

A RADICAL SOFTWARE STATE-OF-THE-ART REPORT



TAPE

Tales of cheap videotape are like talking about the weather. But every now and then real, if somewhat flawed, deals do pop up. Two companies are selling videotape at very low prices. An outfit called EHI (P.O. Box 20643, San Diego, California 92120) is listing 30 minute tapes for \$5.50 a reel in quantities of one to nine; \$5.10 a reel for ten to twenty-four; and \$4.75 for twenty-five to one hundred. Beyond that they encourage you to write for special prices. On the same quantity scale, hour tapes are going for \$9.25, \$8.45, and \$7.70. These prices are about 40% of the wholesale price of Sony videotape which itself is about 40% off the retail price. We have written EHI asking how they can sell so low but never got a reply. We imagine that they are selling re-processed tape and the one sample roll we had resembled Memorex Chroma and seemed alright for dubbing, but not for taping masters.

Another company, Dak Enterprises (P.O. Box 69920, West Hollywood, California 90069) is selling reprocessed tape, and at about the same prices. Audio tape too, cassettes included. They will send free sample reels.

Finally, there's so-called high energy tape which is supposed to store a cleaner, more powerful signal. We've tried some (Scotch), but haven't noticed any difference. Price is about 40% more than regular Sony tape. Still inconclusive. If you have experience please write us.

DEALERS

No one buys equipment at list price in Manhattan. But because demand often outstrips supply, one day's prices are gone the next, and people who you relate to as your friends nonetheless try to screw you. Naturally, we all expect the lowest prices possible. Some of the dealers will accommodate us, but other who deal mainly with industrial clients and large companies do not discount as heavily as those in touch with the video groups.

We (Raindance) do this: We first go to Technisphere (141 Lexington Avenue, New York City, 684-3136) where we know we can get good prices, honest information on delivery, and reasonably reliable back-up service. But because the owner, Jack Goldman, does not yet have a Sony dealer franchise (he does have a Sony service franchise), he must get his supplies from other dealers and thus cannot always fill an order.

If this is the case, we then call C.T. Lui at C.T.L. Electronics (86 West Broadway, New York City, 233-0754) who, because he is a dealer, often has stock. But, while Lui's prices are often the lowest possible, he has sometimes reneged on a deal after it was made. Moreover, he sometimes tries to sell new equipment that has been opened.

While Lui maintains that this is just to get a spare accessory, if you are paying fair price than it is not unreasonable to ask for sealed equipment. Lui's service, which was terrible in the past, has greatly improved under the guidance of John Brumage. Moreover, Lui has pioneered in equipment modifications and is usually well-informed about new possibilities. So check-in there and compare prices before you buy.

The third outfit with which we deal is Harvey Radio (Pro A/V Division, 444 Madison Avenue, New York City, 832-8675) which, when it has stock (which is usually), maintains discount prices as low as anyone in town. Harvey Radio is also a franchised Sony dealer. Also a good place to check before you buy.

Those of you are familiar with the dealers in New York will realize that several names are missing from this list. This is for two reasons. One, because the companies simply don't give good prices. Or two, because we feel we have been screwed by them in the past.

RANDOM INTELLIGENCE

Sony half-inch equipment can be purchased in Hong Kong at prices less than in Tokyo. An AV3400 (Porta-Pak) camera is \$500; the AV3400 deck is \$620; and an AV3650 lists for \$830. Then, if you buy in person and pay cash you can get a 15% discount. If you order by mail figure \$55 for shipping and handling, but that doesn't include duty. Address inquiries to: Fook Yuen Electronic Co., Ltd., 1106 Hang Seng Bank Building, Des Voeux Road Central, Hong Kong.

Both Eric Siegel and Nam June Paik have shown their video synthesizers in New York this winter. Paik's mutates a camera signal and adds fabulous colors, while Eric's can generate its own imagery without external input. Both are spectacular if you're interested in video imagery.

The Videofreex have built a custom camera for Shirley Clarke which allows her to wear the lens and vidicon on one arm and the viewfinder in her hand. The Freex made it from an old CV Porta-Pak camera.

Technisphere in New York City (141 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016) can modify the Sony AV3650 editing deck to eliminate the sound lag problem. They are charging \$25 for the modification. The problem is that with Technisphere's change you can no longer do video inserts with the 3650. So it's a trade off, inserts for no sound lag.

The CMX600 is a computerized electronic editing system which costs \$380,000.00. Developed by CBS-TV and Memorex, it allows random access to thirty minutes of video information frame by frame and can do dissolves, jump cuts, and other optical effects. Once you've decided on sequencing and effects the computer mixes your tape automatically adjusting for color correction if so instructed. Its designed, of course, for two-inch tape and super-commercial uses.

Equipment prices are going up. Sony is adding \$150 to the list price of its VTR's AV3650 and AV3400 (Porta-Pak). And the other manufacturers are following. It seems that the Japanese are into price fixing, which is illegal for American companies, theoretically at least. (The price of videotape isn't expected to go up a while, however).