

Carol & Ferd

Carol Rowe and Ferd Eggan, the "stars" of our underground, video verite, documentary soap opera, were struggling to escape from their lives and work as pornographic filmmakers for the world reknown Sutter Cinema when first we met. They planned to get married, paying off some debts with one last film (of their wedding night). Then on to Alpena, Michigan, for a month with Ferd's parents where he planned to kick junk. Eventually they were bound for Greece, only to return again for the security of academic life.

Carol's name was given to me by Mother Boats of the Psychedelic Venus Church, as some one to get in touch with for the purpose of combining video and erotica. Skip and I were on our way to tape at the Good Times and so the wagon was well stocked with Sony half-inch gear when Carol said convincingly, "Why don't you make a tape about the story of our wedding (and the film of the consummation). At that moment they were anticipating the appearance of Richard, a friend and former lover of Carol's, who was determined to talk them out of tying the knot. And here on a rainy afternoon on Hayes Street our story began.

Taping with Carol and Ferd was (is) an incredible experience. They are witty, completely open, and have a great understanding of the media experience. Time and again in the midst of a heated argument, a heavy emotional moment or an orgasm, they would turn to the camera and comment (much in the tradition of the Shakespearean aside) on what was happening psychologically or offer some insight into the media process that was occurring.

These factors, interfaced with their rather unique relationship and circle of friends, resulted in a genre of information-entertainment, perfectly suited to the production qualities inherent in half-inch video technology, particularly the facility to play back the unfolding story before its main characters, the ease of operation allowing subjects, directors and camera men to exchange roles, and the ability to edit and re-edit (a work in progress) as the story grows.

As of this moment we've taped with Carol and Ferd (or they with us) on seven separate occasions. The current version contains interviews, verite, rap sessions, instructional footage, erotica, process and feedback tape. There is also a sequence during which they were in a room by themselves with the camera, taking turns interviewing and shooting each other. We hope to tape at least one more session capturing their reaction to the current edited version, and the effect taping had on their relationship — also perhaps some additional interviews with participants in the "action"

Sex roles, media, homosexuality, junk, dope in general, aesthetics, film are the subjects which, mixed with endless anecdotes and probing psychological analysis and emotional moments make up the verbal content.

Our conception of what the piece was really about evolved through several stages. At first simply a piece of video erotica, then a Warholesque study of a couple of freaky people, then a hip study of the institution of marriage, and finally more or less where we are today — a number about media process, and public life style. In subsequent taping we hope to get further into how participation in a media event affects behavior — to what extent everyone becomes an actor when confronted with a camera, notions just touched upon in the final moments of our current version.

The question with which we're wrestling at present is how to best present this frankenstein of ours to an audience.

One valid yet disturbing thought is that with video tape the minute you do any editing at all, you are sapping its strength as a real-time medium. In fact, several people have sat in our studio and watched all 15 hours of original, some more than once, really getting into Carol and Ferd and becoming Carol and Ferd freaks to the point of considering them as personal friends. Observing this, we have in our more flamboyant moments considered establishing a Carol and Ferd environment offering a complete log of the tapes, several copies, several vtrs and monitors, allowing people to view whatever they wanted and in whatever order. Films made by Carol and Ferd would be available also, and at times the "stars" themselves might pay visits. Video gear to record comments or conversations would probably be included in the environment.



Another suggestion is to simply present it as an ongoing serial, presenting new episodes on tapes as they came in. Either of these two presentations lend themselves fully to the notion of ongoing taping.

The approach that would be most feasible for distribution would of course be to simply edit a single track approximately 1 1/2 hour narrative. Actually, this method also would tell the narrative story of Carol and Ferd most clearly. We will probably do this at some point. At present our enthusiasm is greatest for creating a 6 input system of 3 cameras (one on the audience, one focused on the operators, one interfaced on preview monitors) and 3 vtrs (one with basically narrative tapes, one with highlighting comments, one primarily visual) all put through a matrix switcher to be delivered in varying combinations through twelve monitors.

This piece would have to be performed "live" by 2 operators (a distinct disadvantage) and would deal with the concepts of voyeurism through media, effects of media on behavior, posing the questions: how real is any piece of media? why are you watching it? and why did we make it? Also we'd probably tell the story of Carol and Ferd.

Recently on a tour of 5 colleges, we tried a watered down version of this last approach, and reactions, while varied, gave us direction as to where we should go. The system was utilized in some of the following specific ways. *Simul-tracking* (presenting two different views of same action) — this we did with the wedding ceremony. Playing the two views slightly out of sync was a reminder that a media event was being created. *Simultaneous tracking in time* (showing action happenign concurrently in two different locations) — contrasting the banality of the wedding reception with the nervous humor of the upstairs preparations for the consummation. *Double tracking to collide information*, i.e. demonstrating both the physical and psychological relationship between shooting up and "the sex act" by playing back these events at the same time; affectionate footage from early tapes contrasted with later alienated behavior; and a visual metaphor of a broken spouting sink pipe with discussion of marital difficulties. In print these examples seem quite obvious, but to experience them on combinations of 8 monitors is another thing entirely.

The two live cameras were utilized as follows: one, providing an input of a wide picture of the audience watching the monitors (toward the end) which remained in silhouette until lights were turned on and the viewers themselves became the viewed; the other camera interfacing from a nine inch preview monitor, at times pulling back to show the image of a TV within a TV, as a reminder that the whole thing was being done for public consumption (a recurring verbal theme), and at other times zooming in to pick up a detail of a picture, a close-up of a close-up, and also fragmenting the image into the enlarged scan lines colliding the obvious constructed electronic image with the similar but apparently real one next to it.

The ability to move any combinations of these 4 inputs onto any displacement on 8 monitors by use of the matrix switcher created endless potential for both emphasis and experience, which sometimes, by accident or design, was well exploited (excuse the term).

I shall not make the mistake of verbalizing further about the electronic grammar of environmental video (matrixing, simultracking, double tracking, interfacing, live camera input, etc.) because it's a visual tactile experience, a grammar which we are just beginning to explore with no counterpart in words).

If, after reading this, your curiosity is aroused either about *The Continuing Story of Carol and Ferd*, or about the techniques we intend to explore in presenting it, I can only recommend that you watch for it at your local neighborhood video theater.

Arthur Ginsberg
Video Free America

Meditations (continued)

6. It seems that as time goes on there is a certain increase in the clarity of the general tone of my life. There is a certain lightness that seems to increase space with the deepening of my connectedness with life. A certain harmony percolates thru the holes in my confused mind. However, along with that clarity and light is the growing feeling, especially clarified by this attempt at writing, that I know relatively nothing that the subtlety of all things is increased rather than decreased.

If I have a rheostat on a light and it's dark out and slowly I turn that rheostat up so the light just begins to shine, at first all I can make out are the gross contours of objects in the room. After a while at that level, I am pretty confident that I know what is visible in the room. If I try and get a closer look, I soon run out of sufficient illumination. I can only get a closer look if somehow I increase the illumination. So I

move back to the rheostat and step up the light level. Suddenly a whole new order of detail presents itself. Anywhere I might look there is more information that I can gather about that or any other area. If I choose to zoom in, then the detail is there with enough light now to see. But at the same time, I begin to lose the ability to take in the large patterns. I lose the ability to be a real generalist about the room the more I focus in on details. So there is the dilemma: know only the surface, or know only a few things in detail. Reductio ad absurdum leads to "know nothing about everything or know everything about nothing", absolute light and absolute darkness — Zen Koan. Either alternative is just one side of that Yin Yang duality. So there must be a Wu Way to think of this. The only thing I have not gone into is the light itself. What is the nature of the light itself that allows me to see it all in the first place? This is the Knowing of That whereby All Things are Known that the Vedic scriptures speak of: The question that leads to the Yoga. This is what has led me into Integral Yoga and

that gradual unfolding that I see taking place in my life. What occupies my most conscious moments is inquiry after and movement into the light. That inquiry is the real-life rheostat that produces the movement that automatically increases the light level. Then anything that requires my attention is illumined by that greater light. As soon as it has ceased to be a "problem" or ceased to demand my attention, then attention can go back to the light. Perhaps a cross-over is where I see so many things that need doing that I have no time to concentrate on the light. That is the image of my connectedness or the feeling that there are all these things that I see to do that I seem to be able to do. It's a dynamic process. It has its ups and downs, but the slope integrated over a few years is fantastically and markedly UP. I have opened seemingly so little, but what a difference! That is what I want to share with you, "ever new joy". Since every thing that rises must converge, somewhere after the struggles and the pain of climbing, we will meet on the Way. Aum