

not, Congress will once again tackle the question and the CANM lobbying effort will return to high gear. The prospects for a legislative victory are good.

Throughout this debate, "diversity" has been a key buzzword, with all parties claiming to be its friend. But it would be naive to imagine that diversity, as alternative filmmakers understand it, will necessarily result from retention of the FISR. At the same time, it's certain that without the rules, such diversity will be almost impossible. —DG

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 portapak 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

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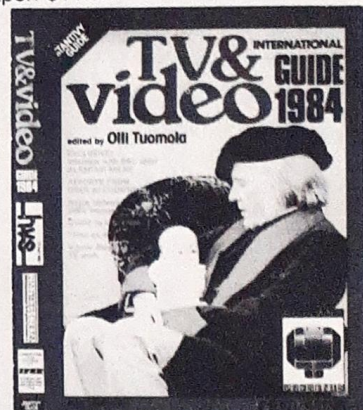
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Southern California. Non-broadcast video is new to Los Angeles, and cracking its audience may be one of Hollywood's last entertainment frontiers. Super-8 and video producer Ken Camp remarked on the uneven attendance at EZTV screenings: "I have a horrible 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

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* ■

WEST INDIES

Building a Voice: Lobbying Group Forms

FENTON JOHNSON

"West Indies" is an occasional column devoted to news & issues from the West Coast. Send your press releases & suggestions to Fenton Johnson, Film Arts Foundation, 346 Ninth St., San Francisco CA 94103; (415) 552-8760.

With 1978 Telecommunications Act reauthorization hearings scheduled this spring, a coalition of West Coast media organizations and individuals is moving to lobby for independent producers' concerns. The coalition includes representatives from the four largest media organizations in the Bay Area, with a combined membership of over 3,700. For the first time, Film Arts Foundation, Bay Area Video Coalition, Video Free America and Media Alliance have joined forces to pursue collective goals. AIVF helped catalyze the West Coast lobbying coalition by co-sponsoring public TV hearings in San Francisco last fall.

In its first and most significant action so far, the coalition engineered a mailing to its own members and the members of Washington state's Focal Point, Oregon's Media Project, southern California's Independent Feature Project and the western states members of AIVF. The mailing presented a nine-point platform, and included a sample letter to members of Congress asking that they support the platform at the spring hearings.

Though coalition members used the AIVF position paper already presented to CPB as a starting point, there are differences worth noting. The coalition declined to advocate the Center for Independent Television called for in the AIVF platform on the grounds that it would add another layer of bureaucracy whose responsiveness would be difficult to enforce. Instead, the West Coasters call for direct funding—insulated from station and consortia—of

indies. The coalition also advocates the establishment of regular consultative structures among indies, CPB and PBS, with an eye to improving public television's dismal record on carriage and publicity for indie programs.

Depending on which coalition member you're talking to, the mailing's objective varies from "education" to "confrontation." The first of these goals raises few enough hackles. In a town where politics rate among the fine arts, San Francisco's indies have been a notoriously quiescent crowd. "There may be a time for confrontation, but I'm much more interested in a clear, reasoned approach," said Skip Sweeney, co-director of Video Free America and a coalition member. Sweeney worries that if indies make too much noise, they may risk losing outright the financial gains they made through the 1978 legislation.

In contrast, coalition member Larry Daressa, president of California Newsreel, advocates a much more activist line, contending that the mailing itself was a gesture of confrontation. But, Daressa concedes, "Most of the coalition members have been uninvolved. They've not seen themselves as functioning politically regarding CPB and PBS."

If Sweeney and Daressa represent the coalition's extremes, Bay Area Video Coalition director Morrie Warshawski is the voice of its center. Warshawski identified education as the mailing's principle goal, noting that on the West Coast it's difficult keep current with activity 3,000 miles away.

Still, Warshawski spoke out strongly in favor of direct action now. "What's wrong with making a little noise? All of us support CPB—that's the first plank of the platform. Now's the time for us to let CPB and Congress know we have a large voice and constituency and can make things happen."

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Teal Fraser

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