

Teaching Suggestions

Have the students practice trying not to provide too much of an answer in the phrasing of their questions. This is a common mistake. Have kids interview each other just to discover what the process is about. The less the interviewer says and the more the interviewee says, the more interesting the tape

will be.

When kids are on the street doing interviews, have them playback the tape to the person they have just talked with. New questions and deeper responses often generate this way. Also, of course, kids can see if they got what they wanted.

Video Animation

CHUCK ANDERSON

The question inevitably arises: Can animation be created with the videotape recorder? It is virtually impossible to animate still objects with the 1/2 inch videorecorders. The continuous scanning operation of the camera negates the possibility of single frame shooting such as is done with Super 8 and 16mm movie cameras. Therefore, potential video cartoonists must look to other forms of animation, such as manipulation of objects in front of the camera. The basic rationale exists for all animation: you have complete control over whatever is to be videotaped. Here is one possibility: a variation of the ancient Chinese shadow play.



Chuck Anderson

The Activity

A story or choice of characters for improvisation is made. Two dimensional puppets are created from heavy paper or cardboard. Movable limbs are achieved by connecting figures at their movable joints by means of masking tape and thread. The puppets are pressed against a translucent, taut rear projection screen. They are manipulated by long, fixed dowels that are fixed to key points of the body. The puppets and their operators are positioned on the darkened side of the screen; the video recording camera is on the other. Movie lights at low setting heightens resolution of video images.

In-Depth Interviews

KIT LAYBOURNE

In most video programs, there are many, many activities in which kids conduct the kinds of interviews that they know so well from a lifetime of watching television. This activity forces students to experience a different kind of interview. Doing



Jeff Strickler

in-depth interviews helps bring into relief the assumptions and stylistic conventions, the strengths and liabilities of standard TV fare. It also programs students to explore the unique qualities and abilities of portable video systems.

The Activity

The class divides into pairs - an interviewer who uses an external mike and the cameraperson who will do the taping. The pair select a person to interview whom neither of them knows well. The subject can be another student, a teacher, a younger person, a parent. A meeting time and place is arranged. Here is the assignment for the actual interview: Shooting begins immediately and runs for twenty minutes straight. At this point the tape is played back. The subject, the cameraperson and the interviewer watch it all. The camera is again hooked up and ten more minutes of interview are done. The talk in this second segment usually comes from what was experienced during the playback. During class, the entire in-depth interview is played again and discussed by all.

Teaching Suggestions

At first there may be some frustration among the entire class as they watch these long interviews. Di-

rect the discussion towards discovering and describing the set of expectations that broadcast television has created in all of us. You may need to ask the kids to begin developing a higher frustration level - they will need it for many viewing situations including tapes made by independent video artists as well as by themselves.

Generally, the effect of such in-depth interviews is very powerful. Individuals who have been taped appear complicated, three dimensional. They are individuals. Compare the quality and significance of this kind of interview with the quick and flat portraits that appear in most television documentaries, talk shows and news events. Finally, ask the kids to reflect upon their experiences as interviewer and cameraperson during these relatively long interviews. Have the kids compare their analysis of this activity with the feelings of power and control they have probably experienced during other activities like street-shooting or conducting an opinion survey with video.

Creative Electrography

ALDO TAMBELLINI

From my experience I developed an approach to the single system camera which I found both educational and creative - and also very appropriate to projects that could be completed within one session. I brought the students to the awareness of looking at their immediate environment so that their senses and response would be communicated through the camera. Every experience and every form around them contained some source of information in terms of the visual - the sounds, light and motion. In the manner that this information is brought together into a videotape - the reprocessing of information from the environment by each student - the student will then create a videotape which communicates his sensitivity to his surroundings.

The Activity

The students explore the places and activities that seemed commonplace to them before: - the street, the cars, the street markings, the forms of objects around them, the repetition of daily activities, a street vendor, a woman going to the laundry, a

Aldo Tambellini



store on the block, goods on display in the window, people passing, light, time and motion of a place. Through the sensitivity of a student all those elements contained within a situation are brought into a structure or form by each individual student - and they become the language of his videotape.

Teaching Suggestions

For example, we could take the city block, possibly the one next to the school, or where the student lives and look for those audio-visual non-verbal elements which he feels from the environment as well as his improvised speech and his gathering of information from people along the street. All this brought together in terms of time sequence - as they occur in real time - and by editing into the camera only - working around a particular idea of theme - record that child's idea - an idea which he himself gives form to. All the audio-visual information - once brought back into the class and viewed by everybody through a monitor can be recycled for writing assignments and the presentation of class topics.