

VIDEO GUIDE

SUMMER 1983 \$2.00

MUSIC/ROCK/VIDEO/TELEVISION
TOKYO ROCK
WEST GERMAN INDEPENDENTS
BRIAN ENO
NASH THE SLASH
CHRIS BURDEN
BROOKLYN BRIDGE
VIDEO SHORTS III



TATTLETAPES

TAKING A VIDEO VACATION is like taking a permanent 'holiday from life' for those who revel in reruns instead of engaging in the future. . . . life is constant strife as **B.C. CITIZENS** are forced to digress further into the dark ages brought on by the 'restraint (control) policies (police) of the dangerously right-wing government of **BILL BENNETT'S SOCIAL CREDIT PARTY**. . . . Instead of 'revelling in nostalgia', **B.C. CITIZENS** are arming/organizing for a full fledged rebellion against the current policies that deny basic human/workers' rights, ignorance of health and safety measures. . . . In search of style was **DENIS L'ESPERANT**, the new Canada Council Video Officer's cross country visit of his constituents, who are as much in the dark about current policies than before his visit (?) . . . with most of them equally annoyed and baffled about the short notice given re: new application deadlines and 'interim funding'? ????????? lack of communications, lack of policies = lack of direction . . . not lacking in direction is **MICHAEL BROOK** of **CHARLES STREET VIDEO** (Toronto) who just toured through Vancouver as part of pop rockers **MARTHA & THE MUFFINS** and previously in the U.S., JAPAN and ITALY with **JON HASSELL**. Back from Japan and the world was **TIM GUEST**, going to Japan is **SALLY DUNDAS** and still in Japan is **MICHAEL GOLDBERG** whose wife **MIHATO** is pregnant . . . coming from Japan (one more time) is **KOU NAKAJIMA** to attend **DIGICON 83** here in Vancouver and in November **VIDEO CULTURE CANADA** in Toronto . . . **VIDEO CULTURE** (Canada) is a non-profit organization working in direct conjunction and under the auspices of **SONY** (Canada). After a controversial and somewhat shabby and perhaps arrogant start, Video Culture is shaping into a 'first class' international audio-video festival that will showcase 'the art and technology of video' that will include panels on **VIDEO TECHNOLOGY, NEW MUSIC VIDEO, TELEVISION ART, VIDEO CULTURE EXCHANGE, VIDEO ENTERTAINMENT, EVENING PRO-**

EDIT

Independently produced video is rapidly becoming a most valuable tool in promoting the international exchange of ideas. This low cost technology enables us to experience the highly personalized sociology, politics, traditions and **MUSIC** indigenous to the numerous foreign cultures in existence today. This issue of **VIDEO GUIDE** focuses on the relationship between video and the most universal of communications catalysts: **MUSIC**. Widening the audience of alternatively produced music/video must be a contributing factor towards greater understanding of our global neighbours. Let's keep it up!

Look forward to the next issue of **VIDEO GUIDE** where we will be taking a look at the fascinating new area of video/computers.

Stokely Seip
for Satellite Video Exchange Society

GRAMS of Performance, Exhibitions, Hi-Tech Cabaret, Video Library, Gala Awards Ceremony and more . . . this multi-category festival includes participants from all sectors of the industry: artists, curators, critics, executive directors, producers, musicians, writers, etc . . . talent is still being lined up for this first canadian merge of private sector (**SONY**) and public funding agencies. . . . **VIDEO CULTURE** has already created enough non-dialogue to prompt response from the 'Canadian independent video community' who drafted a series of '**RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES FOR VIDEO EVENTS, FESTIVALS, EXHIBITIONS, AND BROADCAST**' as well as responses from dissenting member **PETER WRONSKI** (refer to the article in the next issue) . . . This issue's **MUSIC EDITOR, STOKELY SEIP** has taken a leave of absence from **VIDEO INN** to continue production of his new videotape and to assist with the latest after-hours video/disco **RAZ DRAZ** at **CITYSPACE** which is also his studio . . . Never to be outspoken or to be unorganized **SARA DIAMOND**, action feminist artist/writer has now joined the new board of directors at **VIDEO INN**, meanwhile the barely surfacing **METRO-MEDIA** has bitten the dust possibly for the last time, maybe to re-emerge as yet another try? Who knows only rumor has it . . . Media Artist **BARBARA STEINMAN** will be co-directing Montreal's **POWERHOUSE GALLERY** starting in the fall, **LIZ VANDERZAGG** is completing her videotape **BABY EYES** in time

for presentation at **DIGICON 83**, Liz's tape **THROUGH THE HOLES** will be showcased as part of the **VIDEO VACATION** at **THE ARTS, SCIENCES & TECHNOLOGY CENTRE** along with **EXERPTS & EUPHORIA** by **ED MOWBRAY**, **VORTEX** by **AL RAZUTIS**, and **C'EST LA VIDEO** by **HANK BULL** with workshops by **PAUL WONG** and **JOE AVERAGE** . . . the all new **VANCOUVER ART GALLERY** is opening October 15, the audio/video storeroom and privvy **PATRICK READY** studio is an enormous white cement bunker (to rival **B.C. PLACE**) the bewildered staff is frantically re-adjusting (in shock therapy) from moving out of broom closets into courtly chambers. Meanwhile director **LUKE ROMBOUT**'s 'new (rude) boys in uniform' are keeping all curious artists, public and architectural snoops at bay while he continues to mull over the menu for the 'art eatery', Weather, culture and old marble obviously don't mix, as no works of art can adorn the walls of the offices due to the humidity and fruitflays . . . Speaking of galleries, **THE BURNABY ART GALLERY** has surfaced with contemporary art with **PALINDROMES: ON WOMEN AGING**, works by seven Canadian women artists. . . video support for **Palindromes** co-ordinated by **VIDEO INN** and curated by **KAREN HENRY** includes works by **DORIS CHASE, ELAINE VALEQUEZ, JULIE GUSTAFSON, JOAN WOODWARD, SHEREEN MALONEY, MARIE HART** and **GAYLE WULK** . . .



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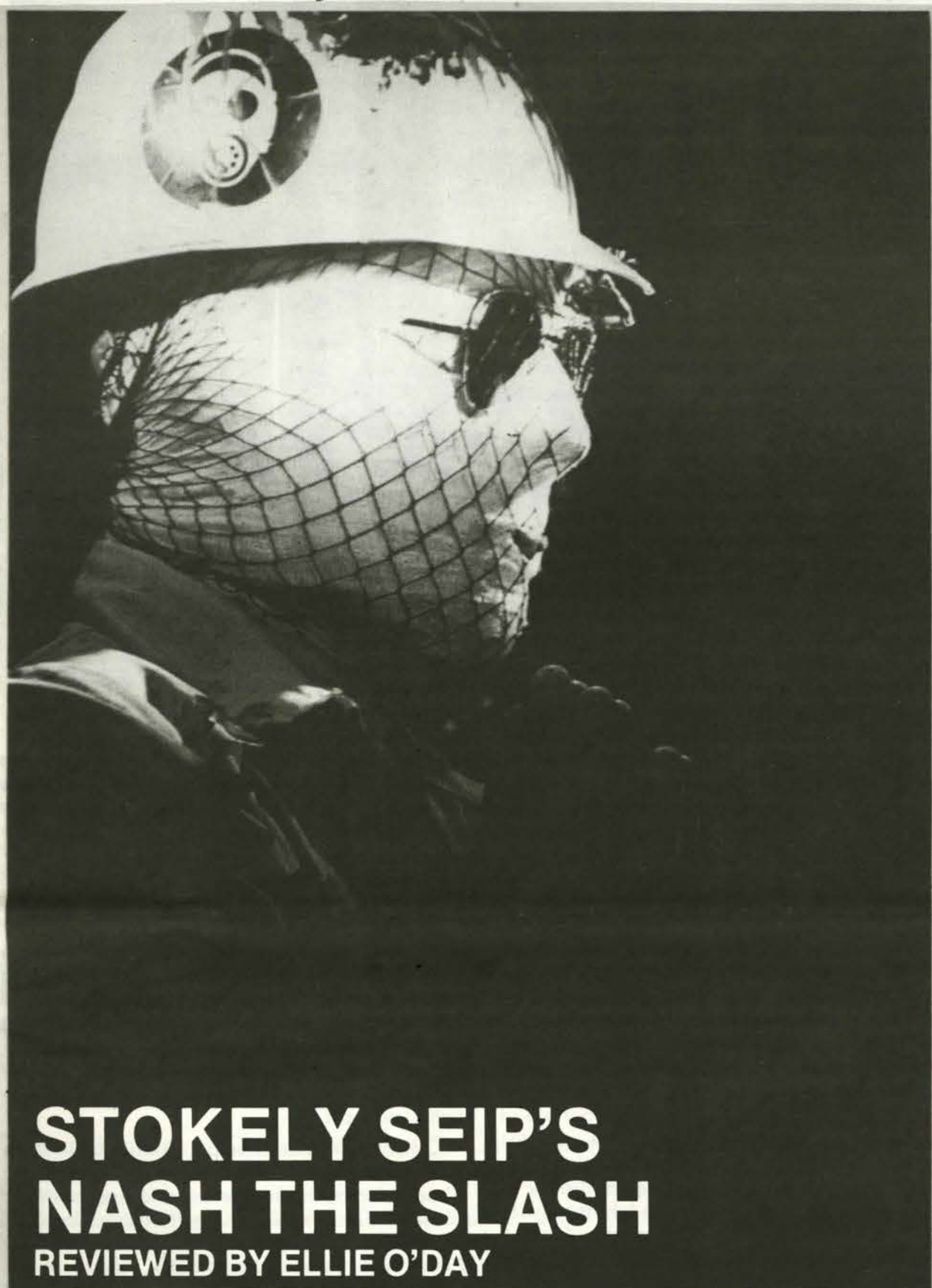
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STOKELY SEIP'S NASH THE SLASH

REVIEWED BY ELLIE O'DAY

Nash The Slash — photo: Barbara Pratt

Popular music and video are already inextricably entangled as commercial mediums today, but like so many commercial ventures, the technology has sprinted ahead of the concept. Quantity before quality. MTV has a lot of hours to fill, and for years before that Britain and Europe counted down the week's hits on TV. That still leaves us with lots of room for improvement.

So I was pleased to see Stokely Seip and Paul Wong peering through their video cameras at Nash the Slash on The Commodore stage in March of '82. For the uninitiated, Nash plays a progressive electronic rock music, appearing incognito in gauze bandages like a mummy, over which he wears a variety of uniforms/costumes. This was my first introduction to Nash's stage show, quickly converting my curiosity to fascination and fan-dom. Nash not only manages to entertain through his one-man-show, he establishes more rapport with his audience than the typical sweating five piece band, by creating the illusion of a shared, foreign environment. As part of the audience, one's imagination comes into active play. Inevitably, perceptions are bound to vary from person to person.

Almost a year to the day, I've just viewed Stokely Seip's video of four different songs by Nash. Should I expect to see on the video screen

what I saw at The Commodore? Could I expect to see something more? If I hadn't seen Nash perform, would these videos give me a good taste of Nash's unique performance and whet my appetite for more?

The four songs are distinctly edited, so I think it's fair to treat them as separate, though related, entities. "Swing Shift" and "Stalker" work best of the four, for different reasons. "Swing Shift" is the only one that incorporates a "conceptual" segment, a scene recorded apart from the live show that subsequently has been cut in with (and lip-synched to) the audio. "Swing Shift" has always reminded me of the dream sequence in JULIET OF THE SPIRITS, delivering the admonishments of religious dogma in a taunting playground rhyme. This is the stuff childhood nightmares are made of. Seip has taped a visual segment of Nash pushing a dangling lantern as if pushing a swing, which cuts to a shot of Nash singing to the camera through angular bars that remind me of playground monkey bars, as well as a sense of entrapment. Point taken.

The other three songs are live shoots. First comes "In a Glass Eye", an intoxicating melody riding on a rhythm machine, slashed by Nash's unique electric mandolin playing. Seip shows us medium shots of Nash and his costume and some of his surrounding equipment, cutting to some

close-ups of Nash playing his mandolin. Somehow the video gives us too matter-of-fact a depiction of the performance. One thing that makes Nash's show so unique is his ability to operate a stage full of equipment on his own while giving the sense that he almost telepathically commands their operation. We do get a few shots of Nash touching foot pedals, but what we miss is the total scene the audience sees from the floor and Nash's relationship to it. That's significant, because Nash's set was created to contain his sinister nightmare world. His equipment was encircled by a three-walled set with a skyline silhouette, flanked by angular lighting pods that jutted at angles from the silhouette — sort of Nash's idiosyncratic treehouse. The close-ups in "In a Glass Eye" don't give us Nash's relationship to this set. We see a musician playing and that's only part of the story. Still, "In a Glass Eye" portrays Nash at his most human.

"Dopes On the Water" does give us a long-shot from the audience's perspective, but it's too short to digest. We also get a shot of some of the tape recorders running in an on-stage medium shot. The song is a parody, turned back on itself, of "Smoke On the Water", and we need that audience-stage-performer relationship to get the joke. There are moments here when it works, especially on the chorus, but it needs more irony.

I'm being harsh here in my criticism because I think Nash the Slash is doing something that is not only unique, but is entertaining and engaging on several levels, and I want to see that depth extended to the video medium. Seip comes very close on "Stalker", the final segment. This is the one three-camera shoot, done by Seip, Paul Wong and Andy Harvey. This is Nash's encore, and he whips up the energy again, whirling the (costume # 3) long tassel on his fez hat in dervish circles. This time the cameras capture this focus, the motion matching the swelling electronics. Via the three cameras we finally get a sense of Nash's relationship to his equipment, as if he's conducting members of his nether-world band. Nash uses strobe-lights in this number, and the cameras capture the pulsing lights and music, the climaxes and plunges.

Had I never seen Nash the Slash on stage I'd probably be intrigued by his music and his persona as portrayed in this video. Yet I don't think the tapes of "In a Glass Eye" or "Dopes On the Water" really enhance the music. "Swing Shift" adds an additional hook to the number with the image of the lantern. And "Stalker" goes far to portray what Nash accomplishes on stage. What Nash is doing is a subtle form of performance art. He embellishes his sinister nightmare music — almost always laced with black humour — with design, not with props. Alice Cooper and Ozzy Osborne use props. Nash the Slash's nightmares spring from imagined evil, in the tension of the lines in his stage set and lighting structures, certainly in his costumes worn over his white-gauze everyman un-persona, and in the cool ease through which he harnesses technology to deliver a very vivid, melodramatic music. In the live show, sometimes the stage seemed frozen; sometimes it got very frantic up there. From the Commodore dance floor my attention shifted like a busy zoom lens, exploring the dark corners of Nash's house of horrors while the drum machine marched on, or squinting to see if I could make out real lips moving beneath the gauze when he spat out "DOPES" on the wa-ter", or watching his very human fingers move on wild mandolin solos.

I think at one time, magicians used to put on a show like this — frighteningly fascinating. They didn't just pull cute rabbits out of hats. Nash the Slash has created quite an elaborate sleight of hand. The next challenge is to create more magic with the video. Surprise me!

MUSIC/ROCK/VIDEO/TELEVISION

A NICE NEAT PACKAGE?

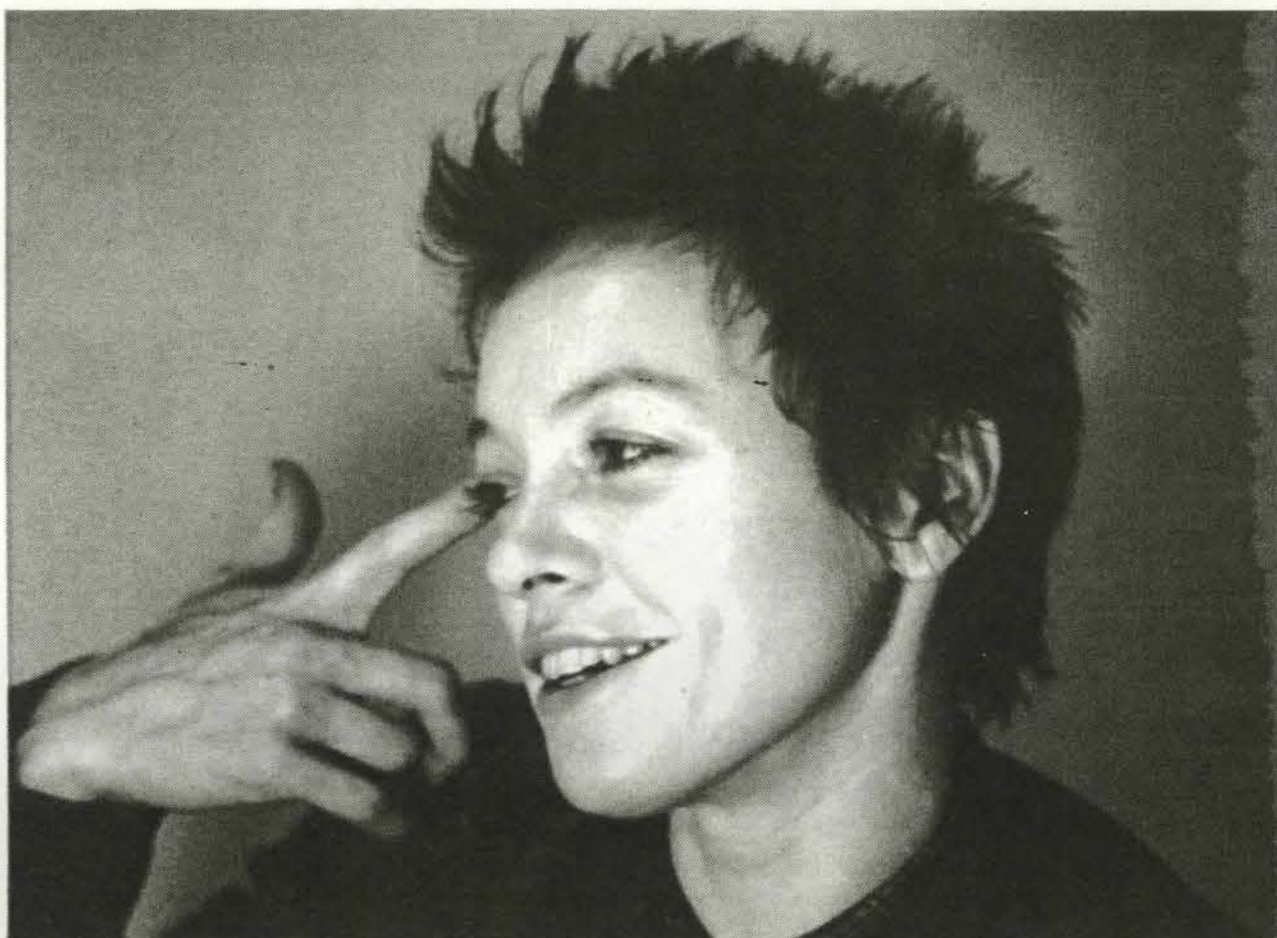
BY EDWARD MOWBRAY & NANCY PATERSON

The early sixties produced a handful of television programs showcasing rock n' roll and the success of these shows was dictated by playing the music at the top of the AM radio charts. Compared to the relationship image-making artists have had with sound and music over the past hundred years in mediums such as theatre, opera, dance and film as well as imagery inspired by music in painting, the evolution of music and video on television has a relatively short history. When television found its way into the hearts and livingrooms of the North American household, little was understood about this new-found status symbol's ability to communicate and influence. At the same time when North Americans began to embrace this new and engaging pastime, such unlikelys as Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry and Jerry Lee Lewis were about to subvert the hearts and minds of the American youth as potent symbols of teenage rebellion.

Rock n' Roll music was to become an industry that would encompass all communicative media, especially television. The "risk" of showcasing rock n' roll music on network television began with such programs as Dick Clark's "American Bandstand"; and it was Ed Sullivan's entrepreneurial spirit in 1964 that brought rock n' roll live to a family audience on Sunday nights with the now legendary appearances of Elvis Presley, The Beatles, The Rolling Stones and other contemporaries. Programs such as Hullabaloo and Shindig followed in the mid-sixties. They offered the 'top of the pops' and in hindsight may have been the predecessors of today's rock video promos.

The first hint of genius came with "The Monkees" television show in the late sixties. This was a new idea in serializing a rock band and its music in a television program by offering a camp, off the wall alternative to the tired live music format. Although intended for a younger audience, its 'bubblegum' format indicated and inspired the future directions of the rock video promo. The early seventies brought pathetically safe and over-produced big name rock talent to television with such shows as Midnight Special and Don Kirshner's Rock Concert. These shows attempted to push rock into mainstream credibility, only to defeat its intention with the late night programming slots. Another shortcoming of this type of rock program was their inability to present anything but the now overworked live concert approach and their lack of foresight in developing a new aesthetic for television rock n' roll. Meanwhile Britain's pop culture, being part of the mainstream life, saw the acceptance of a revolutionary application of rock/television/video and developed far more quickly than in North America.

The accessibility of the video rock promo has opened up new avenues for promotion in record stores, on cable TV and at rock clubs. It has also allowed broadcast television a chance to initiate new directions in rock programming. With the epidemic of new rock videos being produced, major marketing strategies have developed. New York's 24 hour MTV music network went cable in the U.S. to accommodate the number of new tapes being produced and adopted a programming philosophy too close to that of top 40 AM radio. Although record companies were skeptical of 24 hour music programming, it appears to have succeeded, only with some of the inherent drawbacks of the AM radio format. For example, MTV's policy of selective black music programming strangles a potential audience for black music with its pejorative token attitude. New York based "RockAmerica" began packaging rock videotapes (on beta, VHS and 3/4") for distribution to rock clubs, college pubs and record stores, taking full advantage of independently produced rock tapes and company promos to give the people what they want and make a buck.



Laurie Anderson — photo: Chick Rice

The aesthetic of rock videos began to challenge the language which commercial television has so redundantly stuck itself with. Because of the 'limited' artistic scope of broadcast television, media artists were soon employed to initiate creative conceptual ideas for the rock promo. Artists with a background in experimental film or video are now responsible for some of the best rock promo tapes by using their vocabulary of imagery combined with music. In 1977 experimental film artist Chuck Statler and a no-name band from Akron, Ohio called 'Devo' caught everyone's eye and imagination with their version of the rock promo *I Can't Get No Satisfaction*. Even though Statler and the band were working in film at the time, the potential and power of the conceptual promo to interpret the music and lyrics of the band was evident. The marriage of progressive production ideas combined with the advances in state-of-the-art post-production technology has given some artists the opportunity to challenge the rules of commercial television with some fresh ideas on the aesthetics of video in a commercial context via the rock promo.

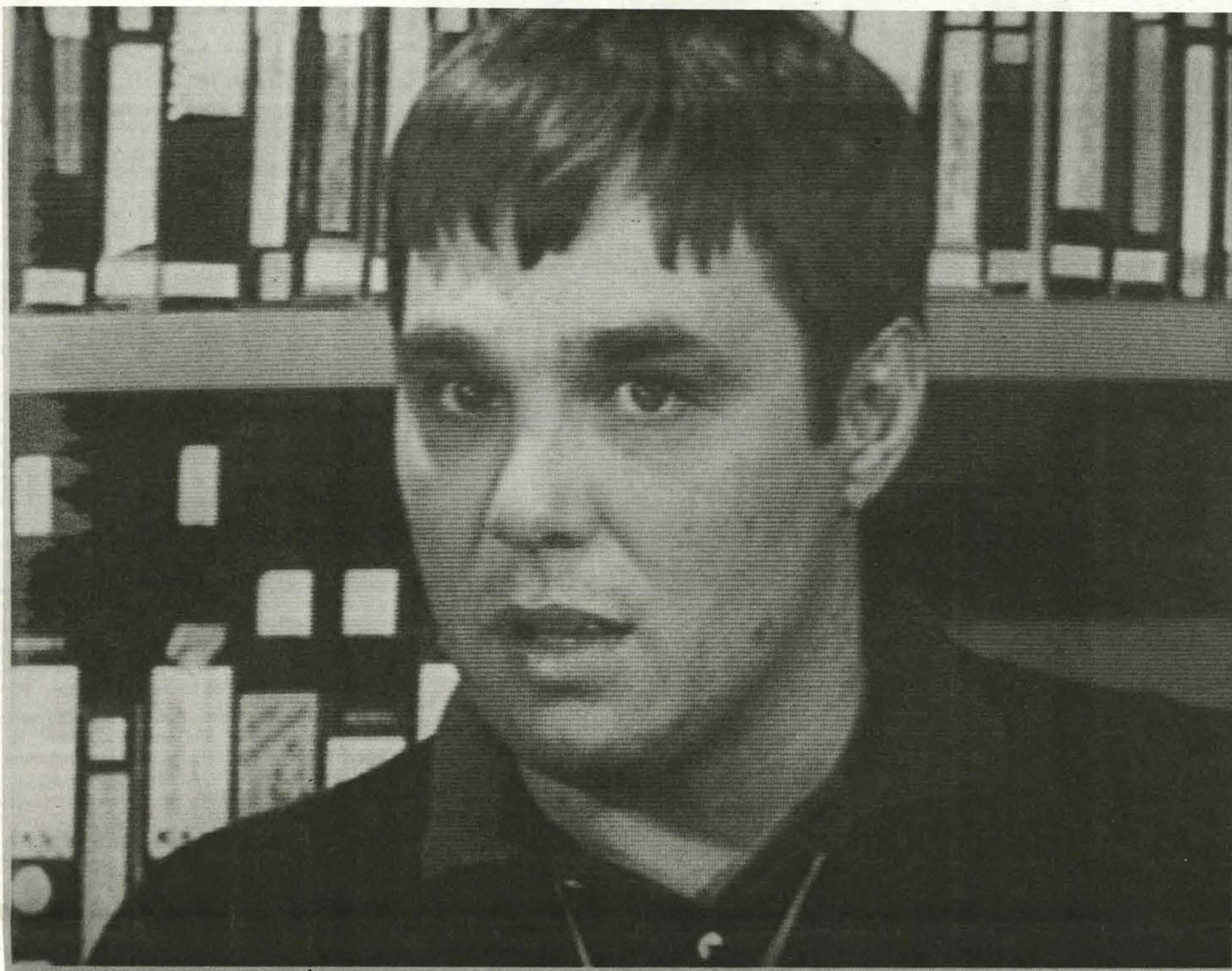
Record companies, although conservative, began to develop new marketing strategies using video for promotion, distribution and programming. The promotional rock video was to become the most popular marketing method in clips, TV guest shots or video features of rock music that could be viewed by a potential audience of millions through broadcast and cable television and in the movie theatres. With that, the video rock promo has given birth to a number of thriving commercial enterprises dealing strictly in the promotion and distribution of rock videos.

Music and video developing within the framework of a commercial milieu has resulted in hybrid mixtures of the two art forms. Elaborate sets, storyboard and the technical sophistication of David Bowie's video rock promo *Ashes to Ashes* (directed by David Mallet) presents some stunning allegorical images that in themselves redefined the approach given to the synthesis of image and music. This was one videotape that everyone was talking about and it has undoubtedly influenced others working in this medium. The advances in post-production technology alone have played a major role in the final look of the rock videos. Kit Fitzgerald and John Sanborn are two artists who have literally created new tech-

niques in post-production. Their use of digital technology combined with taboo editing techniques such as flash frames, repeat edits and jump cuts has produced work of incredible complexity, pushing the hardware to extreme applications. Fitzgerald and Sanborn's previous videotapes were anything but commercial, however their style and flair for image processing and manipulation has resulted in work with a commercial application without compromising their particular aesthetic. Recently they completed a video promo for the progressive rock band King Crimson and that has resulted in a rumoured collaboration with David Bowie and producing promos for his latest album. It has been their access to sophisticated machinery that has enabled them to enhance the language of the video vanguard.

Other work that attempts to find its place on the commercial dial is avant-garde composer Robert Ashley's made-for-television opera *Music Word Fire and I Would Do It Again, Coo-Coo, The Lessons* (1981) from *Perfect Lives (Private Parts)*. Ashley's opera is a complex, visual narrative developed as a performance for musicians and media artists in which the principles of music improvisation are applied and intended as a new form of television/musical theatre. Again, through sophisticated post-production editing Ashley has assembled a monumental video/music work. The technology however, imperils the content of Ashley's work. Ashley appears to be caught up in the visual myriad of technology to the point that the images convolute his overall intentions and the work never fulfills its true potential. Unfortunately, this type of overindulgence in the technology has allowed a number of videotapes to fail. By contrast, Laurie Anderson's video promo *O Superman* is a literally restrained sequence of simple images using self, light, colour and shadows as visual metaphors for its hypnotic winsome soundtrack. One of the few video promos and perhaps the only one for a time, that attempts to close the gap between video promo and video art.

The influence of the artist on the self-aggrandizing medium of broadcast television will hopefully become far more significant in the future. Although commercial television has never fully enveloped the creative vision of the media artist, video/music has been largely responsible for exposing the talent of a number of video artists and has created a long overdue dialogue between broadcast television and the artist.



Still from "The Chris Burden Interview" — snapshot: Stokely Seip

CHRIS BURDEN IN CONVERSATION WITH PAUL WONG

TRANSCRIBED BY STOKELY SEIP

CHRIS BURDEN is an artist who lives in Los Angeles. He was in Vancouver as part of the travelling **International Festival of Video Art** organized by The Saw Gallery in Ottawa. This is an edited transcript of a video-interview conducted by Paul Wong on May 12, 1983. The videotape is available from the Video Inn. Chris Burden videotapes and works are available through Ronald Feldman, N.Y.C.

PW: *I've been aware and to some degree fascinated and influenced by your performance works that you were doing in the early 70's, mostly through publications such as *Avalanche* and other forms of documentation. As far as I know, your work has little to do with video, in fact I was surprised at your inclusion in this festival. Do you consider yourself a video artist?*

CB: Not really, I mean when I need to make a tape I just make it or have it made, I don't really see myself as a video artist. I've made a few tapes but that doesn't make me a video artist.

PW: *Why not?*

CB: Why not? Because I don't think it's my main concern, I'm not very especially interested in the technical aspects of it. Some people, like film people, are really into film as a medium — it's just another tool that I can use when I need to.

PW: *How do you and how have you used it?*

CB: Well, I can talk about a recent one. It's called *Firebird Friction*. It's not a videotape although I did make it into a videotape. This is an act where you try to start a fire by rubbing two sticks together kind of ala *Quest For Fire*. That's a film where obviously it can be faked. I was

invited to do a live piece on a satellite broadcast conference last fall. I practised for literally two or three weeks til my wrist couldn't move. I got pretty good at it — I could do it in about a minute so I figured in three minutes of broadcast time I'll have no problem. Everything went wrong though — the little string broke, you know I couldn't do it live when it came right down to it. Immediately when I was off camera I could do it so I decided I'd just make a tape because I wanted to have it somewhere that I could do this thing. That's an example.

PW: *You've also done pieces in the past specifically for television broadcast.*

CB: I try to explain to people it was a little different then in the sense that there weren't really any cable stations. I wanted to be on TV and being on TV meant being on one of those things you can just flip to on the dial, so I bought advertising time and I put my own stuff on those slots.

PW: *Did you achieve what you were after?*

CB: Oh yea, there was a lot of complaining then about how TV was this monolithic structure, it came at you — it was a one way street, you didn't have any choice about the stuff that was fed out of the tube. You could turn it off and not watch it but you had no input in the programming whatsoever, no hope of even influencing it. It was either this pabulum that came out or reruns of movies or ads. I thought by doing this, although it was very minimal, it was a symbolic gesture instead of being on somebody's talk show and being a part of the format. If you pay for your time then you own it and in a sense it was a way

of fighting back. It was like *my* own time, my TV time and I forced hundreds of people to view it too. It was a tremendous sense of power when you're watching network television and you see your ad come on. You realize you're cramming it down the throats of . . .

PW: *Was that the *Glass Road* piece?*

CB: That was the first one I did. That was kind of crude. I just wanted to be on TV so I used a film from the last performance I had done. It was a piece where I crawled through glass — broken up glass on my stomach — a lot of wiggling. You couldn't tell really. It was done in black and white and it was real short only ten seconds long. I played it every night for a month after the eleven o'clock news on an ABC affiliate in Los Angeles. I've done a bunch of them since then.

PW: *What is the role of the audience in perceiving those pieces, in that those actions are real actions on your part, they're not fictionalized actions?*

CB: I wasn't trying to show that to the TV people, really. It wasn't clear that it was glass. It could have been mini-marshmallows or something. It wasn't obvious what I was doing. It was real bizarre. You couldn't really tell what was going on. I was kind of moaning and groaning and there was this weird breathing sound and you could see my body wiggling. I don't think people saw the ad and said, "Hey, gee, great art piece, Chris." Viewers who saw it just knew that some-

continued on page 14



From Max Almy's "Leaving the 20th Century":
High Hopes photo

VIDEO SHORTS III

BY KAREN HENRY

Video Shorts III is a collection of 10 short tapes which were chosen to represent the best of 122 tapes submitted to the 3rd National Video Shorts Festival in Seattle. The stated purpose of the festival is to "encourage the development of video artistry, communication and technique." This is a broad commitment which does nothing to define the realm of independently produced video or its value as a powerful forum of ideas and change, informing the established media with new potential and more diverse cultural input. The nature of the medium is communication, and aesthetic values require that it be effected with artistry and technical skill. Renee Baert offers a definition of video art:

'Video art' is a term used to describe an eclectic range of independent production activity originating in individual pre-occupations with both specific and broad aspects of the medium's formal, technological and cultural properties. The use of a common technology, however, does not act to unite the divergent applications of that technology: 'video art' as a term is more successful in denoting a body of work which, as in other art forms, is generated from an internal and autonomous sense of perception, reality and value.

—Renee Baert, Video/
Video Catalogue 1982

The basis of artistry then is a quality of personal involvement, of emotional commitment to the process. Independently produced tapes are not under the restrictions of the commercial business of mass appeal nor do they generally have the advantage of large budgets. They arise from the inspiration and experience of individuals and specific groups and appear in a wide range of styles which often defy strict categorization as documentary, visual poetry, political or conceptual art, computer effects or any other of the many possible labels. Personal artistry and discrimination enhances each of these possible distinctions. How do we define this illusive difference? Again from Renee Baert:

Television is a mass medium: Impersonal, distanced, objective, predictable, commercial. Artists have appropriated for video of the personal: intuitive, communicative, perceptual, subjective, participational, political, psychological, engaged. This has led to a new understanding as a direct receiver/participant . . . in a direct communication . . . Artists reveal themselves to their viewer, their attitude toward their content displayed either directly (didactically, or by guiding the viewer to a specific understanding or conclusion) or indirectly (through choice and/or

treatment of subject matter, withholding comment, etc.).

—Renee Baert, Video/
Video Catalogue 1982

Viva la difference!

Video festivals have some responsibility to encourage this distinction between artistry and the standard commercial product. With the growth of pay subscription channels video shorts are in a prime position to be picked up on the market as continuous fillers in the style of European noncommercial channels. This is an opportunity for video artists to present their work to an extended audience. All the more reason why those in the field should begin to establish an aesthetic which stands as an identifiable alternative to standard commercial programming, to change the format of North American TV from one of mindless entertainment to a more broad representation of ideas and forms of expression, consciously using the medium fully to explore the technological, political, cultural and artistic diversity of images.

Taken as a group, this difference is not clear in the tapes chosen for Video Shorts III. Though some of the tapes have this kind of interest and commitment, others, particularly the dance tapes, have the edge of slick entertainment and objective presentation which demeans the festival as an alternative source by reflecting the prevailing commercial mode. These do little to explore the medium or the standard assumptions of TV mass culture.

Leaving the 20th Century (Max Almy, San Francisco) presents video as "the ultimate escape vehicle." The main image is of a woman's face boxed closely as on a screen as she repeats a sequence of "be calm, release, depart". Both the face and the voice have the sensual, seductive edge that sells products and soothes jittery airline passengers, reflecting the social emphasis on sexuality as part of the ultimate "escape." The piece emphasizes language in contrast with the visual metaphor as in "he leaves" and "she leaves" leaving behind a hollow silhouette. It has the feeling of a seductive transfer — though from what to what is not an issue.

Cape May: End of Season (Maxi Cohen, NY) is a study in complacent inanity, middle aged vacationers whose only immediate concern is the luncheon menu. Out of any meaningful context they look foolish, pathetically isolated by sand and sun from any real concerns, flattered to be on TV. The judgement is unstated but chopply edited to the point.

There are 3 basically documentary tapes. The study of woman body builder Lisa Lyon (John Hunt, LA) is an entrancing show piece, her oiled and muscled body moves gracefully through dance poses, the sculptural aspect accented by a totally black background. The serious body

artist and her philosophy are contrasted in the end by her image as a feminine woman.

Phenomenon (Alec Friedman, Ann Arbor) is straight camera documentation. It is a clear, objective recording of student projects in an industrial design class. If as the PR says, it "touches on many important issues in art and design", it does so only incidentally and not through any challenging use of the video medium or conscious questioning of the material.

Father Groppi (Jon Aleckson, Madison, Wis.) documents the history of a race activist in the 60's from his current perspective as a city bus driver using media clips to reconstruct his political past. The sensitive dialectic between youthful idealism and mature humility distinguished the work from straight newscasting.

As I mentioned earlier, there were 2 dance tapes: *Future Primitive* (Norman Levy, San Francisco), a Martin Denny-style exotic pseudo-primitive percussion with some computer changes (I could swear I saw it on TV in the early 60's) that had the same vacuous effect as that of a plastic flower; and *Me General* (Ric Sternberg, Austin, Tx), basically a hollywood-style production number using juvenile consciousness as an excuse to glorify tits and ass and S and M. I might expect this lack of consciousness from prime time mass-mentality commercial TV, but where is the new hope and encouraging communication potential of independent video? We need something more than this kind of flashy seduction.

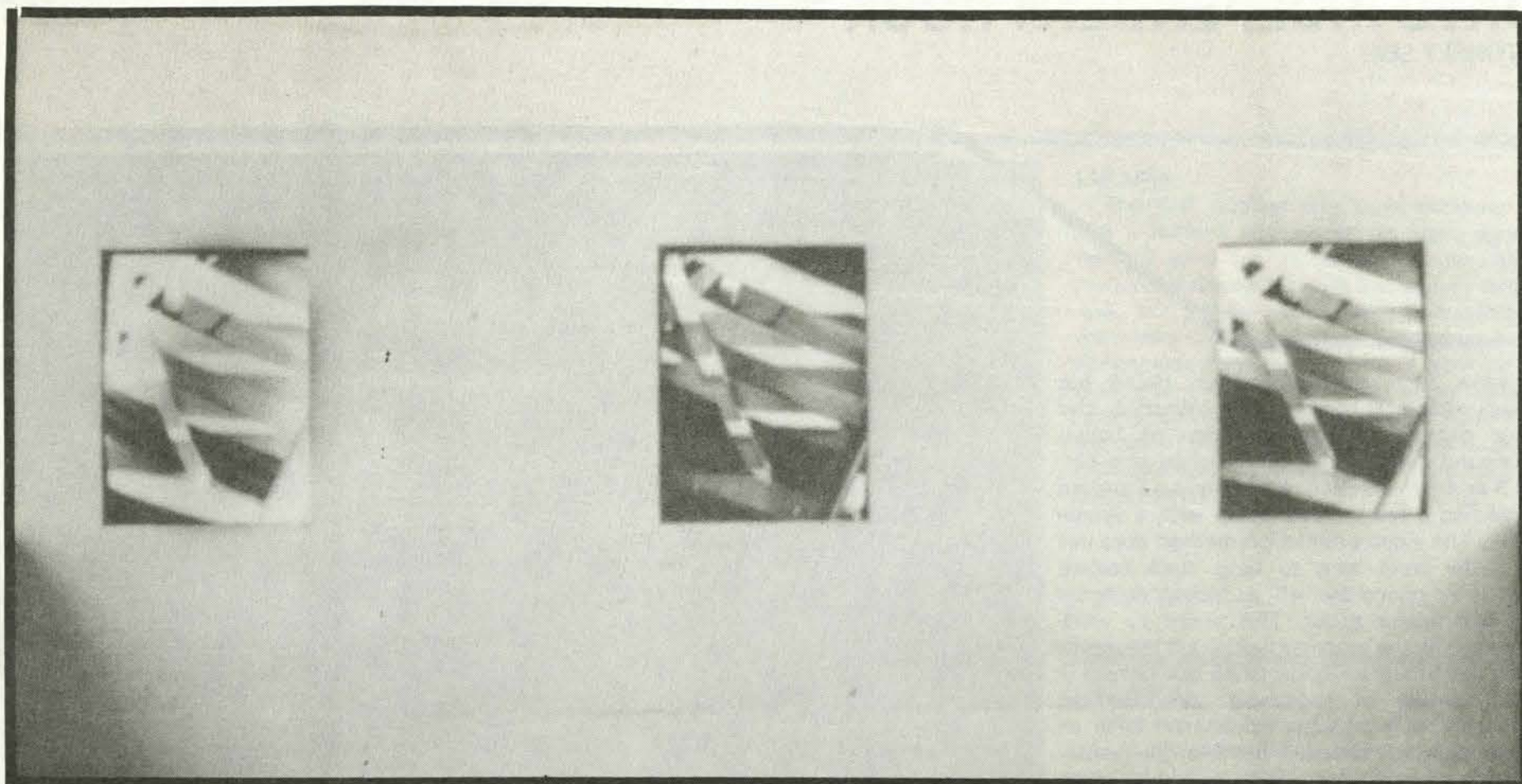
On the other hand, *This is dedicated to Lee Choon-Sop* (Laurie McDonald, Houston) is an example of the medium used to empower a particular political perspective, thus becoming part of the democratic discussion and utilizing the powerful communication potential of the medium. The tape enacts a specific actual incident of government brutality in Korea. The torture methods are safely abstracted from reality by the obvious use of video overlays. The soundtrack is the voice of a woman commentator exalting the virtues of the Korean Government's progressive programs and its debt to American generosity and inspiration. It's a strong contrast and suitable to challenge the most tasteful intellectual drawing rooms.

Duality/Duplicity (Janice Tanaka, Chicago) is a vague poetic piece which has some good artistic moments but falls into cliché occasionally and is visually marred by a muddy use of colorizing.

Somersault (Steina Vasulka, Santa Fe) is a clever optical illusion using a spherical lens which leaves the viewer in the position of a gymnast's bar. It's a limited technique but a fun piece.

It is surprising that out of 122 tapes submitted there would not be one which adequately explores computer visual imagery for its own sake. It was missed as part of a well-rounded selection of video potential.

As a group, the tapes have a range of values from established entertainment and linear documentation to the political left and personal poetic expression. It is a hodge-podge uninformed by any discriminating distinctions or philosophical context. By what criteria is the sample chosen? While each tape can be critiqued separately, the festival as a whole lacks strength as an ethical entity in the diverse realm of video communication. "Shorts" is not enough. You cannot compare a tape which has a personal artistic commitment with one which is aimed at that broad belt of indiscriminate mass entertainment with which the airwaves are so heavily loaded and they should not be lumped together in the same grouping. In order for the new found access to broadcast to truly change the face of North American TV it must separate itself from the insidious commercial standards of entertainment broadcast and define a new aesthetic with standards of quality and sincerity which take into account the lower budgets and simpler equipment and the integrity and value of an independent production as a segment of the artists' reality.



Brian Eno's "Mistaken Memories of Medieval Manhattan" —
photo: Jim Gorman

BRIAN ENO: MISTAKEN MEMORIES OF MEDIEVAL MANHATTAN

BY DAVID A. ROSS

"Although it has been fashionable among video artists to resist the seductive properties of the medium for fear of being dominated by them, or to shun that which is beautiful for fear of being entertaining, these are not my inclinations. Of course there are 'harsh realities' of life, and of course it is appropriate that they be dealt with in this medium, but there are other, perhaps more hopeful realities. I would like to be dealing with these."

—Brian Eno

During the 1970s, Brian Eno emerged as a seminal force in the direction of avant-garde music. Though schooled in the fine arts in England, Eno achieved international acclaim as a musician when, with Brian Ferry, he co-founded the British rock group Roxy Music. Roxy Music's complex studio production techniques were pioneered by Eno, who claims the recording studio itself as his primary instrument.

But it has been his own solo work that has established Eno's position in the tradition of electronic experimental music that runs from Varese through Boulez, Stockhausen and Cage and more recently manifested in the minimal compositions of Steve Reich and Phillip Glass. As a result of his rock n' roll preeminence, however, Eno has been able to inform his own non-rock work an unparalleled understanding of the recording processes, while at the same time carrying the rigorous and intellectual elements of his solo work back to his popular production work. Eno's solo music shows a full grasp of behavior modification to the construction of aural environments. More recently (like the video pioneer Nam June Paik, whose debt to Stockhausen *et al* is well acknowledged), Eno has expanded the breadth of his recording work from purely sonic art to an audio-visual form by composing for recorded video imagery coupled with original music.

In a series of painterly video installations first shown in 1979 at The Kitchen Centre for Video in New York, Eno explored the notion of environmental ambience. Eno proposes a use for music and video that is antithetical to behavior control-oriented "Muzak" in that it induces and invites the viewer to enter a meditative, detached state, rather than serve as an operant conditioner for work-force efficiency. His underlying strategy is to create works which provide natural levels of variety and redundancy which brings attention to,

rather than mimic, essential characteristics of the natural environment. Eno echoes Matisse's stated desire that his art serve as an armchair for the weary businessman.

Eno's earliest video works were synchronized, single channel installations presented on three or four adjacent screens. In a move calculated to recontextualize the television set, and to subliminally shift the way the video image represents recognizable realities (like cityscapes), Eno has placed the screen (and camera) in a vertical orientation (as opposed to television's standard horizontal positioning). Natural phenomena like rain look quite different in this orientation; less familiar but curiously more real. His music/video works are designed to "tint" the environment rather than dominate it — a direct relation to his musical strategies evident in purely audio works like *Discreet Music* (1975). Eno notes that (early) videos *2 Fifth Avenue* and *White Fences* were designed for transit spaces (such as airports and train stations) and arose from the question, "What type of image would not presuppose the time and attention characteristically accorded a narrative structure?" This experimentation led him to the understanding that his preference for static images (changing colour in relation to the natural changes in the environment such as passing clouds) produced television that had the pictorial character of landscape painting, rather than a narrative thrust.

Eno's attitude toward video and observation seems related to that of Frank Gillette, a video artist well known for his multiple-monitor landscape studies. Both their works are grounded in the basic world view and vocabulary of cybernetic theory (Eno for example, refers to his music as a "self-regulating system"), and both work from a decidedly minimalist perspective. Further, Eno's

work is built on Morse Peckham's notion that art is a construction and not a direct reality allowing the artist to take liberties in the organization of the representation (such as pink clouds or a purple sky). This is where the two artists part company, as Gillette takes a more "objective" approach to video colour and relies upon complex editing structures to convey and create sensibilities for the viewer. Eno's work is selected and altered but not edited internally, giving it a thoroughly different feeling.

In the new work, *Mistaken Memories of Medieval Manhattan/White Fences/Motion Study*, Eno combines three-screen, synchronized imagery (Memories) with compositions that slowly evolve into three separate video tracks (*White Fences* and *Motion Study*). Though the artist doesn't expect the work to be viewed straight through and says he hopes people don't feel badly if they doze off during the piece, he does acknowledge that the museum/gallery site provides a different kind of ambience — one more conducive to contemplation — than the previous installations at La Guardia Airport or Grand Central Station. The artist does not offer a Pop Art challenge to boredom; he just wants the viewer to relax.

Eno admits that the effect he is after is a meditative experience emerging from the combined music and image. He states that he has previously "... been interested in placing works in unorthodox locations on the assumption that a piece removed from the expectations aroused by conventional locations might evoke unexpected feelings in whoever discovered it." But the new work reflects the use of a conventional site for the contemplation of pictorial video imagery, and focuses our attention on Eno's remaining unresolved problem, "How can one deal with the limitation of the TV screen which focuses a point of view and a level of sensory attention in a way which music doesn't?"

TOKYO INDEPENDENT ROCK

BY STOKELY SEIP

Japanese independent producer Reiko has come up with a 90 minute video collection. Her package consists of a cross-section of Tokyo underground bands. Each of the eight acts performs 3 or 4 numbers and all of these are captured live utilizing a four camera setup with a simple switcher. The video production method does not really differ from song to song. Each camera seemed to be roving the hall, as though doing its own single-camera shoot. This seems to work very nicely for the most part although the inevitable awkward cuts do occur when one camera is caught focusing or re-framing. An intercom system for the video crew would have been an immense help but those familiar with the restrictions of low budget production should be quick to overlook this minor problem. The audio was recorded from a line out of the PA system and here we run into the same problem we encounter worldwide . . . OK, hands up, how many video producers understand the concept of unity gain? I didn't think so. All in all this is a fascinating package which should not be missed by anyone interested in the current music scene.

THE BANDS

EQUAL

Equal is a five piece unit fronted by a young woman with dyed-blond hair dressed in an unusual combination of lab jacket and mini-skirt. Her Nicoesque vocals are backed up by a very hypnotic, textured synthesizer sound. Even though there are two percussionists, the band relies heavily on its pre-programmed drum machine for rhythm. Many of the effects devices used are revealed by close-up shots to be home made. This would explain the uniqueness of the guitar sound as well as vocals processing.

AUTO-MOD

If there were ever an Adam Ant Look Alike/Prance Alike Contest the frantic mincing antics of this band's lead singer would win him first prize, no contest. All this to the cacophonous accompaniment of bass, drums, guitar & electric piano. The band's playing seems to vary between funk and straight out British style progressive rock. A strange combination of influences by anyone's standards. This is fusion through time but not space.

DAISUCK & PROSTITUTE

This is a five man jazzoid outfit. They seem to be 'composing' as they go along. They start each number with a jam which somehow develops into a very catchy four chord riff which they ride to the bitter end. The sax player has definitely studied his James Chance records. Another player stands around stage doing not much of anything. Perhaps he owns the band's equipment?





LIZARD

The first number this band performs sounds like a valliant attempt to get itself signed to a western label for distribution to the AM radio market. Mid-way through the second song, however, the syrupy ballad mode is superceded by some very melodic synth-based passages. Lizard's leader/vocalist/guitarist bears a striking resemblance to a North American Indian repleat with feather earrings and long straight hair. Towards the end of the set he suddenly rips off a couple of searing heavy metallic guitar solos. Marketable but predictable.

FRICTION

This is a band that tries and succeeds at living up to its name. The front man and bassist/vocalist behaves as though experiencing the throes of mental breakdown. His dyed spikey hairdo does nothing to detract from his abbrasive playing style. The woman playing guitar remains seated and indeed at times sounds all too similar to Robert Fripp for there to be any doubt as to the influence of that particular artist. The percussionist reminds one of one of those mechanical wind-up monkeys pounding a furious beat on his bongoes until he needs to be wound up again.

TSUNEMATSU MASATOSHI

This is strictly a one man show. A rockabilly attired avante-garde performer who plays to the accompaniment of his own pre-recorded tape loops. Totally disregarding the beat emanating from his drum machine he tortures his guitar by bending and yes, actually breaking several strings at full volume through a chorus flanger. This young man's chosen artform appears to be hardware abuse. Unfortunately I can't imagine there will ever be a large enough audience base to sustain this lone nihilistic samauri.

ZELDA

This is Tokyo's entry in the 'All Girl Band' category. But Go-Go's they're not! The music itself is very competently played. The arrangements have some hilarious twists for such a deceptively light pop format. However the deathly serious delivery of this music has me wondering if the Japanese lyrics are about somebody's mother dying. The image really does not seem to match the content here.

TOTSUZEN-DANBORU

These guys specialize in amphetamine propelled, electric blues structured songs. This is the only group in this entire package in which the members appear to be actually enjoying themselves on stage. This aspect of their performance seems to be in stark contrast to the well practised vacant stares which must be the 'required look' in this particular microcosm of Japanese culture.



The Lounge Lizards on video — snapshot: Stokely Seip

WEST GERMAN INDEPENDENTS

BY ULRICH LEISTNER

There are approximately 60 million people living in West Germany today. Presently, only about 3% of all households there own video playback equipment. Despite this poor market potential, there does exist a number of people who are producing video, under true independent circumstances. There are no real sources of funding so all of these producers are involved in some other form of activity. 95% of the West German video market is occupied by pure commercial shit.

Nonetheless, in addition to independent music there are many people producing videos with 'problem themes' — social, sociological, socio-psychological, peace & no nukes, alternative living, ideas, projects and so on. They are independent, they are non-commercial, they know about the new medium and try to use it for their goals but they are not at this time reaching the popular culture. Some people are using video as the new medium for their ideas. There are a lot

of art/performance/experimental video clips. Video in West Germany is becoming as important as any other possible expression of art. The people responsible for this art activity really have the most knowledge about video and its possibilities.

There are three groups in West Germany who are producing independent music videos.

I.C.R.
Leipziger Str.
291 a
3500 Kassel
0561/51 66 58
West Germany

"I.C.R." Iron Curtain Records were the first to produce independent music videos in West Germany. Each of those working with I.C.R. are activists from specific disciplines such as art, film, music, performance, video and so on. They have six music videos to offer: *REXIW* (early punk video), *Wirtschaftswunder*, *The 39 Clocks* and others. All are German groups of good quality. I also viewed another production from I.C.R. which could not be called a music video, but rather a video with music. It was a really impressive mixture of music and images — great! As one of them told me, they don't intend to produce more pure music videos. They're currently searching for new projects and ideas. As always, they're sure to be one step ahead of the others.

Another rather interesting thing happening on the German independent video scene is something called *Schauinsland*. You may translate that as 'View into the Country'. This is a video magazine which is produced every two months by eight independent video groups from six German towns. They are from Berlin, Hannover, Kassel, Munich, Cologne and Mainz (a small town near Frankfurt). It consists of 5 to 10 minute clips of the scene/ the action/ the cultural events/ the town itself/ the feeling of this town/ of this group. These productions are about 90 minutes in length and full of intensive video action.

BILDSCHOEN VIDEO
Mainzerstr. 23
5000 Köln 1
0221/31 65 54
West Germany

"Bildschoen Video" This is by far the most active group, at least in terms of music video. They have about 40 tapes to offer. Most of these are uncut live recordings of more or less good quality (more good than less!), utilizing one or two cameras. They have groups ranging from the unknown to the very well known indeed. For example, they have on video: Malaria, Gang of Four, Honeymoonkillers, Einsturzende Neubauten, Abwärts, Tuxedomoon, This Heat, Lydia Lunch & Birthday Party, Lounge Lizards and and This group is one which uses the immediate quality of video as a medium to transmit information about recent events. They do not incorporate the technical/artistic possibilities of video as much as the other groups tend to. Their videos are the most up to date available. They're OK without the high artistic pretensions, they're live! Their work is a good documentation of the music scene in the western part of West Germany, including all directions of new music. Their prices are comparatively cheap. They sell a 1 hour tape for approximately \$35.00 Canadian funds and 120 to 150 min. tapes go for \$60.00! (Editor's note: no doubt at these prices and lengths we're talking about Beta & VHS.) In addition to their music productions, members and friends of Bildschoen Video are active in the art scene and in the organization of festivals and concerts.

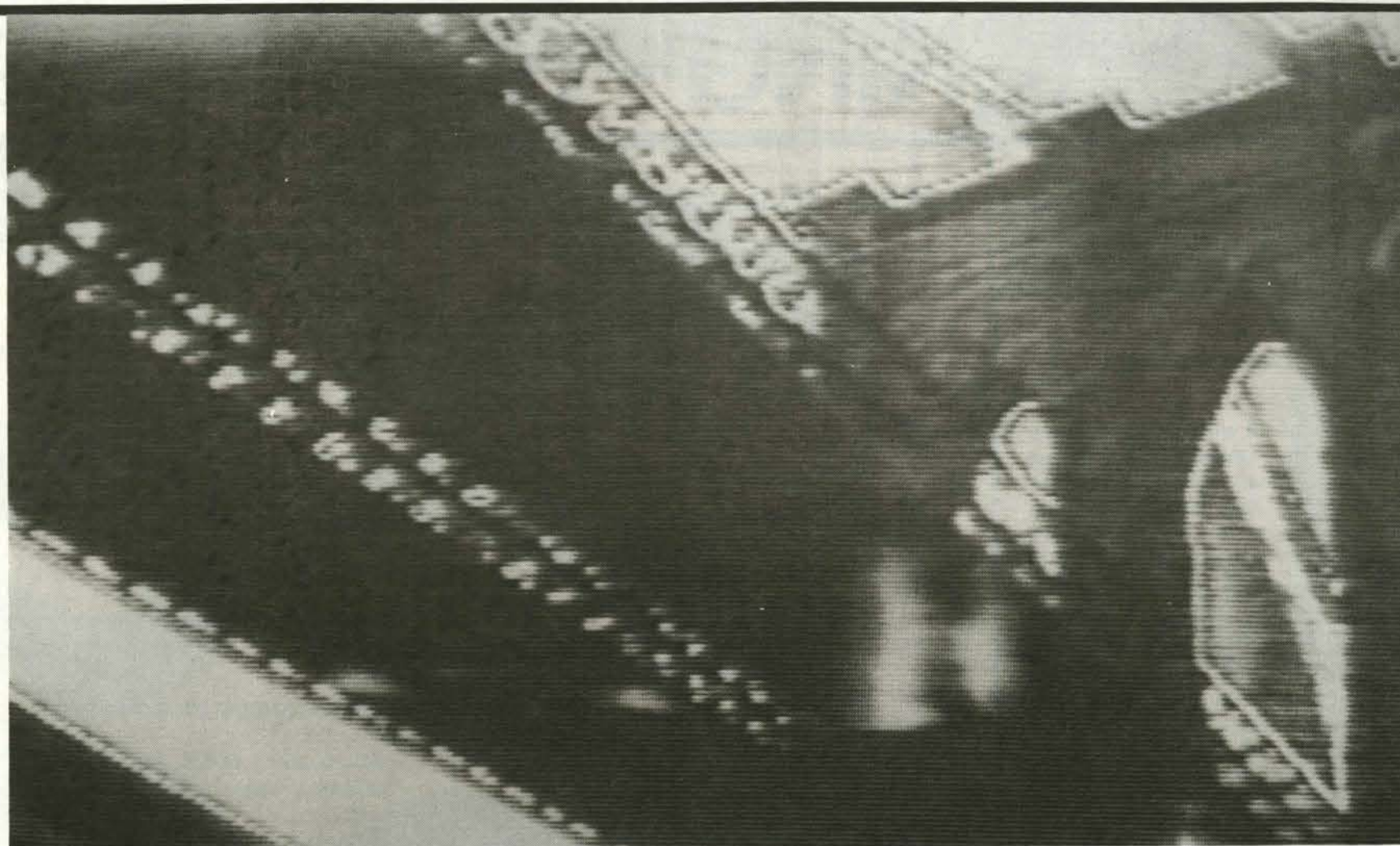
The possibilities of video as a medium aren't nearly exhausted in West Germany and all I can say is **video has much future in West Germany!** (and not only for the Big-Babes who always make the big money). This is one reason why TWENTYTHREEFIVE (235) not only distributes independent music on cassette, but on video as well.

PROPAGANDA VIDEO
c/o Norbert Meissner
Im Moore 27
3000 Hannover 1
West Germany

"Propaganda Video" This is a one man operation. He has three music videos to offer, all of them documentations of live performances. The first is a compilation titled *Wave '81* which features 8 German groups. The next is called *Berliner Krankheit* (Berlin Illness). This tape contains material by Einsturzende Neubauten (Collapsing Newbuildings), Sprung aus den Wolken (Jump Out Of Clouds), and MDK=Mekanik Destruktiv Kommandoh (not translatable). Perhaps you have heard of these names. They are fairly well known underground groups, rather extreme, each in its own way. Finally, we have *Abwärts*, one of the best German punkandsoon groups. All of these videos are of good quality, recorded with at least two cameras and well edited. While they are not the most recent performances, they are short and interesting — nice to see.

Any questions to be answered, addresses to be obtained, etc. . . please write to:

235
c/o Ulrich Leistner
Oberauer Str. 1
5202 Hennef 1
West Germany
02242-82044



From Reynold Weidenaar's "Love of Line, of Light and Shadow";
snapshot: Stokely Seip

**REYNOLD WEIDENAAR:
LOVE OF LINE, OF FLIGHT AND
SHADOW: THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE**
CRITIQUE BY KAREN HENRY

I am not an expert on computer video effects. Though I have seen a few impressive computer tapes I am not familiar with the language or the technical skills. Consequently I am always somewhat entranced like a child in the realm of illusion. Good computer effects extend the visual possibilities into the magic of the unknown, where technological process takes on the human imagination. They are part of the unique potential of video as an expressive medium. The creative product emerges from the original vision, the surprises and the discriminating skills of the artist. It is an awesome blend of science and aesthetics. The artist-magician manipulates the images and creates a mood, a context to give the visual experience meaning.

R. Weidenaar's *Love of Line, of Light and Shadow* is an artist's study in admiration for a particular structure, in this case the Brooklyn Bridge. It is based on footage of the bridge from all angles, moving and still. The screen is in constant motion with images keyed across each other, building in a snow-like pattern and fading into ghostly impressions and broken up with

graphic and linear patterns. The bridge is explored in all its structural diversity while the computer designs the relationships of colour and line and form. Weidenaar's skill with colour keys is sensitive and moving. The colours range from intense oranges and chartreuse to lovely soft pastels. The fine gradations of light are then intensified when the colour is extracted momentarily leaving the subtle beauty to the black, white and grey contrast. This fascination with colour and light in a particular subject is reminiscent of Monet's cathedral studies though the inspiration is transformed by the speed and technology of the current medium. The colour is one of several elements which give the tape texture, adding depth by accenting light and shadow. The effect of double images, movement of line and form, geometric graphics and the "venetian blind" effect are also parts of the rich visual texture of the piece.

The soundscape is a combination of instrumental tones in an almost meditative jazz mode. These are enhanced with subtle recorded sounds of the bridge itself — not gross traffic noises but sounds of movement and of a large structure in space. The audio creates a mystical feeling, suggesting movement through distant or deep realities. When the tape focuses on the monumental gothic arches on the bridge, recreating them in line and moving into and away from the image, the combination of the mood set by the music, the monolithic weight of the structure and the classical symbolism of gothic arches gives the sequence some imagined inspirational significance.

There is a visual break in the middle of the tape I previewed. The soundscape continues to a flat, deenergized screen. Whether this is a sort of zen accent — a breath held, a meditative exercise — or an ultimate extreme of the range of visual energy, I don't know. But the blank space was long enough to cause some confusion. The piece comes back on in a run of black and white where the frames hesitate slightly to intensify the movement and then moves into colour again and comes to a tasteful conclusion. But I'm still wondering about the pause.

The Brooklyn Bridge is an excellent choice of subject for this kind of study. The artist conveys a sense of being personally caught up in both the technical mysticism of computer video and the impressionistic fantasy of line and light that the bridge provides. One feels sincere admiration for its simple majesty and fortitude as it cuts through space and designs the horizon while from a closer vantage point the complex geometric precision of lines and sculptured forms create over and over new patterns of texture. The tape indulges this dialectic between the parts and the whole and compliments both with a sensitivity to the technical possibilities of the medium. There have been other tapes of bridges. This one may not be able to claim the pioneering glory of any new technology like the psychedelic Electronic Visualization Events in Chicago and others in the early 70's, nor is it a part of any stirring political avant garde, but it does have a sense of artistic grace and it is executed with some skill in the medium.



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EVENTS

VIEWPOINTS ON VIDEO IN THE EIGHTIES

An exhibition of 30 video tapes by artists from Canada, the United States, Great Britain, and Europe will open at the Walter Phillips Gallery at The Banff Centre on July 8 and continue to July 21. The exhibit, *The Second Link - Viewpoints on Video in the Eighties*, is a major project organized by the Walter Phillips Gallery to examine aspects of video by artists that are central to the medium in this decade.

A major publication for *The Second Link* will be released in September, 1983. The book will contain 60 pages with colour reproductions on the artists in the exhibition and 9 essays by Gene Youngblood, Sandy Nairne, Dorine Mignot, Brian MacNevin, Barbara London, Carl Loeffler, Kathy Huffman, Peggy Gale, and Lorne Falk. For orders and institutional discounts, write: Art Metropole, 217 Richmond Street West, Toronto, Ontario, M5V 1W2. Telephone (416) 977-1685.

For further information on *The Second Link*, write to the Walter Phillips Gallery, The Banff Centre School of Fine Arts, Box 1020, Banff, Alberta, Canada T0L 0C0. Telephone (403) 762-6283, Lorne Falk, Curator.

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL D'AVANT GARDE

F.I.A.G. is an annual festival with an objective to bring together photography, experimental films, video, diaporamas and multi-media performance. We were successful in October 82, and the next Festival is going to take place in November 83 (1st to 30th) in a very big gallery at Saint-Germain des Pres (8 rue de Nesle Paris 6 eme)

Film and video works have to be entered on 16mm or super 8, or ¾" U-Matic videocassettes, in either Pal, Secam or N.T.S.C. standard. Please contact us as soon as possible.

Frederique Devaux
Festival International D'Avant Garde
B.P. 41
92114 Clichy Cedex
Paris, France
Phone: 713 29 76 or 208 71 57



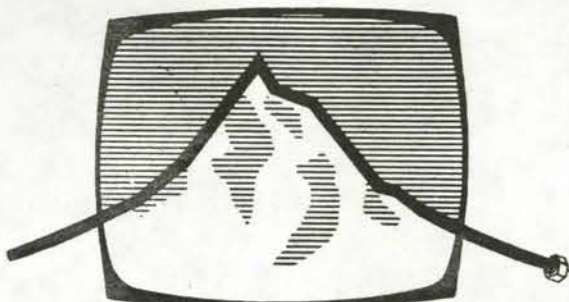
BANFF TELEVISION FESTIVAL

August 14 to 20 are the dates for the 1983 Festival in Banff, Alberta, Canada. Entries must be made for television and have first aired on television between July, 1982 and July, 1983. Categories include: television features, limited series (mini series), on-going series, drama specials, comedies, social and political documentaries, fine arts, light entertainment programs.

Entries must be on ¾" NTSC Video Cassettes. Foreign entries not available on NTSC format may submit 16mm print. Deadline is July 15, 1983.

For more information write to:
Banff Television Festival
Box 1020
Banff, Alberta, Canada T0L 0C0
Tel: (403) 762-6248 or (403) 762-6246.

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(includes a one year membership)
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For further information contact:
Rachel Jacky
Center For Urban Education
2045 S.W. Bancroft
Portland, Oregon 97201
(503) 221-0984

VIDEO/CULTURE CANADA

Application forms for the 1983 international competition in videotape production are available by writing to:
VIDEO/CULTURE CANADA
411 Gordon Baker Rd.
Willowdale, Ont. Canada
M2H 2S6 (416) 499-1414

Categories:
½": Student (under 18 years of age); Student (18 years and over); General.
¾": Fine Arts/Video Art; Performing Arts/Entertainment (drama, dance, etc.); Music Video; Documentary; Community Broadcast (individuals producing for community cablecast); Industrial (training, motivation, public relations, information); Educational (instructional, teaching, guidance, special subjects); Computer/Video Design (animation, graphics, technological experiments).

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SAN FRANCISCO VIDEO FESTIVAL

Application forms for the 1983 San Francisco Video Festival are available by writing to:
229 Courtland
San Francisco, CA 94110
(415) 641-9207

Categories: General, Documentary, Computer and Erotic.

Awards: All works selected for Festival exhibition will receive an honorarium of \$100. Broadcast, distribution and showings outside of regular Festival showings will receive additional revenues contingent on agreement of artists.

Entry Fee: \$15 (US) in US; \$18 (US) outside US.

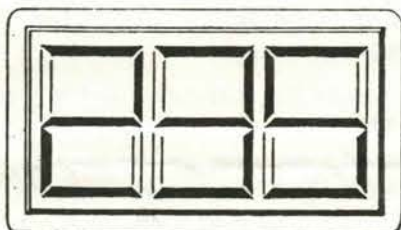
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PERIODICALS

To Anyone Interested in Periodicals

The MIDCONTINENTAL is a quarterly publication produced by a Winnipeg based co-operative of artists. It includes: cultural work, theory and criticism. The cultural work is a departure from experiments formerly confined to a gallery or other specific environment.

Those involved in the publication of the first issues generally concentrated on what were increasingly felt to be public rather than private works (partly because a periodical is less limited geographically).

In upcoming issues ideas and positions which cannot be accommodated by commercial or other existent venues will be encouraged.

Submissions:
Midcontinental
54-221 McDermot Ave.
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 0S2
Messages: 204-956-0783
(our yearly institutional rate is fifteen dollars.)

AKA and Grain

A.K.A. and Grain announce a special Juried Exhibition and Publication on Visual and Written Languages in Dialogue

Works accepted for reproduction and/or publication in GRAIN magazine (special issue XI.4, November 1983) will be exhibited at A.K.A. Gallery during December 1983. There will be a public reading from the issue during the exhibition.

The content of the exhibition and publication will be selected by E.F. Dyck, editor of Grain, and Stephen Horne, instructor at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.

The guidelines for selection are:

1. preference will be given to works that have both a visual and a written component;
2. each work must be a unit, although collaborations are permitted;
3. each work must be a significant investigation of the topic, visual and written languages in dialogue.

Deadline for submissions: Sept. 30, 1983

Artists/writers should send their submissions to:

A.K.A./GRAIN Project
c/o A.K.A.
813B - Broadway Avenue
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
S7N 1B5



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CHRIS BURDEN IN CONVERSATION

thing was amiss on TV. It was like a little bleep on the oscilloscope pattern or something. It's like there was this blank stuff coming over and all of a sudden there's this . . . you know. I was teaching a class at a little college. I remember asking my students if their parents saw it. It was "Yea, something really weird was on, I couldn't really figure out what it was."

PW: Are you currently involved with engaging that kind of an audience?

CB: No, not too much. I spent a lot of money doing it and got kind of freaked out about how much money I was spending.

PW: How much?

CB: Thousands. . . tens of thousands. It's pretty weird. I remember once I did this ad in New York, it was on the Saturday Night Live show. It's called The Chris Burden Promo. That's the title of it, it's not what you see on the screen. It has the five most famous names from art history and they come out of the screen. They come out like the Carpenter ads. Let's see if I can remember — I think it's Leonardo DaVinci, Michaelangelo, Rembrandt, Pablo Picasso and Vincent VanGogh. Then the last one is mine. In the Saturday Night Live context it was real weird because it looked like part of the show. Then again it was like \$1500 down the tubes in thirty seconds. It's not a lot of money in terms of the advertising world but in terms of an individual who doesn't have a lot of money. . . This was five or six years ago too. . . I've thought about doing other ones. To do it effectively you need million dollar budgets.

PW: National.

CB: Yea, National. Because I've really done it in only two cities, New York and Los Angeles. And those are local markets.

PW: Do you do any kind of announcement that you're going to be doing those?

CB: Yes, often the gallery would send around a little card or something to art world people but we're talking about a couple thousand people as opposed to two or three hundred thousand who would see it.

PW: Has there been phone-ins regarding those, has there been mail to the networks?

CB: Yea. The usual reaction is I'd always have trouble with the management. In other words I could convince the salesman to take my money, because I don't have any credit so it's like C.O.D., cash up front. They take my money and give me a list of when it would be aired then someone higher up in the management would be at home watching TV and they'd see my ad come up on their TV station and just go berserk. The station manager would call up, "Pull that right off the air!"

PW: They would actually pull it off the air while it was on?

CB: No, not right when it was on but it was like, "Pull that thing. I don't ever want to see that thing on the air again." You'd have to get in this legal hassle with them about breach of contract. Usually I'd get more time out of them. I always had to monitor my ads because they were always going to be pulled off the air if anybody in authority at the TV station saw them.

PW: In more recent years your work has gone from the self, the body, into really mechanical kinds of things, like your car piece.

CB: Kind of like engineering things a bit.

PW: Your work is real macho.

CB: I guess you could say that about the Big Wheel, yea.

PW: How do you see your work evolving from the body work that you were doing to the kind of mechanical stuff that you do? What is the correlation between the two?

CB: I'm not really sure there is any in a way. I guess I wanted to deal with how there's this really high-tech stuff that comes out all the time and nobody really knows how it works. People just use it. Its fundamental design is not really understood. Not that most people need to understand it to have it work but making those things is like people going back to the roots and growing their own food and making their own shoes. I'd twist that around to making something that you wouldn't normally think of making yourself, like a high-tech object.

PW: You've been involved with making non-object statements such as in your performances and in your television promo's, which are here one second and then gone. Now your concerns are in making objects, have you had a problem in dealing from one to the other?

CB: I was trained as a sculptor. I started out making sculptures in college like minimal art. Donald Judd box things. I think my performance work kind of evolved out of that. It's like a paring away of what sculpture was. I remember making bigger and bigger sculptures, I was walking around them and I realized that sculpture influenced your body physically as opposed to a two dimensional painting. You had to walk around them. Mine were really big, like a hundred feet long, some of them. So, I made a bunch of objects that tried to deal with that. The closest thing would be like exercise equipment. They were objects that you had to use to have the art happen. When you used them there was art. If you didn't use them they were these dumb objects and there was some confusion over that. People would see the object as sculpture which, in fact, they weren't. So, the first piece I did that was an important step was called The Five Day Locker Piece. It was my master for my MFA show. Instead of making a box and getting into it, I used a wall of lockers. Going back to the minimal thing, there's a paring away, it's still getting down to the essence of it. I think a lot of my performances were gut reactions to physical spaces. That's where the inspiration would come from. If I'd travel, even if I did things at home, it was like there was often a physical thing that would trigger it. Something architectural about a space or some particular spot that made me do it.

PW: Are you familiar with the milieu of video art or video artists?

CB: Well, I'm aware of it.

PW: Do you go out and see work?

CB: Occasionally, yea.

PW: What do you see and what do you think about them?

CB: Once in awhile I see something that's OK but very rarely. I'm not sure, I'm kind of confused about what their goals are. I think that's one thing that I'm not sure about. I think a lot of them are sort of frustrated TV producers. I've talked to some so-called video artists in Los Angeles and it seems a lot of them want to actually be TV producers but then there's a conflict because they don't want to do that, so it's not real resolved, it seems to me . . . But then there's people like William Wegman. Is he a video artist? Was he a video artist? What do you think?

PW: It's interesting the correlation between what he is doing now, his photography work, and what he was doing then. It has been a very clear extension. I think it has become clearer what his work has been, more now than ever . . . his transition into very formal, beautiful photography and the continuation with his dog content. I think it's great and in fact he's not concerned with television. In the last number of years, what I've seen of his work has been quite fascinating. I think his polaroid material is great!

CB: So, he was a video artist and then he . . .

PW: He's an artist.

CB: Yea, right.

PW: A multi-disciplinary artist, that's what you are.

CB: That's what I think about video art. I just think it's kind of weird when people narrow it down to something like, "Well, I'm a video artist", you know. It implies that all other art is like. . . it's somehow separate and doesn't have to follow the standards of other art or something. I think it could be a mistake, I don't know.

PW: In your performance there is always an element of self-danger.

CB: Mmm, not always.

PW: Quite often there was.

CB: Sometimes, yea.

PW: Are you continuing that kind of idea into what I would call your mechanical works?

CB: I've done, in the last three or four years, a series of installations. A lot of them deal with, I mean I guess you could see them as sort of political. They deal with weaponry and armament and man's kind of insanity, war. I've done a lot of collages that are things that I've saved from different times in my life when I've sort of flipped out. They're not specifically about danger to myself but I think they do talk about violence in some way.

PW: In your own documents of your work, those one time only performance situations, did you ever consider the notions of the camera in terms of documentation?

CB: Yea, I did a lot. That's why I don't have many films and stuff. I hate cameras and equipment during performances. I think it's really obtrusive, and that's why I've never videotaped anything I've done. I even hate having still photographers there. Sometimes I've gone back and fabricated the photograph just so there wouldn't be cameras there.

PW: So that explains the low quality of most documents I have seen.

CB: Uh, I don't think they're that low quality in a sense, I like them. I mean technically they may be but a lot of them capture the essence of what I want. Like I've had people who were professional photographers try to take pictures for me (shakes head). Most of my pictures are taken by friends or people who knew me. Unless people know something about me and empathize with what I'm up to, they can't take the picture.

PW: Do you still feel that way?

CB: Uh, not so much because when you take a picture of an object it's a little easier sometimes. To some extent it's true, I've had professional photographers take pictures that were just terrible. I mean I just can't believe it.

PW: Do you take pictures yourself?

CB: Yea. Actually I took a lot of pictures when I was a kid. I lived in Europe and that's all I did was take tons and tons of photographs and I worked as a darkroom technician for a year.

PW: I myself, find that term television art or video art not particularly a strange term because people need terms. First of all I think video is multi-disciplinary. It's a tool that can come from many different avenues.

CB: I can't believe that people sit and watch that many tapes you know? My tolerance for watching a tape is like you can do it once in awhile but I couldn't like look at all these tapes.

PW: I don't think it's intended for you to watch all those tapes.

CB: I know it's not, but do you know what I'm saying? It's like. . .

PW: Do you watch television?

CB: Yea.

PW: Do you go to the cinema?

CB: Yea, and I get cable TV and all that stuff. I mean pay TV or whatever you guys call it here but television is not the same as watching video, you know. It's like. . .

PW: I'm personally looking forward to and enjoying seeing what I call the second generation of video artists. Those who are not as clearly in opposition to television. The second generation is

taking the next step further as opposed to being reactionary and really starting to work in a much more healthy way with video. I think art's here and popular culture is there, I think the second generation is attempting to be more in the middle. The language is much more sophisticated. The use of the medium is that much more sophisticated and the technology is that much more sophisticated.

CB: I can see it in the abstract, I see it occasionally, pieces that I call art but they're few and far between I guess. You know?

PW: So, where are you in your own art? Where are you headed towards?

CB: Oh, I don't know, I mean where am I headed towards?

PW: Your goal. You are talking about a lot of

video artists being frustrated television producers. Were you a frustrated performer?

CB: You mean like an actor? No, I don't think so. I don't think so at all, no.

PW: OK, you've done your mechanical works, which are really one of a kind objects, do you sell those objects?

CB: I'd like to, I don't usually, I don't sell very much work.

PW: Do you create multiples from those?

CB: Uh, no. What are you talking about?

PW: Your mechanical works.

CB: No.

PW: So in many ways they are performance works in that they are non-marketable objects.

CB: Yea, that's a good point, actually. They're not sculptures in the sense that you could put them in your house and look at them or put them in a plaza. There's always something wrong about them.

PW: Do you have a problem being off-centre?

CB: Off-centre?

PW: In that kind of way. Misjudged, off-centre, not part of a particular...

CB: I just follow my interests. I mean I have an idea of how things are supposed to be, to be marketable. I just do stuff that interests me as an individual and that's basically what I see art as. To do things and by doing things to make a statement as to how a person could live as an individual is different than the way most people live.

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