

## USING A MICROCOMPUTER TO ENHANCE TELEVISION PRODUCTION

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The introductory television production course trains students in all areas of the television studio allowing them to create their own television programs from script to videotape. The class, usually consisting of eighteen to twenty students, meets for a regular lecture period and a three-hour lab weekly. A major objective of the course is to provide students with practical training on the television equipment. More importantly, the objective of the course is to teach the students the more creative aspects of television production such as good composition and continuity, lighting techniques, set design and directing skills. During the course, each student directs several short programs including a music visualization and a two-person interview show.

Several components of the course, such as scripting and set design, lend themselves to the use of the microcomputer for instructional purposes. A major component is the use of interactive video in reinforcing instruction in composition of shots. This use directly addresses two problems which surface in the teaching of the basic course at a small college. The first involves limits on studio time for classroom instruction. Most small colleges have one production studio used not only for instructional purposes but also for in-house production for the entire campus. Because of this, most small colleges have to limit availability of the studio to students to supervised lab time. This leaves the students with no time to practice with the equipment outside of classtime. Interactive video exercises can provide the student time to practice certain skills outside of that time and outside of the studio.

Interactive exercises also alleviate a second problem. Television production often occurs in a pressured environment that intimates some beginning students. Students directing "live" shows must make split second decisions on all aspects of the production -- camera placement, shot choice, timing of transition devices. The director simultaneously must communicate commands to several crew members -- the technical director, the audio person, cameraperson, assistant director, and floor manager. The beginning student can have difficulty isolating and paying attention to all the important aspects of the production at the same time. Students will often learn the correct terminology, but may have problems with some important basic skills such as good shot composition. Interactive video allows certain exercises on the directing process to be slowed down, allowing

students to concentrate on specific course objectives by isolating those objectives from other directing decisions.

For example, one interactive model that focuses on shot composition consists of a basic two-person interview show. As each person on the show finishes speaking, the student is presented with a series of choices of shots. Some of these choices are correct, some are incorrect. The interactive video simulates what the student would be seeing on the preview studio monitors. Incorrect shots include shots with improper headroom, shots with incorrect cut off lines, incorrect camera placement and angle, and uncentered shots. Students are asked to recognize incorrect shots and to choose what to do to correct those shots -- zoom out, zoom in, truck, pan, pedestal, etc.

The exercise offers several advantages to the student. The interactive exercise allows the student to practice some basic television production skills outside the studio on his/her own time. The exercise allows the student to slow down the very fast directing process long enough to concentrate on one aspect of it -- in this case, shot composition. The exercise reinforces the use of proper vocabulary in camera commands and even allows the instructor to keep track of which students are having problems understanding certain types of shots.