

COMMUNITY VIDEO IN NEW PALTZ

New Paltz, New York, is located about eighty miles northeast of New York City. New Paltz is 1) a college town 2) a farming town and 3) the victim of incredible urban sprawl. There are so many different types of people in New Paltz, that the problem of social integration among the populous is a staggering one. There is no doubt about it—New Paltz is a highly polarized community.

... "in" steps the Community Video Project. What are we all about? It is our intention to help to bring the community together via video. After checking out the disparate elements within the town, we concluded that the only thing that the community has in common is one nasty habit: they all watch the tube. So we have set out to present via the New Paltz cable system (independently owned) some "community programming." Perhaps a definition is in order. To our way of thinking, "community programming" is programming that originates at the grass roots level—in this case, in the town or village of New Paltz, and concentrates on an individual within a larger entity—the community. We show people at work, at play, just hanging out, at civic affairs (meetings, library fairs, etc.). We concentrate on the old, the young, the middle aged, the poor, the rich, and the middle class. In other words, we want to put everybody on the box doing what they normally do and showing their special gifts and interests. We have all lived here four years or more, so we know a good many people in a community of about 7500.

Each week, we put on an hour feedback, "Community MIX," along with our other programming, which right now is pretty sporadic, but developing nicely. "COMMUNITY MIX" is more or less a collage of things and people in the community, including the college (five thousand students). We put out our software on half-inch Sony AV-3400 and 3650s. So far, community response to our experiment has been really astounding. All those disparate elements which I glanced over earlier in this article have all been responsive. Most response has been extremely positive, and criticism (much of it justly deserved, some of it unfounded) has been generated to a lesser degree.

Our only hassle now is the problem of commercials. Our Project is against commercials on Channel 12 (New Paltz's cable station). It is not that we oppose commercials per se, it is only that the power structure in this community is such that the real estate-banking-insurance conglomerates, the group responsible for the urban sprawl and loss of character in New Paltz, is in power here. We don't want to see a community station go the way of all flesh in this place, and become absorbed into this insidious structure. Presently, we are showing people at their places of work, in their stores, restaurants, etc., and these programs have been pretty interesting. It's all free, and serves the community a lot more fruitfully—a community paying six dollars a month for a cable should not be subjected to advertising too. Anyway, we're trying to work it out and see what happens.

Incidentally, we have unlimited access to the channel, and no outside censorship, so it's a pretty good situation. The cable owner has been extremely cooperative (Russell Bogie) and we really have a free hand. So far.

Anybody in the videosphere who is interested in sending or swapping us some tape for showing on Channel 12, don't hesitate to contact me:

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THE FOLLOWING TAPES ARE AVAILABLE FROM THE NEW PALTZ COMMUNITY VIDEO PROJECT:

EXPERIMENTAL:

GRAY STRAWBERRIES NEVER KNOWS:
VIDEO DISTORTION WITH SOUND TRACK WHICH MAKES THE TAPE ONE RHYTHMIC EXPERIENCE. TEN MINUTES.

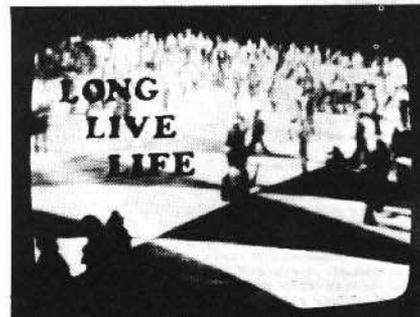
ACUPUNCTURE BALLET:
VIDEO FEEDBACK WITH ORIGINAL SOUND TRACK CREATED BY A SINE AND SQUARE WAVE AUDIO GENERATOR, WHICH OSCILLATES TO THE RHYTHM OF THE FEEDBACK IMAGE. TWENTY-FIVE MINUTES.

MEDIA SINK:
FOUR TRACK AUDIO TAPE MADE WITH SIX TAPE LOOPS AND DOUBLED SPEED FED INTO OSCILLOSCOPE WHICH IS MANIPULATED AT RANDOM. BECAUSE OF SPEED OF IMAGE, VIOLETS, GREENS AND REDS APPEAR WITHIN BLACK AND WHITE IMAGE. TWENTY MINUTES.

PRICES:
ONE DOLLAR PER MINUTE, YOU PROVIDE TAPE. OR WE'LL WORK A STRAIGHT EXCHANGE SYSTEM. YOU SEND ME A TAPE, I'LL SEND YOU A TAPE. IF YOU WANT ME TO PROVIDE TAPE, PRICE IS ONE DOLLAR AND FIFTY CENTS PER MINUTE.

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DOWNSVILLE COMMUNITY TV



There's a funny, funky video thing happening in Downsville, New York in the Catskills. At a pre-scheduled time, on a given evening each week, a green VW van pulls up to a telephone pole on a country road and unhooks two cables which are hanging there waiting to be plugged into a Sony 3600 or a portapack. With the flip of a few switches, the local community cable cast begins. In their homes, all the local folks are sitting eagerly by their TV sets, waiting to see themselves, their friends and neighbors on Channel 3. Usually there are some live announcements, an invitation to come on down and be on TV, and a description of the tapes to be played. There are strong requests for feedback: any technical problems (interference on other channels, bad audio, etc.) as well as requests for ideas on programs people would like to make or see made. Our first official cablecast was interrupted temporarily after the first tape was shown in order for us to follow some fire engines down the road to report on a fire. We returned shortly to resume transmission, having arrived at the fire too late to catch it, but we did interview some people who had been there. Lots of people stopped by to tell us they were watching (some even invited us to a backyard barbeque), and of course the usual entourage of kids showed up on their bicycles to see themselves on television.

Response in town has been overwhelming. Contrary to conditions in a big city where you never even know if anyone is watching, people in a small town are really tuned in. In fact, one afternoon after we had made a successful but unannounced test on the system, we went into town to get groceries and some woman came running out of the beauty parlor (she must have jumped right out of her chair because she still had her plastic smock on) just to tell us how wonderful it was!



So much for enthusiasm. As far as programming is concerned, possibilities keep growing. We have shown only local tapes so far, mainly because people are most excited about seeing their own little town on TV . . . the local grocer making sausage, a former school teacher caning chairs, the cop talking about the non-existence of crime in a small town, a terra firma man talking about his Wallace politics and how his life has changed since he came to live in the country, some city kids turning people on to video at a fire house bazaar, interviews with townspeople about a local controversy on whether to close an old covered bridge to cars, American Indians dancing at a nearby crafts fair as well as people demonstrating their crafts, an auction, a square dance, the Memorial Day Parade (much requested since everyone in town was there), and numerous events from the school. The school by the way, is purchasing a portapack and a 3600 in September, so hopefully a lot of programming will be originating from the kids themselves.

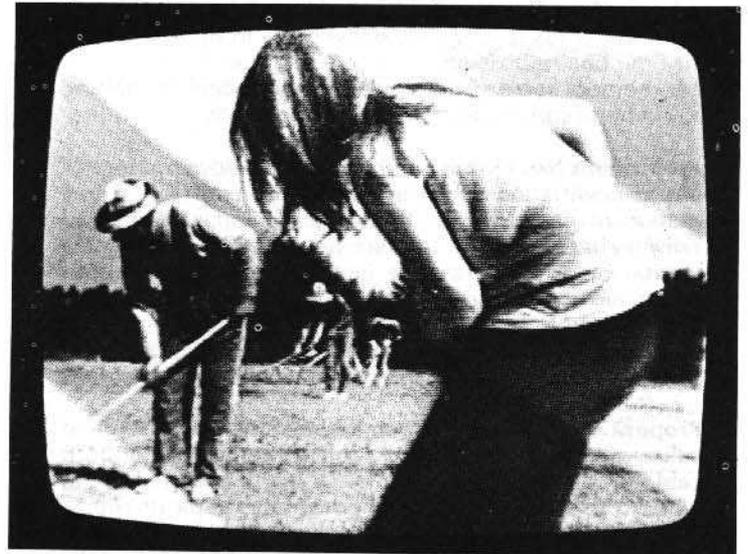
We are quite interested in generating a series on small farmers and the problems they encounter in trying to maintain a living in a society which consistently supports bigger and bigger farming operations. We hope to gather



survival information which may be of help to those people who want to earn a living in the country, be they farmers who don't want to be forced to sell out to city people because they can get more for their land than from farming, or whether they are young people who want to leave the city and get into the land, learn a craft, and simply live as self-sufficiently as possible. This also applies to local young people who may be tempted to move to a city to find work because they haven't gotten themselves out of the "get a job" mentality.

TECHNICAL DATA: We are using the Sony RF modulator out of the 3600 and the portapack, going through an old tube RF amplifier (worth about \$10, could be better but it works), and padded down to match the other signals. At the moment, we are going into a 30db down test tap in the first trunk amplifier. Hopefully, when we get the right kind of connector, we'll go directly into the line without a pad. We're ordering a Hamlin band pass filter (\$15 from Hamlin International Corp., 126-B S.W. 153rd St., Seattle, Wash. 98166) to minimize spurious side band signals.

A few sets in town do get bleeding of video into Channel 2 (noticeable as a herringbone pattern). The point we are plugged into is the first place the cable splits after coming down the mountain from the antenna. We also get AC there. People usually have to fine tune their sets (some old sets don't get the signal at all) but, in general, quality is quite acceptable. The cable system is in good shape and there are about 250 subscribers. It is a community-owned system which tends to minimize bureaucracy!



ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION NETWORK

We have an hour edit from the Environmental events in Stockholm last June which should be seen by anyone concerned about the quality of life on the planet. There is emerging an unquestionable realization that our basic value systems must be changed before we can maintain a standard of living which meets our spiritual as well as our material needs. Also of note is a half hour edit on some people in Sweden who are into what they call "friendly farming." This goes beyond simple organic techniques. They don't believe in plowing (it disrupts the ecological balance of the soil and thus requires even more energy to be put back into the earth in order to regain the balance) and of course, they use no chemicals or even animal waste to fertilize. They work with nature, not against it, and the old man who is their inspiration has much to teach us all about living on the earth and making things grow.

We are interested in gathering and disseminating information which raises people's consciousness about the environment. Unfortunately, since ecology has become such a political issue, many people relate to it only superficially rather than trying to develop life styles that are ecologically sound. It seems that video could generate information to change some of these patterns.

Dean & Dudley
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photos: Dudley Evenson