



OLD STYLE: Heavy Hardware



GEORGE ADAMS

1



Guerrilla Television

SOME THEORY

In the summer of 1968, Sony, the Japanese electronics manufacturer, began marketing in America a low-cost, fully portable, videotape camera.

Prior to this, videotape equipment was cumbersome, stationary, complex, and expensive, even though it had been used commercially since 1956.

By now it's clear that television has succeeded print as this culture's dominant communications medium. The first videotape equipment embodied its analogue to Gutenberg. Portable video is TV's offset printing, the result of a techno-evolutionary trend toward decentralization and high access; just as developments in printing meant that we could get more than Bibles.

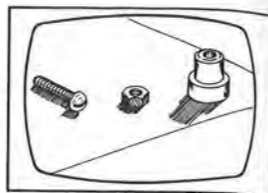


Whereas tens of thousands of dollars were once needed to tool up for videotape, now only \$1,495 are required. In place of a machine weighing hundreds of pounds and requiring special power lines, all you need now is standard house current to recharge batteries which will let you use the twenty-one-pound system anywhere, independent of external power. And instead of a mystique of technological expertise clouding the operation of the system, all you have to do is look at a tiny TV screen inside the camera which shows exactly what will be recorded, and then press a button.



Typically, the technology was (and still is) designed and marketed in a rear-view mirror. Treated like Polaroid movie cameras (in other words, "films" which play back right away), they're hyped to industry and government as a low-cost way to train employees or do surveillance.





SONY CORPORATION OF AMERICA/47-47 VAN DAM STREET, LONG ISLAND CITY, NEW YORK 11101

Sony helps Tinnerman Products in sales, training, production

What started out as an experiment with Sony video tape recording equipment has proved to be such a valuable training and sales tool for Tinnerman Products, Inc., Cleveland, Ohio, that management is weighing more exotic possibilities for its future use.

In application, the VTR system has become a highly practical industrial tool, equally valuable for keeping salesmen in the field abreast of home plant developments and for training other employees in such matters as getting the most out of a computer.

Founded by G. A. Tinnerman, as a hardware and kitchen stove maker in the 19th century, the company today is a subsidiary of Eaton, Yale & Towne, Inc. and engages in the production of fasteners for any kind of metal fabricating. It has annual domestic sales in excess of \$20 million and sells in foreign countries through a network of nonaffiliated licensees.

According to William H. Gibbons, director of marketing services, this field, in which Tinnerman enjoys a high reputation, is very competitive. The company's emphasis is on quality, ingenuity, and service and sales engineers who handle direct customer contact and fastener counseling have had intensive training in fastener applications and design.

Tinnerman's first experience with video tape recording came in 1968, when it was bringing all of its field personnel—more than 30 salesmen—back to Cleveland for the annual sales meeting.

"We hold these meetings in other locations most of the time," Gibbons said, "but every third year we like to get the men back into the plant where they can become acquainted with technical advances and operational improvements that are necessary to remain competitive and a leader. In 1968, however, plant tours were out of the question because Tinnerman was in the midst of a major expansion and retooling program. The salesmen needed to be acquainted with this program, but



taking all of them around for a first-hand look would have been impossible."

SUBSTITUTE FOR A PLANT TOUR

In cooperation with its advertising agency, Tinnerman arrived at what proved to be an ideal solution: use of a Sony VideoRover, which is a battery-powered portable video tape recording system, backed up by a Sony Videocorder® video tape recorder for tape playback on four TV monitors.

The VideoRover was selected, according to Gibbons, because it provided maximum flexibility: It can be carried and operated by one man and used just about anywhere a man can go. Together with the playback equipment, it could serve to bring the plant to the salesmen assembled at the meetings.

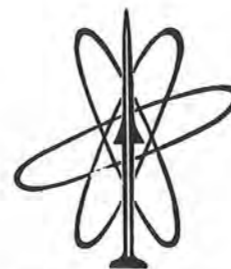


Top executives were taped in their offices, presenting their views on the company's products and its advertising needs.

On the evening before the two-day sales meeting, Tinnerman's cameraman, a member of the advertising department, passed quietly through a social gathering, unobtrusively taping with the VideoRover. Few of the men paid any attention to him.

The next morning, as they strolled into the meeting room, most of the men were busy talking to each other, while four monitors, placed so that everyone in the room could see a picture, were playing the tape recorded the night before.

"A man would be chatting," Gibbons said, "and all of a sudden he'd hear his voice in last night's conversation. He'd blanch, wondering just what he'd said, and then relax when he heard nothing embarrassing. It would be an understatement to say that we captured the men's attention."



Rather than enhance the possibilities inherent in electronics, portable video cameras are still designed like guns with triggers for sighting and "shooting" people.

(Electronics are decentralized in the truest sense of the word. The video signal travels from camera to recording deck through a cable which can be both indefinitely long and unhindered by curving. This means your eye can monitor a TV screen which previews what's being recorded without it having to set in a straight line behind the camera lens, as with film. Instead, a TV camera can even be wirelessly controlled from another planet, as our space program has shown.

(Nonetheless, manufacturers believe that to sell video cameras they must make them look like movie cameras because that's what consumers know, even though the two technologies are radically dissimilar.)

More important, none of the manufacturers, or the educators along with them, seized on the real potential of portable video: that it's the perfect tool for media-children who were raised on TV but never allowed to make their own.

I don't know of any educators who conceive of TV as a tool in the same way they see writing: that every kid must be taught how to do it as a prerequisite skill, even though only a small fraction will become artists in the medium.

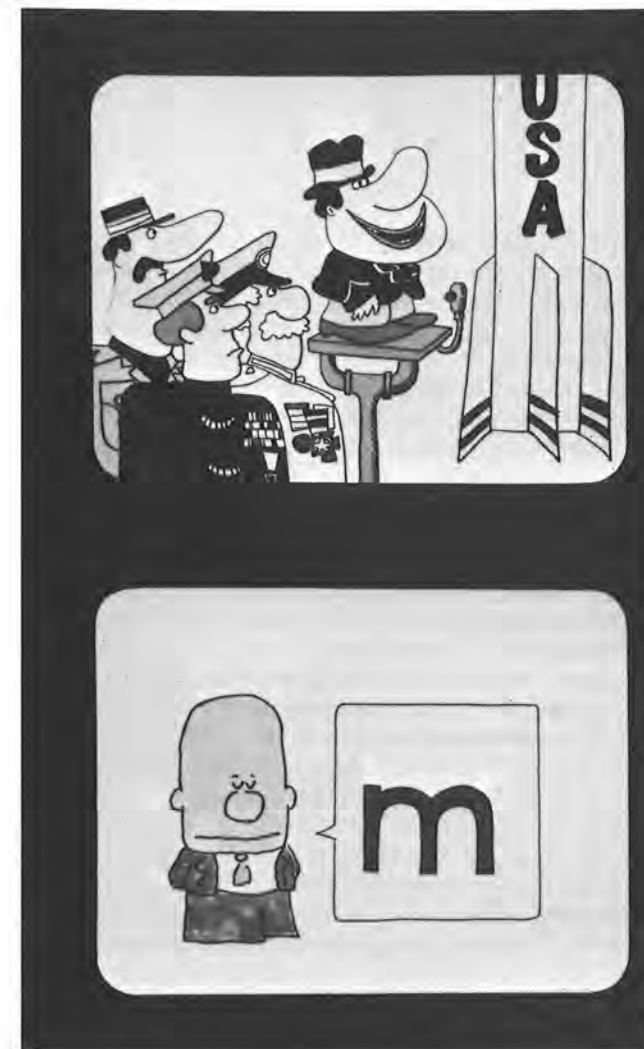
The only response of American education to television has been in terms of content. How can we give kids better programming?

Out of this mentality has come the juggernaut of "Sesame Street" which teaches other media (reading, writing, counting), but refuses to explore its own medium.

Anything but a radical break with the past, it is the ultimate triumph of the structure it pretends to oppose because it legitimizes the whole broadcast-TV context as acceptable, without question, for children.

"Sesame Street" children are supposed to be consumers who passively sit in front of a one-way TV "receiver" and are bombarded with information at the cadence of advertising messages.

The truly necessary change, one of structure, not content, eludes American education because of its heavy print bias which imagines a schism between actor and audience.



'COMMERCIALS' THAT TEACH — The four scenes above are taken from animated cartoon spots created for the Children's Television Workshop show for preschool children, "Sesame Street." The spots, patterned after television commercials, are designed to be entertaining as well as informative and can be inserted as required during each daily, hour-long show. Clockwise from upper left, the spots help teach numbers (the countdown), the letter "J," the concept of "through," and the letter "m."

The first spot utilizes the familiar rocket countdown sequence to familiarize preschool viewers with numbers. The second tells a 60-second story full of words that start with "J," emphasizing the sound as well as the sight of the letter. The third features a know-it-all little girl who prissily promises to demonstrate what "through" means by pouring a bucket of paint through the pipe. (She gets doused when it comes "through" all over her.) The fourth, a 10-second spot, demonstrates the sound and sight of the letter "m."

From: Children's Television Workshop
1865 Broadway
New York, N.Y. 10023 phone: 212-757-3545

Neg # CTW-13

SLUG: COMMERCIALS THAT TEACH

5/6/69

Structural change, of course, is contingent upon an available technology. As long as broadcast television is the only means of distribution, its economy prevails.

But there are decentralized distribution technologies within the so-called "state-of-the-art." They are cable television and videocassettes. The decentralized production tools for those channels are portable video systems.

The potential of this technology has coalesced people into a notion of a whole alternate television which doesn't just want alternate programming played across the existing system, but which demands a whole new system.

I have chosen the term "guerrilla" here because it describes how I use and relate to television, and how I see others relating to it.

Guerrilla Television shares strategies and tactics with its counterpart in warfare.

But I do not call it "Guerrilla Warfare Television" because it is not a form of physical warfare or violence, any more than evolution is.

Guerrilla Television is by definition non-violent because violence is a mode of social change which substitutes seizure and destruction of property for a genuine understanding of the difference between Media-America and a product-based culture.

Another function of Guerrilla Television is as counter-technology.

Only the most optimistic liberal can honestly believe that governmental surveillance agencies will not pursue a perverse Parkinson's law of data gathering (information expands so as to fill the space available for its storage) utilizing each new gadget that comes along.

Okay. Then why not a kind of People's Bureau of Investigation where the watched compile open files about their watchers; e.g., videotaping police at events, undercover agents on the street, and so on. (In Pennsylvania, near the FBI office which had its files taken and made public by a clandestine organization, the people in one community became so tired of FBI surveillance and questioning they had an anti-FBI street fair where videotapes were shown and you could have your picture taken with J. Edgar Hoover's.)

The purpose, however, shouldn't be counter-tech which mimics what it opposes (and thus becomes what it beholds), but an opening up of what should be public areas.

Thus, counter-surveillance systems will function best as social parody, by taking police intelligence activities and betraying their structure in an alien context.

However, that kind of counter-tech is at best a minor use of a tool which promises a whole system that makes politics irrelevant, both right and left.

Rather, Guerrilla Television is the application of guerrilla techniques in the realm of process.

Guerrilla Television is grassroots television. It works with people, not from up above them. On a simple level, this is no more than "do-it-yourself-TV." But the context for that notion is that survival in an information environment demands information tools.



When a broadcast TV crew goes to an event they stand above the crowd and tell you about it (Sander Vanocur of NBC at an anti-Cambodia demonstration in Washington, D.C.)



When you go to an event with a Porta-Pak you shoot in the crowd and let environmental sound and people speak for themselves (A Raindance videotape of the same event)



The structure of Guerrilla Television is biomorphic and decentralized. As opposed to traditional warfare or bureaucracies, where units in the field support a heavy, centralized headquarters (or studio), each component of Guerrilla Television is either self-sustaining or uses more centralized facilities only as its support system.

This is not the way television is done now in America. Camera crews using film go out to the people, "shoot" them, and then bring the film back to a central processing location.

With portable videotape technology, anything recorded on location is ready on location, instantly. Thus, people can control information about themselves rather than surrender that power to outsiders. ABC, CBS, and NBC do not swim like fish among the people. They watch from the beach and thus see just the surface of the water.

Potential in Guerrilla Television is an information infrastructure for Media-America, a grassroots network of indigenous media activity.

In place of a mass consciousness of millions of people all plugged-in to the same "show," is a more flexible collective mind with the option of a high variety of available viewpoints.

I personally don't want everyone to look, act, and feel like me. What I do want is for other viewpoints not to inbreed and degenerate into hatred for my life style. Translated into TV this means many different types of programming made by many different types of people. As only people themselves ultimately know how they feel, they must have access to television tools without mediators.

If there weren't technologies available to accomplish this, Guerrilla Television would be a book of theory, not practice. Many of us have an intuitive understanding of these potentials. Others, however, do not. Often they are in positions which retard potential development. They don't need to be politicized, but "media-ized": to understand the conditions of media-ecology as keenly as those of natural ecology.

For the ultimate aim of Guerrilla Television is to embody ecological intention through the design of information structures.

The more options a culture has available to it, the more flexible it is. Media repression trades off short-term control for long-term sterility. But it is less the government which threatens information flow than the bias of the media itself.

I believe that coverage of the government is not fair, that it is subjugated to the biases of a limited number of people with similar views.

The people in broadcast television are just another constituency. (So, however, is the government.) They should have their own channel to express their opinions, but not all the channels; just as the government should get its channel, but not every one.

In other words, given a forty-channel system (already possible under current cable-TV systems), let the networks have one channel, the government a second, and advertisers a third.*

Then open up the other thirty-seven to the people themselves, and set up economic support systems to sustain a high variety of indigenous video production free of any bias but that of people themselves. That is the purpose of Guerrilla Television.

*The response of the broadcasting networks to charges of unfairness made by the Nixon regime has, ironically, helped to substantiate those charges.

In the aftermath of government criticism of the anti-military show called "The Selling of the Pentagon" (done by CBS), Secretary of Defense Laird made a reasonable request to participate in a subsequent show on POW's only if he could appear live. CBS refused, and demanded that he be videotaped in advance without an opportunity to view the show he was to have been a part of.

If CBS really understood the nature of television, they would have produced a show and concluded with a live interview of Secretary Laird feeding back about it. Instead, we must accept the mediated judgment of network newsmen who claim to represent the public, but really only represent themselves and their own select viewpoint.

Subsequent to that incident, Richard W. Jencks, president of the CBS Broadcast Group, was quoted (in the New York Times, June 17, 1971) as saying that demands by various groups for free access to the airwaves threaten to convert the broadcast press into "a common carrier of other people's views with no creative or vigorous voice of its own."

That "vigorous voice" is more of a monopoly than the voice of the government, which is at least subject to electoral referendum from time to time.



a personal
history

Dear People:

It's not uncommon for two people who don't know each other to have the same idea at the same time because the culture is right for that idea. What I'm writing about Guerrilla Television would make no sense if it took me saying it to make other people do it.

Grassroots video is sprouting everywhere across Media-America because it fulfills genuine information needs.

My own experience is being duplicated and bettered by people who could care less about the video scene which has already gone down.

Nonetheless, some people did get to it first. And however brief the chronology of Guerrilla Television, the experience of others can provide useful information. You can skip this section if you want.

What follows is written from the first, not the third, person. Thus, the people I've worked with get more prominence, perhaps unfairly. I emphatically don't claim the experiences recounted below are the only way of doing guerrilla television. All I can hope is that my experience verifies yours.*

3

Moreover, the historical details pieced together here are from verbal accounts given, out of nostalgia, often when stoned, by the people mentioned. I haven't gone around and interviewed anyone and any and all critical opinions offered are exclusively my own.

In 1968, when Sony introduced the first portable video camera, Paul Ryan was doing his term as a conscientious objector from the Army as a research assistant to Marshall McLuhan at Fordham University in New York.

At the same time Ken Marsh and Dand Cort were working with one-inch video tape equipment at a museum in Brooklyn into which they'd been initiated by Eric Siegel.

Paul claims that he got into videotape to figure out if McLuhan was right, for if he were then Paul would be able to decode accurately a medium that McLuhan hadn't touched yet. Thus, he borrowed the new video tape equipment from Fordham for the summer.

*Generally, my brief history concentrated on video groups who have been most preoccupied with structural, not just content, changes, in television production and transmission.

Thus, I must gloss over video artists who are nonetheless doing very fine work. Some particular names are: Eric Siegel, Jackie Casen, and Woody and Steina Vasulka, working in New York; Nam June Paik at the California Institute of the Arts outside Los Angeles; and Bruce Howard and the National Center for Experiments in Television in San Francisco.

I must also mention Andy Mann who, since his fortuitous split with Global Village, has aided many of us in New York with his particular genius. In addition, Andy's collaborator at New York University, Bob Mariano, has shown admirable innovation in helping to establish the student-run Videotape, along with Red Burns.

Finally, there are Frank Cavestani and Laura Long, pictured in this book as "New Style Video," who until recently have been hindered by lack of resources but who nonetheless have added much to working with video in New York City; as has C.T. Lui of CTL Electronics whose usually generous discounts on equipment have not kept him from worldly rewards; his purple Cadillac Coupe de Ville.

Paul then met Frank Gillette on the street on New York's Lower East Side which was, that year, the center of the Eastern hippie renaissance. With borrowed equipment, Frank and Harvey Simons produced a ten-hour videotape portrait of street life on St. Marks Place, the heart of the heart of Eastern hippiedom.

Meanwhile Paul was making tape with a poverty project in Brooklyn which culminated in a documentary made by kids of their experience in Washington, D.C., at Resurrection City, the makeshift village of the Poor Peoples Campaign led by Martin Luther King.

At the same time, Howie Gutstadt ran into Frank and Harvey on the street and told Ken and David out in Brooklyn about them, and about portable equipment. The upshot was the first video company, **Commediation**, with Frank, Ken, David, and Howie.

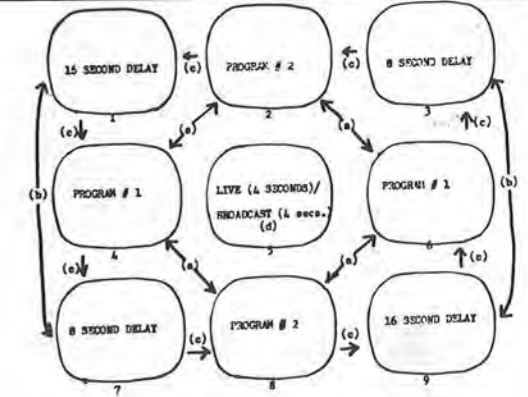
In the fall of the year **Commediation** produced a videotape documentary of the now-famous school decentralization crisis in New York which centered around the Oceanhill-Brownsville decentralized school district. The taping was sponsored by the center for Urban Education. Shortly thereafter **Commediation** dissolved.

5

In early 1969, Ira Schneider, an "underground" filmmaker, met Frank at a party and was turned-on to videotape because he found film too cumbersome to pick up on process. This resulted in an invitation to them to visit Antioch College in Ohio for a month and generally hang out and make tape. Ira claims to have paid for most of the expenses himself.

Immediately after they returned, Howard Wise, who had a gallery on 57th Street in Manhattan, asked Frank to participate in a show he was having entitled "TV as a Creative Medium." Frank asked Ira to collaborate with him and the result was a piece called "Wipe Cycle," a bank of nine TV monitors playing back live and delayed feed back, broadcast television, and pre-recorded tapes.

Also in the show were Paul Ryan, Eric Siegel, Nam June Paik, and others. I heard about the show from Frank who was then living with a woman I'd gone to college with. At the time I was working for Time Magazine and I did an article on the show.



CYCLE (a) Monitors 2, 4, 6 and 8: Programmed change cycle, Program No. 1 alternating every eight seconds with Program No. 2.
 CYCLE (b) Monitors 1, 3, 7 and 9: Delay change cycle, Nos. 1 and 7 and 3 and 9 alternating (exchanging) every four seconds.
 CYCLE (c) Monitors 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9: Wipe cycle, gray "light" pulse, moving counterclockwise every two seconds.
 CYCLE (d) Monitor 5: Live cycle, four seconds of live feedback alternating with four seconds of broadcast television.

One half-hour of videotape costs, on the average, \$13 (and is, of course, re-usable). One half-hour of Super 8, including processing but using an external audiotape recorder for sound, costs \$45. Finally, one half-hour of 16mm (black-and-white) film with a magnetic soundtrack on the film itself, costs \$110.

What more can I say?

As for the difference in the two processes, here is a description:*

In both film and videotape the moving picture is a series of still images. Actually, the film picture is still because the whole frame is exposed to light in a single flash of the shutter, but in video the different areas of the picture are traced at different times by the tip of a sweeping electron beam. One sweep of the entire picture is called a field.

Sixty fields appear each second (in videotape). Two phosphorescent points continually trace the screen, using the same scanning pattern the reader's eye uses on a page. As one field fades, a second is being drawn. The constantly regenerating image on the screen is an exact reproduction of how motion is scanned electronically in the camera.

Watching sound film, we see twenty-four different pictures a second, interspersed with instants of darkness. In fact, the screen is dark about half the time, but the flicker rate meshes with the retinal image retention of the human eye, and we see a persistent picture. This picture is wall-sized, an optically focused shadow of the image on the film.

The movie image is the light of the projector reflected off the screen, as the TV image is a surface of phosphorescent bits. Greys in the projected film are the light being kept from shining through the film by a barrier of silver grains. The light that does get through projects the pattern of the grain in the film which is the fabric of the image. The brightest part of a projected film image is white light passing through clear film and a lens reflected off the white screen.

Watching television we see a sheet of glass, its far side coated with phosphorus, being swept by the tips of two electron beams. The phosphorescence excited by the passage of the beams in several hundred geometrically exact lines is the television image. Its brightest part is the flash set off by the strongest electronic pulse recorded on the tape. It is an image with brilliance and luminosity which film can't achieve.

*Excerpted from Videotape Versus Film, Half-Inch, 16mm and Super 8, by Louis Jaffe. Radical Software #3, Spring 1971.

3 How to Bankrupt Broadcast Television

"GETTING CAUGHT," to a media-guerrilla, means BEING LABELED



3. How to Bankrupt Broadcast Television

In an information-based economy, loss of credibility is the same as bankruptcy. While broadcast is the antithesis of Guerrilla Television, there are still those who think that the medium could be salvaged if only *their* messages could be put across.

Beware. This is untrue. As the Meta-Manual demonstrates, people who believe this don't really understand media. It is the very structure and context of broadcast-TV which are co-opting. Instead of politicizing people with mass-TV, Guerrilla Television seeks to media-ize people against it.

Once you're sensitized to broadcast television it has potential only as entertainment, either intentional or unintentional. The first occurs with some shows which are fun to watch, and there is some live coverage of events done by network television which is superb. But generally the economics of broadcast-TV are such that those shows are labeled "special."

The run-of-the-mill stuff, which comprises better than 90 percent of broadcast-TV time, is crap. It can be entertaining because it's so poorly done, but not everyone has even that awareness.

I know people who lust after exposure on broadcast-TV. The energy I see them wasting is awesome. For perhaps one hour of exposure, once, at a pre-determined time, they will spend months organizing, contacting people, and having meetings.

When I first began working in alternate television I predicted that about a year later we would have a chance to air some of our tape, but only after TV labeled it something like "Crazy Experimental Far-Out Videotape Makers" so that somehow it would set apart from broadcast-TV instead of posing a real challenge to its structure.

Sure enough, eighteen months after I said that, we were asked to contribute tape to a show called "The Television Revolution."

Getting caught, to a media-guerrilla, means being labeled. It's impossible to vary your tactics each time, which is classic guerrilla strategy, if the people you must work with have pigeonholed you in a pre-determined category. The legitimacy you need to build a base of community and economic support may be unattainable if an alien press has already manufactured your image. The moment you surrender control of your media image, you're captured.



This is what happened to the Black Panthers. They got great press as they built up an image of armed reaction to what they deemed a repressive culture. This juiced up people to respond to them *before* they could make their move.

After all, if I am continually bombarded by a threatening image, nine times out of ten I'll move to pre-empt that threat. In other words, I'll strike first.

That's exactly what happened to the Panthers. White America very logically cut them down, both literally and figuratively, because the Panthers lacked the control they needed over media to get the non-belligerent, more constructive part of their message across. (If they had one.)



When Che Guevara went into Bolivia he shaved his beard and traveled incognito. The Panthers did the opposite, practically sending out press releases on where to find them. The media created them and the media destroyed them *because they couldn't control their own image.*

As I write this, the Panthers have broken into a schism between the followers of Eldridge Cleaver and those of Huey Newton. I know about this exclusively from the aboveground press which has used it to replace the Manson trial as the latest media follies.



Perhaps the only hope for the survival of the Panthers comes from portable video. It seems that early in 1971 someone laid a Porta-Pak on Cleaver in Algiers and since then he has been tooling up to make his own tapes and several have filtered back to the United States. But mainly they deal with propaganda. It remains to be seen whether in exile he can send back information which will help his disciples survive in America, or whether he just pumps out empty rhetoric.

Understanding the terrain of broadcast-TV is essential for Guerrilla Television. There is a reality in the great "message-messenger" debate which must be understood.

That debate goes like this: first the media say something, and then the government criticizes the media for having said it because, they charge, that creates an issue where there was none. In other words, as in ancient Greece when bearers of bad news were put to death, the media are thought to be responsible for creating what they convey.

Well, they do. Anyone who thinks that TV just reports news doesn't understand biological systems. The very fact that a message does get picked up amplifies it tremendously.

Remember that the collective American mind has no physical reality. Rather, it is a process entity of reported opinion, polls about that opinion, and marketing surveys to determine how to act on those polls. That structure is fabulously vulnerable to manipulation, either deliberate or unintentional.

The upshot is that the media amplify all sorts of messages. It's not by chance that social disorder comes in epidemics. Demonstrations on the West Coast are complemented by ones on the East Coast. Airplane hijacking sprang up like Asian flu. One bombing catalyzed hundreds of bomb threats. Many events just wouldn't take place unless TV cameras were there.

However, what the government is asking is to substitute its amplified messages in place of those of its opponents. That's like having your cake and eating it too. The people don't have the machine/money resources of government. All they're left with is the media to keep government honest.

Government is supposed to defend people's interests, so why shouldn't it be on the defensive? The problem is that the media structure is spastic. The broadcast media just have no control over what they'll respond to.


Ben Bagdikian, in his book *The Information Machines*, points out that advertisers wrap the same old messages in new images to fool people out of their lack of interest. Thus, new movements and ideas are co-opted and made to sell products, like Virginia Slims cigarettes telling women: "you've come a long way baby" which, in effect, renders Women's Lib a merchandising scheme.

The networks themselves, because they must sell to advertisers, are an even more voracious novelty machine, gobbling up any and all new fads, pheno-

mena, and personalities. Decisions to cover political dissent, which Agnew has attacked, are not made by a cabal of newsmen, but are Pavlovian responses by an organism which has surrendered self-conscious control. (No medium criticizes itself less than broadcast television. There simply are no TV shows on TV which use the medium for self-analysis. At best people on TV talk about how bad it is, but they never use the videotape technology to show it.)

Perhaps the most decadent media event of the past half-decade was the saga of Michael Brody. Brody was a kid who claimed to have inherited a fortune and said he was giving it away to the needy. Each day he got more exposure in the press and more and more desperate people tried to get in touch with him. Not one newspaper or TV station checked to see if he was telling the truth.

He wasn't. It turned out he'd probably wasted his mind on drugs and had at best a half-million dollars to play with. When this came out the press actually got mad at him for misleading them, yet he never implored them to cover him. Like a lumbering dinosaur which had to follow its instincts instead of a course of survival, the media gobbled up Michael Brody and then tried to blame him for their own indigestion.



BLACK PANTHER PARTY
International Section
B. P. 118 - GRANDE POSTE ALGER ALGERIA
TELEPHONE 878448 78-21-05
19 March 1971

PEOPLE'S VIDEO THEATRE
544 Ave of Americas
New York, New York
U.S.A.

Ken March and Eliot Glass:


We are presently making arrangements to take a delegation representing a cross-section of the Movement on an extended visit to China. You are aware that this will be a historic and unprecedented event. We want to be in a position to guarantee complete documentation of our visit, and we are convinced that video tape provides the best possible form of documentation for our purposes. Having begun to use video for communication and information purposes, we have discovered the fantastic effectiveness of this medium as a political weapon and we want to develop its potential to a much higher level.

We need two portable SONY video sets in the American system, complete with all accessories like fuses, cords, battery packs, and so on, with plenty of blank tape. You're in a good position to help us get this equipment through the contacts you have with the video network in Babylon. We'd like you to put the word out that the International Section of the Black Panther Party needs this equipment to video this historic event. The understanding should be that whoever gets together this equipment for us will have full access to all our documentation on China. Perhaps some collective effort could be made by the video network to provide us with the tapes and equipment and then these same sources would be the main outlets for the footage on the delegation's visit to China.

-2-

Time is running short and you know we are in a tight position due to the contradictions being resolved within our Party. Frankly, we're up tight on all fronts --especially for money. This shit has to be moved on fast, and has to produce some concrete results.

Let us hear from you soon.



ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE
DEATH TO THE FASCIST PIGS

Eldridge Cleaver
Eldridge Cleaver
Minister of Information

P.S. Another project we need help with is putting together the Revolutionary People's Communication Network throughout Babylon for distributing and reproducing video.

FINAL DAILY NEWS 8¢
NEW YORK'S PICTURE NEWSPAPER
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10013, Founded January 15, 1897

BRODY SETS OFF A GOLD RUSH

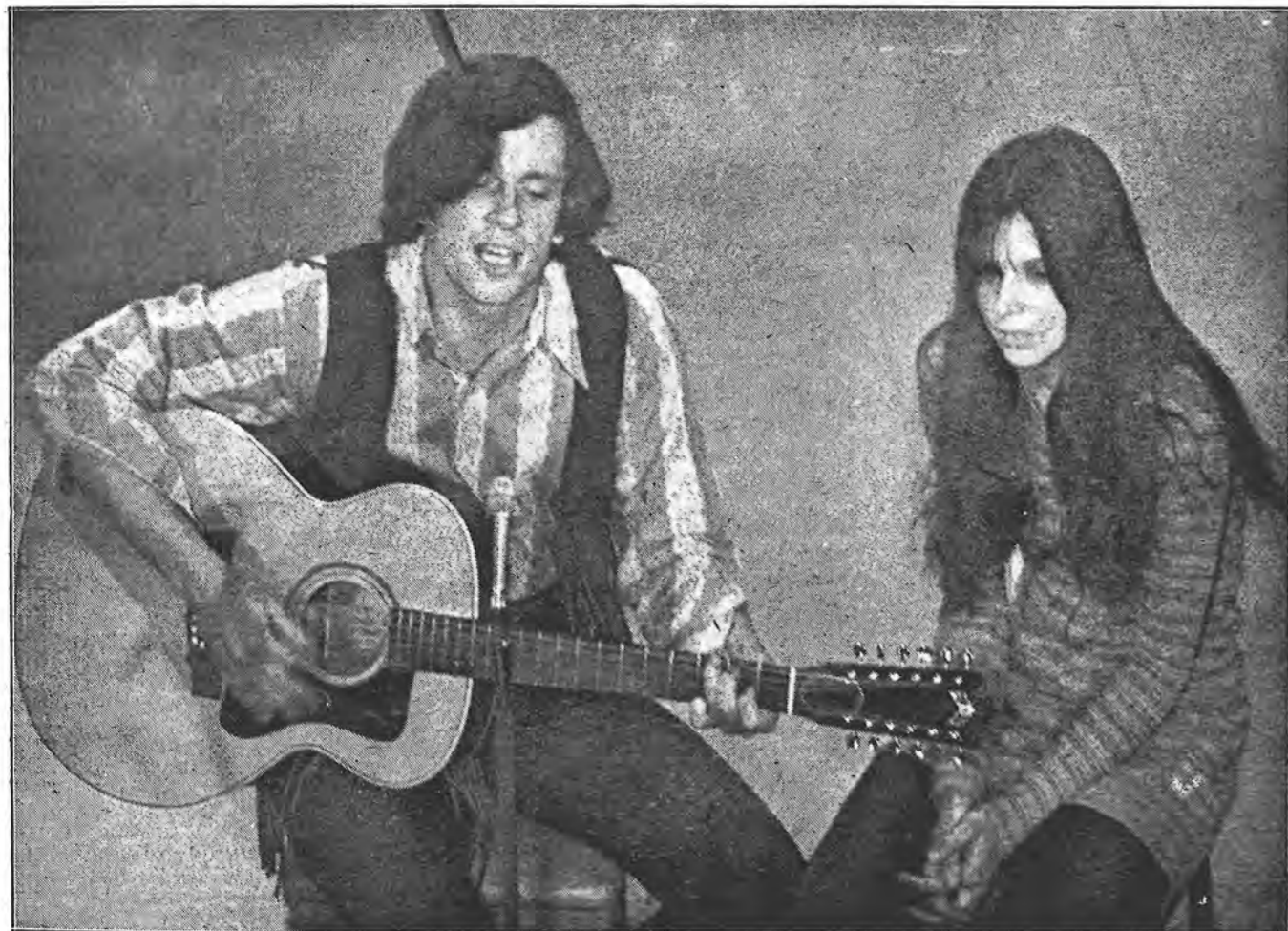


The Manna Of the Hour

Judge's Son: New Crash, Old Charges

Used by permission

BRODY TV SONG: 'I GOT BILLIONS'



Used by permission

NEWS photo by Anthony Casale

Ripe for the Plucking. Strumming a guitar, margarine millionaire Michael J. Brody Jr. makes his singing debut on Ed Sullivan's TVer last night. Brody's bride, Renee, listens. The madcap money man says he wants to give away \$100 billion next week. Crowd of 300 waited outside the TV studio. —Story on page 3; other pictures in centerfold

Avert Catholic School Strike

Story on Page 2

Well this brings us back to Guerrilla Television. The object isn't to censor what people say about you, or put out propaganda, but to optimize the chances of getting your message across successfully. If you use the broadcast networks, the signal to noise ratio is not favorable.

We once got a videotape from some friends in England, of Jerry Rubin and some of his Yippie buddies "hijacking" the David Frost show in England (on the BBC).



Rubin was an invited guest and he packed the audience with English freaks. After brief dialogue with Frost he invited them all up on stage and they came — with their own Porta-Pak.



Thus the tape we got was a composite of straight off-the-air what the British public saw, and how the Yippies themselves were seeing it from the inside.

It's hard to know who won. On the one hand Frost was revealed as an incredible tight-ass as he demanded, in so many words, that the Yippies conform to his format (in other words, he belittled them when they didn't act like his other guests, docile and verbal); but on the other hand he looked good because the format, despite its straightjacket aspect, has the image of rational dialogue and the Yippies looked like unappealing madmen by not adhering to it.

Generally, Rubin's people had the best point. Plastic television is mental repression and there should be a chance to freak-out on TV. But as long as someone else controlled the cameras, they couldn't get it across.

However, on the tape they made, which the English public didn't see, the point came across very well. Unfortunately, Rubin and his crew have always been more concerned with becoming broadcast celebrities than doing the hard work necessary to set up their own support systems.

Finally, the last group in broadcast-TV to watch out for are the reformers. I've already badmouthed "Sesame Street," but there's lots more where that came from.

LONDON DAILY NEWS, February 9, 1971.

Frost Yippies Show probe

By GEORGE WEBBER and MARTIN JACKSON

THE Home Office has been asked to investigate Saturday night's oath-filled Yippy invasion of the David Frost programme, and the alleged use of cannabis during the show.

And a probe has already been ordered by Lord Aylestone, chairman of the Independent Television Authority. Protests poured in from viewers after the incidents.

NO CUTS

But despite all the objections, a recorded version of the programme went out uncut last night — four-letter words and all — on eight TV stations from Scotland to the South of England.

These stations always show the programme on a Sunday. It is

screened live on Saturdays to viewers of London Weekend, Midland, Channel, and Westward.

The I.T.A. gave the Sunday show stations a free hand in their treatment of the programme. A typical attitude was that of Granada, where an official said: "It was difficult to cut so we decided to put it out uncensored."

But last night's recording was preceded — at the request of the I.T.A. — by a warning telling people exactly what to expect.



Frost show shambles: Rubin [standing, far left], followers, and Frost

Used by permission

The difference between regular broadcast-TV, educational-TV, and Guerrilla Television, is this:

The networks are run by people who operate the cameras in their own interest. Educational-TV is where Liberals demand the cameras to operate in the people's interest. And Guerrilla Television gets cameras to the people to let them do it themselves.

This was underscored at a luncheon we went to once for the National Citizen's Committee for Broadcasting, one of those classic Liberal reform groups all the way down to the full-page ads in The New York Times soliciting money.

What happened was that each person anted up \$15 for lunch in a plastic hotel ballroom and another \$5 apiece per panel after lunch to listen to people talk to them.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CITIZENS RIGHTS IN BROADCASTING
Reception for Guests of Honor
in Versailles Ballroom
(Second floor)
The Americana Hotel
Seventh Avenue at 52nd Street, N.Y.C.
Monday, October 26, 1970
12 Noon
(Please present this ticket at the door)

an open letter to the presidents of ABC, NBC and CBS

and the public:

The first National Conference on Citizens Rights in Broadcasting Monday, October 26, 1970 at the Americana Hotel, offers an unprecedented examination of the role of television in American democratic society. The essential political fact is that the airwaves in the United States belong to the people, yet billions of dollars each year accrue exclusively to the three major networks. By and large it is their interest which finds expression. Our most vital natural resource, our children, will watch 22,000 hours of television before the age of 18 — 50% more than classroom time — and 95% of presently scheduled prime time programs undermines the values responsible parents wish to impart. This fact coupled with the almost total disregard of minority ethnic and intellectual representation poses one of the serious threats to our society.

No total assessment of broadcasting performance has ever been made in the United States. The National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting has undertaken such an assessment. Despite repeated attempts on our part, **NOT ONE MAJOR OFFICIAL OF THE THREE CORPORATE TELEVISION GIANTS HAS ACCEPTED OUR INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE.**

At the luncheon we will honor former FCC COMMISSIONER KENNETH A. COX, long known for his champion-ship of the public rights. Mr. Cox, appointed by President Kennedy, has been denied reappointment by President Nixon. Principal speaker will be SENATOR BIRCH BAYH who will speak on "Television and the Political Process."

Television, the most remarkable communications medium of all time, is needed as never before as an intelligent force in a nation facing the uncertainties of the 1970's. A majority of the American people depend on television for their view of the nation and the world. Yet, television's potential for clarifying social issues, for interpreting the manifold problems besetting this nation, for adding to the quality of our life, lies largely dormant and as a result the medium is ignored by the vast majority of thinking people.

This National Conference will mark the beginning of nation-wide activities by the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting to ensure that adequate expression of the public's interest is achieved and that the public's concern for the improvement of present policies of the Broadcasting Industry is recognized. To this end, over one hundred organizations representing hundreds of thousands of citizens are sponsoring this Conference.

Six panels will be conducted with such leaders in their fields as: MRS. JOAN GANZ COONEY, Producer of "Sesame Street"; FCC Commissioner NICHOLAS JOHNSON; WARD B. CHAMBERLIN, JR., Executive Vice-President of Educational Television Corporation; Actor OSSIE DAVIS; RAMSEY CLARK, former Attorney General; JOE MCGUINNESS, author of "The Selling of the President"; CHARLES BENTON, President of Films, Inc.; Congressman ROBERT O. TIERNAN; JOHN de J. PEMBERTON, JR., Executive Director of the American Civil Liberties Union; REVEREND JESSE JACKSON; DR. W. WALTER MENNINGER; ROBERT LEWIS SHAYON and EDWARD P. MORGAN.

Panel topics will include: 1) *Minority Inclusion and Programming Diversity*; 2) *Children's Television*; 3) *Politics and Television*; 4) *Concentration of Control*; 5) *The Needs of American Society in the Development of CATV*; 6) *How to Effect Positive Change*.

For all our sakes in the years to come, Messrs. Goldenson, Sarnoff and Stanton, I urge you to join in this Conference, so that the leadership of ABC, NBC and CBS will have ample opportunity to express its views.

Sincerely,

Thomas P. F. Hoving
Thomas P. F. Hoving
Chairman, National Conference on Citizens Rights in Broadcasting

MR. THOMAS P. F. HOVING
Chairman
NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CITIZENS RIGHTS IN BROADCASTING
95 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016 Telephone: 859-2244

I will attend the National Conference on Citizens Rights in Broadcasting in New York City and wish to have _____ ticket(s) for the luncheon at \$15.00 each. (The price for each luncheon ticket includes one morning and one afternoon panel ticket).

I will attend only the panel sessions at \$5.00 for one morning and one afternoon panel ticket (State panels in order of preference).

I will not attend the National Conference on Citizens Rights in Broadcasting on October 26th, but wish to contribute \$_____ to NCCB in support of the cause of better broadcasting. (All Contributions are tax deductible).

NAME _____ (please print)
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____ TELEPHONE _____

Morning: Panel 1) _____ Afternoon: Panel 4) _____
Panel 2) _____ Panel 5) _____
Panel 3) _____ Panel 6) _____



FLASH-MATIC TUNING

BY
ZENITH

ONLY ZENITH HAS IT!



A flash of magic light from across the room (no wires, no cords) turns set on, off, or changes channels...and you remain in your easy chair!

YOU CAN ALSO SHUT OFF LONG, ANNOYING COMMERCIALS

WHILE PICTURE REMAINS ON SCREEN!

Here is a truly amazing new television development—and only Zenith has it! Just blink! Without budging from your easy chair you can turn your new Zenith Flash-Matic set on, off, or change channels. You can even shut off annoying commercials while the picture remains

on the screen. Just a flash of light does it. There are no wires or cords. This is not an accessory. It is a built-in part of several new 1956 Zenith television receivers. Stop at your Zenith dealer's soon. Zenith-quality television begins as low as \$149.95.*

If it's new...it's from Zenith!

YOU HAVE TO SEE IT TO BELIEVE IT

*Manufacturer's suggested retail price. Slightly higher in Far West and South.



With a beam of magic light

This Zenith "flash tuner" works TV miracles! Absolutely harmless to humans!

Instead of that, as Ken Marsh pointed out, they could have skipped the whole affair and contributed the money to buy thirty or forty Porta-Paks to set up grassroots video projects.

Here then are some tactics for media-izing yourself and others against the psychic straight-jacket of broadcast-TV. Generally, what's below is just fun and shouldn't be mistaken for a particularly heavy or important use of Guerrilla Television.

TACTICS

Essentially the tactics revolve around this fact: with videotape you can record right off the air just as you can pick-up radio with audiotape. Like cutting up old magazines, this means that you can manipulate their myth system, instead of vice-versa.

Anti-ads

Try dubbing the soundtrack from a TV ad over your own video footage. Say one of those fatuous super auto ads and video of an actual traffic jam in your home town.



Or mix their audio and video, like a Band-Aid ad over visuals of Vietnam; or a catfood ad and something like kids starving in Biafra.

The irony is that this happens all the time. A favorite of mine was a documentary on Red China which concluded one section with pictures of little Chinese kids drilling with rifles as some sort of belligerent threat juxtaposed to an ad for underarm deodorant showing a gleaming white couple just after they'd finished playing tennis.

These jarring juxtapositions go by unnoticed because we've become so inured to the context of broadcast-TV. Even though the ads border on social obscenity, not even newsmen have control over which ones follow their broadcasts.

Doing your own juxtaposition will seem forced and you can't do too much of it because the idea is often more powerful than the execution. But when people object to the staginess of it, ask them why and then get them to try to penetrate their own biases.

An extension of this tactic might be a fully developed anti-ad service where consumers receive videotapes of TV ads with full supporting or non-supporting data. Or teachers might begin assigning ad research to students using VTRs. (Never once in my own grade school experience, however, did a teacher bring a TV set into class and use that as the content of a discussion.)



Screen-within-a-screen

Tap a broadcast-TV show so you see a screen-within-a-screen playing to no one. This has the effect of making an object out of broadcast-TV and reveals an alien absurdity.

Information collages

Make information collages which juxtapose interviews of real people with the phony characterizations in soap operas and ads.

Still-frame and slow-motion

Use still-frame and slow-motion in playback of tapes of talk show hosts or the President. Add canned laughter to the President's speeches.



One effective thing we did was to excerpt a phrase from a Nixon press conference and edit it into demonstration footage. (The phrase was this: "When the action is hot, keep the rhetoric cool." Nixon said it in response to a question from Nancy Dickerson about whether or not he was going to ask Vice-President Agnew to tone down his speeches. The time was shortly after the Cambodia invasion and Kent State. We went to Washington to videotape the subsequent demonstration and inserted that phrase into scenes of passionate, shouting students.)

Another tactic is to edit in a phrase two or three times in succession. To do this you just repeat a word or line for emphasis. ("A generation of peace. A generation of peace. A generation of peace.")

PLAY WITH POLITICAL ADS

It's interesting to contrast what the Republicans think is honest TV versus what the Democrats think it is.

GOP politicians sit calmly with a coat-and-tie on and talk straight at you, sort of like a parental monologue. Democrats, on the other hand, prefer shots of themselves in shirtsleeves walking among



the people. (That's what Lindsay does and that's why they want him to be a Democrat.)

Both attitudes, of course, are pure hype. On-the-scene footage is usually edited from one minute out of hundreds shot; speaking directly into the camera to simulate dialogue is ironic because the politician is actually talking to no one at the same time he's talking to everyone.

Nixon's style of TV is a throwback to the days of radio and consequently his success on the medium is only with pre-Media-Americans. The more natural TV is to you, the more plastic he seems, almost like one of those mechanical Walt Disney historical figures.

This isn't to make a character judgment *per se*: just because someone comes across poorly on TV doesn't mean that he's dishonest or venal.

But what Nixon does is eliminate (if he has it) any apperceptive sense of self. In other words, instead of the usual attitudes — Nixon being himself, Nixon knowing he's on TV, Nixon relating to audience, he eliminates the middle step and goes directly from being himself to relating to audience.

That's why he comes across as a product — because he doesn't acknowledge any process. As a result, he always seems out-of-sync, as if his body movements lag a split second behind what he's saying because he's trying so hard to be natural.

The more important the thing he's saying, the more intent and the less believable he becomes. I mean, who could keep a straight face when he told us he was invading Laos so we would have "a generation of peace." Such schizophrenia between content and intent is strictly a print bias.

Because many old modes of political advertising on TV have been exhausted, there'll probably be a radical escalation. It's already foreshadowed by regular product advertising which gives acknowledgment to the video process itself.

In other words, advertisers have realized that people are so oblivious to the ads themselves that the next thing to do is let on that they're aware that they're ads; the ads then become ads about ads. (It's sort of having your cake and eating it too. On the one hand you tell consumers that they're not so dumb they'd actually believe the ad, while on the other you try to sell it to them anyway.)

A particular case in point is a spot for Doral cigarettes which is so absurd as to make me question the mental age of the men who did it (in fact, most ads are amazing when you consider that *grown men* think them up for a living).



71. The "rational" David Frost as seen by viewers of the BBC



26. David Frost loses his cool as seen from Yippies own video camera



31. An "honest" Republican talking straight to a TV cameraman while pretending he's talking to you



28. Anti-Ad (recorded with a Porta-Pak)



27. Ad (recorded from broadcast TV)



The first round was ads showing Doral cigarette packages dancing around and singing "Taste me, taste me." After that got patently absurd, Doral began to lampoon itself by having the characters in its ads wonder aloud why the package of Doral they'd just bought wasn't singing and dancing like the ones they saw on TV.

Similarly, the next presidential campaign will see politicians making ads about politicians making ads. It might work with an officeseeker coming out and telling you how *he* won't try to manipulate his image. Or maybe it will be one politician attacking the media image of his opponent; not the substance, but the image.

Probably this will be done verbally because to do it visually, with stop-framing or slow-motion or repeating phrases, would seem somehow immoral to print people who've learned to detach criticism from action.

If Nixon catches on to the fact that he can't be resold as a candidate (especially to eighteen-year-old voters) after his over-exposure as President, then his campaign strategists might decide to limit his image in ads for him. At that point, the Democrats might start putting him in their ads. In other words, one party will pay to show you their opponent.

The perception of perception through media is akin to the epistemology of dope wherein you become aware of yourself, and then aware that you are aware of yourself, and so on.

The fact that political advertising employs so much media manipulation seems immoral mainly to print-based people. Once you've media-ized yourself against broadcast-TV and assimilated TV as a tool, you can spot what is survival information and what is bullshit.

The reason we become more incensed over patent lies in print is that we have a working print grammar. When we have a similar affinity for video grammar, ads will become more honest, just as consumerism has fostered great changes in other product advertising.

So what you can do with political ads is make your own. On election night in 1970 we went to Buckley for Senator headquarters in New York and shot some very fine tape (Andy Mann and myself) of his supporters, most of whom we found to be courteous and open and eager to talk about the straight media. Later we edited our interviews with Buckley TV ads which gave a good picture of the man and his supporters.

Granted, this is not high-powered stuff. But ads are the weeds of the information environment, and everyone should have their own non-lethal pesticide.

DEBUNK THE MYTH OF PRIME TIME

When you've recorded a show off the air you can stop it, rewind, and fast-forward so that you, not a distant control room, control the pace at which you watch.

The only place they do this now is in football games where they budget time between commercials. They could do it lots of other places, especially on the talk shows which are videotaped, but they don't because time costs them too much money. You are thus a slave to their economic liabilities.

A thing we've done to point up the artificiality of time scarcity is edit an arbitrary amount of footage of the sea, just rolling in and out, in the time slot reserved for sixty-second commercials. Sometimes we dub audio over it.

BUILD UP A PUBLIC AFFAIRS ARCHIVE

That type of access used to be the prerogative of the rich and royalty when media like sculpture and painting were dominant and it was fabulously expensive to duplicate them.

Now everyone can have their own archive, especially a personal one. (All the Instamatic pictures locked up in closets will boggle the minds of future historians.)

Anything you want off TV is fair game. And all public event shows like presidential press conferences have no copyright on them.

The notion of a personal public affairs data bank is an extension of information power. Having your own record of what people, especially politicians, have said, lets you use their behavior to keep them honest. We have Nixon talking about Kent State, Laos, and Cambodia, and then throwing an incredible party for the astronauts, and that gives us enormous flexibility in relating to current events. (In fact, if you have the right tape you can show up the whole space program as a TV marketing gimmick from Hostess Twinkies ads about little astronauts who need "space food," to astronaut Scott Carpenter hyping gasoline.)

ELECTRONICALLY DISTORT THE VIDEO IMAGE

Eric Siegel, an electronics genius who's built his own video synthesizer (a TV analogue of audio synthesizers, it generates pure, abstract video images), complains that standard TV sets minimize the visual control you have over them.

They're similar to automobiles. The cheaper the car, the less dials and gadgets. About all you get are idiot lights which tell you there's trouble but give no forewarning.

Similarly, about all you can do with a regular TV set is make rudimentary adjustments in the way of brightness and contrast, horizontal and vertical. With more sophisticated monitors you can do all kinds of distortions and image shading.

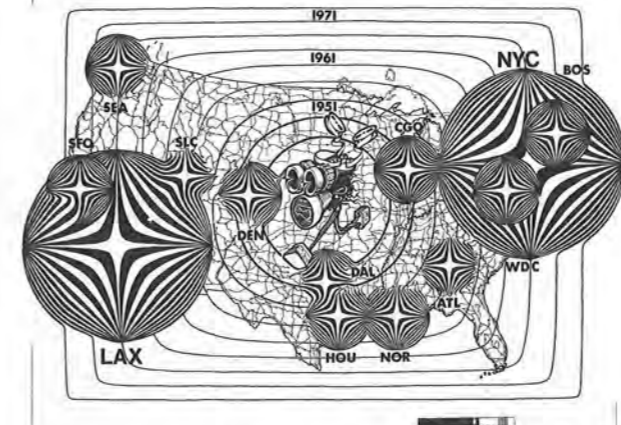
Eric's idea is that everyone should have as many controls as possible to permutate the size, shape, and color of what they're watching. Of course you can do this to a degree with normal controls, but generally they're offered to "adjust" a picture which is thought to be abnormal, rather than to create your own electronic kaleidoscope.

However, one thing you can do is draw a magnet across the face of the picture tube. This messes with the magnetic field on the picture tube and distorts the image (without damaging the set) at your control.



YOU *are* Information

4



4. You Are Information

Ant Farm

In Media-America, we are extended in an information-space which is as real psychologically as geographical terrain is physically. In other words, TV cannot be understood as a representation of physical reality. Nor is it an extension of anything. It is its own reality. (Would you behave in your own home like a Dick Cavett show?)

Television is also a natural resource. Not only does it physically use publicly held space (*i.e.*, airwaves and cables), but the psychological space it inhabits is our collective intelligence.

Most people feel they suffer from information overload, which is analogous to pollution. Bombarded with electronic stimuli, they feel there's too much to know, too little time to know it in.

Added to that is the immense psychological manipulation of accepted behavior by models which are for the most part images generated by advertising.

There are no tools to fight back if you accept only one-way information technology. There is no way to assert your own value as information, no way to be as much information as, say Walter Cronkite.

For there is a unique cybernetics of self indigenous to an electronic culture. It has been little explored by traditional psychology. In fact, when psychiatrists use videotape in therapy they do so to re-affirm other analytic structures. About all they've concluded is that videotape lets you extrapolate behavior for more sensitive analysis. None have suggested that videotape may be a therapeutic tool which is uniquely applicable in an electronic culture.

If you understand mind not as a self-contained unit independent of external stimuli, but rather as an entity which has definition only with those stimuli, they are then no longer external. Inside and outside become inseparable and, as anyone who's ever been stoned knows, also interchangeable.

Paul Ryan offers the most understanding description of that experience. He calls it "infolding information."

In other words, we have various mental sets or programs through which we filter and select input. "Self-image" and "family ties" are examples of that kind of software.

But not only do we relate to ourselves or our families, but we also relate to our images of them, which Paul calls referencing systems. When we take experience and feed it back on itself, *i.e.*, infold it, we are self-referencing.

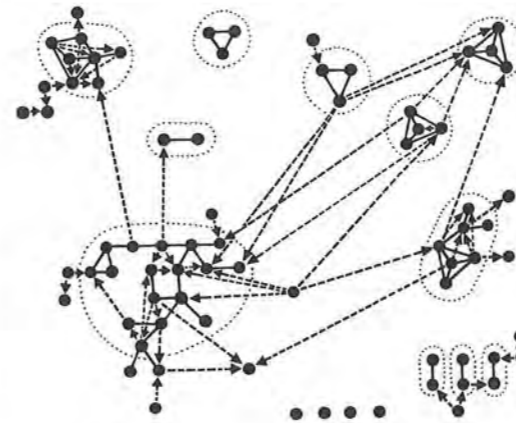
Videotape is a tool to externalize and enhance that process. As the tape becomes internalized (*i.e.*, remembered) it is thus infolded and acts as a lever to enhance cybernetic experience. Paul calls this "self-processing" (See page 00).

A standard malaise of ghetto children is that their sense of self-value is denigrated by the constant bombardment they receive from broadcast-TV of people and behavior which are alien to them, but nonetheless desirable. Street behavior especially (and especially on "Sesame Street") is given absolutely no verification. Yet street behavior is often the richest and most imaginative of all.

Making videotape with and about yourself and your friends is first of all just plain fun. But it's also a tool for knowing who you are and combating the superstar behavioral patterns of the media. With tape, being yourself has value in itself. (Which may cause a revolution in fashion and cosmetics when video feedback is widely available.)



NOTES:



Community Video

Contemporary communities, especially urban ones, have few formal networks for anticipating the intentions of their citizens. Bureaucratic action is generally taken after a "crisis" which has erupted in the form of a physical demonstration over a specific, usually *ad hoc*, cause like highway expansion, police brutality, or an eviction.

As communities have become more complex, the intelligence role of government has not kept pace, except in surveillance. That the police departments in most communities should be entrusted with gathering data about citizens, and that they have the most sophisticated information technologies to do that, is a fundamental flaw in American democracy.

A true community media means an anticipatory intelligence network, not a repressive one. As only people themselves know what they are thinking, such a media structure must be as free of mediators as possible.

This is not now the case. Because local governments have abdicated responsibility for guaranteeing access to the popular media, the ombudsman role has been taken up by "Six O'Clock Newses" all over the country. Traditionally, however, the broadcast structure responds to abnormal behavior and permits feedback only in the form of editorial replies by "responsible spokesmen." The local TV station, of course, determines who they are and generally they must conform to a mode of behavior which is alien to the disenfranchised, *i.e.*, a neatly groomed man or woman sitting behind a desk must deliver a low-key monologue. Never is a community group permitted to present its own response footage shot on location in the community and edited by the people themselves.

5

Government is just another technology. Right now its state-of-the-art is far behind other bureaucracies because it refuses to embrace the sophisticated technologies which businesses and even its own police departments are using. Information indigency is as real as material poverty. In fact, they go together.

As long as broadcast-TV is the only means of distributing video information, and heavy, cumbersome hardware the only means of production, the function of community television is bound to be controlled by a *de facto* elite.

Guerrilla Television combats that pattern. Even without access to television distribution channels like cable television, or even videocassettes, it's possible to initiate a grassroots television in your community. This chapter, "Community Video," is concerned primarily with indigenous production. A more detailed discussion of how to access the means of distribution is covered in the chapter "Networking: Videocassettes and Cable Television."

There is no one pattern for introducing and using video in a community other than a certain attitude toward the medium which has been laid out in the chapter "You Are Information." There are, however, a variety of options available, some of which will fit your situation.

About the only generalization to be made is that community video will be subversive to any group, bureaucracy, or individual which feels threatened by a coalescing of grassroots consciousness. Because not only does decentralized TV serve as an early warning system, it puts people in touch with one another about common grievances.

My understanding of the community potential of Guerrilla Television comes mainly from two sources: from the People's Video Theater and Raindance.



JAY ITKOWITZ

SET UP A STOREFRONT THEATER

Very few communities have cable-TV yet. If you wait, the franchise in your area will probably be granted to straight money people whose idea of community programming is a stationary camera on the mayor while he talks.

Thus a secondary value of storefront television is that not only do you establish a community information service, but you anticipate the installation of cable by having an indigenous information power base not contingent on the whim of outside owners.

A true community, of course, can be either geographic or demographic. In New York, for example, many of the nascent pressure groups like Gay and Women's Lib draw supporters from all around the city, not a specific neighborhood.

The actual location of a storefront or loft will depend on price and access. You should try to minimize your operating overhead as well as your equipment requirements to remain flexible enough to go into the community rather than demand that it come to you.

Generally, you shouldn't demand that people organize around Guerrilla Television. Rather, it is a tool which can be grafted onto already existing social situations with established social bases. Thus, it was patently disenfranchised and organized groups like the Young Lords and Black Panthers whom PVT chose to work with first.

People's Video Theater is now expanding into Greenwich Village which is affluent, further from the edge of just bare existence struggling. To do this they plan to cultivate existing citizens' groups, coalesce them around prominent issues (e.g., an influx of drug addicts into the neighborhood), and build a programming base to extend into cable-TV.

Another place to begin is in the schools. Most of them are desperate for new ideas, and some even have equipment imprisoned in a closet. Many, however, have no money.

You should also anticipate how subversive your project is going to be. The more uptight the school, the more old-line the teachers and community, generally the more trouble you'll have.

Paul Ryan helped set up a project in Newburgh, New York, in 1969 which used Ford Foundation money to turn local high school kids on to portable video and then let them transmit their programs over the town CATV system.

The fact of kids generating their own knowledge combined with the type of things the kids chose to tape (e.g., they went to Washington, D.C., and taped a peace demonstration including obscene slogans against the government; when the adults objected they replied, in all honesty: "That's what went on. We didn't make it up.") was too much for the right-wing community which forced the program out of the school and into a local theater with an independent administration.

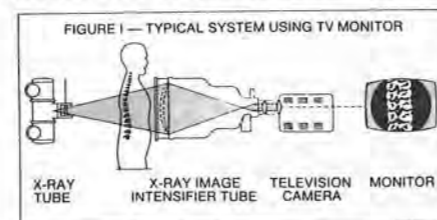
As Paul tells the story, the highlight of the inquisition was a town meeting at which the school gym coach gave a pre-assigned report on new media. He'd read a *Look* magazine piece by Marshall McLuhan on a predicted breakdown in hard-edged definition between male and female dress and concluded with a question/statement to the project's directors: "It says here this guy McClugan (sic) is for free love. Is that true?"

An equally amazing incident took place in a project done by Media Access Center. Out in California they borrowed equipment from Stanford University to give to a group of local black kids who'd just integrated an all-white, suburban high school. The kids went out and taped the school while adding their verbal commentary which was very strong.

The result was that the school principal impounded the tape and told Media Access, which had designed and run the project, that no one could see the programming unless they had a Ph.D. in education, Media Access included!

A filmmaker named Grant Masland reports a similar incident, but one which had a more creative ending.*

A group of students at a California high school taped a teacher reprimanding them for bringing a Portable Video camera into a teachers' lounge. Instead of disciplining them, the assistant principal viewed the tape and then tried to explain what a high school is like from the administrative end.



*From: "Occasional Papers: A Center Report," Bimonthly publication of The Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, Santa Barbara, February 1971.

USE THE MASTER ANTENNA IN APARTMENT BUILDINGS

In urban areas, many apartment buildings have a sort of mini-cable system in the form of a master antenna which feeds the sets in the building. It's a simple matter to hook into this system and feed programming over an unused broadcast channel.

If a building is particularly together, not only can the tenants receive programs but they can make them. This is going on at Westbeth, an artists' cooperative building in Manhattan. The tenants wired the building themselves and are working toward their own TV station. Westbeth was an old telephone company laboratory building in Greenwich Village which was converted into 350 artists' lofts. Because of the concentrated community, a few of the tenants (Ann Douglas and Allen Katzman) interested in video decided to wire the building.

With help from us and Videofreex for the actual wiring, the system spread through the whole building. Now, nightly, from Ann's apartment she and Allen and others transmit (with a Porta-Pak) live real people (e.g., a look into the refrigerator), tapes they've made and that others bring, and even shoot films from a movie-projected image off the wall, including pornography.

As everyone who gets the channel has made a conscious decision to do so, Westbeth TV is absolved from the frivolous denominators of mass taste which plague broadcast TV. In fact, residents are eagerly putting up fifteen dollars for a year's subscription to the cable for this alternate programming.

Of course, a clandestine variation of this tactic is just to go into apartment buildings and do it anyway. (Another variation, on a grander scale, would be to build a low-cost, short-range transmitter and feed in to broadcast-TV signals.)

Master antennas have enormous potential because many low-income housing projects have them, and many of the people in them have TV sets. Mainly because about the only thing you can do in that kind of poorly designed building is watch TV.

MOBILE SHOWINGS

You can either take a traveling show on the road (see the section "A media bus") or better, in a community context, work with existing hardware set-ups.

We know some people in France who travel around the provinces making and showing tape in people's homes and cafés. Their tape, however, tends to be quite political because that's where the French are at.



The Videofreex giant TV screen inflatable used for outdoor showings (with a video projector)
VIDEOFREEX

PROGRAMS AND PROGRAMMING

As a general-use technology, portable video has no one approach. Guerrilla Television demands applications to fit specific situations.

Nonetheless, there is experience around and some things do seem to work better than others. Generally, all you have to do is make contact with the community and it will begin pouring back its needs to you.

It's better for people to suggest what you can do for them rather than vice-versa. Even if their ideas are the most banal in the world, the fact that they have actually done something for themselves has tremendous value.

Begin by covering local events and people and building up contacts, often by playing back on the spot. Or just hand the camera over to interested spectators and let them begin shooting for themselves. Not everyone will want to, or will even be good at it, but a sorting out happens which draws on the people in the community.

Avoid an onslaught of public relations and hype. Just move in and start shooting. But always, of course, ask permission. To start taping without the consent of the people involved is just a rip-off, like broadcast-TV.

Some tactics you might try are:

Video mediation

This is a mode originated by the People's Video Theater. Essentially it means taping one side in a conflict and showing it to the other. Then taping their response and showing it to the first group. And so on.

PVT first did this in Washington Square Park in New York. The park had been under reconstruction for over a year and a tense situation had developed between park people and local residents.

PVT first made a fifty-minute documentary of the situation in the park by talking to everyone who used it: blacks, students, pensioners, etc. From the tape it became apparent that people were very upset because construction, already past deadline for completion, limited available space.

PVT then made a six-minute tape of the park people talking about the documentary, and a six-minute tape of local residents responding to that feedback. The resulting twelve-minute tape was shown to city officials, local residents, and city planners. They responded to the questions posed and the final tape, documentary with feedback,

was then shown in the park.

The New York University Media Co-Op did a similar thing by first taping a meeting of squatters (people who had moved into abandoned buildings because they had no other place to live) and then playing it to objecting neighbors.

There is a similar program in Canada called "Challenge for Change" which works in rural communities to mediate differences. In fact, Canada is way ahead of the United States in decentralized media, much of which is government-sponsored.

Tape a TV crew

When a broadcast-TV crew comes into your neighborhood, videotape them. Demand to interview an announcer. Then organize a local discussion around the announcer's response and the broadcast-TV coverage that appears later (which you can tape right off the air for a community archive).

Two women friends of ours did this with a Women's Liberation demonstration. First they went to an abandoned building that women had seized to convert into a day-care center.

When they got there a CBS cameraman told them that CBS was going downtown to interview the city attorney who had signed an eviction notice. Our friends went down there as participants who had a right to see that media coverage was fair, especially since it involved a public official.

They got there ahead of the network crew which came in demanding that they leave and not tape the network filming an interview. This is a real insight into the whole broadcast mentality.

The local "announcer" was a woman, because it was a Women's Lib "story." Her name was Gloria Rojas and she demanded that the two women leave because she told them: "It's my story. I found it [the idea to interview the city attorney]. Aren't you ashamed of yourself for not being able to think up your own stories?"

In other words, she related to the information as her property, not a process in which others were involved. During her tirade, however, the women kept their Porta-Pak running unbeknownst to Gloria.

Monitor grievances

Instead of approaching bureaucracies with print petitions or alienating demonstrations, ask them to watch a short documentary of people describing

and showing the conditions and problems they're protesting. Use videotape as the evidence.

You might try this especially with police behavior and if they threaten you, just leave the camera running. Even if they smash the thing they usually don't understand that, unlike film, videotape isn't ruined by exposure to light.

On the other hand, police are usually as frustrated as everyone else, and often with good reasons. So tape them and let them see themselves on replay. Rather than exacerbate police/community tensions, use videotape to mediate them.

One of the best tapes I've ever seen was done by Media Access who taught local California high school students how to use the equipment. The students then made a tape called "Juvenile Justice."

"Juvenile Justice" is a straight documentary (without the annoying voice-overs of broadcast-TV) made by kids on how the law relates to them. It's particularly concerned with drug laws and interviews kids about why they take drugs, parents about why they think their kids take drugs, and law enforcement officials about why they enforce the law.

The resulting twenty-eight-minute package is a powerful piece of honest information (edited, of course, by the kids themselves) highlighted by the sheriff and judge who claim that the reason they enforce the law is that it's the law, not that it has any particular cogency. Perhaps the punch line is the local judge's plea to them to wait until they're old enough to vote to change the law. In other words, the same culture that's telling kids to assume responsibility renders them powerless until an arbitrary age limit.

Other grievance tapes you might make are local opinions about public services, or lack of them, like garbage pick-up and mass transportation.

Do your own "public service" programming

The best way to build grassroots media support is to appeal to people's self-interest. It's one thing to show them propaganda programming, another to give them useful information.

Depending upon local need, try making a tape about how to get food stamps, service at city hall, or how to get on welfare. Remember these are supposed to be public officials — *i.e.*, your servants — and they should be subject to the scrutiny of being played back in the communities they service.



Work the suburbs

If you're white and middle-class you shouldn't be on a political trip in someone else's neighborhood unless you're prepared *not* to tell other people how to live. If you think others should listen to you, then go back to the suburbs where you came from. Radicalize your parents.

As the repression they suffer from is psychological, not physical, you need psychological tactics, *i.e.*, Guerrilla Television.

Make tapes of housewives shopping at those sterile shopping centers. Ask them if they really like it. Play back on the spot.

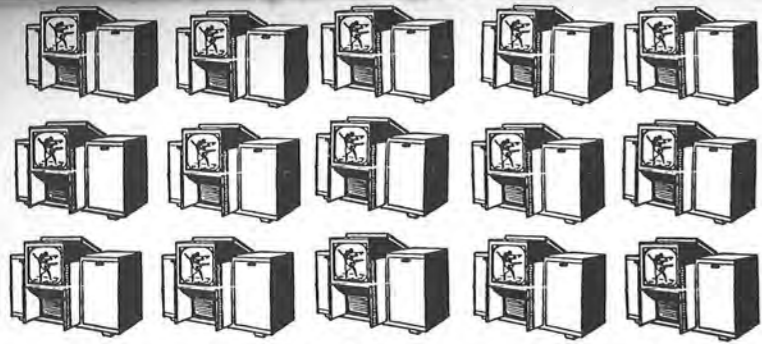
Or videotape commuters waiting in neat rows for those trains they claim they hate. Play back at the station. Or buy a ticket and play back on the train.

Community video can't really happen without indigenous energy and that means indigenous information. People don't want to see films of sugar cane cutters in Cuba when they've got their own problems. With Guerrilla Television you can pick-up on those problems and feed them back right away, under the autonomous control of the people who are experiencing them.

PLAYBACK ENVIRONMENTS

There's no one or two ways to show communities videotapes but there is a general attitude which applies: don't set up a theater, set up an information center.

That means flexibility instead of rigidly scheduled showtimes. If people are going to be late, wait for them. If someone has some tape they'd like to show but you hadn't scheduled it, let them



show it. And if people want to stop a show in the middle to talk about what they're seeing, let them — that's one thing that videotape technology is all about.

Also avoid a hard environment where seats are immovable and people have to trip over each other to get around. And, whatever you do, don't turn the lights off.


Some of the pleasantest evenings I've had watching tape were at People's Video Theater where the show was loose and informative and at the end they passed a camera around so people could tape themselves, and people got into talking to each other.

VIDEO FESTIVALS

A good way to bring together video people, let others see what you're up to, and have a good time is to have a special Video Festival.

Everyone can bring tape and equipment and just do what they want. Soft environmental structures like domes and inflatables are good things to have festivals in.


Ant Farm in California once sent out invitations to a "Video Slumber Party." Everyone came with tapes and Ant Farm set up a replica of a 1950s living room with sofas and chairs. A good time was had by all.



VIDEO

SATURDAY MARCH 6 8pm-8am
SAUSALITO ART CENTER


INVITATION



Slumber Party

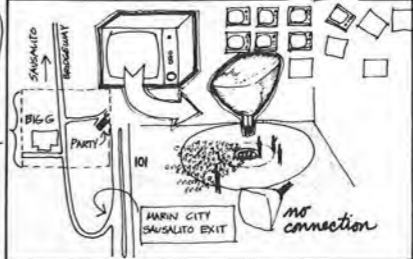
PARTY

BRING YOUR HARDWARE,
TAPES, EATS, DRINKS, ETC.



NEVADA STREET
GOOD TASTE
MARIN BUSSTOP
SHELTER
ART CENTER

art center is
at 630 NEVADA
street. for more
call (spring) 332-1088



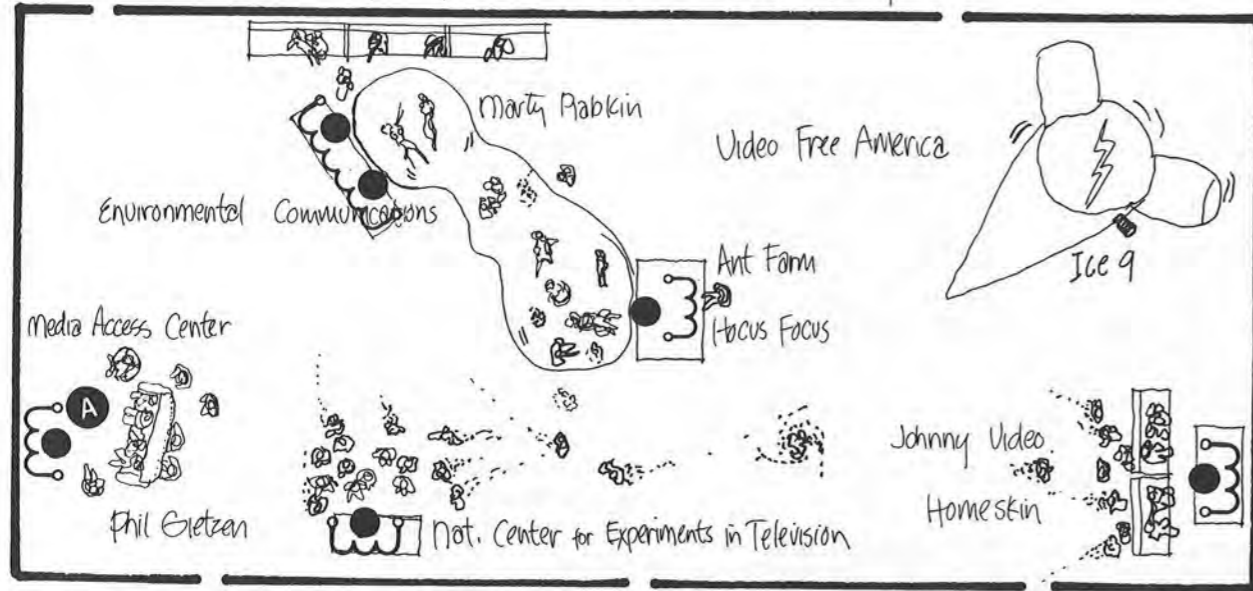
MARIN CITY
SAUSALITO EXIT

no connection

DO NOT GUSE

ABOUT THIS EVENT: ITS FREE, ITS FOR VIEWING TAPES AND MEETING VIDEO PEOPLE, NO HYPE, NO EXPECTATIONS, BRING YOUR OWN.

March 6, 1971, Sausalito Video Slumber Party



ICE 9



ICE 9

