. For me it is almost a way to look at the world. Film is a vehicle for movements. Film is an innovator in literature. Film is a destroyer of aesthetics. Film is fearless. Film is a sportsman. Film is a dispenser of ideas. But Film is sick. Capitalism has covered its eye with gold. Dextrous entrepreneurs lead it down the street by the hand. They collect cash by turning over their hearts to pathetic subjects. This must come to an end. Communism must seize Film from profiteering producers. Futurism must steam up the numbing water-slowness and mortality. Without this we will have either the imported tap dance of America or unbroken tearful eyes of Mosjukhmin. The first is tiresome. The second even worse.

I'd say that's terrific. Working in the industry and being involved in the Association as well, I can appreciate the difficulty in making the decisions you had to make. Judging from the shows of Woman Alive! I have seen, I think you made the right ones. What's happening with the show this year?

J. I don't know. This season, our production unit is creating four specials. To do a film that takes real thought or shaping can take six months or a year. We are going to have to try to do them in much less time—eight to ten weeks. Well, this time with a central core staff, Jacqueline Donnell is the coordinating producer, Janis Klein is the associate producer and Ronnie Eldridge is the executive producer. Once again, I'll be the producer. These specials will probably be the last season for Woman Alive! The Corporation for Public Broadcasting will support a series for only two seasons and I don't see any corporations coming forward with financial support. All of this experience—trying to raise money, learning about the way the public television system functions and the independent world has been an incredible education. A lot of it has been very hard, professionally and personally. It's been a lot of work, much of it using up creative energy struggling with bureaucratic systems. But sometimes terrific things happen, like when the "What's Happening" series at the Museum of Modern Art and the Donnell chose to build a program around three films from Woman Alive!

Many AIF members made major contributions to the series and I'd like to acknowledge that with special thanks to the filmmakers.

**Independent Films made for WOMAN ALIVE**

**ARMY WIVES CHANGE OF COMMAND**  
A film by Patricia Sides

**BECOMING TOUGH ENOUGH**  
A film by Mirra Bank

**NINE TO FIVE**  
A film by Suzanne Jasper

**BETWEEN TIMES**  
A film by Abigail Child

**THE WOMEN OF MCCAYSVILLE INDUSTRIES**  
A film by Charlotte Zwerin

**FOUR MEN FROM OREGON**  
A film by Vic Lesick

**MIDDLE AGE...**  
A film by Ellen Horde

**CONSIDER THE SOURCE**  
A film by Borda E. Lee

**WORK IN PROGRESS**  
A film by Linda Leeds

**FARING**  
A film by Nina Schulman

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**NYSCA, NEA, CNN**

Kino i Kino (Film and Film) was the poet Mayaakovksy's response to a crisis point in Soviet film culture. In 1922, five years after the revolution, Soviet film culture was still that of pre-revolutionary Russia. Would the revolution accept the established film industry dominated by Hollywood and German exports, or would it promote a new cinema in touch with the realities of Soviet society? Mayaakovksy's political-aesthetic analysis was affirmed over the next two years with the emergence of major filmmakers like Eisenstein, Vertov, Pudovkin, Kuleshov, Ermler, Kozintsev and Trauberg. While the parallels between Soviet society of 1922 and American society of today are few, an analogy with our position in American film culture has definite validity. Can we successfully confront the Hollywood panache known as commercial cinema: cops and robbers pictures, violence films, and exploitation movies? Can we make films that are in touch with the social and aesthetic realities of American life? And what are the objective forces that will make this possible?

written by VV Mayaakovksy  
appeared in KinoPlots #4, Oct. 5-12, 1922  
introduction and translation by Charles Musser  
from Teatri Kino, Vol. 2, p. 425, Moscow, 1994
An Introduction to Video Systems

Video equipment often seems to change faster than the weather. It seems as if every week a new camera or editing gear makes its appearance. The result is an often frustrated individual who wants to stay current, but can't afford the time or money. Unfortunately, I know of no solution to this problem. Video by its very nature invites constant change and upgrading. Since it is an electronic medium, its growth keeps pace with the latest technological developments in electronics such as integrated circuits, solid-state design, etc. electronics, in fact, is probably harder to keep up with than video equipment. The reason film does not change at such speed is its basically "mechanical" (rather than electronic) nature and the fact that it has been developing for more than 75 years. In contrast, broadcast videotape has only been around about 15 years, and portable units only for five years. Low-cost portable color is only about two years old. Video in its infancy and will go through many changes before it matures.

Within all this change and confusion, however, there is a great deal of stability. Hopefully, this article will pinpoint the main components of the current video systems.

The Portapaks

The first group of equipment is the "portapaks." These started the video revolution with the first units that were truly portable. There are various types made from several different manufacturers such as Sony. Alan Miller is a video artist who lives and works in New York City. He is a member of the Board of the Association.

Vera Chylitova is a Czech New Wave director whose film, Daisies (1966), established her international reputation. Unlike her colleague's Milos Forman and Ivan Passer, who came to the U.S. to continue their work after the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia, Chylitova stayed in her country. Since 1969, when she completed Frants of Prague which won the Grand Prize at the Chicago Film Festival, Czech authorities have prevented her from working and have kept her in total isolation from the film community. Chylitova was invited to be the Special Festival Guest of Honor at the International Women's Film Festival held at the American Film Institute Theatre, Kennedy Center, in December 1975, but was prevented from accepting the invitation.

Following is a letter we received shortly after the festival:

"Dear friends, dear Ms. Krasilovsky,

Thank you for the honor which you have conferred on me. I'm very sorry again that I cannot participate in an event which is so important for me. Allow me therefore to convey greetings from a distance to the festival, I wish better fate for all its participants than the one which met me and my work. I would be very happy if one could succeed in establishing an international group of film women which would be capable of independently producing films about women. Perhaps then I would have some hope. Regardless, I hope that perhaps some day we will meet.

With Greetings,
Yours,
Vera Chylitova"

Please add to our petition drive by writing on her behalf. The Film Export, Wencelas Square, Prague, Czechoslovakia.

Alexis Rafael Krasilovsky, Chairperson Film Festival Committee International Women's Film Festival

Video by its very nature invites constant change and upgrading... a few years ago, a color camera for under $3000 was a fantasy. Today they start at $1900...

by Alan Miller

Panasonic, JVC, Sanyo, Akai, etc. For the purposes of this article I will limit discussion to either color or color-capable equipment.

Sony has two color portapaks. One is the AV-6400—a 9" reed-to-reed up-date of the original AV/CVC 3400 Black and White portapak. They also make the AV 3800—a 14" video cassette portapak. Both decks record and play in color. The 3800 has much more sophisticated electronics and is superior in quality. The $400 costs about $1400 without the camera. The 3800 costs about $3000 without the camera. Color cameras will be discussed later in the article. The 3800 is the deck currently being used by TV stations and networks around the country for ENG (Electronic News Gathering), and is recognized as the best around. True to form, Sony has just announced a whole new series of 14" decks called "Broadcasters" models with substantial improvements, at significantly higher prices.

Panasonic and JVC also have 14" reed-to-reed portapaks in about the same price range as the Sony AV 8400. This summer JVC will show its new 14" video-cassette portapak to rival the Sony 3800. Akai makes a 14" reed-to-reed portapak that is very small and light-weight, but has a fraser signal due to the smaller tape size. Even so, WOR-TV News in New York uses Akai exclusively for their ENG. Sanyo makes a 14" cartridge portapak with superior quality, including four video heads for perfect slow-motion, but it is not standardized to EIAJ (Electronic Industries of Japan) standards and thus is incompatible with other manufacturers' units.

Color Cameras

Color cameras are probably the fastest growing area. If decks appear every six months, then cameras seem to appear every week. A few years ago a color camera for under $3000 was a fantasy. Today they start at $1900 and go all the way to $16000 plus. This article will explore the less expensive (and more accessible) ones. Generally, the rule that you get what you pay for applies. The picture quality and colorimetry of the more expensive cameras is just superior to that of the cheaper ones. However, several of the midrange cameras give excellent response within their limits. The Sony DVC 1600 for about $5000 is very good. It does have one major flaw, a tendency to lag slightly when passened or tilted. Its plus is a built-in image enhancer for sharper pictures. The JVC and Sony are slightly cheaper and do not appear out of place. The Akai, Sanki, and RCA. They all perform very well and are the cameras most often used by network and local stations. It must be emphasized that many stations are using the Akai, Sony and JVC.

An article like this couldn't have been written without the latest news in cameras. One is that JVC will preview a new camera for under $1000. Hitachi (Shibaden) has shown a new camera that weighs only 6.6 pounds complete. It uses small "on-camera" ENG and Concorde are cheaper still and perform according to form. At the other end of the price spectrum are the $20,000 to $30,000 cameras like the Fersel, Ikegami, Asaka, and RCA. They all perform very well and are the cameras most often used by network and local stations. It must be emphasized that many stations are using the Akai, Sony and JVC.

O.D. FOR VERA CHYLITOVA

Laying in bed with a cold, barbed wire strapped over my teeth— Where is detente? Don't call.

Vera's far, far away, liquidation likewise.

Love letters on the telephone— who remembers them?

Where the computerize complete double doses on every crime of creativity.

I lie with my cheek against my arm and think of you— your Czechoslovakian body tumbling down the aisles of adolescent love.

Here in Memphis, we're filming prostitution, the police, and politics which hit the whores who talk. The press discuss magnolias, while I close my eyes

and see Daisies once again.

We've exchanged buttered popcorn in the drowsy, dim-lit theater, and we're waiting for the pinmophiles to shine official highlights on the marque of your face your frozen-framed face, Hollywood-opening style.

Alexis Rafael Krasilovsky

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10 July, 1976 Independent GAZETTE
ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT VIDEO AND FILMMAKERS, INC.

ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT VIDEO AND FILMMAKERS, INC.
75 Horatio Street, New York, N.Y. 10014
Tel. 212-989-8366

PRINCIPLES OF THE ASSOCIATION

1. The Association is an organization of and for independent video and filmmakers.

2. The Association encourages excellence, commitment and independence; it stands for the principle that video and filmmaking is more than just a job, that it goes beyond economics to involve the expression of broad human values.

3. The Association works, through the combined efforts of the membership, to provide practical, informational, and moral support for independent video and filmmakers and is dedicated to insuring the survival and providing support for the continuing growth of independent video and filmmaking.

4. The Association does not limit its support to one genre, ideology, or aesthetic, but furthers diversity of vision in artistic and social consciousness.

5. The Association champions independent video and film as valuable, vital expressions of our culture and is determined to open, by mutual action, pathways toward exhibition of this work to the community at large.

MEMBERSHIP

Regular Membership is open to any person who is 1) involved or actively seeking involvement in independent video or filmmaking and 2) is committed to the principles of the Association.

Yearly dues for the Association are $10.00. New members pay a one-time-only $5.00 membership fee. The membership fee and dues for new members in 1976 total $15.00. Those who join after September 1, 1976 pay $10.00. All memberships are renewable on January 1, 1977.

Supporting Membership comes with a contribution of $100.00 or more; Sustaining Membership with a contribution of $250.00. Membership entitles you to receive our monthly mailing as well as other reports prepared for distribution.

Mailing List Only: $7.50 for New York City resident individuals; $5.00 for individuals living outside New York City and all institutions, irrespective of geographic location.

ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT VIDEO AND FILMMAKERS, INC.
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MEMBERSHIP FORM

NOTE: Clear printing solves the unfamiliar-handwriting problem.

Name ____________________________

Address __________________________

City, State, Zip ___________________

If applicable: Business Name _______

Address __________________________

City, State, Zip ___________________

Phone ____________________________

Membership: [ ] Regular [ ] Supporting [ ] Sustaining

Professional skills and specialties: ____________________________

What do you feel is the most important thing the Association can accomplish for you?
______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

I hereby apply for membership in the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers, Inc., being qualified for the category of membership I have indicated.

Signature __________________________

Date ______________________________

Independent GAZETTE/July, 1976/11
In the Beginning

The first plans to create an association for independent film and video people were hatched in the summer of 1973. With the support of the Center for Understanding Media, Ed Lynch spent nearly six months organizing before holding the first meeting in January 1974. Below are some excerpts from the monthly newsletter of the Association.

February 4, 1974
The first meeting was good: nearly 70 filmmakers, with no illusions as to the difficulty, a general willingness to work, and an eagerness to get started. It was the first step toward association—sharing a part of the struggle for survival as working independent filmmakers. The meeting showed willingness and general agreement.

August 12, 1974
The newly incorporated Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers, after several months of planning and organizational work, held its first official membership meeting on July 25. The 125 charter members adopted by-laws and principles of the Association and elected a seven-member Board of Directors. The principles of the Association center on providing "practical, informational, and moral support for independent video and filmmakers," encouraging "diversity of vision," and working for acceptance of independent film and video as "valuable and vital expressions of our culture." The members have joined together in the conviction that the practical problem of survival as an independent video or filmmaker is not one of craft. The problem is a combination of the character of the industry and the independent's isolation from, or distaste for, the conventional processes of funding and marketing.

November 7, 1974
...Our basic position is that the API does not represent the film community, and, therefore, we are opposed to the bill to financially renew it.

December 8, 1974
It is almost the end of our first year. We have defied the critics and skeptics who have said that independent filmmakers were either too crazy or too selfish to get together and agree on anything. And we are being heard. Artists who have never worked together before may have a little more difficulty in the beginning. But after all, it is just the beginning.

January 9, 1975
We have had our victories. As most of you know, the bill to create a "new" American Film Institute was defeated. Perhaps we will have part of the credit for the defeat of the bill, but that is not the most important point. During the evolution of the fight, it became clear that there is a community of filmmakers, videomakers, educators, film librarians, museum administrators and other dedicated individuals who would work together to stop bad legislation.

April 11, 1975
I think that each of us understands, and always has, that we could use all of our precious time and energy usefully, for our own individual survival. Then what, in the name of all funding sources, are we doing? I say, JUST THAT. Surviving. The difference is in the character of that survival. We want to work with a new sense of community.

May 16, 1975
We are about to begin our second season and the difference between the two seasons, in the latest lingo, is a quantum leap. Last year at this time we were planning our legal, our individual survival. During the last year I stopped holding my breath. The Association is no longer in my imagination or yours. It is no longer fragile. We can take a moment to look around, tend our various gardens, hold hands with our new friends.
ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT VIDEO AND FILMMAKERS, INC.

Connect to the Independent Community
Join AIVF
Indies Present Indies

THE FIRST ANNUAL AWARDS CEREMONY FOR INDEPENDENT VIDEO AND FILM.
Photographs by Randall Hagadorn.

Most Americans, if they remember March 29, 1976 at all, will remember it as the night when Elizabeth Taylor led the nation in her rousing version of "America the Beautiful," when people in 18th-century costumes performed the Bump on a rotating stage, and One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest swept the Academy Awards.

On that same night, however, the Association held its first annual Awards Ceremony. Two hundred and fifty film and video artists jammed the Fifth Avenue Hotel to honor each other's work and publicly recognize our common aspirations. It was a rare and warm evening.

The enthusiasm and financial support of Dan Sandberg of TVC Labs was the first catalyst for planning the event. In 1975, he approached the Association with the idea of creating the R.W. Altshuljer Award (named after his late friend and predecessor at TVC Labs) for excellence in independent filmmaking. A ballot of the Association membership yielded two winners who tied in a vote for the "person who contributed the most to independent film in 1975." Victoria Hochberg and George Griffin shared the $500.00 award. With awards and winners, a celebration was an inevitable next step.

Victoria Hochberg recently made Metronomer, a semi-abstract lyrical documentary of the American railroad. George Griffin is an animation artist whose most recent work, "Heid," is an ironic, surreal look at the relationship of animator to subject.

INDIE awards were also presented to ten others who either directly or through example contributed toward independence in film and video.

The recipients were:
• Karen Cooper, Director of the Film Forum, one of the premier showcases of independent films in New York City, introduced as "maybe the only woman theatrical programmer in the United States; certainly the only one who painted her own box office."
• John Cutkin, Director of the Center for Understanding Media and Instrumental in the formation of the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers, Inc.
• Ed Emshwiller, film and video artist who has contributed tirelessly to the creation of a community among independents through his involvement with the American Film Institute, The Filmmaker's Co-op, and the Association.
• Howard Guttenplan, Director of Millenium, a New York-based equipment center and, for many years now, an exhibition center for avant-garde film and video works.
• Nancy Hanks, Director of the National Endowment for the Arts. Ed Lynch jokingly described this as "our only blatantly self-serving award."
• Eleanor Perry and Frank Perry for independently producing David and Lisa in 1952 and hence serving as "godmother" and "godfather" respectively for independent theatrical feature makers. Amalie Rothschild, a member of New Day Films and AIVF Board Member, in presenting the INDIE to Ms. Perry, praised her for her advocacy of increased hiring of women in the motion-picture industry. "I admire you independently," Eleanor Perry said. "I admire your toughness. Voltaire said, 'To hold a pen is to be at war.' Well, the same is true of using a camera."
• Hilary Harris for his tenacity in making Organism over a fourteen-year period.
• Barbara Kopple, who, in documenting the struggles of coal miners in a film still in progress, has opened up new pathways for the financing of social documentary work.
• Nam June Paik, widely recognized as a founding father in the young world of video art.
• George Macoy, documentary film and tape maker, film teacher and Director of the Alternate Media Center, for his involvement in community media and issues of public access.

George Griffin, in accepting the R.W. Altshuljer Award, reads from his fifth-grade report card. "George spends too much time drawing." In the background, Mrs. Ethel Altshuljer, widow of R.W. Altshuljer, and Ed Lynch.

Dan Sandberg, President of TVC Laboratories

John Cutkin: 'To put the words "Independent" and "Association" back to back is gaudy stuff. Our part of the film community has not been known for its economical spirit ... there's been kind of a cold war going ... so to watch what's happening here is really sensational ... '
The Distribution Contract

This article begins with the assumption that you have or will find distribution for your film and need to understand the contract you will sign.

Contracts are so varied that it is impossible to discuss a "standard" one. I will name the items and considerations that are—or should be—common to all distribution contracts.

What follows is oriented toward "non-theatrical" distribution; that is, safe and rental to primary through high schools, colleges, universities, public libraries, film societies, churches, museums, community groups and specialized areas within this market such as medical schools, women's groups, art schools, etc. In short, all market areas outside "theatrical" exhibition.

Exclusivity

Most distribution contracts are exclusive. This means that you have given the distributor sole rights to distribute your film and you cannot enter into an agreement with any other distributor.

The cash investment in a film, necessary for effective promotion, is what prompts a distributor to ask for an exclusive. If you want an option for an identical title when their dime is on the line.

Some exceptions to exclusivity are possible:
1. Not all distributors ask for exclusivity (though virtually all the large companies do). The Co-ops (Canyon Cinema in California; Center Cinema in Illinois; Filmmakers Co-op in New York) do not and some of the smaller or more specialized distribution companies do not.
2. You can ask for and sometimes receive permission to handle individual sales and rentals that might come directly to you. If this is agreed upon, have it in writing.
3. Let us say your film has both broad, general appeal and is also about a subject that has a small, specialized audience. You are negotiating with Distributor X who deals with the broad, general audience and you are willing to have Distributor X handle your film. For example, Distributor Y deals extensively with the small, specialized market your film’s subject also appeals to and Y would like to distribute your film in that market. In a case like this—where Distributor Y’s market was not likely to conflict directly with Distributor X’s interest—you should ask both distributors for a contract with "conditional" exclusivity—each contract specifically "excepting" the other. That is, your contract with X would read that they had exclusive rights with the following exception naming Distributor Y and vice versa in your contract with Y.

Term of the Contract

The term of the contract is the length of time that it applies. This varies from distributor to distributor ranging from seven years to forever. In a contract, "forever" is called in perpetuity and you do not want to sign on for this length of time. In fact, you want to sign for the shortest amount of time possible.

It takes at least a year for a distributor to make a film title known in the marketplace. The next two years will see the fruit of the first year's labor. This is the first "bloom" of the film and sometimes that is all there is. Other times, a film will rent and sell consistently for many years thereafter. This factor has a lot to do with value. Most theatrical films that bomb at first or have been dead for years experience "revivals." This is seldom the case with non-theatrical films, however.

If you are reluctant to agree to the length of time specified in a contract because you are unsure of the distributor's ability to market your film effectively, try negotiating the contract for the distributor's desired term but ask to insert a clause that stipulates if the distributor has not returned X amount of money to you within Y years—Y years being shorter than the contract term—the contract terminates and all rights revert to you. Y years should be a short amount of time, say two or three years, and X amount of money should be "within reason." It is perfectly proper for you to ask the distributor what amount she/he feels is "within reason." It is also a good idea for you to get an outside, "expert" opinion on what is "within reason."

Warranty to Distributor

All contracts contain a section where the filmmaker "assures" the distributor that the filmmaker does, in legal fact, own the "rights" she/he is granting to the distributor. This assurance means that you have the right to grant distribution rights; that you have not invaded anyone's privacy or that, if you, have you are in possession of releasing third parties not infringing on the rights of others, i.e., music rights, literary rights, etc.

You also assure the distributor that there are no claims or litigation pending that could conceivably affect the right you hold.

In this same section it will usually say that the filmmaker agrees to "indemnify" and hold harmless the distributor against any legal judgments. This means that you accept all responsibility for damages incurred by the distributor should someone else's rights be declared paramount. The extent of your legal responsibility is spelled out in the terms of the indemnity. The indemnity may include not only judgments but also legal fees and court costs in the defense of any claim. If you are accepting responsibility for legal claims made by anyone contesting your rights, you should have the opportunity to control or at least consult with the defense.

Film Materials

A standard clause is that a negative of the film will be deposited with a laboratory and the distributor will have access to the negative for the purpose of making prints. Specify in the contract that the negative will be deposited in your name. Some distributors will agree to leaving your film in a laboratory of your choice.

Freude is both a filmmaker and a distributor. She runs SERIOUS BUSINESS CO., the West Coast based film distribution company.

This may not always be to your advantage unless there is some particular problem with your film that you feel only one special lab can handle.

Distributors have agreements and special price arrangements with their own laboratories. Because of the volume business they do with labs, they can get a better price on prints than you can as an individual producer and they may insist your negative be deposited with their lab. If it is deposited in their lab, It will still take three months to process your film, and also include a clause that says you have the right to buy prints at cost directly from the distributor should you wish.

Never give up your originals. Unless you are selling your film outright (which is a bad idea, anyway), supply the distributor only with a negative—or with negatives and prints only for the purpose of making a negative.

If you do not already have a negative and the distributor agrees to make the negative at her/his cost, or agrees to share the cost, write this into the contract.

 Territory

This is the whole world to choose from when defining territory, and distributors frequently ask for it. You are not obliged nor is it frequently in your interest to sign an exclusive contract giving "world-wide" rights. You can limit the territory specifically. After "world-wide" the most commonly asked for territory is "the United States and its territories and possessions and the ships that fly its flag" with "Canada" often thrown in, as well. There are too many good film distributors in Canada and you may wish to seek separate distribution there. There is not much market in Europe on the university level but there is a healthy television sale market there and again, you may wish to negotiate separately with a distributor or agent for Europe.

Media Rights:
The Scope of the License

Regard media rights, it is quite important to be specific. A contract will usually state under "rights" either theatrical or non-theatrical (or both) and television and then include the phrase "and other forms and size." S.

Sizes usually refers to guage. That is a film you supply in 16mm may be reduced to Super 8 or blown up to 35mm. All forms can mean not only videotape, cassette, disc, etc., but also whatever "formats" may be invented during the term of your contract.

Television rights are commonly included in distribution contracts. Television is a diverse marketplace consisting of popular, syndicated, cable, closed circuit, etc. You may wish to grant TV rights to or to specifically exclude certain areas in the television market. You must exclude these specifically by name.

If you believe your film is appropriate for these other media and you want this potential exploited, you should question the distributor about her/his interest and ability to transfer and market your film in these ways. You should have the premise to do so in writing. You should also consider if the royalties paid to you under the "film" terms should also apply to these other forms or if you wish to receive a greater royalty in these special cases. If you do, this should be in the contract.

If you do not want to grant the right for any or all other "forms," the rights you wish to withhold should be set down explicitly in the contract as an exception to the rights otherwise granted and described.
Royalties

Royalties are how and what you are paid. This is always stated in terms of percentages: Filmmaker will receive X percent of the revenue derived from the film. For example, the statement "X percent of the revenue derived" should be qualified by either "gross" or "net." It is important that the percentage of "what" be clear. If the revenue received was money received with no expenses deducted. Net indicates that some expenses will be deducted before you share is calculated. If your contract states a percentage of net, net must be clearly spelled out. What is being deducted to constitute net? Is it print cost only? Is it advertising and publicity? If it is advertising and publicity, forget it. Do not agree to it. There is really no acceptable way a distributor can determine accurately given advertising and promotion costs on a short film in this market.

Most medium to large distribution companies are now offering from 17 to 25% of the "gross" revenue. When a company offers a percentage of gross it means that they will absorb all distribution costs: print cost, advertising, postage, etc. There are some smaller companies that will offer 50% of the sales with the filmmaker and distributor sharing the cost of the prints. This is equivalent to 40% of the gross.

Make sure it is stated clearly how often you will receive an accounting. It should be at least twice yearly and you should name the number of days by which it is due within each accounting period (say, biannually, within the first 15 days of each six-month period). Does it say that the distributor will submit itemized statements along with your royalty check? You should want to know how your film has been seen and, unless specifically requested, very few distributors provide an itemized statement. You should also ask that the distributor forward to you all copies of advertising or publicity released or received relative to your film.

It is extremely important that when and how often you receive accounting be clearly defined because, in case of trouble, it is usually in this area that it will be easiest for you to claim breach of contract if you ever need or want to.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Film Festival Awards

You may wish to spell out procedure on film festivals. Does the distributor intend to enter your film in festivals? You may wish to reserve the right to enter your film in festivals yourself. If it is mutually agreeable that the distributor enter your film in festivals, you may wish to limit the royalty among the distributor may take on prize money awarded to your film.

Advances

There are at least two advantages to advances. One, it is immediate money in the bank. Two, having advanced money, a distributor is more likely to actively promote the film to regain her/his investment. Unfortunately, advances, unless you have a very hot property, are hard to come by. Distributors would rather invest the money directly in the film via promotion and prints than in the filmmaker. It doesn’t hurt to ask, however—especially if there is a great need for a film of the sort you’ve made and if you sense the distributor wants your film very much.

Breach of Contract

Breach of contract is the way out. If you are unhappy with the way your film is being distributed—for whatever reason—it is not reaching the audience you think it should; your royalty payments are nonexistent or late or suspect for some reason; the film is being advertised or promoted in a way you consider inappropriate or exploitative, you may want to cancel your contract.

If you can find no other specific agreement that has been violated, if you have clearly spelled out the time period of royalty payments and if this schedule has not been followed to the letter by the distributor, you can claim breach of contract on that basis. It is for this reason important that you keep the statements sent to you by the distributor for reference and proof.

It is extremely important that you have a clause in the contract covering yourself in the event the distributor goes bankrupt. You want a clause that says: (1) if the distributor should cease to be actively engaged in the distribution business, or (2) the distributor’s business is liquidated, or (3) the distributor becomes bankrupt or makes an assignment for the benefit of its creditors; then your contract terminates and all rights revert back to you. Not only rights but all property relating to the film including the negative in the lab, the prints on the distributor’s shelf and all monies due to the distributor with respect to your film.

General Considerations

Placing a film with a distributor is in some ways not unlike giving a child up for adoption. It is rarely possible to know your distributor personally.

The contract is a legal document. It is worth having a lawyer look at it before you sign it. Carl Sandberg did not say, "Nobody cries when a lawyer dies" for nothing, however. Even if your lawyer looks at it first (or last), it is important that you have read it and understand perfectly what it is you have agreed to. This contract, however legally binding, is, after all, only a piece of paper. Though it is important that you be satisfied with the formal wording of your contract, you also want to have confidence in the way it is going to really function. This means it is a good idea to have confidence in your distributor.

If you are satisfied with the interest and understanding expressed by the distributor, a good way to investigate the distributor’s effectiveness is to write to other filmmakers listed in the distributor’s catalogue and ask about their experience. It is best to write to several filmmakers because any given person’s experience may not be typical. Writing to the filmmakers in case of the distributor is a good way as any to reach them. The distributor, if sincere, wants your film, should be happy to forward such inquiries.

"YOU ARE NICE. YOU LOSE"
—Andrew Carnegie

“Dear Horatio…”

Dear Horatio,

I have not met someone who says that he "really cares for me," which sounds right, but he refused to come to my place (Bowery) and insisted that I come up to his place. He lives on West 95th St. Question: Is this the real world?

—Eume

Dear E,

I have heard that it is easier to maintain a relationship than to suffer between those different parts of town. I have never heard of a successful get-together between those that lasted without a move, and rather quickly. As to who travels in the first blush of romance, it depends on who is the adventurer, who has the nicest place (sun in the morning, room service, etc.) and who is the most insecure.

Dear Horatio,

Has anyone done any serious work on drug combinations? I get confused. For example, I’m fine on librium, weed, and a little bit of coke, but if I have a beer, I keep repeating myself and running into things. Or if I’m working on aspirin, B-12, and a little bit of dex and I take a toke, the walls start to curl and my mouth gets fuzzy around the edges. Or when I’m full on on scopolam, gams, boats and stompers and I take a little bit of acid. I can’t remember which way I'm going, if you know what I mean. So how in the world do I supposed to know what to take?

-Stompin’ and stokin’

Dear S & S,

You’re supposed to do exactly what you are doing, believe it or not. The way out from where you are is always confused with the way in. Not to be cute about, you do face one hell of a problem, and I feel that I should advise you to go to the one place that you will go anywhere—a good dealer who should try to keep you straight. It is good for business.

Dear Horatio,

Lately I’ve been feeling unquiet, like I’m living outside myself. Even the sand and the sunshine don’t help. My friends tell me that I must be careful not to become my own perspective. Can you help me find my space? I’m also looking for an apartment.

—Confused on the Coast

Dear Confused,

For sure.

Dear Horatio:

I have big breasts and big feet so I know that I can never be an actress. What’s in the future for five-year-olds, generally?

—Budding

Dear Bud, Grouch.

Dear Horatio,

My dog has a habit of whining when the TV is on, looking worried all the time, wanting to come into the bathroom when I take a bath and then staring at me, sniffing everyone you-know-what, staring at me and everyone else with sad eyes when they are eating, but otherwise is a great dog! My (dog) psychiatrist says that it doesn’t sound serious, but that I should come in for consultation. My neighbor says that I should join her "group." What do you think?

—Muddled

Dear Muddled,

I don’t have a dog, but yours sounds normal, which is why I don’t have a dog. But really—try and learn from Fido: sell your TV, relax, take your mitt in the tub, and feed the animal outside.

Forget about the group—those arrangements don’t work in this country.

16/July, 1976/Independent GAZETTE
Copyright: All Rights Reserved?

by Tom Lennon

Copyright? Yes, copyright is this funny symbol which you put at the end of your film or tape when you're done. You put your name and the date. Maybe you add "ALL RIGHTS RESERVED" in bold type. And then no one can use your film. Right?

A legal lawyer? Yes, a very technical branch of law, that few people fully understand. The American copyright laws that are now on the books have been there, unchanged, since 1909. For almost a quarter of a century, Congress has wanted to rewrite the laws but they've never been able to come to a consensus. Sort of like Red Dye #2's relationship to the Food and Drug Administration: no one can deny that actions are needed but there have been so many special and conflicting interests involved that it has been easier not to act.

Meanwhile, technology has altered the real problems of copyright. The invention of jukeboxes, television and photocopying, not to mention videotape, make statutes written in 1909 seem a little feeble. 1975 was supposed to be the year of Copyright but at the end of the Congressional sessions, hearings were still being held, a consensus still elusive. Very well, 1976 would be the year of Copyright. This time it seems that Congress means it. Chances are that by autumn we will have new copyright laws. And at stake in the copyright debate has been the very basis of our livelihood as film and video artists.

The so-called "educational exemption" to the Copyright Revision Bill was designed to permit schools, libraries, museums and other educational institutions to reproduce short films and videotapes as well as poems, short books and music without payment to the publishers or producers. Think about that for a moment. Schools, libraries, museums...without payment to the producers. The potential anathema of our aspirations at self-sufficiency lay buried in the fine print of a little-publicized piece of legislation. Only that rare independent filmmaker whose support comes from theatrical distribution—and we can count them on the fingers of two hands—would have any economic base whatsoever to support his or her work. AIVF President Ed Lynch once compared copyright to the Ozone layer, just too remote to get worked up about...until perhaps you are forced to recognize the dimensions of what's at stake.

In order to first understand how legislation like the educational exemption could receive serious consideration in Congress, we have to take a couple of conceptual steps backward. Laws reflect society. The priorities of law reflect the values of the society that has enacted those laws. To look at the vast array of United States laws that concern transportation, for example, tells us that modern-day Americans are obsessed with the automobile. And so it is with Copyright. Bella Linden, an internationally recognized copyright expert and a vocal opponent of the educational exemption, came down to the Association meeting-place one evening and sketched out for us the history of copyright. It was founded during the middle ages when the prime concern in reproduction and copying was maintaining the integrity of religious texts being copied; it followed that the laws addressed themselves exclusively to the obligation of the copier to copy the scriptures accurately. After the invention of the press, publishing became an industry and an economic incentive had to be established which would induce writers to write. So copyright law was turned around to fill that need. In essence, it now made of literary and musical creations a marketable property, which in turn guaranteed the society of an ample supply of "creations" to feed their newly found industry. The basic function of copyright has remained unchanged since then. Now, in the 1970's, the proposed law undermines the "copy" right of the author. Copyright is held in favor of the educational institutions and the vast industrial concerns involved in technological reproduction, such as IBM and Xerox. That speaks eloquently, Bella Linden pointed out, to American societal values at this point in our history. We revere technology and we revere the educational complex and its host of symbols and degrees. Writers, musicians, media artists and poets don't figure quite so prominently in our priorities.

The educational institutions—and this applies equally to PBS, whose "Mathias" amendment I will discuss below—are facing some lean years. Massive quantities of federal money were injected into the libraries and schools in the sixties but the seventies have held out only the promise of cut-backs and fiscal austerity. With expenses spiralling and appropriations being reduced, there has been no alternative but to start axing personnel...unless, that is, the institutions can find a means of getting something for nothing. Which brings us to the educational exemption.

A school can't ask to be given its milk or its desks for free. And certainly it can't demand that Xerox Corporation donate a photocopier machine. But copyright? Copyright is a little different. It's less tangible. And artists and writers carry no electoral clout. The National Educational Association recognized an idea whose time had come and turned it into action. "We work for people, not for profit" they cried. It seemed plausible enough. At the hearings, young schoolteachers with long hair and beards testified about their plight in one-room schools in Appalachia, unable to afford textbooks and audio-visual materials. Meanwhile, defending the rights of the "copyright proprietors"—a term which in itself had very negative public relations value—were the likes of James Michener, John Hersey and the presidents of the publishing houses and film distribution companies. To the Senators, the message was clearly one of the perils of the privileged. As Senator Pastore put it: "Why should the public have to pay composers and others in Hollywood? Those people make enough money already." Kennedy waxed enthusiastic about the educational exemption; Mathias, Bayh and other liberals followed suit. Those who defended the integrity of copyright found themselves allied with Senator Hruska, Senator McClellan and the militant right.

The educational exemption was at its core an attempt at expropriation. It was expected that it would come under attack from conservatives who regard it as governmental meddling in the sacred arena of private property. Although many AIVF members might describe themselves as socialists of one hue or another, we found ourselves in agreement with the conservatives, defending our right to function in the free-market system, for the educational exemption called for the total destruction of a marketplace while providing for no system with which to replace it. It is sometimes said that America's economic system is one of capitalism for the poor and socialism for the rich and both proposed amendments to the Copyright Revision Bill vividly illustrate that very observation.

Putting aside for a moment our interests as film and video artists, let's consider the implications of the educational exemption for the country as a whole. The economic basis for the production of audio-visual materials would disappear overnight. The schools and libraries would enjoy an orgy of videotaping for a couple of years. No new films or tapes, however, would be available to replace obsolete work. The institutions would have to look to the vast corporations for new (free) films. The government would be forced to stimulate production or go into production itself, offsetting any short-term economic gains made by reducing educational budgets. Meanwhile, the independent voice, always fragile in film and television, will have been silenced. Who would make the films on Watergate, on Cuba, on Methedane treatment, on any of the thousands of topics which govern-ment and industry would rather not see in the mainstream of public information channels?

Through our lawyer, Bob Kline, the Association learned of the copyright legislation in the fall of 1975, late in the legislative process. The bill was already out of committee in the Senate and imminent due to be voted on. The House was (and still is) trudging the Senate, but it, too, had closed its doors in order to
"The educational exemption called for the total destruction of a marketplace while providing no system with which to replace it."

"mark up" the bill and heard no more testimony. We had to accept the fact that we were not in a position to propose legislation. We put aside thoughts of possible copyright systems we might have proposed to Congress, such as a clearinghouse for film and video artists, on the model of ASCAP, which would pay royalties, to artists wherever their work was reproduced on video tape. We had to support or oppose the bill and its amendments as they were presented written. We put all of our efforts into defeating two publicly amended provisions of the bill: the educational exemption, already described, and the Mathias amendment.

The educational exemption is, at first reading, an obvious heresy. The Mathias amendment eludes such simple definition. It provides for the compulsory licensing of non-dramatic literary works, as well as sculptural, musical, graphic, and pictorial (not film or video) works to public broadcasting corporations at a fixed fee to be determined by a governmental agency. Under the system which Senator Mathias put forward, a PBS station would be entitled to excerpts or ideas from Future Shock, for example, does not have to contact Alvin Toffler, but merely file, post facto, a notice of use with a centralized copyright agency. If, at the end of the year, Alvin Toffler or his agent contacts the agency, he will discover that PBS has used his work and that he is entitled to a given sum of money. (Starkey Kuntz, the poet, estimated he would collect ten cents if his poetry were read over the air.) Toffler would have no right to refuse PBS the use of his book. If he deems the fee insufficient, he cannot appeal his case to the hopefully named Copyright Royalty Tribunal; any extra monies would be given to him after deducting "reasonable administrative expenses." (1) for the cost of the appeal.

The Mathias Amendment is a complex, hastily conceived bill which no one—not even its sponsor—appears to fully understand. Basically, it grants to PBS a privileged relationship to copyrighted literature and art. The bill is no more than an effort to streamline the process of obtaining rights to copyrighted material, a process too time-consuming, supposedly, that it discourages local stations from putting together their own programs. A plausible argument. But when asked if they would limit the Mathias Amendment to programs which are being used for local, one-time use only, the PBS lawyers showed no interest, revealing that, more likely, they are simply looking for areas in which they can cut major costs. Mike Klipper from Senator Mathias' office conceded that this was the aim of the bill.

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AlVF finds the Mathias Amendment objectionable on numerous counts. It would create a bureaucracy of vast proportions. Within the workings of that bureaucracy, the author of a non-dramatic literary work loses the right to choose the producer of his or her work, because PBS has automatic access to it. PBS can accidently or intentionally misrepresent that work in its visual reinterpretation of it. It can suppress ideas that the independent film and video artists will be highly reluctant to produce documentary works which draw on literary material, even if it is not exclusive rights to that material will no longer be available. Finally, the Mathias Amendment heavily taxes authors, musicians, and filmmakers who are interested in distributing their work but are not able to sell it at a profit.

"It doesn't have sex, it doesn't have power, it doesn't have money—how are you planning to get anyone interested?" a legislative assistant was to sneer, later, when we were in Washington.

Bob Klise and Don Connors, a filmmaker, defined a statement which was sent to all members of the House Judiciary Committee, of which the Subcommittee on Courts, Civil Liberties and the Administration of Justice, which handles copyright, is a part. We received a smattering of form letters in reply. Bella Linden's presentation in December made it clear that we should mobilize to go down to Washington and make ourselves heard in person. John Hiller, a film-editor and a new member of the Association, threw himself into the task of mobilizing an educational campaign. We had to play our desire to mount a thoroughly impressive "uptown" style effort against the limits of our energy and resources—we were a one-person staff—and no one knew for sure when the bill would come to the Senate floor. It could be any day. In soliciting appointments with legislators over the telephone, John became a master of the technique of intimidation through silence. First comes the pitch in a resonant voice, then the confiding request for an appointment, followed by the protest of the legislative aide: "But the Congressman has hearings for most of the morning...silence from our end...the vote on the cut-off of funds for Angola is scheduled for this day...normally the Congressman will only see constituents on this issue...well, how about for ten minutes, absolute maximum, at eleven?" Two cars, ten filmmakers, and two dozen appointments jelled for the last days of January and we were off.

Into Washington in the driving rain long after midnight. We stayed with friends. The first appointment the next day, at eight in the morning, was with Susan Englehardt, a lobbyist for the American Association of Publishers. There we link up with two Washington filmmakers from a fledgling organization called the Washington Area Filmmakers League, formed along lines similar to AlVF. Susan Englehardt's report: The educational exemption is not part of the bill as passed out of the Senate committee but it may well be introduced on the floor. The Mathias Amendment is in the bill and still at this late date no Senator has agreed to sponsor an amendment to delete that amendment. Rumor has it that Mathias might not oppose such an amendment—to remove the amendment but no one is sure and Mathias is stilling.

Into taxis for our appointment with Representative Charles Wiggins, the conservative from California who achieved notoriety last year during the House hearings on Nixon’s impeachment. Wiggins listened intently to what we said and asked precise questions. He sympathized with our opposition to the educational exemption; beyond that, he sought from us details on the economies of audiovisual production and reproduction. "Yeah, I get it," he said, ‘you're the little guys who stand to get wiped out."

We surveyed our toused hair and clothes and broke into a wide grin, his eyes twinkling. "In effect, you're the operators of small businesses...you're a bunch of right-wingers!" We smiled uncomfortably, looked down, shifted in our seats. Until we saw him mischievously enjoying our embarrassment, relishing the...
The larger issues of free speech and copyright integrity were being lost while the vested interests divided up the spoils.

Meanwhile, I confess to a lingering affection for Mike Klipper, Senator Mathias’ legislative aide. We met him in the Senate’s basement cafeteria. He told me he had brought an aide home and that with ten filmmakers crowding around him in the booth. We bargained. What would the Mathias Amendment achieve that more funds directly allocated to PBS would not accomplish more efficiently? What about the potential suppression of ideas? What does the bill mean by a work’s “adaptation”? This amendment, he explained, was written before he was working for the Senator. Although he must have been over thirty years of age, he would have passed for a college student. His mouth turned up at the corners in a look of almost boyish embarrassment as we debated the value of the bill. He mentioned a book, “I haven’t read it”, Phil Medinsky retorted, but I guess I’ll soon be able to catch it on PBS instead.” Aware of our numerical advantage, we relented, but he urged us on. It was seven in the evening before he said he had to leave. As we got up to go, he proposed more questions. How did we go down to Washington? Did we have places to stay? Did we know, and so on, now a filmmaker, formerly his roommate in college? Inwardly, he seemed to feel that Mathias had made a mistake. And we apparently embodied for him a rebelliousness, a different consciousness, that he wanted to feel was not dead in him.

After two days in New York, he talked, drifted out and fazed, but satisfied. A few days elapsed and John Hillier then made a follow-up call to Susan Englehart. She was seemingly jubilant. “You were are in the worst business!” she said. “You stirred up the whole place. You turned the tide.” The day after we left, Humphrey agreed to sponsor an amendment to remove the Mathias Amendment. Senators Cranston and Buckley were to co-sponsor the bill. We could hardly have hoped for a more powerful coalition representing, as they did, the American film community. We sat down with representatives of the country. To us, victory on both amendments seemed highly probable. Susan Englehart concurred.

With relief, we turned back to our daily chores. The amendment passed the New York Film Council, Ed Lynch all but praised the in the imminent defeat of the amendments. Yes, we need a little more. Then came the evening news. The Mathias Amendment did not pass. A couple of days before the vote, Senator Pastore had made a powerful emotional appeal for the survival of PBS: “Have we lost our confidence in humankind to be fair? Let me conclude by saying, God save public broadcasting!” PBS, in Congress, is apple pie. Humphrey withdrew his sponsorship of the anti-Mathias amendment at the last minute. Cranston and Buckly hastily realigned their amendment so as to merely require inclusion in the Mathias Amendment of a right-to-veto on the part of the artist. But that amendment was voted down by a comfortable margin.

In our disappointment, we hardly noticed the good news that the most objectionable section had not been introduced on the floor of the Senate. Whether our presence influenced the decision of the proponents of the educational amendment not to attempt a floor vote, we have no way of knowing.

We will also never know what manner of secret pacts and gentlemanly agreements led to the sudden drama in the voting of the Mathias Amendment. The amendment was(nullptr unspecified)

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We will also never know what manner of secret pacts and gentlemanly agreements led to the sudden drama in the voting of the Mathias Amendment. The amendment was rejected in the Senate, and in the House.

In our disappointment, the music and publishing interests hope to kill it in the House. If they are not strong enough, to do so, they can quite possibly remove the worst teeth from the bill through the inclusion, for example, of an artist’s right to veto.

In helping to defeat the educational amendment and in bringing the issue of copyright into the public forum, we had largely fulfilled our immediate task. In doing so, we had succeeded in upholding the status quo in the face of a potential calamity. For an independent maker of films or tapes, the status quo is hardly cause for celebration. With or without the blessings of the law, the Xerox and Sony machines will remain busy in the universities, systematically ripping off the artist. Are photocopying and videotaping machines to be licensed, as they are in Germany, where each use brings a royalty to the creator? The systems of information dissemination in this country remain tightly controlled; the artist at one end and the public at the other are impoverished as a result. Amid all the debate and machinations surrounding the copyright controversy, the corporate stranglehold over the flow of information has yet to be seriously challenged or even discussed.

**SUMMER HIGHLIGHTS**

The pace of the Big City slackens somewhat during July and August. Listed below are some highlights of independent film and video happenings in stores for the summer.

- **June 17th & 18th at The Kitchen:** It’s a Living, Chicago 76. Videotapes by Skip Lumberg, Maxi Cohen and Joel Gold about working and making a living.
- **Stan Brakhage will be coming through the city. He will be present at a screening of his work at Millennium Film Workshop. Also on July 19th, and will teach an intensive two-week seminar at NYU entitled “Shamanism: Story-Telling and Film.”
- **The Fourth Women’s Video Festival will run through June 27th. Thursdays through Sundays, at the Women’s InterArt Center, 549 W. 52nd St.
- **Ken Jacobs, with his film “Star Spangled to Death”, will hold a concert-performance: FLOP: FOURTH OF JULY, 1976 at the Collective for Living Cinema, 21 White St., on July 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 8 PM.
- **The First Annual Celebration of Cinema & Art will take place on the historic grounds of Lyndhurst Castle in Tarrytown. The grounds will be open for picnicking at 6 PM and video, film and performance pieces will start at dusk. Sponsored by the Film Workshop of Westchester and AIVF.**
- **Through July 4th, the Whitney Museum will be featuring its first regular programming of Video Art.
- **The 1976 Robert Flaherty Film Seminar will be held from August 28th through September 4th in Chautauqua. Please contact the Center for information.**

**Independent GAZETTE / July, 1976 / 19**
Distribution of independently produced films and tapes has often been a rather grizzled business. In September, several members of the AIVF helped to form a new organization called ICAP, which has been attempting to open up a new market for film and video artists.

ICAP, Independent Cinema Artists and Producers, was set up to pre-screen films and negotiate for their showings on pay-cable systems and other independent producers. Its activities have been changing, as the entire cable industry has been rapidly transforming the company.

Pay-cable television systems are quite different from the commercial networks. The viewer pays a certain amount to be hooked up to the cable service, and as a result, the network’s profit comes from cable subscribers. The largest pay-cable system is Home Box Office, which shows special programming uninterupted by commercials. Home Box Office’s main fare consists of features and sports. Once September, they began to take independent shorts, which ICAP brought to them.

ICAP began as the Cable Committee of the AIVF. They began working with independent producers on pay-cable as an experiment to see that a real audience existed for independent works. The Cable Committee drew up plans for an agreement which would not involve the use of special hardware and marketing for independent works. The experiment would seek to show that independent programming, if handled properly, can attract enough of the audience to be economically viable. Pay cable television has such a large audience potential, and can involve the direct payment of fees as well as through commercials, it could create a vast new market for independent artists. A proposal for this experiment was submitted to the New York State Council on the Arts last spring (Some seed money has subsequently been granted.)

It was during the research for this experiment that talks began with Home Box Office. Though they were not interested in running a controlled experiment, they were eager to start screening independent works right away. The Cable Committee decided to form a new organization which would handle negotiations with HBO.

ICAP is a non-profit, unincorporated association, that has applied for tax-exempt status. The Executive Committee is Charles Levine, Kitty Morgan, and Marc N. Weiss. We are filmmakers for gaining independent programming on pay cable as an experiment to show that a real audience exists for independent works. We are working on a proposal which would not involve the use of special hardware and marketing for independent works. The experiment would seek to show that independent programming, if handled properly, can attract enough of the audience to be economically viable. Pay cable television has such a large audience potential, and can involve the direct payment of fees as well as through commercials, it could create a vast new market for independent artists. A proposal for this experiment was submitted to the New York State Council on the Arts last spring (Some seed money has subsequently been granted.)

When we first began dealing with HBO, they only went into four Northeastern states, and had less than 200,000 subscribers. They had a national satellite system and went into several states, including the South and West. They have about 300,000 subscribers and are growing rapidly.

Their main subscribers are young adults (about 60%), sports (about 30%), and specials, including shorts (about 10%). Their monthly subscription fee ranges between $4-5. Most of their features are first-run, still enjoying theatrical showings. The shorts are often quite good, and are being sold and distributed through main offering.

After the first chance to talk with HBO, we had a standard contract for shorts which paid a flat fee for an unlimited number of runs. They simply paid a certain amount per minute, and used the films as often as they liked for three months.

This was considered quite a breakthrough. Usually, a short film would be run between 10-20 times during its one-year contract. With our contract, a half-hour film run on HBO 10-20 times would make $1000 or more. With the old contract, it would make about half that amount, or less. Unlike distributors, which usually take 50% or more, ICAP retains 25% for administrative costs, and gives 75% to the artist.

In September, ICAP had its first showing on HBO. We had a good rapport with some in the programming department, who really enjoyed our films. A couple of months later, he left the department, and there was no one around to take up the cause of independent works. The heads of the department came from the theatrical buying world, and were accustomed to thinking of shorts as insignificant. They devoted almost all of their time to features and have expressed little interest in continuing to look at any shorts.

At this time, HBO is reevaluating its position, and we expect to have a series of meetings with them soon. In the meantime, they continue to re-run the shorts we took to them in the fall, and the filmmakers are still getting checks for their runs. Since HBO’s attitude towards shorts is unclear, ICAP has begun to deal with other pay-cable systems. Many of the other systems don’t even know that this kind of programming exists, and we are in the process of creating a promotional campaign for independent works.

This whole experience against ICAP was originally much broader than HBO—it is pay cable spread as widely as it has recently, it could provide a real revolution in the economics of arts programming. Audiences will have access to a greater variety of programming, and will pay directly for it. Lincoln Center has been exploring the possibility of using pay cable to increase its audience and its revenues. Thus, pay cable could increase the support of museums, dancers, and perhaps all the arts.

Advocates for pay-TV insist that it will become widespread. They say that the networks are not free, since the public pays for the advertising of each commercial. The consumer is paying for everything on TV right now; why not just pay for what you watch?

Some insist that the per-program billing system will proliferate. Rather than a flat monthly subscription fee, this kind of billing involves the use of a computer which monitors what is being watched and only bills the customer for those programs. Probably pressure will come from the sporting events, people who would like to get $5 or $10 or whatever, for a price. With a monthly billing system, they could not get that kind of money from each subscriber. However, with a per-program system, they could command those kinds of sums.

It is important for us as artists and producers to keep aware of this technology and try to find ways to use it to our advantage. With the advent of pay-TV and video discs, we could finally find the wide audience and support we need as independent artists. We must be aware of the possibilities and fight for our interests.

One concept behind ICAP is that it could eventually function like ASCAP, protecting the rights of artists and assuring the payment of royalties. With the explosion of communications technology, there could be the need for a body that would monitor the use of visual material and see that fees are paid accordingly. If such a system is set up, it should be done with the interests of the artist in mind. It should not be done by the business world, nor by the government. We could have the power to change the economics of our lives.

ICAP requests that any correspondence regarding its activities be addressed to P.O. Box 775, New York, New York, 10013. Please do not send films without writing first. It is difficult for us to handle tapes at this time, but we hope that will change. We are in the process of making plans for the future and welcome volunteers, both for the AIVF cable experiment and for ICAP. Please contact Thomas Lennon at 212-989-8366 for our new telephone number.

Kitty Morgan is co-founder and director of ICAP and a member of AIVF’s Board of Directors.
White Ox Films: Funding the Future
by David Tulbert

White Ox Films, Inc., is a non-profit film organization based in Rochester, New York. Its purpose is to harness the untapped potential of the film and television media by developing new conceptual and technical and practical systems in the field of cinema technology, aesthetics and communications. Our primary purpose, however, is to use such systems once developed, to create films that are positive, healing and uplifting. We hope to give an overview of the ways in which we feel film and TV can be used to further the evolution of mankind by providing deeper, more total communications, particularly in the realm of art.

There is no doubt that the works of filmmakers like Brakhage and Baltes, and the other pioneers of experimental film, have shown us the existence of an enormous potential—the potential of moving-picture communications. As sophisticated as these art works may appear by current criteria, they represent the early beginnings of the artistic development of a medium still in its infancy. Perhaps in 500 years the works of these artists, which are misunderstood or not understood at all by the general public, will be seen as the first nuggets from the enormous gold mine of moving-picture communications. It is communications which distinguishes a society from a more aggregate of individuals, and it is the great need for trans-verbal communications like film/TV to establish a world society (which, of course, must depend on trans-verbal communications). The media, because their communication comes from a deep, grow in depth, also increase the social cohesiveness of individual cultures. It is the purpose of White Ox to develop and make public whatever technology and knowledge is needed to place these media completely in the hands of the public.

One night in January 1965, my roommate dragged me to see some “experimental” films (whatever the hell they were) by some West Coast “schohmania” (at that time “hippies” had not yet replaced “beats”) named Stan Brakhage. The showing was at the Cambridge Community Center. I was greatly impressed by the other very experimental film presentation by a local self-proclaimed film aficionado (and Brakhage’s quick put-down of him), we saw “Dog Star Man.” and a couple of Brakhage’s other films. I am giving this historical perspective now because the same was relatively new to us then. In Cambridge, one of the country’s leading intellectual centers. Brakhage was playing and speaking before a house of maybe 75 people! I was absolutely transfixed by the films. They showed me how I could work the image streams in my head directly onto the screen and not have to grapple with an abstract language like poetry to describe them on the printed page.

I dropped out of school, took a night course at Boston University, bought an 8mm camera (this was before Super 8), and started shooting like mad. I must have shot about 5000 feet of 8mm film in two months. Through the course at Boston University and this intensive shooting in 8mm, I got a good grasp of how to shoot, shooting techniques, etc., how to develop, and how to use the camera to get abstract effects. Between ’65 and ’67, I made a couple of films using an 8mm Bolex and had them blow up to 16mm. They were done from script, but all the film, dissolves and complex matting was done in camera. A soundtrack, including voice-over poetry and avant-garde jazz, was mixed at the M.I.T. radio station and put onto the films.

Quite by accident, this film was screened at a colloquium of senior M.I.T. Humanities majors, and subsequently I was able to return to school and make a film for my thesis. I even got a small grant which covered stock costs and the construction of a special machine that allowed me to pre-program complex fades in the field and thus attain complete control over visual rhythm. I was, and am, very concerned with the question of control of the medium’s substance. I worked from graphic scripts and used the machine to implement them. The idea was that the film went directly from my head onto a graphic script that specified all the details of camera movement, image intensity, etc., on paper. In this way, I avoided, during the creative process, any interference from the machinery of filmmaking. The shooting and editing processes were merely the mechanical implementation of that “ideal” as expressed in the script.

The film went over budget (it was 27 minutes long) and was never completed, though I still have the script, the original footage, and the machine. My thesis advisor accepted the script, the machine and raw footage as satisfying the requirements of my thesis, and I graduated in 1969.

During the period 1967 to ’70, I also got involved in the Center for Advanced Visual Studies at M.I.T. and worked under Wygang Kepes as a graduate student. I did some kinetic sculpture design and a lot of investigation of the topic of mathematical aesthetics. Since Pythagoras’ time, this has been a field of study that has woken through the history of art. I studied in great depth Joseph Schillinger’s MATHEMATICAL BASIS OF THE ARTS, which was very enlightening because it proved the idea that artistic structure could be abstractly described in mathematical language with great versatility and elegance. Moreover, these structures can then be applied equally well in all the arts including music, dance, sculpture and, of course, film. It was particularly interesting because it provided a rational descriptive language that could be used to unify the rhythms, camera movements, etc., in a film. The system could also unify the total quality and rhythm of the soundtrack with the image structure. It was possible because of the generality of Schillinger’s approach to do all this rationally with a high degree of well-formedness (in the aesthetic sense) and without resorting to “Mickey-Mousing”; i.e., creating a sort of literal correlation between the rhythms and moods of the sound and the pictures of the film.

With Kepes’ help, and a good deal of internal politicking, I managed to obtain access to a very sophisticated graphics computer that would create images in real-time. After a few months of struggling through the programming manuals, I managed to make a programming that would accept as input numerically described structures and could apply them to the rate of movement, angular trajectory, and distances of images. Our images were a set of eight spheres which moved in three dimensions, kind of like 3-D billiards. I did a good deal of experimenting with this system by using different sets of Schillinger structures as well as random numbers, and noting the results. The results proved conclusively that for the great majority of viewers, Schillinger’s system would harmonize the movements and create pleasing and beautiful movies. Of course, our images were purely in the abstract realm, but the important thing was that the system increased the filmmaker’s structural vocabulary enormously. Moreover, it gave the filmmaker a rational system for creating and using structures to control image streams or modulations that cut across the boundaries of music/film. It also allowed the artist, without cramping his or her style, to harmonize pans, zooms, fades, etc., on the screen. The system, once grasped, makes possible the creation of highly well-formed structures.

I would have very much liked to continue this research, but there were other forces acting in my life leading me in a new direction. Someone gave me THE THREE PILLARS OF ZEN by Philip Kapleau and, after reading it and trying some meditation, I felt a strong attraction to Zen. I sold all my possessions and moved to Rochester to study Zen (which explains why White Ox is in Rochester).

Since we’re really talking about film here and not Zen, I will bypass what proved to be an intensive three year learning experience. I learned that it was necessary for me to get out of an ego-les, uninformed state, especially with respect to my art, and to serve mankind according to my particular predilection but without concern for my “self”.

Out of these realizations came the desire to work again on film. The result was that I formed White Ox Films, which became incorporated in 1972. The government provided us with a corporate seal, but not much else. We began by putting on an exhibition series of fine feature films and experimental shorts. The project was a joint effort with the local art gallery which had enough of a budget to put these off any deficit the project might incur. Through this program, which was, by and large, successful, we began to establish a “track record”. I say “by and large” successful because at that time there was no art-film interest in

White Ox Director David Tulbert emphasizes point at Film Art Seminar.
Rochester, at least for current works, and certainly no interest in experimental filmmaking. But we pulled in reasonable numbers of people and almost broke even. Many viewers were introduced to the WNY Council on the Arts (NYSCA) for funds for two projects, Film Farm, as intensive eight-week summer workshop for gifted high school students, and SummerDreams, a series of free film festivals that were selected to stimulate feelings of brotherhood and joy in the audience. They were popular films, such as “Yakapoto” and “Tent,” but were chosen carefully. The films were preceded by experimental shorts. The Highland Bowl in Rochester, where the films were screened, is a large outdoor natural amphitheater located in a park. There are benches for about 600 people and room on the grass for about ten thousand more. Because we had a bit of a track record, because NYSCA liked the idea, and because Peter Bradley (directors of Film Farm and SummerDreams), us and determined that we were a reasonably together group, we get the grant and did the programs. Both were successful. Thousands attended the films and the students in Film Farm got a very fine, creatively oriented film course.

The idea behind these two projects was that we would start small and have a “shake-down cruise” to see if we could really do projects. We wanted to do this before we locked ourselves into any year-long contracts that we might not be able to fulfill. However, we went through a period of severely lacking funds because the funds were just not there to pay salaries after the summer. But we accepted that as one of those little sacrifices you have to make.

In the following year, we proposed a lot of educational programs and a full year of exhibition projects including another edition of SummerDreams. What we did not know was that NYSCA’s policy towards educational programs had changed, and so about $50,000 of the $62,000 we requested was denied. We went to Albany and met with Peter Bradley to explore some of the other directions we wanted to move in and came up with the idea of a resource center like MERC in New York. I believe that Peter had been looking for a group to provide such services and were fortunate to be at the right place at the right time.

In any case, it wasn’t until the tail end of the ’74-’75 funding cycle that the grant for the establishment of the resource center (Cinemedia Resource Center) came through, and so the project didn’t really get underway until July of ’75. Since that time, additional funds have been appropriated towards the support of the center, and we have numerous programs of cooperation, all aimed at helping independent filmmakers and educating those who become more proficient filmmakers. For example, we offer a free loan of the full gamut of Super-8 and 16mm production equipment, a revolving cycle of theofilmmaking’s for each year, a monthly seminar in either technical or non-technical aspects of filmmaking (in response to the requests of our constituents). An active film guild program is established, and a regional co-ordination effort aimed at helping existing film centers within the region together and to Cinemedia.

The beginnings of a regional film center, with prizes and everything! It is appropriate to mention here that these programs are partially funded by the NYSCA and the National Endowment for the Arts. The cooperation of the Center and Film and Media departments of these agencies and the appropriations they have made for the activities of White Ox have been instrumental in accomplishing the work we are doing here.

And now to the future.

In highlighting the work at the growth of Cinemedia (which has definitely been an uphill climb and will continue to be so), several things have become apparent about the economics and kinetics of independent filmmaking. These observations indicate some specific directions we feel will be most productive in achieving the goals (low cost, fast turnaround, high versatility equipment, open and interested distribution markets to provide survival and capital for further work, better communications among ourselves, etc.) which will aid independent filmmaking.

First, I think it is important to consider what independent filmmaking really means. Ultimately, independent filmmaking and public access can and should be the same concept. Someone with a beef who simply wants to talk in front of a camera would, perhaps, if he or she had the benefit of a lot of media-communications training in high school, want to make a more elaborate and impactful statement on film. At the present state of the art, because of the high costs and large hassles in production, persons like that, no matter how much innate visual capability they might possess, would be quickly discouraged from trying their hands. As a result, only the most dedicated and fired individuals are willing to devote their lives to independent production. Certainly things should be done to make production easier for these independents. But how many other people are out there who, because they are so caught up in the horrors of the hassles of film production? You really can’t blame them; it is a big hassle. But IT DOES NOT HAVE TO BE THAT WAY.

I think that the article began with this article the importance of moving-picture communications to our society and to the world as a whole. Let me anchor that: If you are more interested in it than is a habit to do a bit to show HOW THINGS CAN BE CHANGED.

Fact: The media are basically storage mechanisms for information, so that it can be broadcast or project ed at a later date.

Fact: The communications process in any medium is a process of externalizing (and perhaps encoding) the information from a human mind onto a medium.

Fact: A good film can transmit 24,000 times as much information in a given period of time as does the print medium (based on a reading speed of 300 words per minute, and a “talking head” image in which only 3% of the information in each new frame is different).

Fact: It is precisely this high information rate that makes picture communication the goldmine of resources they are for mankind.

Fact: Current communication technology, no matter how sophisticated it may appear on the surface, is really about 30 years outdated. If we are talking about film and art as information, then we should be thinking about film production as information-manipulation and not twiddling with cameras and broken wires, replacing fuses, and paying highly over-priced technicians to do the more complex of these manipulations for us (such as optical printing or computer animation).

Fact: The reason the technology is so outdated and expensive is because 99.9% of the total American hardware pool is used by the networks, Hollywood, and other commercial interests, and their profit margin is so enormous that they don’t care if it costs them an extra million or so to produce a film. Thus, the industry has not provided equipment manufacturers with sufficient economic incentive to really get the technology up to date.

The result is economic discrimination against the independent and a free-for-all approach to film development (when-whoever can afford it and can afford the national or go), and, consequently, a lack of interest in the audio-visual arts by a lot of very creative people. There are other factors making the argument stronger; that also be important in itself, but these facts give the basic picture.

How do we change this? One possible solution
would be to prevail upon our federal congress to recognize the importance and necessity of independent film and what it can evolve into if given enough funds. Hopefully, the funds would not remain with us. But what kinds of funds are we talking about—how much? If you talk about the medium with the public, you’ll need funds for equipment, stock, lab costs, etc., etc. You all know the independent budgets look like. Using New York State as an example, we would need about ten (10) times the amount of funds recently available from N.Y.S. to make a good beginning. That’s about (I believe) $20 million per year. Multiply by 50 states and you get $1 billion per year. That’s heavy money.

If the federal government would look dollars into energy research, which they’ve identified as a primary national need, then why shouldn’t they do it for film/TV? The media have an enormous impact on our lives, and the primary sources of food for the mind. So, even if there should be $1 billion a year, we won’t get it. The reason is that it’s an ongoing, year after year, expense, and would continue like the defense budget (God forbid), ad infinitum. Not to mention the effect of inflation on our mere $1 billion. And don’t forget that $1 billion is just a start.

If you look at the technology which supports film production, however, you realize that it doesn’t have to be that way. The distribution side is already opening up, due to the advent of cable and video disc. Again, commercial incentive has been the main economic spur to development, so don’t look for an upgrade in programming content or better access for yourself. However, a guy I recently met at the National Science Foundation told me that within five or ten years we would have fibre-optic/laser cable networks capable of carrying 500 to 1000 simultaneous channels. That’s impressive. At that level, your independent productions might get shown.

Ah, but back to the crucial point: IF YOU CAN AFFORD TO PRODUCE THEM. Nothing is being done to upgrade the technology of film production to the level paralleled by distribution technologies such as video disc and fibre-optics. And the industry isn’t likely to because they’d just as soon maintain control by keeping the public at a severe economic disadvantage. The only way to open them is to control the programming content, to make a computerized TOOL (you run it, it doesn’t run you) that would cut production costs by at least a factor of 10, increase versatility almost infinitely (since the computers can be almost instantly re-programmed), and decrease the turnaround time for a complete complex experimental film from one year to several days. The machine would be, essentially, “transparent”, that is, you would not have to fumble with splicing tape, etc. The whole process would be entirely under year control, but all the work would be done by the computer. The manipulations you perform are in the pure Information realm and don’t require mechanical mechanisms which are slow, clumsy and expensive to operate. Transparency means, essentially, that you could make the film at the speed of your own thought processes, without fumbling with hardware. The only aspect that such a production machine would have in common with conventional production hardware is in the gathering of raw images. Yet, you know the portapack as you wanted. The original would go in one end of the machine. You would twiddle the machine, and the final output would come out the other end. The machine, by the way, would enhance the image quality of the Super-8 or portapack output programs to better than 10mm or 2 inch VTR quality. That’s really what it would do. The machine would look like, and the amount of control and versatility would be unbelievable.

A machine to do this would serve 30 users simultaneously, would be located in an access center, or perhaps a library, and would cost about $10 million. In a few years, the service could be piped into your home, and in 30 years or so, you could buy one for the price of a moose.

It seems more likely that the government would go for this significant upgrading of the hardware and consequent significant decreasing of production costs instead of that perceived $8 billion per year appropriation; first of all, they get hardware for their money and, more importantly, it would be a one-shot expense every 20 years or so rather than every year. Now let’s see: 100 of these machines at $10 million apiece comes out to $1 billion. So in one year, presuming the prototype were developed, you could build a network of these virtual synthesizers across the country. That $1 billion goes a lot farther than spending it on the present outdated, highly expensive production technology.

There are two things to be added. First of all, such a center would have staff programmers to work with artists in making new types of image manipulations that had never been made before. Once a new program has been written, it can be easily given to the other 99 centers. So, through group effort, the level of visual literacy in the country would consequently begin to grow very rapidly.

Secondly, the educational wing would have access (perhaps their own set of machines for training purposes) so that within 20 years we would have a youth that was really visually literate, and who could, as they made their way into society, begin to implement highly sophisticated visual communications as part of our daily lives.

That about wraps it up. The solution to the public access problem, and to your problems as an independent, lies not only in more funds but in better production equipment to keep pace with the rapid technological expansions taking place in the distribution technologies.

Well, this has been fun writing. By all means, please get in touch—the more feedback, the better. Here is White Ox’s address and phone number: David Talbert White Ox Films, Inc. 308 Laburnum Crescent Rochester, N.Y. 14620

And if you’re up this way, call up so we can get together: (716) 442-4080.

AIVF warns people who are submitting scripts to be wary of the release form currently being used by the William Morris Agency. Contracts in this release form grant to Morris the non-exclusive right to use any materials submitted to them. The fee to be paid for the materials would be decided on at a later date. AIVF argues that a release form of this type is highly illegal. The creators of this release form would risk £25,000 the market value of non-exclusive rights to the materials on the date the release form was signed. The release form grants the material to Morris and requires the creator to accept this deal. Morris would have no objection to a producer who would pay for the materials later. But it presents a very serious problem in the case of the release form is held by a major firm.
Rain falls on the railroad tracks. Thunder is heard and lightning flashes across the sky. Then, in a series of shots in which rain, fog and steam blend into one great and powerful railroad engine, emerging from a tunnel as if being born, whole, complete in every detail, a resounding triumphal chorus rises on the sound track and Victoria Hochberg's film masterpiece "Metroliner" begins.

In ancient times, the gods were visualized riding chariots across the sky. The place of man-made objects in the human psyche is related to the period in history in which they appear. Cars, rockets and airplanes have today filled some of this psychic space. The railroad train, from its very beginnings in the early 19th century, held a magnetic attraction for the imagination. The movement and power of trains took on meanings above and beyond the practical need to move people and merchandise from place to place.

In both conscious and unconscious ways, trains were identified with the old mythology, but they were also part of a new mythology. The mythology of triumphal technology. Railroad engines were given names such as Jupiter, Mars and Véxan, a symbolic connection to an old mythology; these same engines represented perhaps the single most advanced accomplishment in the mechanical technology of the 19th century.

A new religion of technology emerged with a transformed and upgraded psychic vision of power and temples of worship were built all over America. Many of these were styled like Greek and Roman temples and, so that no one would be confused, they were called railroad stations. "Metroliner" shows the railroad station, or what I call temples, in just the right context. The grandeur and sweep of the stairways, the monumental pillars and arches, are like the stage set in the MGM version of "The Wizard of Oz." In the MGM film, Dorothy and her friends are in the wizard's palace when the voice of Oz is heard and a vision of Oz emerges through a cloud of steam. In "Metroliner," Victoria Hochberg has succeeded in bringing to life the mythological dream of the railroad train. It is a life that has a ghostly quality to it. Spirits such as those in Dicken's "A Christmas Carol," the ghosts of past, present and future, inhabit the film.

The train rushes forward, leaps across the land in beautiful, effortless strides. The camera angles are varied; our point of view shifts from within to outside the train and to high in the air. The use of different film stocks, such as high-contrast negative, evoke textual variation.

The Metroliner is a train which runs between Boston and Washington, through the heart of Megalopolis. One quality of Victoria Hochberg's film is the visual intensity with which the landscapes of Megalopolis are portrayed. "Metroliner" is a true synthesis of two of the central styles of American films: avant-garde poetic and documentary. The crisp, clear and honest imagery and editing and the forthright portrayal of the people at work attest to the influence of the American documentary. But as the train seems to become a mythological being and take on a life of its own, Metroliner soars into the realm of the poetic film.

The Metroliner reaches Washington, D.C., and we see the engineer, documentary-style, in the cab of the train. The film reaches its climax as a mystical super-train consisting of three steam engines abreast, travels right down the center of Pennsylvania Avenue with a Presidential motorcade and a formation of planes overhead. The image is superbly blended with the dome of the U.S. Capitol and the Washington Monument to become an American capitol of our dreams. This hauntingly beautiful film ends as the engineer checks his watch and departs; for him it was just another work-day.

I am not a train buff. In fact, the modern Metroliner is not even a very beautiful object. But trains move, and this was the starting point for the film. I was interested in the train as a vehicle that might carry me to another realm, and I liked the railroad as a symbol of the American industry. The film explores the dimensions of an object, revives the ghosts that hang around the Northeast Corridor, and makes a comment about where the free enterprise system has taken us.

Charles Levine has been making films for over fifteen years. (Steps, Horseopera). In 1975, he helped found Independent Cinema Artists and Producers (ICAP).

24 / July, 1976 / Independent GAZETTE.
Every time I purchase a piece of film or video equipment the first thing I always want to do is to learn how to use it and change it. I don't know whether this is my own personal identity problem or simply a reaction to poor design. I always like to think it is the latter: it is probably a little of both.

To satisfy my custom I have amassed over the years a modest machine shop which includes a drill press, a milling machine, a lathe, a number of files, bits, nuts and bolts, various machinist's angle, calipers and a vise as well as an assortment of materials from that great place we all love, Canal Street. These materials include all types of rubber, plastic and aluminum to be used for lightweight construction, foam that can be wrapped around things, materials that stick to things, stick to other things, provide a firmer grasp for holding, make the feel of an object softer, etc. etc. I have fabricated a little do-dads for my movie camera for years and have designed and built no less than six or seven different types of handles for it before coming to what I consider to be the truth about camera design.

My enthusiasm for mechanics, design and materials may be common to many camera technicians in film just as electronics seems to be for sound folks. I consider all the above techniques about reasonable and acceptable to keep it that way because it always looked so complicated, because I was always very poor in mathematics, and finally, because I don't have anything about it. I don't have to "deal" with it. On the other hand I consider myself "good with my hands" and have certain strong ideas about design. This background is by way of an introduction to the story of my latest project involving the modification of the Sony one-half inch AV 3450 video camera. (Figure #1.)

To get right to the point, the only fixtures on a hand held film or video camera that belong in front of your face are the lens, the viewfinder and possibly a handle. All the rest of the camera should be somewhere behind you. It has taken film and video camera designers years to finally come to this conclusion. It would have taken less time if the designers had ever used the products they designed. But we all know they don't. They are, however, finally getting the message.

Certain video cameras now have an adjustable viewfinder on the side instead of at the back, and in 16mm. Jp. Beauvialas has designed a movie camera which satisfies every design requirement that I could conceive of. The problem is that it will cost you about as much as a modest home in the country.

The Sony AV 3450 video camera has an acceptable design if you're doing home video. If you take the in-hand model and add new handles, you'll have something a little different. The story. The first thing I realized after I bought one was that for my purposes the zoom lens that comes with the camera was too limited in the zoom range in both telephoto and wide angle, 2. did not focus close enough and 3. that it zoomed in a different direction than I was used to. Since I have a sizeable complement of 16mm film lenses, I decided to use them on the camera instead. I borrowed a "CAI" (Eclair) to "CC" adapter from a friend so the lenses would fit on the Sony camera. This solved my lens problem by giving me the 5:7mm to 15mm.

But the utilization of film lenses created another problem. The zoom lenses weigh practically as much as the video camera itself, and with them and the camera body all hanging on the front, the weight becomes unbearable in a very short time. A body brace doesn't solve the problem because it consticts movement and is apt to be responsible for the recording of your own tics on the tape.

So the solution became simply to put the camera body back on the shoulder. This meant that the viewfinder tube had to be taken out and mounted somewhere forward and to the left of the camera body.

I toyed with the idea of having the viewfinder tube separate from the body, connected only by a cable which incorporated the high voltage cable and all connecting wires (of which there are about twelve or thirteen). The viewfinder tube could then be mounted to be worn on my head, leaving the camera totally flexible and mobile. I rejected this solution for two reasons. First, a friend had actually done this and reported that the image in the viewfinder was substantially less sharp than it had been originally. Since it is more difficult to focus with one-half inch video cameras than 16mm film cameras, this solution was unacceptable. Second, the connecting cable would always be vulnerable to damage and that kind of problem I didn't need.

So I decided to keep both the camera body and the viewfinder in one solid (but adjustable) unit.

The design of the housing and support of the viewfinder system had to fulfill several requirements.

First, it would have to be in a position far in front of the camera body, but not so far as to enter the frame of the picture if an extreme wide angle lens were used. Second, it had to be mounted firmly but in such a way that the camera could be held under the arm, in the lap or on the ground without losing the ability to look through the viewfinder. The connecting cables and wires would have to be protected from possible damage during use. Finally the whole unit (housing and support) would have to be mounted on the camera body in such a way that it would not only be rigid but also have the capacity to be taken apart without too much difficulty, should the camera need service or repair.

Wise, I never planned to wire up the modification myself. After some research, I contacted a fellow who was a sound technician and television engineer and who was willing to do the job.

He suggested that I incorporate the connecting wires within the mounting structure to avoid damage (to both the wires and myself) through a shock. He stressed, above all, that my total design must allow him enough room to work at the wiring.

Onward and upward! The first challenge was to find an aluminum box in which to house the viewfinder tube. I found a thin aluminum chassis box at an electronics store, the top and sides of which pulled off in one unit. Perfect. I bought two, in case I screwed up the first one. As it turned out I used both by mounting them bottom to bottom, cutting down the lower one to house the electronics that are part of the viewfinder system directly below the tube in the camera body. The unit itself also gave the whole unit more strength. (Figure 1, #1.)

I incorporated the on/off switch into the housing (Figure 1, #3). This is actually the wrong place for the switch, as it should be in the handle, but it fit so neatly into the housing that at the time I could not resist it.

Next I cut the eye piece assembly off the original plastic black plate of the camera body and mounted it on the new viewfinder housing (Figure 1, #9) so that it could be flipped for use as originally intended.

For the supporting arm of the housing I chose 1" square hollow aluminum tubing out of which I built an "L" coming forward from the top of the camera body. This arm was cut back to be flush with the front at 5V. At the end of this "L" was mounted the viewfinder housing (Figure 1, #4, 8, 10, 2). The elbow of the "L" had to be reinforced as this was the point of most stress. I cut a hole at the elbow to facilitate the wiring job through the "L" (Figure 1, #10).

The next challenge was to mount the housing and support "L" on the camera body itself. Due to the design of the body this was difficult. The entire electronics mechanism of the camera is mounted on the camera body on a very small interior chassis and there is very little room in which to work. Furthermore the exterior plastic shell could not support any weight without breaking.

The solution simply became to build an exterior chassis using all the existing screws which held the body together and which were tapped into the interior chassis. This exterior chassis took the form of an inverted "U" running from the front of the camera body, across the top, and down the back (Figure 1, #2). I mounted two hollow square pipes that were just slightly larger in diameter than the "L" so that the "L" could slide back and forth in them. This is turn permitted the viewfinder housing to move forward and back depending on whether the eyepiece was flipped up or down. The "L" is also retracted to an extreme width angle lens was next.

I mounted the viewfinder housing at the end of the "L" so that it could be turned up ninety degrees to a vertical position and locked into place. The camera could then be used in numerous positions, as well as on the shoulder when the viewfinder was horizontal.

Next problem: the mounting of the handle. Needles to say, the original handle had been taken off and this left a reasonably flat surface on the bottom of the camera body with plenty of original screw holes from which to work.

I mounted handle support I mounted a flat aluminum plate on the bottom and attached to it one of my own special little home-built do-dads which permit a rod to slide through and tighten down. I put another piece of these near the front mounted on the right side of the "U" (Figure 1, #5). Through these two I ran an aluminum rod (the same one that keeps your book shelves on the wall). To this I attached a handle from a Bolex 16mm camera which I drilled out to reduce weight (Figure 1, #6). The handle slides back and forth for balance and comfort, depending on one's mood.

Since I had to be able to mount the camera on a tripod (in timed motion) I reinforced the aluminum plate on the left side by drilling the hole about three inches left of center. This will rotate to become the front. This position for the tripod hole made the camera perfectly balanced when on a tripod, as the viewfinder housing adds a lot of weight on the left and forward position.

Time to try it out for balance on the shoulder. No good. The camera had a tendency to fall to the left as a result of the weight of the viewfinder housing.

I decided to add one more piece (a habit I try not to fall into) that would be mounted through the tripod hole left of center, just below the neck and provide a little more balance. I also read this far you undoubtedly have been wondering what #7 is and that's it. This piece must be detached when the camera is mounted on a tripod, and that's...
The Closet Machinist continued

why the habit of mounting pieces after the fact is bad. Aside from that drawback it functions perfectly. A final word on the wiring. The person who did the job shall remain nameless, because after the wiring was finished he told me that he would not do it again if he had to. At least not on a small camera like mine. I understand. He did a beautiful job; it looked as though the wiring was a complete success. I had gotten many opinions that even if it could be done, the image in the viewfinder would not be sharp. As it turned out it is as sharp as any I've seen.

The wiring took two to thirteen hours and cost two hundred dollars. The machining of the structure took, as near as I can guess, a week of solid work on my part as well as more than a little thought. All told it is worth it, except it really should have been done on a color camera. But that's next.

And last but not least, as I can see, I put my name on it (Figure 1, #12).

Introduction to Video continued

little time as possible is spent on the expensive quest format. Of course the 1/3 "off-line" master is in many instances the final form and there is no need to go to quad.

At the next lower level are the 1/4 "cassette editing systems. Several of these should be looked at. Most cassette editing right now is done with Sony 2850's. These are high quality cassette editing decks which feature vertical interval insertion, and the operation is automatic. They can be operated manually or with some sort of automatic console between them to program them. Sony makes the RM 400 which edits accurately to about 5 frames (1/6 second). TRI, a California company, makes the EA-5 system that is frame accurate (1/30 second) and features four searches with a visible picture screen, and the editing system is made by Convergence Corporation. Spectravision and Datavision are two other manufacturers of automatic systems. The TRI, Sony and Convergence units count control tracks pulled to line up the editors. The Spectravision works from a crystal oscillator for accuracy. The Datavision is a highly sophisticated system that uses SNIPTE time code and is the most expensive. Editing with 2850's using the Sony RM 400 runs about $40/hour. The TRI and Convergence systems run between $60 and $75/hour. Rates for the Spectravision are higher but vary. The RM 400 is the only one that has a separate editor for the editing time. For those curious, the 2850's are $600 a piece and the RM 400 is $1000. The TRI and Convergence are about $600 400. The Spectravision is about $5000.

That pretty much covers cameras, decks and editing systems in general use. There are others, but as of now they are not as widely used. Of course, by the time you finish this article, it will all probably be obsolete.

Ed Lynch continued

human first and intellectual second.

My suggestions for a working definition are spiritual and therefore common, and are extrapolated from the tribal context. Many primitive people believed, and many still believe, that everybody has spirits. Within their daily lives they were, and again in some places are, conscious of the spiritual power and control of the many objects around them. The witch doctor or medicine man, in their primitive beliefs, had the power in touch with the spirits. He or she had a powerful influence over the masses, the decisions, the direction and control of the tribal rites and ceremonies. Now we are quite willing to believe that they have, or had, a profound influence over the lives of their art and steal their objects as well. They, of course, did not have a concept of art. They had a concept of power and its control of the art itself, inanimate objects in the world.

Many people love Hirsch without the slightest notion of film craft. The Sound of Music may be our Keane (the painter of the sad, big-eyed children) but people understand and like it. The spirits are familiar. It affects families. It agrees with them. It con-

uses people to read that it is a bad film when in fact they feel so good. (David Lean understands that idea and has now the confidence to ignore the critics.) The Sound of Music is not bad. They call it Music a bad example of the film it wasn't. It is a good film, good art. Good low art. The audience must be the final judge, not collectively, but individually. What they receive in spiritual terms is the essence of what they receive in art terms. If they are taught to respect their own reactions they will be harder to exploit. A personal experience excludes the critical first, allows analyses later.

I am continually impressed with the thoughtless way that we create the world that we live in. It is thoughtless because it does not consider the fundamental effects of the thing, that is, the spiritual or art-of-life concept. We have been seldom located more than a hundred floors exactly like one another straight up. It is an embarrassing homage to one plus one. They have considered whether people would like to work there, or whether the elevators would be able to ride express to elevators, or whether the capital resources are being fairly and properly used. The same mentality that built the Peoples Building also builds shopping centers (small), demotes theaters to substandard and slick magazines our most beautiful women, uses mother-and-child to sell soap, and a promise of sexual evil to sell cars. We know all these buildings, but we have been thinking about them as either inevitable or foolish but not really harmful excesses from the hard-charging business mentality. If we see these excesses as not foolish but damaging, then we have begun to see ourselves as fundamentally spiritual rather than mechanical. But what kind of trouble are we really in?

We celebrate (and only slightly regret) a vast legions of American drunks that say they have a right to drink as much as they please. In a democracy, we should be able to make it easy for people to do what they think is right. If they want to drink, we should do everything we can to make it so easy for them that they have to be thoughtless to do it.

With all the talk of what could be done to build a better world, the key seems to be that we make the world we want by doing it. It is, as they say, the essence of that thing, that is, the spiritual or art-of-life concept. If we do any thing at all that is spiritual, that is, that it cannot capture the spirit of the thing that it represents (express the assumption). Or we say that it has no power. These are useful spiritual perspectives that can be used by everyone. Unfortunately the history of art criticism is not spiritual but intellectual.

Piscopo is supposed to have complained to Malraux that people cannot see "see" (my quotes) anymore than they can hear music. I can understand the Chinese, why can't they recognize their inability to see and begin to study? He is also supposed to have said that he didn't expect anyone to understand his work since it was high art and people don't make the images and ideas come from. So, logically, how could another person, no matter how scholarly, who must know him (Piscopo) much less well than he knew himself, be able to tell the world about the meaning of his paintings?

The truth of this statement is beside the point for it is a horrible place to begin. If his genius is undeni-
able it is a pity. All people do see "see" in their own way, admitted with vastly different levels of perception and skill. Few artists would deny that children see better than we do because they lack a virtual education and cannot naturally process in that culture to acquire "lessons" about looking at things as they grow older that are damaging to the natural sensibilities. As treacherous and castrating as it is to insist that people are naturally inadequate to have an art experience, the other statement is actually worse. Piscopo would have had to agree that everyone has a mentality and politics and that's what follows from the experience. The physicality of life, the topography of land and water, the character of plants and food and so on. It may not be possible for an artist to totalize or totalize in his experience but parts of it may strike familiar chords. At that point the audience is included rather than excluded. The genius of assembly, of selection, of techniques, and of subject matter is, before anything else, understood without a great deal of study and effort. But the art is understood first of all outside of the intellect. It is understood by the child through being naturally receptive, not by being trained.

There is a lesson in the people's choices as even with this enormously expensive system we short circuit it with our dogs which grace the street with the best evidence of cowardly politicians and careless citizens. Keeping the sidewalks and streets free of foots of disaster footage while spending expensive equipment and expense accounts expecting the flood and drilled, our intrepid will remember that the benefit of exposure to the Art is for the citizenry who are loyal to the harm from the caloused indifference of the crew.

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If not in spiritual terms, what are the words which we will to discuss and define our work? Technological? Financial? Structural? Historical? We could lead off to the critics to tell us what we are doing, but I would not be helpful. They have been writing ads for the industry by and large, and there is little evidence that they have managed to uplift the form. In the tribal context, art was not defined. The village artists would be equal in their degrees of skill and in their standing to be spiritual. They were useful to create and control spirits. We would do well to be able to do the same.

Is the world getting too difficult to stomach? Wassily Kandinsky, the painter, said that everything dead quivers...everything has a secret soul. Another painter, de Chirico, said that he tried to deal with a world where无意义無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義無義无
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Dear Hopetul,

Good luck! Just check with counsel beforehand to make sure you’re not contravening the emancipation proclamation.

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I heard somewhere that during the filming of a low-budget feature in New York last year a stuntman was required to crawl across a parking lot on his hands and knees with his face on fire and fall into the East River in the middle of winter. Do people really do those kinds of things for a living in movies? —Dear N.B.

Dear Ben,

Apparently the film was quite except that it was, of course, one shot deal. At the end of the roll and when the film had piled up in the gate of the projector.

—Ben Gould

Not a Pretty Picture continued

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My final advice is that it is very important to try to have a sufficient budget for editing. We did, and that kept the final cost down, as the editing didn’t drag on forever.

Finally, I would just like to say that despite the fact that low-budget films are limiting in many ways, they are also limited. Many new directors and actors, technicians and designers start this way. I think that when all of us, including critics, look at a film, we should consider its budget. Instead of looking at a film such as Legacy and saying it’s not like a big-budget picture, we should start by saying that it’s new and interesting, and that it’s phenomenon that it was ever made at all. Though a comparison between Lipstick and Not a Pretty Picture in terms of subject matter is obvious, they are films designed to be completely different in budget scales and to do completely different things. Not a Pretty Picture was intended to break new ground in terms of subject and work. For many of us, it did just that.

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Dear Hopetul,

Good luck! Just check with counsel beforehand to make sure you’re not contravening the emancipation proclamation.

—N.B.

Dear Editor, Independent Gazette:

I heard somewhere that during the filming of a low-budget feature in New York last year a stuntman was required to crawl across a parking lot on his hands and knees with his face on fire and fall into the East River in the middle of winter. Do people really do those kinds of things for a living in movies? —Dear N.B.

Dear Ben,

Apparently the film was quite except that it was, of course, one shot deal. At the end of the roll and when the film had piled up in the gate of the projector.

—Ben Gould

Not a Pretty Picture continued

ing a shoot can ruin everyone’s spirit and, after all, spirit is mostly what low-budget films are made of.

Editing

My final advice is that it is very important to try to have a sufficient budget for editing. We did, and that kept the final cost down, as the editing didn’t drag on forever.

Finally, I would just like to say that despite the fact that low-budget films are limiting in many ways, they are also limited. Many new directors and actors, technicians and designers start this way. I think that when all of us, including critics, look at a film, we should consider its budget. Instead of looking at a film such as Legacy and saying it’s not like a big-budget picture, we should start by saying that it’s new and interesting, and that it’s phenomenon that it was ever made at all. Though a comparison between Lipstick and Not a Pretty Picture in terms of subject matter is obvious, they are films designed to be completely different in budget scales and to do completely different things. Not a Pretty Picture was intended to break new ground in terms of subject and work. For many of us, it did just that.

—Hilary Harris continued
... and see in a while I would look up at the Aerospace State Building and realize that I was clucking away... it was really nice. Actually, I got too carried away with it and got a bit late bit on one of the shots. I would have liked to have tilted up a little more. What I was doing was just taping in a little... I went down... I would tilt up and I caught the moon rising. That was frustrating, not knowing exactly what the weather was going to do. I wasn't sure that I had something that was actually on the moon. All you notice is some weird things in the sky that gradually becomes the moon. I had to shoot that a little wider than I would have liked, not knowing how the moon was going to come up. But no, there's no reason to be there. I just locked the door and left.

It's funny that very thought made me think of hitch-hiking, because you can't predict what's going to happen exactly. You don't know what clouds are going to float across or what ships are going to come to visit the planet or anything like that. The sky is so... it's like sitting back and letting it happen. And somehow that freedom is like hitch-hiking—you don't know how far you're going to go that day. You have no idea what's going to happen. It could be anywhere, or nothing. Whatever the momentary decision is of somebody coming by deciding to stop or not.

Also, another type of shooting is the demolition of a building. I've done a few of those. They're not all successful: I mean, they're really hairy because of the light changes that happen. Every day, from one to the next, the colors change, the cloud change. I've never got an automatic exposure thing set up. But even so, it wouldn't solve the cloud change problem. Maybe if you did see some optical analysis. It takes a few corrections on each frame, it could be done reasonably smoothly, but I've never gotten into it. But still, you pin a camera in somebody's yard and you pin it there, and you can leave it there if you can leave it there for an extended period. Plug it in and just go and change the film every few weeks, and keep recording that you've done that. A lot of editing... Pat did some of that... the worst kind of editing, cutting out bad frames and selecting certain parts of the day just to hold, and cleaning up a scene that's messy because of a lot of bad weather or something like that.

TC: What was her involvement in the project?

HH: She helped me with some editing problems like that and mixing the tracks, putting together some of the rough cuts. She's got a pretty good ear. She's one of these --- she's got a pretty good ear for the rhythm of the city... that's one of the analogies that interests me the most. If you study the brain, you realize that there is an incredible amount of activity going on there. And so we've been trying to use it. It's a highly active electro/chemical device that is operating whether we're asleep or awake. Our consciousness only takes a small part of a time, and we can tap in and remember this or observe that, and go back and forth in time. I make that analogy between those kinds of services that the brain gives us to the services of the city. We can jump on the subway and go up and send a telegram or pick something up. The city is all laid out in this random access, like this random access device. The grid is very convenient, very logical, very useful, and yet we wonder why the city is so rigid. It has to do with the sort of specific point out of a great many possible inputs. The brain is actually like that. It has grid structures in it, highly organized groups of nerves and whatnot. I mean, I thought that it was a funny kind of analogy. It's a hard one to get across to some people. Not everybody gets it.

TC: What is the analogy in the film? What is the macrophotography?

HH: It's the same slime mold. When you see those little bits of little single-celled animals sort of moving along tracks, that's a slime mold colony. Then there's another part of it that is a living animal—a hamster. It's a hamster cheek pouch. To do that photography, they drugged a hamster and stretched out its pouch under the microscope. It was a doctor up at Boston University who helped me with that photography. It means, he was kind of an unconscious artist... or maybe he was conscious of it... I don't know, but it's beautiful stuff.

It's funny's another shot that's symbolic of the whole film. I don't know if you remember those thin, light blue structures that were kind of thin, light things with granules moving around them back and forth kind of parallel to what they do in the brain. But you see the way they move and the way they act, and then you can think about how the neurons act and the different ways. But they're actually the legs of a parasite that lives inside the stomach of a termite. I can't remember the name of the particular animal, but that parasite is really not a parasite... it's a symbiotic relationship. You've got enzymes that permit the termite to digest the wood. They're discovering in biology... some theories are developing... that a lot of the complex animals were built out of small animals getting together into these symbiotic relationships, because at times these little parasites lose their legs and they float around, like separate animals and come together. I don't know enough about it to talk intelligently, but it is interesting.

TC: There is a negative side of shooting a film with the stop-motion perspective of Organization.

HH: Yes. I've had the experience of a certain number of people really getting overwhelming, getting the feeling that they were just trapped in a mechanism. You can make that interpretation or you can forget that you have a separate identity but that you are embedded in this other thing and that it's an extraordinary mechanism. Of course, you can take it to the other extreme. It is very difficult then, we can make that decision. Like the city is such an entity, such a thing in itself, it's really hard to imagine everybody just splitting. Yeah, I'm afraid it's here to think we want to keep it separate. It's better, it's possible, and that's what's making it interesting.

I also show this film with The Nuer, which is a study of an African people. It's one of their two most recent films. The Nuer is a 75-minute study of these people who live in what we call a very primitive way. They live very close to their cows and they have no roots or technologies other than a very simple horse to help them with the corn. They plough the corn with a heavy piece of wood and so forth. It's very peaceful there. In other words, I don't think I could have been more peaceful. I'd never felt so free, not since I was a baby. And I came back with it: it was in my body. I remember getting off at the London airport and just looking around. It was so different and I held that, and kept that, really, for two, three weeks. And I still know it. But our society is so incredible in terms of the number of inputs, the number of choices, the number of things that we have to adapt to. And I think it's really hard to have that sort of sense of unity and cohesion about all that. That's why I'm doing this New York film. I've also had this experience with the Navajos out in New Mexico years ago, sensing that they had this incredible power, hearing them singing out at night around a huge bonfire, and sensing that their connection with their surroundings... transcendent... is a very high experience, a sort of sense of unity.

Another thing that happened to me happened in Africa. I picked up Newsweek magazine when I was there. It was sort of in the middle of my stay, and just looked over it and that's when I had the sense of the number of inputs that we seem to cram into ourselves. You know, we've gotten all these incredible new tools of communication and distribution... basically its communication. We're a little overwhelmed by it. I think, and we need to have another perspective. The ideas behind Organization is not that we're entrapged in this device but that we're a part of it, and that if we can see that, we can see we're a part of it. We can see the way we're trapped in this device and trapped in all people with human needs who are creating this and making it happen. We can begin to then transcend all of this jangling input and begin to let things fall into place, interpret, and begin to see the beauty of it and the relationship that we have with it. That kind

HH: How long were you there?

TC: I was actually only with them for two weeks, a very short period of time. Most of the time, I was going in and out.

HH: Is that the state of Sonora?

TC: I really can't say a lot about it at this time. Anthropology, and especially anthropological filmmaking, is more of an experimental process than an analytic process. Everything is sort of tended to be more or less an elegance. It really can be like one newspaper scooping another with a hot story.

HH: Right.

TC: So there are like a few of sumptuous humors about it in terms of their perspective and mine. When they saw the shape of the hair on my body, they wanted to burn it off. It's hard to get up there with that kind of environment and living experience.

HH: Yes... that's quite a challenge.
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