

# Outlook For The Electronic Soapbox

By JOHN REILLY

(Co-Director, Global Village)

The best part of public access is the idea itself—a revolutionary concept for American electronic media, that the people have a right to get on the air. Traditionally the media, both here and almost anywhere else in the world, seem to belong to the guy who has physical control of the studio and transmitter. A fantastic target of the generals almost anywhere where they seize power. If you control the broadcast media, you control the minds of the people or so goes the popular wisdom.

A truly unrestricted access to mass media does not really exist today, but we do have the special channels set aside on the cable systems, called the public access channels. They are the closest we've come in America to an electronic soap box-giving a citizen the right to voice his or her views on almost anything, anytime. We're not really talking about the unrestricted use of electronic media, but rather the right of the minority, the disenfranchised, the little guy, to use the electronic media available today.

I've often wondered if we really accepted the concept that the airwaves belong to the people, as the Communications Act of 1934 states. In theory the tv and radio stations are licensed for three years with no guarantee of renewal, but in practice it is a revolving door with the FCC doing the formulating of the rubber stamping of applicants passing through.

Almost no tv stations are owned by black Americans and only a few radio stations. Less than one and one-half hours a week of national television time is donated to black audiences.

By the accepted definition of broadcasting we exclude major segments of our social fabric from participating in access to radio and tv. Even in local markets the ever-present real or imagined pressures of the advertiser prevent "controversy" in programing.

Both nationally and locally the pressures of the clock will exclude those who get by the "controversy" restrictions. It is the accepted wisdom that the largest possible audience is best. Even public television falls victim to the same pressures of the rating game.

## Keeping The Lines Open

Broadcast and cable systems in this country don't exist solely for the benefit of the sponsor or station owner. We've had Spiro Agnew remind us of that fact. By the very nature of a democratic society we must keep open the means of communications and make them as widely available to all the people and all the viewpoints as humanly possible. If we fail to assure as wide an access to all media, we hasten the movement away from an open and free society and towards one reflecting the interest of the few, be it the government or large corporations.

It is unreasonable to expect any drastic change in the structure of radio and tv in America. We have defined our mass media by our national goals, a logical if somewhat narrow approach for the goals often change whereas the need to protect the constitutional rights of people remains rather constant. The system reflects rather accurately the market economy, with priorities given to earning a profit.

Public television has never really succeeded in America because at best it has been an afterthought, supported by the few wealthy foundations or now an overly sensitive Congress. There is no real constituency for Public TV, as there was none for it when it was called Educational TV.

Commercial television is simply too commercial, and public television lacks a real public.

The idea of setting aside channels on all major cable systems for public use is revolutionary in that at least in theory we have opened up a major means of communication to anyone who wants to get a message across. The current rules of the FCC covering cable incorporate the public access channel concept into the mix of in-

centives and restrictions designed to regulate the growth of the cable industry.

The rules governing public access are just a few paragraphs of a much larger document but with great significance. For the first time our government has officially recognized that the people really have a right to access of electronic media. The public access channels are open to the public on a first come, first served basis with no censorship, well almost none. Cable owners are still liable for what is said over those public access channels, they could censor material where they feel it may be libelous for them.

## The New York Test

The real test of public access has been in New York City. For the past 18 months the franchise agreements the city granted to Teleprompter and Sterling Manhattan Cable Television has mandated two public access channels per system.

Does it work?

As a producer of material for public access since its inception, I feel it is only partially successful. The fact that it exists has influenced the FCC in its formulation of rules on cable development and will certainly help determine whether other cities will encourage and support public access channels.

Also as a result of the discussions of public access a few commercial radio and tv stations have experimented with public access timeslots. The main restrictions have been very limited air time and infrequent use of media. Surely the success or failure of public access in New York will greatly affect its growth in the other top 100 markets.

To develop a public access system costs money, though not much compared to a hour of network primetime. The New York State Council on the Arts has given over \$200,000 in the past two years to groups working with public access in New York State. The Markle Foundation has supported one group at New York U., the Alternate Media Center, with \$275,000. The three major groups producing material for public access; Alternate Media Center, Open Channel and Global Village, all have been funded by private and public foundations and the state and federal arts councils. Few other sources of funds exist at present.

Teleprompter has given more support to public access than has Sterling (a company partially owned by Time, Inc., ready to purge unprofitable divisions). Teleprompter has opened an access center on 125th Street in Harlem, where users of the access channels can go and have a simple program produced for 1-inch tape free of charge. Teleprompter also publicizes a monthly listing of public access programs and sends it to its 50,000 subscribers. Sterling has no studio available nor a listing for subscribers. But it did lend \$10,000 in equipment to an access center located near New York U.

Approximately 70 hours per week are cablecast over each system and can be viewed by any of the 100,000 cable subscribers, providing they have a converter that has channel C and channel D, know about public access and can find out when to tune in.

## A Matter of Support

What's wrong? Presently everything is pretaped, nothing is live, partially because of the liability question and partly because it is easier to handle tape. The source of funds to support programming is very limited and reflects the same general trend of foundation support of public television. It's largely at the whim of a few foundations and as such has almost no real community financial support base.

Public Access programs in New York City have almost no real community feedback. They are put out over the entire system (approximately half the area of Manhattan) to 50,000 homes or less than 15% of the television households in the area.

What is lacking is programming by residents of Harlem, being

cablecast to Harlem on any meaningful basis and needed by that community. This stage is planned for 1974. Herb Dordick, director of the City Office of Telecommunications and a real supporter of public access, feels the subdividing of the present systems into 10 head-ends will set the stage for viable community support. Says Dordick: "to make it work it has to have a community base . . . I also feel that local cablecasting has to have a sound economic base."

It's the basic question of financial support that may make or break the concept of public access. If that support is not directly related to the local grassroots community it will have the same general irrelevance that afflicts public tv today. If the local community wants its own channel and supports it, as it would a community newspaper, the electronic soap box has a chance of surviving, thriving and demonstrating the viability of community control as a democratic process.

It becomes increasingly clear that if public access is to serve a useful function, both to the community and the system owner, it must be needed by the local community. In the case of New York City, that means subdistricting to better serve geographic areas of the city, perhaps even developing local advertising support, comparable to local community newspapers. As the community wants to use the public access channels, it will see to it that the programs are of better quality (it ranges now from crude to very exciting) and meets real local needs. Global Village has worked with Community Planning Districts to help focus on local issues that are not covered adequately by other media.

Public Access which is perhaps the most exciting innovation in electronic media in recent years can survive and prosper if it can develop a constituency.

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# GLOBAL VILLAGE

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**V I D E O T A P E S   B Y   R U D I   S T E R N**

**PRODUCTION GROUP:   Jolie Davidow  
                                 Susan Shapiro  
                                 Sal Spiezia**

**CURRENT DISTRIBUTION LIST**

**APRIL/1972**

**GLOBAL VILLAGE VIDEO RESOURCE CENTER**

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**TAPE #1      GLOBAL VILLAGE VIDEO JOURNAL: I**

26 min., B/W and Color

Edited by: Joie Davidow

This videotape journal, containing the elements listed below, is in a magazine format. The structure and style of such a video magazine are being explored to determine feasible prototypes for college distribution networks.

## CONTENTS

"Faces": a video light composition

Dhun/Chinese New Year Celebration: a video/light composition employing laser projections by Llyod Cross and the dragon dance inaugurating "The Year of the Pig".

Video/Dance Composition: Alexandra Kasuba's Environment: Emanuel Ghent's Electronic Composition: Costumes by Evelyn Roth and Deborah Rappaport from the Museum of Contemporary Crafts Exhibition: "Costume Statements" June, 1971.

Witch-In: Central Park gathering of metropolitan witches: interview with Dr. Martello about the civil rights of witches.

Central Park Video Poem: a video composition about Sundays in New York (This tape was broadcast on WNET-TV on "Free Time" in May of 1971)

Brighton Beach confronts Earth People's Park: an urban commune. A video dialogue between the Jewish mothers of Brooklyn and commune members. This sequence was shot as part of the Global Village Video Workshop during the Spring term of 1971.

Paul Silbey's Massage Lesson: the fine points of body massage in an educational spirit.

Open Theatre: exercise in sound and body movement with a true story by Chami Chaikin concerning her visit to a friend in the hospital.

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**TAPE #2      GLOBAL VILLAGE VIDEO JOURNAL: II**

24 min., Black and White

Edited by: Wayne Hyde

Interview with Anthony Colombo of the Italian-American Civil Rights League: March 1971

Bowery Interview: March 1971

Christopher Street Liberation Day: Gay March and reacting by-standers: June 27, 1971

Daytop Village: a drug rehabilitation concept and facility on Staten Island: May 1971

Abbie Hoffman at the Judson Church Flag Show: shot by Jim Sheldon: November 1970

STAR: Street Transvestites Action Revolutionaries, a radical Lower East Side Commune: March 1971

"City People, City Walls": an excerpt from a video documentary dealing with the reactions of people to wall paintings in their neighborhoods: August 1971

Krishna: devotees performing in Central Park on a Sunday: March 1971

**TAPE #3      Christopher Street Liberation Day March: June 27, 1972**

22 min., Black and White

Edited by Rudi Stern/Joie Davidow

A video documentary dealing with the second anniversary of the Stonewall Riot. The march up Sixth Avenue, the gay-in at Central Park, and the reactions of by-standers comprise the structure of this work. The tape reflects the spirit of the gay movement in achieving self-awareness and social freedom. Onlookers' reactions serve as a document of some of the existing gaps in public awareness towards the liberation movement. The tape has been shown on one of New York's public channels (Sterling/Manhattan Cable) and is being circulated and shown by the Gay Activist.

Some of the potentials of street television and portable video as a social and community resource are explored in this tape.

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**TAPE #4 CITY PEOPLE/CITY WALLS**

A video documentary on wall paintings and neighborhood reactions. 18 min., Black and White

Edited by: Joie Davidow

A group of artists has been involved in painting huge murals on the sides of Manhattan buildings. They are on Park Avenue, the Lower East Side, Houston Street, and the West Side Drive. This tape documents the effects of these works of art on the people who live with them. The tape explores neighborhood environments as they relate to the city muralist. Bob Wiegand of City Walls, Inc. worked closely on the production of this tape.

**TAPE #5 COSTUME STATEMENTS**

An Exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts in June of 1971. 13 min., Black and White

Edited by: Joie Davidow

A video documentary about an unusual participation costume show and the reactions of museum visitors as they wear the designs. The concept of this show demonstrates new ways in which museum exhibitions can relate more directly with the public they serve. This tape was commissioned by Evelyn Roth, one of the participating artists in the exhibition, on behalf of Intermedia in Vancouver.

**TAPE #6 ST. PETER'S FIESTA: A VIDEO DOCUMENTARY BY JOIE DAVIDOW**

12 min., Black and White

Shot and Edited by: Joie Davidow

This documentary deals with a four-day Italian Fiesta held annually in Gloucester, Mass. to celebrate the Blessing of the Fleet. This is one of the few communities where families still earn their living from fishing. The Fiesta is an expression of community pride in the fleet and their close relationship with the sea as the source of their livelihood.

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**TAPE #7** SOHO JOURNAL I: A VIDEO DOCUMENTARY BY GLOBAL VILLAGE  
30 min., Black and White  
Project Adviser: Rudi Stern  
Edited by: Joie Davidow

This is a video journal about a community in the process of formation. This tape was edited from approximately 13 hours of material recorded entirely by the students of two workshop groups between September and November of 1971. This video documentary deals with the emerging neighborhood of SoHo and the interrelationship of its many component elements.

**TAPE #8** SOHO JOURNAL II: GLOBAL VILLAGE VIDEO WORKSHOP ORIENTATION to Experimental Television (5750-0 in the New School Bulletin: Fall 1971)

Project Adviser: Rudi Stern

Edited by the Workshop with assistance by Joie Davidow and Wayne Hyde

Workshop Participants: Mariette Allen, Issac Cohen, Eric Hauben, Ron Kessler, Yoram Lehmann, Edward Levine, Robert Wiegand

This video documentary on SoHo contains the following elements:

1. Neighborhood meeting on solving the problems of increasing crime
2. George Noel: French artist living in SoHo
3. Night shift at a doll factory in SoHo
4. Galleries in SoHo: Sonnabend, Emmerich, Castelli, Reese Paley
5. Mr. Zelf and his secretary Chickadee explain the floor sanding process and its place in loft living.
6. Louis Gancher and his screws and bolts company
7. A rap about the architecture and history of the neighborhood by Ingrid Wiegand and Bob Wiegand (who are in the process of writing a book about the subject)
8. Various street interviews: businessmen, store owners, a keymaker, etc.

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**TAPE #8 (con't)**

This tape focuses in on the relationship of artists to the pre-existing business community and how artists are working with this sector for achieving mutual community benefits. These tapes were made with the active support of the SoHo Artists Association. They will be shown on the Public Channel Cable in Manhattan as well as at public hearings dealing with community problems.

**TAPE #9** SOHO JOURNAL III: GLOBAL VILLAGE VIDEO WORKSHOP  
Half-inch video: Experimental and Street Television  
(5745-0 in **New School** bulletin: Fall Semester 1971)

Project Adviser: Rudi Stern

Edited by the workshop with Assistance by: Joie Davidow  
and Wayne Hyde

Technical Assistance: Sal Spiezia

Version #2 Edited by Sal Spiezia with the assistance  
of Susan Shapiro

Workshop Participants: Paula Barnak, Nicholas Dancy, Patricia Depew,  
Mel Diamond, Jim Hanlan, Gary Hoffman, Larry McDonald, Steve McGinn,  
Susan Shapiro

This video documentary contains the following elements:

1. Emanuel Ghent, electronic composer - resident of SoHo
2. Gay Activists Alliance Street Fair on Wooster Street
3. Stella and her Thrift Shop on Spring Street
4. Italian women rapping about the state of things in Little Italy and SoHo.
5. Neighborhood meeting at St. Anthony's Church about a proposed half-way house to be built in SoHo. Various residents' statements concerning this proposal.

The format of this documentary is that of a video magazine: short segments woven together to give a multi-faceted view of this developing area.

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**TAPE #10 CHINESE LOUNGE (A VIDEO DOCUMENTARY ON A COMMUNITY  
PROJECT OF THE LOWER EAST SIDE SERVICE CENTER)**

18 min., Black and White

Edited by: Wayne Hyde

Technical Assistance: Sal Spiezia  
with: Pat Depew, Mitch Huber, Susan  
Shapiro

This video documentary deals with an unusual city drug rehabilitation program. Chinese men, ranging in age from 60 to 86, are involved in a methadone program, having gone from opium to heroin. In many cases these men were literally slaves to their habit and the victims of unbelievable extortion, having worked for Chinese commercial laundries twelve or fourteen hours a day, six days a week, being paid in drugs. Conducted by social workers and volunteers who are deeply committed to their clients' needs, this program is certainly one of the most unique projects of the Social Services Administration of the City of New York. This documentary is conceived as a first stage with subsequent tapes being used for street corner feedback directly involving the Chinese community and its attitudes towards an element that they generally refer to as "lepers" and "degenerates".

**TAPE #11 CONCERT FOR PEACE: St. John's the Divine -- December 6, 1971**

30 min., Black and White

Edited by: Joie Davidow and Wayne Hyde

Technical Assistance: Pat Depew, Ron Kessler, Susan Shapiro  
Mitch Huber, Sal Spiezia, Nicholas  
Dancy

This video tape, involving three cameras and a mixer, is a record of the concert in which the following performers took part:

Tennessee Williams  
Norman Mailer  
Edgar Winter and White Trash  
Chambers Brothers  
Phil Ochs

This tape will be distributed by the producers: People's Coalition for Peace and Justice to raise money for the anti-war cause and as a way of informing people about the efforts towards this goal.

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**TAPE #12      HOSPITAL AUDIENCES INC.**

Part I : 15 min., Black and White  
Part II: 20 min., Black and White

Edited by: Wayne Hyde

Assembled with the assistance of: Pat Depew, Mitch Huber,  
Susan Shapiro, Sal Spiezia

Part I: A presentation of the Beuford Express at GreenHaven Prison. This video documentary of this Black rock group and the inmates' reactions forms the first part of a tape to be distributed by Hospital Audiences to raise money for their institutional projects.

Part II: Hospital Audiences, Inc.: its structure, its offices, volunteers, staff, etc. How it functions, what its goals are, where it sees itself going. H.A.I. is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing entertainment for hospitals, prisons, and mental institutions. It also brings groups out of their institutions by providing freetickets to Broadway Shows, Concerts, etc.

**TAPE #13      CENTRAL PARK VIDEO POEM**

8 min., Black and White

Camera: Rudi Stern

Edited by: Jole Davidow

Central Park Video Poem is a video composition about Sundays in New York. (This tape was broadcast on WNET-TV on "Free Time" in May of 1971)

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TAPE #14 INTERVIEW WITH HON. MR. SULTAN AND HON. JUSTICE  
A.S. CHOUDHURY OF BENGLA DESH

45 min., Black and White

Camera: Wayne Hvde

Technical Assistance: Joie Davidow, Lorraine Rubino,  
Sal Spiezia

Interview Conducted by: Richard Zeif, Esq.

A timely and relevant interview with two leaders of the new state of Bengla Desh conducted on December 19, 1971. Among other aspects of the situation, this tape deals with the role of students in the revolution, public opinion in this country, the U.S. Government's attitudes, parallels to the American Revolution, etc. This tape is the first in a series on the emerging presence and significance of Bengla Desh. (Note: since making this tape in late December of 1971, Mr. Choudhury was named President of the country).

TAPE #15 DOG SHIT IN FUN CITY: A VIDEOTAPE BY THE GLOBAL VILLAGE  
VIDEO WORKSHOP

Project Adviser: Rudi Stern

Editing Assistance: Joie Davidow and Sal Spiezia

A video documentary about the increasing problem of dog turds, droppings and related elements in New York life. The tape includes interviews with concerned city officials, midtown pedestrians, pet store owners, and doormen. It includes an interview with a woman who has not walked her dog in the last few years.

January 1972

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TAPE #16      MORGAN LOVE: HEAD SHOP WHOLESALE: A VIDEOTAPE BY THE  
GLOBAL VILLAGE VIDEO WORKSHOP

15 min., Black and White

Project Adviser: Rudi Stern

Editing Assistance: Joie Davidow

A documentary about the making, selling, and marketing of hash pipes. Interviews and raps with workers, managers, competitors, and customers of this large psychedelic wholesale operation. It provides an interesting insight into counter-culture commerce and the above-ground systems it needs to develop. Mel Romanoff, owner of Morgan Love, cooperated in the production of this work.

January 1972

TAPE#17      NEW JERSEY CAR CULTURE: A VIDEOTAPE BY THE GLOBAL VILLAGE  
VIDEO WORKSHOP

15 min., Black and White

Project Adviser: Rudi Stern

Editing Assistance: Wayne Hyde

A video insight into a unique subculture. Interviews with the owner, salesmen, and customers of the J. and F. Speed Shop in Saddle Brook, New Jersey are the substance of the tape. Drag racing, custom cars, cars as symbols of life-style, and the world of Gear Heads are looked into.

January 1972

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**TAPE #18      THE SELLING OF THE STATUE: A VIDEOTAPE BY THE  
GLOBAL VILLAGE VIDEO WORKSHOP**

Workshop Production Group: Eric Carpenter  
Pat Ceasar  
Bryan Gordon  
Rick Granoff  
Ed Levine  
Alice O'Donnell  
Jorge Mourao  
Sal Sabaj

Editing Adviser: Sal Spiezia

Technical Assistance: Susan Shapiro

Project Adviser: Rudi Stern

15 Min., Black and White  
March/1972

A look at the Statue of Liberty. Interviews with the ferry captain, foreign visitors, park service personnel, etc. in regard to the Statue as a symbol of "liberty". Patriotism and tourist souvenirs work hand in hand in this national monument.

**TAPE #19      CONEY ISLAND: A VIDEOTAPE BY THE GLOBAL VILLAGE  
VIDEO WORKSHOP**

Workshop Production Group: Ken Bauer  
Tom Celandine  
Joe Chiara  
Pat Hanson  
Cynthia Kayan  
Howard Marks  
Marc Nitsche  
Pat Sarsfield  
Bruce Taylor  
Nancy Jacobson

Editing Adviser: Joie Davidow

Technical Assistance: Susan Shapiro, Sal Spiezia

Project Adviser: Rudi Stern

March/1972      15 Min., Black and White

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A video documentary about the present plight of this once-fashionable amusement park. The tape explores deserted street carnival rides amid the recorded laughter of a still functioning fun house. Interviews with shopkeepers, Nathan's Hot Dog customers, joggers on the Boardwalk, police, assorted residents, some phantoms, and a poet-genius about to be fired from his sign-painting gig.

This tape presents an interesting multilevel view of one of New York's more visual neighborhoods. As a document of an area's problems, tensions, fears, memories and defense mechanisms this tape offers an insight into the potentials of portable television as a community medium.

**TAPE #20 VILLENELLE OF THE WALKING FEET: A POEM BY JOHN HARRIMAN SET TO VIDEO COUNTERPOINT BY RUDI STERN**

8 Min., Black and White

Technical Assistance: Sal Spiezia  
Ron Kessler  
Wayne Hyde

A video poem concerned with anonymous faces in the bus terminal, lots of prismatic walking feet, bodies riding Piranesi escalators, and street crossers.

**TAPE #21 STREET THEATER OF OSSINING AT SING SING PRISON**

12 Min., Black and White

A Tape by Rudi Stern with Wayne Hyde  
Ron Kessler  
Lee Osborne  
Sal Spiezia

An improvisation conducted by Clay Stevenson with ten inmates of the prison. The theme of the improvisation is a Christmas dinner attended by a group of brothers who are in the process of deciding their father's fate. A number of the participants were in the workshop for the first time which is surprising in view of the intensity with which they interact. This tape was planned as the first in a series with this important street theater group.

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**TAPE #22**

**OPERATIC EXCERTS AFTER THE PLAYS OF SHAKESPEARE**  
Presented by the Manhattaville Opera workshop

Videotape by: Jolie Davidow

Technical Assistance: Jesse Davis  
Wayne Hyde  
Larry McDonald

Part I : Black and White, 30 min.

Britten: Rape of Lucretia  
Britten: Midsummer Night's Dream

Part II: Black and White, 30 min.

Verdi: Falstaff  
Nicolai: Merry Wives of Windsor

Two tapes of excerpts from the plays of Shakespeare as interpreted by the masters of Opera. Performed by the Manhattanville College workshop directed by Gordon Davis.

March/ 1972

**TAPE #23**

**JULIAN BECK**

30 min., Black and White

A tape by Rudi Stern with: Sal Spiezia  
Susan Shapiro

A rap with Julian Beck about the Living Theatre in Brazil, political repression, and the state of American activism.

April/1972

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**TAPE #24      JAY MILDER-A VIDEO ART DOCUMENTARY**

A videotape by Rudi Stern

Edited by: Wayne Hyde

12 min., Black and White

A video documentary about this American figurative painter who is a member of the Rhino Horn group. The tape deals with his work, life, children and the development of his art.

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