

L.A. Life

ENTERTAINMENT

Gallery's founder wants small-screen shows to find a bigger audience, profits

Video maker hopes success comes EZ

By Diana Rico

Special to the Daily News

John Dorr has a dream. He wants independent video makers to be able to share in the money made from the tremendous new marketplace that has opened up from the sale and rental of home video cassettes.

Dorr, a video maker who founded and runs the 2-year-old EZTV Video Gallery, a West Hollywood screening and video production facility, has taken the first steps toward that difficult goal.

Starting tonight the weekly video programs that until now have been presented exclusively at EZTV will be presented simultaneously at two additional locations: SuperVideo, a production facility and video cassette sales-rental outfit in Santa Monica; and the Apollo, a small video soundstage facility in Hollywood.

His concept is nothing new: a chain of affiliated screening facilities that show programming emanating from one central source. The programs thus shown become familiar to audiences, and when they become available for consumer purchase on video cassette, there already will be people who are interested in buying them.

This is common practice with first-run movies. What is unusual — unique, in fact — is that he is doing this with independently produced videos.

"As far as I know, in the whole country no one has opened a series of commercial facilities, like movie theaters, in order to show videos," says Dorr, a quiet-spoken man who opened EZTV as an exhibition space for video works for which there was no commercial viewing outlet.

The second step in his master plan comes in February when EZTV will issue its first catalog of independently made videos, which will be available for sale to individuals and to video distributors via mail order.

Dorr has not tried distribution until now because there is no existing system for doing so for independently made videos. Mainstream films released in theaters gain a recognition factor among the

audience by extensive publicity and advertising campaigns, he says.

By the time these films end up for sale on cassettes, audience members already know about them and are likely to rent or buy what they think they'll like.

But independently made videos have no such recognition. Dorr hopes to create a release chain like the one that already exists for theatrical films, so that made-for-video movies will find a viable place in the home cassette sales and rental market.

"There's no reason why someone browsing through a cassette rental place is going to pick up something they've never heard of," he points out. "There's got to be that recognition factor. We're creating the recognition factor by screening here first."

The time is clearly ripe. According to a report in *Daily Variety*, the Electronic Industries Association — a major organization of consumer electronics hardware manufacturers — predicts that American households will contain 26 million video cassette recorders by the end of 1985. And the total sales for pre-recorded cassettes will be 33 million units, or 1.5 billion retail dollars — an increase of 50 percent over the estimated 1984 total.

Translated, that means that there's a brave new market out there for anyone who wants to tap into it. Indeed, although most of what's available in video cassette rental and sales stores and catalogs is first-run movies, some made-for-video pieces are starting to be released without any theatrical exposure.

Dorr mentions a new documentary called "Yoko Ono: Then and Now," which will be the second show to be screened at its newly affiliated video facilities (the first is "What Happened to Kerouac?") a documentary about the Beat Generation poet produced and written by Lewis MacAdams and Malcolm Hart, and "Stories From Los Angeles," an evening of poetry readings taped live at the Club Lhasa by the Martin Eden Co. and EZTV and directed by Michael Blake).

"The Yoko Ono video came from Polygram Records and is being released by Media Home Entertainment, a big distribution company, in cassette," says



EZTV Video Gallery founder John Dorr shows how the work gets done with editor Michael J. Mascucci, above center, and client Jan Munroe.



Bob Halvorsen/Daily News

Dorr. "It was made for home cassette sale and rental. But there again, there's no problem with recognition factor, because anyone who is interested in Yoko Ono will want to see it."

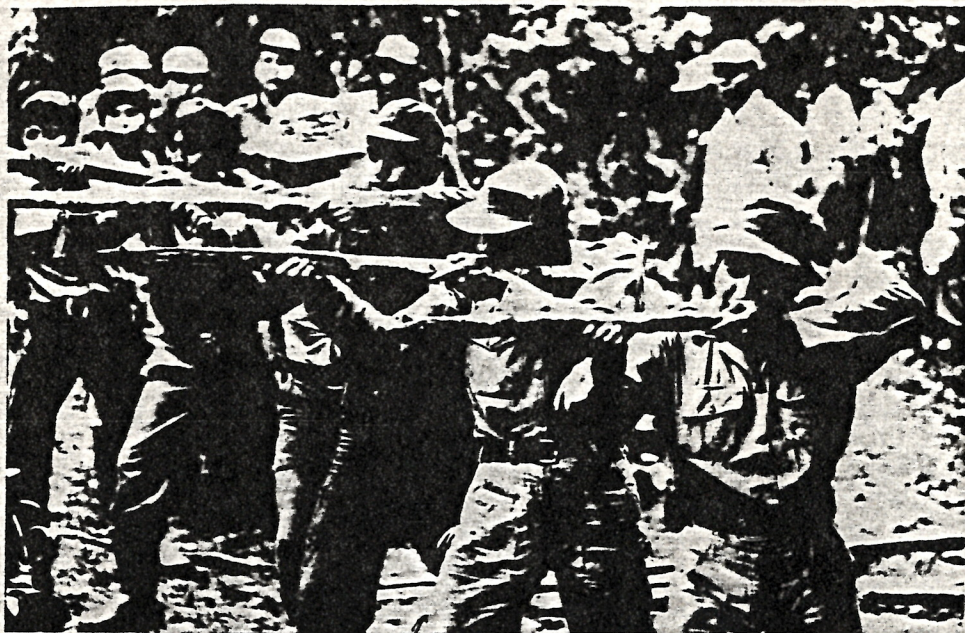
EZTV's first catalog will feature such works as "Stories From Los Angeles"; an off-the-wall Hollywood-style feature called "Laughing Horse," also directed by Michael Blake; some of Dorr's own early feature films; and segments of "Hour 25," a science-fiction interview show produced by Mark Shepard. Dorr says publicity about EZTV's upcoming catalog has already generated calls from both individuals and distributors who are interested in the out-of-the-mainstream releases.

It's an ambitious gamble — nothing less than opening up a whole new

marketplace for a product that didn't even exist a decade ago. If it works, what does Dorr expect the situation to be in 10 years?

"In 10 years? If anything's going to happen, I'd like for it to happen in five years," he says, laughing. "In five years I would like for independents to have an ongoing, viable system so that when they make something it gets shown in video theaters around the country and then goes into general distribution, with their being able to share in revenues from sales and rentals in home cassettes.

"Frankly," he adds, "I'm torn between the reality of being a very small-time operation right now, just seeking to get by, and the possibility that we could make the creation of mass media accessible to anybody who wishes to do it."



4 DAYS ONLY

JUNE 27-30

LA GUERRE DES MAYAS

(THE WAR OF THE MAYAS)

A REPORT FROM GUATEMALA

BY PIERRE BOFFETY AND JEAN-MARIE SIMONET

At these EZTV Affiliated Video Theaters: \$4.00 admission.

West Hollywood
EZTV Video Gallery
8547 Santa Monica Bl.
Thurs.-Sunday, 8:00pm
2nd show Sat. 10:00 p.m.
(213) 657-1532



Hollywood
Apollo Video
1503 Cahuenga Blvd.
Friday-Sunday 8:00 p.m.
(312) 464-9924

ART & ANTIQUES
MAY 1988
SIX DOLLARS

Video Games

For thirteen years, John Dorr was just another Los Angeles screenwriter-cum-film critic, mulling over the auteur theory for magazines like *Millimeter* and *Film Comment*, freelancing at the *Hollywood Reporter*, writing screenplays that never played, script-supervising B-thrillers like *Hell up in Harlem* and *It's Alive*. In 1979, frustrated and weary, he picked up a cheap video camera and, with a group of other writers, directors, and producers, began making features. "But," he says, "we always ran into the same problem. Nowhere to show them."

So in June 1983, Dorr opened EZTV—America's first video theater—to show narrative works from L.A.'s burgeoning video underground. The local weekly entertainment papers began to run reviews; EZTV tapes like *Blonde Death*, *Sushi Olé*, and *Dreamland Court* (which was produced for \$2,000) garnered hot critical notices; EZTV gained a reputation for presenting adventurous, exciting, eccentric video features.

Mainstream audiences who had thought of video (if they thought of it at all) as either Michael Jackson land or "video art"—endless tracking shots of empty doorways punctuated by explosions of feedback—started going to West Hollywood's Santa Monica Boulevard and plunking down four dollars apiece for two hours in front of one of Dorr's video monitors.

"I'm one of those people who always believed it was possible to work in Hollywood and be creative," says Dorr, a soft-spoken, almost courtly thirty-nine-year-old former Yale who invariably conducts business wearing an EZTV T-shirt and sandals. "I'm still interested in where art and commerce are joined. It just began to seem to me that a strong sense of narrative is the

area in which video has been the least explored."

Dorr sees the distinctions between narrative video and video art as matters of context, not quality. "Our use of video is coming from the film world," he says. "I don't see any point



The Louis B. Mayer of video.

in calling it elite versus people's art, but here we are creating something that an audience will react to. What is generally considered video art comes from the fine art field, from people who are supported by museums. But what the video artists who show at EZTV are trying to do is make art that will be shown on television and in theaters. Although video, like film, is a collaborative medium, I still feel that EZTV video is ultimately the vision of individual artists. We don't think of ourselves as being museum artists. It's only not called fine art because it's not shown in a museum."

Have there been any video masterpieces? Dorr hesitates, then answers slowly. "I think there has been some very solid work, like *Blonde Death* and *Dreamland Court*. I think some of my own work, like *Approaching Omega*, is very good. They all have an aesthetic unity, which means they stand in my mind like works of art, like"—Dorr pauses a moment, reaching for an unassailable masterwork, a standard reference, a gauge—"like Hitchcock's *Vertigo*."

—Lewis MacAdams

MICHAEL EDWARDS / Los Angeles Times



Picture of Nigerian Fela Anikulapo Kuti taken from the video.

POP BEAT

NIGERIAN KUTI: WAS THE MESSAGE IN HIS MUSIC?

By DON SNOWDEN

The idea of combining music with a strong political message is a romantic notion to many young musicians, but the concept is a harsh reality for Nigerian bandleader Fela Anikulapo Kuti.

Last September, Kuti was arrested in Nigeria as he and his troupe of musicians and dancers were boarding a plane for his first U.S. concerts in 15 years. He was subsequently convicted of violating currency smuggling regulations and is serving a five-year sentence in Kiri-Kiri Prison in Lagos.

Kuti's supporters view the arrest as yet another example of government harassment of the controver-

sial musician, who has not only attacked the government in his songs but tried to run for the presidency, and once declared his home an "independent republic" in his quest to establish what he calls a truly African government in Nigeria.

But for most Westerners, the political turmoil surrounding Kuti remains a hazy abstraction. That's why the 52-minute documentary, "Music Is the Weapon: Fela," is so revealing. The 1982 film, being shown at EZTV video theater's three outlets this weekend and next, projects the man and his sociopolitical environment into sharp relief.

Produced by Stephane Tchalgadjieff, the film features shots of Kuti performing at his Lagos nightclub, as well as interview footage.

The film makes its most telling points in simply letting the camera capture the ugly urban sprawl and petty brutality of life in Lagos. We also get a look at "Kalakutu Republic," Kuti's home and fortress, that looks less like a romantic revolutionary bastion than a collection of ramshackle buildings in a suburban slum. But the intense idealism reflected in Kuti's flashing eyes as he talks suggests why he is both revered and hated in his native land.

In a bit of fortuitous timing, the camera crew was on the scene when Nigerian authorities raided Kuti's stronghold in 1981 and took him off to jail. The fresh burns and bruises on Kuti's body seem to offer mute testimony to the price he sometimes pays for openly stating his beliefs.

"Music Is the Weapon: Fela" is a partisan documentary but never becomes mere propaganda. This compelling portrait of a charismatic musician screens at EZTV in West Hollywood (information: 657-1532), SuperVideo in Santa Monica (394-9696) and Apollo Video in Hollywood (464-7871).

There are some signs that Kuti's latest bout with Nigerian authorities may be moving toward an early resolution. According to spokesmen in New York at Kuti's record label, Celluloid Records (which will release Kuti's new album "Army Arrangement" any day now), the musician has been moved to the prison hospital. Because he is reportedly uninjured, many Kuti partisans see the move as a possible prelude to his release.

Dr. Christopher Agboli, director of information at the Nigerian Embassy in Washington, said he had received no official information regarding Kuti's status. He denied that Nigeria's military government is conducting a political vendetta against the musician.

"A lot of people in Nigeria know very well the seriousness the government puts to this foreign (currency) exchange business," he said this week. "Any other motive behind this charge should be ruled out completely."

"I don't think a very decent judiciary like that of Nigeria would get some innocent man convicted because of his political involvement," Agboli said. "The process under which he was tried is quite legitimate and he had very brilliant lawyers to defend him."

CALENDAR

West Hollywood

THE PAPER

for the city where legends begin

Aug 28, 1985

I walked by a television in the window of **EZTV Video Gallery (8547)**. I wandered in to see if there was anything to see. The walls were covered with old bagels. There was a huge pink poster which said "They must be told", and millions of people had signed it. Against the wall was a baby playpen filled with toys. I wandered around the room staring at the neat stuff on the walls. There was a record album cover for *Co Star—the record acting game*, which allows you to star in scenes with a genuine actress, **Arlene Dahl**. A good love scene, I hope. There was a poster of my favorite ex-mouskateer **Doreen (sorry Annette)** wearing a tight tank top and a bikini bottom with "Mouse Power" written on it. There was a poster for *Voyage of the Rock Aliens* starring **Pia Zadora**. A clipping informing us that **James Dewar**, the man who gave the world the **Twinkie**, had gone on to his reward. A poster for a **Betty Grable** movie. And a letter from Annette in her own handwriting, which would be a great final exam for a handwriting analysis class.

I still have no idea what EZTV is but I can hardly wait to go back.



VARIETY



EZTV Expands Its Outlets For First-Run HVs

By TOM GIRARD

Made-for-video productions debuting at the EZTV Video Gallery in West Hollywood will simultaneously appear at two other area locations beginning next week.

Expansion of the local outlets for first-run projects will be inaugurated as EZTV prepares to introduce a mail-order catalog next month with 20 videocassettes featuring titles that have premiered over the past year at the Santa Monica Boulevard gallery.

EZTV director John Dorr is spearheading the video exhibition and homevid releases in an effort to establish a sequence he hopes will "parallel that followed by theatrical films." He points to "a recognition factor" that could be generated by initial runs of the independent productions by video exhibitors.

The weekly screenings on Fridays will take place at SuperVideo in Santa Monica, Apollo in Hollywood and at EZTV. The first two settings will utilize large video projection screens while EZTV will continue to rely on monitors.

Opening attractions at the trio of vid venues will be "What Happened To Kerouac?" and "Stories From Los Angeles." The former is a 55-minute documentary on Beat Generation writer Jack Kerouac, and the latter is a 75-minute series of poetry reading taped at the Club Lhasa.

Lewis MacAdams and Malcolm Hart wrote and produced the Kerouac program, with Richard Lerner serving as exec producer under a Metropolitan Pictures banner. The poetry readings piece was coproduced by the Martin Eden Co. and EZTV.

While the Kerouac project is making its American debut in the video outlets, MacAdams said it has already been sold for tv distribution in Holland and Belgium and is being considered by WNET for inclusion in the "American Masters" series it does for PBS.

An ardent fan of Kerouac's while growing up in the Dallas area, MacAdams described the docu as an "incredibly personal" tribute to the late writer.

The 40-year-old producer incorporated interviews with such American writers as William Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Michael McClure. The model for Kerouac's "On The Road" novel, Neal Cassady, is also included via old footage.

In addition to his anticipation of homevid sales, MacAdams also believes that public and university libraries are prospective buyers of the program.

As for "Stories From Los Angeles," the program features John Doe of the "X" band, Dave Alvin of the Blasters, Doug Knott and Victor Noel.

EZTV, which will continue its Thursday-Sunday schedule, began public screenings in Summer 1983.



READER

January 27, 1984 Vol. 6, No. 14

From Zoetrope to EZTV and Beyond

Susan Rogers Says Good Grief Is Feminist 'but It Doesn't Pretend That Women Are Saints'

By Dan Sallitt

Of the surprising number of good videos that turned up at John Dorr's EZTV Video Gallery last year, probably the best was a twenty-two-minute short called *Good Grief*, a light comedy about a woman revenant and the husband who seems unmoved by her recent death. Beyond the excellence of all the video's aspects—its striking long-take camera movements and sense of space, its elliptical script, the uniform excellence of the cast—one senses the assurance of a first-rank artist in the way that writer-director Susan Rogers effortlessly turns the comic story into a thoughtful, melancholy contemplation of the transience of emotion.

The expensive look and sound of *Good Grief* hint that Susan Rogers is not your typical struggling up-and-coming artist, but I didn't imagine that any of EZTV's video makers were former Hollywood executives. Out of Zoetrope and United Artists, Rogers, thirty-five, is a former painter and union organizer who has just made her break in the film world: *Child's Play*, her documentary on a Los Angeles arts school for children, aired on PBS last

week; a film about the elections in El Salvador that she made in collaboration with a political film group will be released in February; and she is about to begin raising money for her first feature film, a thriller called *Homicide*.

My few conversations with Rogers overturned silly preconceptions about artistic personality that I should have gotten rid of long ago. The stereotype of the sensitive artist who can't cope with the business world suited me fine, however, since my own attempts to peddle scripts in this town in the past have been so feeble and half-hearted. Film history is filled with great artists who violate this stereotype; but I still had to overcome my surprise that Rogers seemed entirely comfortable with the techniques required to forge a career as a film maker in an industry town. Since her video betrays not the slightest commercial compromise, one has to assume that the lady simply has her act together.

On the occasion of *Good Grief's* return to EZTV (on a schedule of Thursdays through Sundays until February 5), Rogers and I met over lunch for an interview—her first in this capacity. I gathered, and I hope the first of many for her.

Q: How did you get into film making?

A: I first got a real interest in films when I was still at art college in England, working as an usherette at the British Film Theater and seeing two films a night. When I moved to America in 1972, I spent three years working as a community organizer and fund raiser for the United Farm Workers, but I still wanted to work in film. I left the union in 1976, and in 1977 I got a job as an assistant to the marketing director at Zoetrope Studios.

It can't have been that easy.

Oh, I had help from people: from Marcia Nasatir, who was at United Artists then, and Jane Fonda, and Fred Roos at Zoetrope. I think it had a lot to do with luck, and the fact that I completely ignored how difficult it was. I really wanted to work for Zoetrope, and I was fairly single-minded about it.

What was the nature of the job?

Mainly it was research on distribution: Which films had played in what cities, when, and how much business they'd

done. We were trying to find the best theaters and the best markets for *Apocalypse Now* to open in.

Were you planning your first movies then?

No, I don't think I had the level of confidence then to think I could actually make films. I think I was a little in awe of the film makers whose work I really respected and liked.

Who are they?

Of the people working now: Scorsese, Francis (Coppola), Nicolas Røeg. There are a few more. Of the rest, there's obviously Orson Welles.

When I started working and seeing where each piece came from and how films got made, the process began to be a little less mysterious.

Where did you go from Zoetrope?

For a year and a half I worked at United Artists as executive assistant to the head of production, then as West Coast story editor. I got back to Zoetrope as director of film development but was laid off in the spring of 1981.

The prospect of looking for another job at a company where I would probably have enjoyed working as an executive

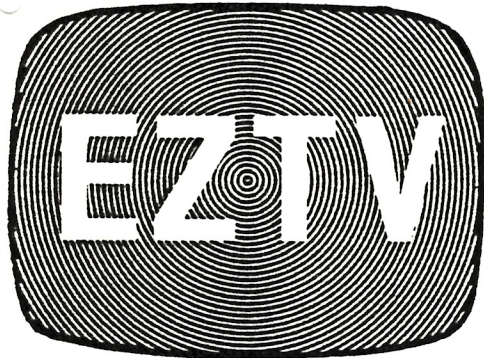


Susan Rogers

photograph by Molly Rhodes

EZTV Offers Off-Off Video in an LA Mall

I've always been big on the idea that one's own community is often the source and influence for one's work. And this proposition may be just as true in Hollywood as in East Harlem. What other explanation could there be for a Los Angeles gallery show of indie video fare headlined by tapes like *Blonde Death* and *Faculty Wives*? It's the Hollywood indie community which has spawned EZTV, its own video theater and production facility.



VIDEO GALLERY

EZTV is a place where videomakers refer to their tapes as movies. Where dreams and projects come true after all the majors have let you down. EZTV is, as former "La Mama"-ite Phoebe Wray says, "off-off networks."

Soft-spoken founder and director John Dorr opened the gallery in June 1983 in a tiny split-level room on the second floor of a West Hollywood shopping mall. He calls it "the box." I'd say it more closely resembles an oversized loft bed.

"When we first opened, no one had any idea of what this space was. The idea of showing video in theatrical situations was unheard of," explained Dorr. Fortunately the press has been good to the gallery. During its nine-month lifetime it has already been featured in *Variety*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Los Angeles Weekly* and *American Film*, among others. As a result EZTV has been able to attract enough of an audience to keep alive four night screenings per week—quite a feat in the city of 70mm Dolby.

Production and post-production activities followed, taking advantage of the two 26" color monitors and ¾" videocassette decks already being used for the screenings. The gallery's ¾" and ½" color portapaks and lights are owned by EZTV or donated by its members, who include locals from the Hollywood area with motivations similar to Dorr's own. "My background is as a frustrated person who'd like to make Hollywood movies," explained Dorr, "and with video you can make it rather cheaply. There are quite a few people around [EZTV] like that. All of the original people here have traditional film backgrounds."

As a result, the program menu includes a preponderance of feature-length narratives such as Dorr's *Dorothy and Alan at Norma Place*, based on the life of Dorothy Parker; a teleplay entitled *Last Quarter Moon*, taped at Los Angeles' MET Theater; and James Dillinger's infamous *Blonde Death*, featuring Tammy the Teenage Timebomb's rampage through Orange County.

Beth van der Water, who coproduced *Dreamland Court* with EZTV and the Long Beach Museum of Art Video Annex, agreed that the shadow of the industry is very much a part of the Southland indie milieu. "The people that I work with right now are all professionals. They're quite happy to get away from the inundating realms of filmmaking—like SAG contracts. Most of them work within the industry, but they want to work on something they really believe in." For instance, *Good Grief*, an indie tape by Susan Rogers shown at EZTV, featured actress Lois Chiles of "Dallas."

Yet not all of the videomakers associated with EZTV are Hollywood-inspired or aspiring. Phoebe Wray, who first learned video at EZTV, explained, "I'm trying to see what video can do that film can't." She uses video as an electronic "intruder or eavesdropper." The gallery's programming includes an eclectic mix of experimental, video art and documentary tapes as well as a sci-fi talk show hosted by radio personality Mike Hodel. Dorr also does not preclude showing film dubbed to tape.

EZTV operates as a semi-cooperative, with each of the approximately 25 members paying a \$50 fee for access to the equipment. Non-members pay a low \$15 per hour for use of the post-production facilities.

Indie video venues in Los Angeles are rare commodities, and videomakers indicated that they are willing to contribute their works for screening because of the exposure afforded to both the press and public. Among the few other indie screening facilities mentioned to me were Club Lahsa, LACE, the Space Gallery and the Long Beach Museum of Art, undoubtedly the premiere video facility in Southern California. Non-broadcast video is new to Los Angeles, and cracking its audience may be one of Hollywood's last entertainment frontiers. Super-8 and video producer Ken Camp remarked on the uneven attendance at EZTV screenings: "I have a horrible feeling that people don't go because they don't want to go across town to watch TV. I don't go out myself. I watch everything at home."

Dorr is moving towards distribution as a supplementary outlet for tapes screened and produced at EZTV. But he also remains optimistic about the gallery's potential draw, and

FIVF
625 Broadway, 9th floor
New York NY 10012

MARCH 1984

has instituted such enticements as "midnight outrages," play-of-the-month tapes and "art world happenings." When EZTV opened last June, its New Orleans Square mall location was a "virtual ghost town." The mall has since turned around, with more foot and car traffic and the establishment of several new video-related businesses. Dorr even hopes to open a screening room at the 14-screen Cineplex in nearby Beverly Center someday. Who knows? After all, this is Hollywood. (EZTV is located at 8543 Santa Monica Blvd., #11, West Hollywood, CA 90069.) —Renee Tajima ■



CALENDAR

HOMETECH

TURN-ONS AND TURN-OFFS IN CURRENT

HOME ENTERTAINMENT RELEASES

~~~~~Excellent    ~~~~~Good    ~~~~~Fair    ~~~~~Poor

### VIDEOCASSETTES

**"Henry Mancini and Friends."** Sony. \$19.95. Taped in 1980 at an auditorium in Edmonton, Canada, this is definitive middle-American music, impeccably performed by a large ensemble with strings. Concert-in-the-park sounds ("Inspector Clouseau Theme") are mixed with easy-listening Mancini piano solos ("Moonlight Sonata"), pre-rock pop songs (Vikki Carr sings "The Best Is Yet to Come") and theatricality (Robert Goulet in the "Soliloquy" from "Carousel"). There's even a touch of jazz in an intense Don Menza tenor solo. Craftmanship is the keynote throughout, with excellent sound and camera work. ~~~~~

—LEONARD FEATHER

**"Approaching Omega."** EZTV. \$39.95. For the last three years, EZTV's office/theater has been Los Angeles' prime viewing spot for independent video. Now EZTV manager John Dorr is making some offbeat works available for sale. Among the initial releases comes Dorr's own "Approaching Omega," which, despite technical drawbacks and uneven acting, is a loose, playful and humorous yet subtly disturbing exercise in unorthodox storytelling. Two men and a woman hike into a wilderness area and into a mysterious exploration of relationships, nature, philosophy and dreams. Information: (213) 657-1532. ~~~~~

—TERRY ATKINSON

**"Neil Young in Berlin."** VidAmerica. \$29.95. Director Michael Lindsay-Hogg does a fine job of maintaining the intimacy that works so well in concert videos. Still, this isn't the essential Neil Young collection because the 1983 "Trans" tour was not his most gripping series of shows. Techno-rock numbers like "Computer Age" left the concerts merely another eccentric sidestep in the singer-songwriter's long though fascinating career. Young connects best when he puts aside his Kraftwerk trappings and hones in on such richly satisfying material as "After the Gold Rush" and "Hurricane." ~~~~~½ —ROBERT HILBURN

## CLOSE-UPS

• JOHN DORR

### He Makes Alternative Video EZ

When he founded EZTV in June 1983, John Dorr fulfilled a dream—a Los Angeles-based video gallery and production co-op that would nurture “Off-Hollywood” product a stone’s throw away from the Hollywood studio system. “We’re stressing fresh ideas, not big budgets here,” says Dorr. “EZTV provides a great showcase for actors, writers, and directors.”

Through EZTV, some 60 hours of video programming have been created in a year and a half. In its first year, EZTV became a stable business by renting Sony editing systems and production equipment. Clients have included Walter Hill Productions (*Brewster’s Millions*), James Bridges Productions (*Perfect!*), Judith Holstra Casting, the Geddes Agency, the Health Department of the County of Riverside, California, Tokio Studios, the Independent Feature Project, Visual Music Alliance, the American Video Jockey Association, and Krishna Shah. “Enough capital is generated to cover maintenance and minor growth,” says Dorr. “We recently were able to expand our equipment holdings, adding a three-tube Sony M3 camera and two Sony Type 5 ¼-inch editing systems.

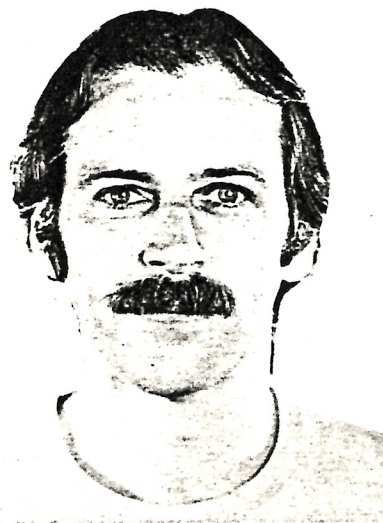
“We’ve produced a wide range of new productions—everything from feature-length video movies to music videos, documentaries, comedy shorts. Furthermore, we’ve become the rallying space for independent videomakers in Los Angeles,” says Dorr.

A graduate of Yale, Dorr started his film career as a research assistant to Peter Bogdanovich and a script supervisor on low-budget exploitation features (including *It’s Alive!*, *Hell Up in Harlem*, *The Prisoner*, *Messiah of Evil*, *Black Starlet*). He painted houses, served as consultant to Filmex, and became a contributing writer on the Hollywood film industry for *Millimeter*. Over the course of 15 years in Hollywood, Dorr’s screenwriting brought him screenplay options and rewrite commissions, but nothing ever was produced until he took complete responsibility himself. “In Hollywood, you’re always in development,” he says. “Now I’m glad I still own all those screenplays I’d been trying to sell.”

In 1979, Dorr discovered video, and new vistas appeared. Dorr shot his first feature—about a Shakespearean actress

who does detergent commercials—on Betamax equipment with a black-and-white observation camera. Dorr made three video features, screened them at the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, and received good notices and encouragement before taking the next step and investing an inheritance into a video repertory showcase, which he dubbed “EZTV.”

Dorr regards video as “a more intimate medium and a personal art form” in contrast to media that are “created by committee.” With EZTV’s feature budgets generally below \$5,000 (and often under \$1,000), Dorr proclaims that “video’s low cost makes it possible for any dedicated individual to do what studios spend millions for.” EZTV’s projects lean toward the dramatic rather than the experimental or conceptual, more prevalent in New York. “Because people in L.A. want to work in the Hollywood system, there is more of a tendency toward traditional narrative work.”



To date, Dorr has produced four of his own dramatic feature scripts on video: *Sudall Does It All!* (1979), *The Case of the Missing Consciousness* (1980), *Dorothy and Alan at Norma Place* (1982), and *Approaching Omega* (1983). For *Dorothy and Alan*, budgeted at \$1,500, Dorr used his own apartment (on nearby Norma Place), redoing the interior for each of the three locations. Capturing the wit and despair of author Dorothy Parker’s later life and marriage to Alan Campbell, Dorr’s incisive screenplay drew rave reviews.

Dorr has been producer and director of photography on a host of other video projects. EZTV’s most popular production so far has been James Dillinger’s \$2,000 *Blonde Death*, which the *L.A.*

*Weekly* termed “a warped cross between *Badlands* and the John Waters film of your choice.” Dillinger, a UCLA film-school graduate, turned to video after years of knocking on closed Hollywood doors. “We’re a good facility for people to use after completing film school,” Dorr says. “AFI directing fellows have come to EZTV to re-edit projects on which they did not have enough editing time allotted at AFI.” Current EZTV productions include *The Last Slumber Party* (a feminist drama) and *Dressing Room for Day Players* (a musical comedy).

Dorr is looking into alternative distribution systems. He plans to make EZTV’s tapes available for sale to cable or rental to colleges and homes in the near future and hopes to find more regional works to screen. EZTV has already reached beyond its Los Angeles confines in arranging closed-circuit screenings of its works in Dallas, San Francisco, and New York City. Dorr intends to expand this networking system and sees EZTV’s greatest challenge as “creating a loyal and stable audience, which we need in order to survive and flourish.” —Jay Padroff



# VARIETY



1933—50 Years of Service To Showbiz—1983

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Mon., Dec. 12, 1983

## EZTV Video Gallery Showcasing Indie Productions

By TOM GIRARD

The EZTV Video Gallery in West Hollywood has established itself as the showcase outlet here for feature-length independent productions shot entirely on tape.

In its relatively short existence since June, this unusual venue on Santa Monica Blvd. has become the modest equivalent of a small film art house. In this case, there are 40 movable seats and three tv monitors for screening works of local video-makers.

Described by founder John Dorr as "a stable business," the gallery has presented nearly 25 different programs on Thursday to Sunday evenings. A \$4 donation is requested of patrons.

The 39-year-old video entrepreneur, who switched from film because of higher overhead costs, speaks of "a new body of work"

evolving through video that "will be significantly changing the way movies are made and distributed in the years ahead."

Productions selected by Dorr, including several of his own, have been budgeted for as low as \$1000 to a high to date of \$100,000. That top end of the spectrum expenditure was undertaken by Jim Wilson for his 88-minute "Laughing Horse" starring Irene Miracle in her first appearance since the "Midnight Express" film.

"There just wasn't enough money to do it on film," Wilson said of the "mystical comedy" produced under his American Twist company banner. "We shot it in 13 days on locations in Arizona, and compiled the entire project in four months from start to finish."

By utilizing high production

values for the surrealistic story line, Wilson has been able to attract some interest in licensing rights overseas. Transcontinental Pictures took "Laughing Horse" to Mifed and sold it to tv networks in Spain and Great Britain. Other deals are pending.

### Domestic Outlets

"Without EZTV I don't think we'd have gotten any exposure here," Wilson added. The Berkeley Film Institute graduate, who had previously produced the "Stacy's Knight" theatrical film feature, hopes for domestic outlets for projects such as his.

Dorr believes there is a possibility that some of the works shown at EZTV would be suitable for pay-cable and videocassette distribution. Saying that he is waiting for his own "reputation to be established," Dorr noted that he has not

made any such overtures with his material.

Dorr's productions of "Dorothy And Alan At Norma Place," based on the life of writer Dorothy Parker, and "Approaching Omega," a psychological drama set in the woods, are screening again this month at the gallery, as is "Laughing Horse."

Dorr is quick to point to other projects he feels are especially worthy, such as the elaborately staged "Blonde Death" black comedy by James Dillinger and "Dreamland Court," Dale Herd and Barry Hall's journey through the emotions of four characters.

Assessing the impact of his venture so far, Dorr says EZTV, which also offers production facilities, "is stimulating production people to make videos."

If successful with his video box-office in coming months, Dorr would like to establish a small cineplex-like theater with up to 75 permanent seats and a large-screen tv projector.

Beyond his own aspirations, he says he hopes video galleries will spread around the country, with productions appearing here becoming a source for such outlets. He noted that one friend associated with the local operation now plans to replicate the concept in Dallas.

# AT EZTV, IT TAKES LESS CASH TO TALK

By PATRICK GOLDSTEIN

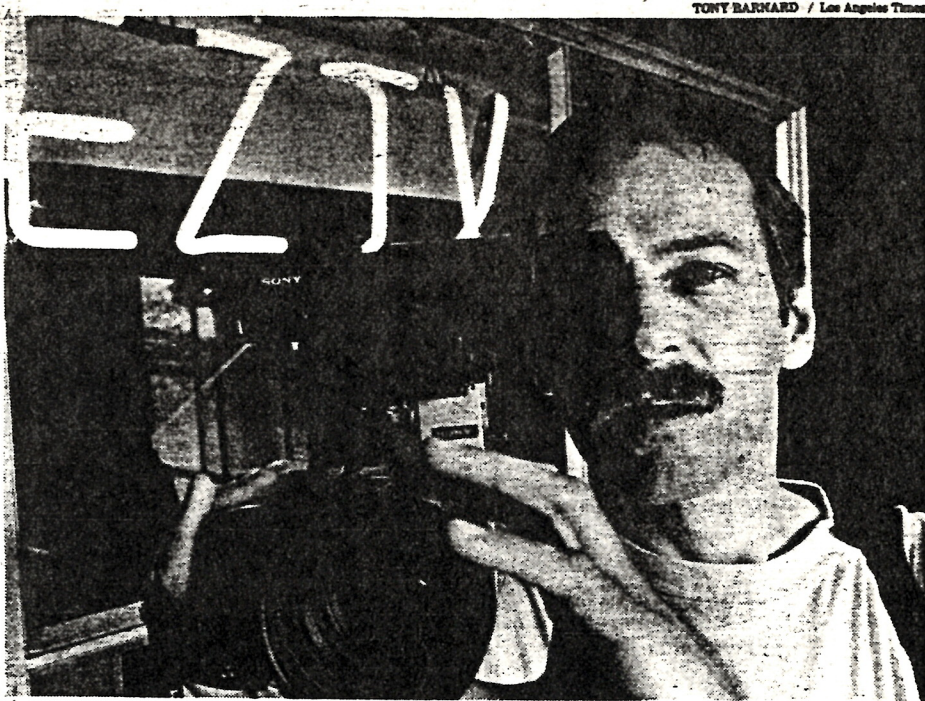
Hollywood is a town where money talks. No one raises an eyebrow anymore at the news of a new \$25-million studio film, a \$5-million miniseries or even a \$150,000 rock video.

But at EZTV, a new video gallery that doubles as a video production and distribution house, film makers are making feature-length videos for less than \$1,000.

"We can do videos that cheaply because everything a video maker needs is right here," EZTV director John Dorr said, pointing at the mounds of camera equipment and editing machines scattered around the two-story loft in West Hollywood. "We try to be completely self-contained. We provide the equipment, the editing facility and the exhibition space. All a film maker has to worry about is having enough money for videotape and food for their cast, and they can make a film."

Since its opening in June, EZTV has become a focal point for video's new frontier. Open Thursday through Sunday nights, the gallery has become a launching pad for explorers of the outer limits of the visual arts. EZTV has displayed an eclectic array of local video works, with an emphasis on profiles, documentaries, *video noirs*.

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John Dorr directs EZTV, which can be used to make feature-film length videos for as little as \$1,000.

Los Angeles Times

## VIDEO FILE: LESS CASH TALKS AT EZTV

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and black comedies inspired by a generation's worth of prime-time TV fantasies.

During the last month, offerings have included everything from "Rimbaud in L.A.," an updated, new-wave version of the life of French poet Arthur Rimbaud, to a mock-video soap opera called "Faculty Wives." The program schedule also includes "Hour 25," a weekly sci-fi talk that has offered interviews with Gumby creator Art Clokey and "Twilight Zone" TV scenarist George Clayton Johnson.

Even on a recent weekday afternoon, EZTV had the informal, chaotic air of a college fraternity den. While Dorr fielded a series of phone calls in his upstairs office, film makers slipped in and out of the main floor, either bringing in new tapes or lugging out armfuls of equipment.

Camped out in one corner in front of an editing machine, James Dillinger was putting the finishing touches on "Blonde Death," his new feature-length video that will be part of an EZTV program in October. Made for \$2,000, the video follows the black-comic escapades of Tammy, a teen-age time bomb who goes on a killing spree after her family moves to Orange County.

"It's definitely what you'd call a low-budget video," Dillinger explained during a break from his editing chores. "Everyone worked for free, since they're mostly young actors at an early stage of their career. We shot it in 15 days over a six-week period, plus a gap of a couple weeks when the lead actress was out of town."

Like many of the young video talents working with EZTV, Dillinger is a film school graduate (UCLA) who has turned to video after unsuccessfully trying to break into the Hollywood studio system.

"As a screenwriter I've had script deals, options, rewrites, but nothing that's ever been developed into a film," he said. "For me, video is a way to do what I want to do, not only cheaply, but the way I want to do it."

"I think that video is going to be a lot like what's gone on in music over the past five years with bands that were once considered punk that are now immensely popular. It's what always happens in art—that something that begins as unusual or marginal eventually becomes accepted as part of the mainstream. Like us, they didn't have millions of dollars to spend on making their albums, yet they were accepted for what they were—fresh, innovative talent."

That's the sort of talent EZTV is trying to nurture, with the hope that someday the gallery can expand either to a larger theater or a regular television outlet. The gallery has already established a program where it has swapped tapes with video centers in such cities as Dallas, New York and Portland, Ore.

"We're just looking for ways to distribute videos

which don't involve negotiating a sale to a major company," Dorr said. "We don't want to get tied down with a mass-media mentality. By arranging our own distribution network, through local video galleries and the growing video rental business, we can find a way to keep our video programs under our control."

Now 39, Dorr has been involved in film work for more than 15 years, teaching film at UCLA and the American Film Institute, writing for a wide variety of film magazines and serving as a screenwriter or script supervisor on such low-budget features as "It's Alive," "Hell Up in Harlem" and "Messiah of Evil."

"But I just wasn't making it in the big-budget Hollywood world," he said. "People would option screenplays and commission rewrites, but nothing ever happened. In 1979, I got my hands on a cheap video camera and started making films, all as cheaply as possible."

"However, we always ran into the same problem—there was no place to show them."

Looking for a home, Dorr first screened videos at the West Hollywood Park Community Building. Earlier this year, he scrounged up enough money to lease EZTV's current two-story loft, where the video gallery began regular weekend screenings.

"We've shown everything from \$50,000 tapes which were made in the hopes of being sold to cable TV to work by people who I don't think ever thought they'd have a place to show their home videos," Dorr explained. "At least 25% of the stuff comes from people who walked in off the street with tapes under their arms."

"For someone like myself, who came in with a film background, video has been a real revelation," Dorr said. "I don't even think in film terms anymore. You just can't compare the two. Video is a much more intimate medium. You can shoot in the back of cars, in a small room. It makes you open to a lot more subtle dramatic possibilities."

Perhaps because so many of EZTV's regular contributors are refugees from film, the gallery leans more toward narrative than conceptual video art. Many recent screenings have featured videos of works by such local playwrights as Terry Mack Murphy and Rob Sullivan.

"I think what you're seeing here are the works of video storytellers," explained Shawn Bovee, a local actress and EZTV's liaison with the local theater scene. "These are really visual short stories, sometimes realistic, sometimes surrealist, sometimes comic, but unique works that you can't see on TV or in the theaters anymore."

According to Bovee, who starred in "Dorothy and

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## VIDEO FILE

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Alan at Norma Place," a recent EZTV feature about writer Dorothy Parker's troubled marriage, the biggest barrier local video artists have to hurdle is their audience's tendency to judge art by its budget.

"A lot of people seem to think that it's only worth spending a Friday night seeing a film if it cost \$25 million," she said. "It's hard to get it into people's heads that the money isn't that important. It's the ideas and the freshness and originality that counts, not the budget."

"One thing's for sure. No one is working here for the status. It's for the freedom and creativity. If all anyone was interested in was how much the video cost, they're bound to be disappointed."

CALENDAR

Los Angeles Times

Friday, September 30, 1983

"Why has this city gotten a bum rap?" asked Meredith MacRae during the weekend she came to Philadelphia, one of the country's best-kept secrets for comfortable living, situated in the midst of early American history on the banks of the Schuylkill and Delaware rivers. "Wasn't it W. C. Fields who wanted his gravestone marked 'Better Here Than in Philadelphia?'" These days, Fields would approve of WPVI's "Action News," the most popular news show in the country; all the Federal redbrick row houses that have been beautifully restored along tree-shaded streets; the immense Fairmount Park, which may be the largest stretch of green to run through the center of a city; the outdoor art and the first-rate symphony under the direction of Riccardo Muti; the Pennsylvania Ballet; Boat-house Row with its sculling teams; spacious sun-dappled gardens and manorial residences, stables and paddocks along the nearby Main Line. Meredith MacRae joined the Hollywood contingent that arrived for the Bar Mitzvah of Earl Green-

# The Great Life

George Christy

from the owner of the Club Bene in Morgan, New Jersey, who wanted to book me for a song-and-comedy act. We sold out, so I moved on to the Catskill clubs, and now I'm playing with Tony Bennett, Don Rickles, Eydie Gorme and Steve Lawrence in Atlantic City, which does more than double the business of Las Vegas with less than half the hotels. There are 60 million people to draw from, all within easy reach from Philadelphia, New York, Washington, Baltimore." At the

ert Hearts" for Patricia Carbonneau. Designers Steve Tomar and Stuart Lampert, who hosted a fancybump luncheon at David Auspitz's Famous Deli with its back room that has a collection of old telephones, assisted Earl Greenburg in coordinating everything (Earl's longtime secretary Beverly Geiger was diagnosed the week before as having lung cancer). Initially based in Philadelphia, Steve and Stuart came to Hollywood to design houses for Johnny Carson, Barbra Strei-

Truth" starring John Ritter, "The Caine Mutiny Court Martial" ("obviously Chuck Heston, who was a success in the London production as Captain Queeg, is busy with 'The Colbys' series, so we're offering the role to Jack Nicholson and Jon Voight"). NBC's Alan Gerson nibbled from the Famous Deli's platters, as did Jay Poyner, who's leaving the United Media Syndicate to form his own Poyner Group; CBS' Rick Weiss; Earl Greenburg's brothers, Mark, John and Shelly; Lorimar's daytime developer Eleanor Richman; talent coordinator Julie Leiferman; Earl's development associate Joel Andryc ("we're working on a game show, 'Generations Apart,' with guests of varying ages, and 'Night Report,' about things that happen at night"); publicist Arnold Lipsman; attorney Harold Freudenheim; Mary and Art Alisi;



Catherine Bach with Spike, above left; Dean Pitchford, top right; Chris Atkins, above right



Lauren Wood with Karen Black, above left, during premiere at EZ TV of "They Must Be Told," which Lauren coproduced with Ed Millis and Allee Willis, and in which Lauren and Karen act with such chums as Linda Ronstadt, Pee-wee Herman, Bud Cort, Teri Garr, Roy Firestone, Toni Basil, Elvira, Mike Edwards, Maria Conchita Alonso and Ed Millis, top right; Irene Cara with fiance Conrad Palmisano, above right



Melissa Manchester, Allee Willis and sponsor Charlotte Crossley (formerly a Harlette, now with Full Swing), above; breakdancer Pop 'n Taco with Toni Basil, below



burg's son Ari at the Main Line Reform Temple, where Rosemarie and Bob Stack and public relations chief Mort Salowitz were smitten with the warm spirit of Rabbi Max Hausen and the voice of cantor Merrill Fisher. Earl, whose production company (with Columbia TV) is producing "It's a Great Life," the half-hour daytime weekday show hosted by the Stacks, had associates and pals fly in for the ceremony, which was followed by a luncheon at the Old Original Bookbinders (established 1865) and a dinner dance at the Franklin Institute, where the black-tie guests were greeted by the fabled Mummies band playing "The Pennsylvania Polka" and where they dined in the great hall with the 70-foot-high rotunda, surrounded by virines displaying Benjamin Franklin's lap desk, inkwell, tankard, spectacles.

Joy and Regis Philbin arrived the night before from New York, where Regis hosts the popular 90-minute morning show on WABC. What with the popularity of his show, Regis has carved out another career in the nightclub circuit. "I got a call



Bruce Roberts, left, affixing his name tag; Sam Harris, above left; artist Andre Miropolsky, Pristine Condition and "Double Trouble's" Liz Segal, above right

Bookbinders luncheon where Barbara Knox entertained with her sultry song stylings, Earl's "It's a Great Life" producer Marcia Lewis and her lamp manufacturer husband Mark Smith chuckled over a sign she saw recently at the Sportsmen's Lodge in the Valley. "It read 'New Nouvelle Cuisine,' which means that nouvelle cuisine had had it, right?" Circulating were actor Dean Butler and Columbia's Susan Simon (who were inseparable all weekend) — Dean announced that he's appearing in a "Gidget" pilot with Caryn Richman ("I play Moonoggie"), adding that he's pleased with his performance as the Reno croopier whom Heier Shaver rejects in "Des-

sand, Suzanne Pleshette, Cicely Tyson, and are now working on Ed McMahon and Lorna Luft's residences. Steve is the resident decorator on "It's a Great Life." Houston columnist Maxine Mesinger also is a regular, along with Chicago hairstylist Paul Glick, who's the "taste and style" editor for the daytime series, which will be syndicated by the Inday Network this month.

At the Famous Deli, Jeff Melnick noted that he and his partner Doug Urbanski have received a commitment for three shows from Showtime — they're hoping to present Lauren Bacall in "Sweet Bird of Youth," "The Unvarnished

Chicago space-planning expert Gene Dreyfus (also featured on "It's a Great Life"); Rob Berry; Nancy Pruss; Noreen Conlin, currently developing a game show of her own; Mary Sweeney and Vicky Shemaria, whose West Hollywood restaurant, Matrix, is booming now that they've switched from California cuisine to Tex-Mex with "kick ass" margaritas and fajitas (in one month, sales went from \$40,000 to \$120,000); Bonwit Teller's ace perfume sniffer Reda Fisher, who praised Earl's 16-year-old daughter Meredith — the night before, Meredith entertained guests at the Franklin Institute (as did Meredith MacRae, who suavely interpreted "The Wind Beneath My Wings"). It was after his sister Meredith admitted that he couldn't wait to get home to count the money he received as gifts (only to have Stuart Lampert predict Ari will be a banker), while Rosemarie Stack was amused to learn that Orson Welles had a chemical created for his swimming pool that turned urine into a raspberry color so that he could see which of his posh pals polluted the water.

Sherry Rayn Barnett