

Making vs. Studying

There is much of this schism too. Some people choose only to teach production. (Agreement with question 7.) Others develop courses that are "study" oriented - they have readings and screenings and field-trips and discussions but never involve making video. (Disagreement with question 7.) Some people we know teach both production and criticism yet feel that, in practice, these two approaches don't work well with each other. Still others feel that making video and studying it can only work together.

We're going to fess up to our Editors' Anxiety.

We are unhappy with a choice we made at some point in the development of this issue of Radical Software. Maybe it was a tone we set. We can't re-

member. In any event, we feel it is unfortunate that the activities we solicited, collected and ourselves described deal exclusively with production-oriented activities. There are many nifty things to do that make kids smarter about video and television yet don't require a single piece of hardware.

In keeping with our general wish to present as many options as possible, we feel bad about the omission - justifications of only 64 pages notwithstanding. To counter our anxiety we have put special emphasis in the RESOURCES section on materials that provide non-production activities you ought to consider trying with your kids.

BEWARE these dualities.

Studying opposites is a good heuristic device. Yet, although it is helpful to consider clear-cut choices, we suggest that you reject adopting them. We do.

Introductory Video Exercises

QUINCY BENT

The following activity is designed to provide a series of structured experiences for exploring some of the fundamental techniques of video and TV production. Used as an introduction to some basic visual concepts, these exercises may provide children with a helpful framework for planning and producing their own video material.

The Activity

The exercises break down into seven main components: the first five are designed for the single camera VTR system, and the last two for a multi-camera, studio system.

For all exercises it is essential that a monitor or TV set be placed so that all participants can see themselves as they perform the various activities. If you are using a portapak system, hook up an RF converter to send the picture directly to the monitor or TV set.

The exercises should be done in sequence. Each child does not have to do every exercise. Generally it is easier to rotate turns so that each child becomes a "subject," then a camera operator, then a switcher (when working in a studio system.) If you



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have a large number of children - 20 to 40 - it is suggested that you use more than one subject for each exercise. Make sure that each child gets a turn with the equipment - especially the camera.

While exercises may seem complex when they are described in written form, you will find that they take a very short time to complete - even with a large class. A group of fifteen to twenty children can usually complete all the exercises in about thirty minutes.

Good luck!

EXERCISE ONE: Far and Near

This first series of exercises deals with the most basic properties of every visual medium. What happens to our visual concept of size and number when they are defined by a small, flat, one dimensional surface? This problem is incredibly difficult to verbalize, but with immediate feedback from a video monitor, it is easy to experiment with.

A. Static Camera/Active Subject

Set the camera at a wide angle focal length and place it on a table or tripod. It is important that