Mediazine

Mediazine

Front Cover

designed by John Lepp

The front cover was designed using Adobe Photoshop 2 5 (a photo manipulation program) Several photos were combined and tailored to create the final image

With this program, a scanner and a high powered Macintosh (at least 8 MB RAM) almost anything can be done to enhance or alter a photograph

STEP 1:

We took this picture from a magazine and scanned it into Adobe Photoshop We decided the portion we were most interested in was the top left hand corner By the way, if you decide you want to get rid of a portion of the picture, you can 'erase' it later
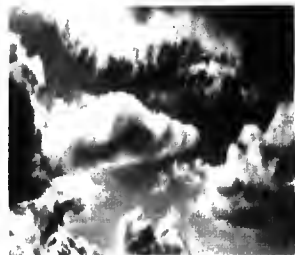
STEP 2:

We found this picture floating around the Internet and downloaded it onto a disk We dropped it onto the above picture and then blended the two together so it looked 'natural'

STEP 3:

For this image we took a picture of a class-mate Once we scanned it into Photoshop, we cut out the background and left only the person and the umbrella We then darkened the image so that it was unrecognizable

STEP 4:

Finally, we clipped various computers, mice and printers and then scanned them all into Photoshop We clipped certain ones out and pasted them into position on our cover

For the final touches we drew in shadows, blurred the edges of monitors and designed the magazine logo

Mediazine

"The new electronic interdependence recreates the world in the image of a global village."
-Marshall McLuhan-

FEATURES
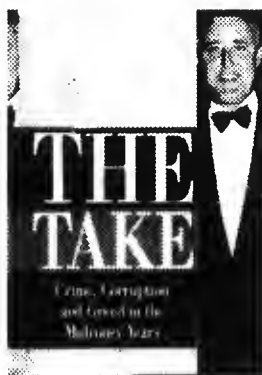
11

16

25

29

" In spite of life, in spite of intelligence and intuition and sympathy, one can never relly communicate anything to anybody. . . our life is a sentence of perpetual solitary confinement."

-Aldous Huxley-

PROFILES

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U.S. prime time: 'Canadian' style

by Deborah Rowe

With all the hype surrounding the information superhighway and the 500 channel universe, serious concerns have been raised about the survival of Canada's cultural identity.

I have always thought it ironic that suddenly we have a definitive identity, when the media constantly tells us we don't have an identity whatsoever.

"Canadians are increasingly influenced by American politics, culture and values, which are often destructive," former UN ambassador Stephen Lewis suggested in a *Prime Time Magazine* debate last spring.

But I don't believe we risk being consumed by American pop culture in the 21st century. In fact, if last year was any indication, the Yanks may want to make room for a Canadian invasion.

One of the biggest advantages the Canadian entertainment industry has, is the U.S. setting up shop in our front yard.

This has enabled production companies, such as Toronto-based Atlantis Communications, to sell Canadian products directly to the U.S. Currently, Atlantis has 30 U.S. projects in development.

To take a prime example, Alliance Communications, Canada's largest film and TV distributor, sold the cop-buddy program *Due South* to CBS last season. *Due South* is the first Canadian-produced prime time show to be aired on a major U.S. network. The show features the "fish out of water" scenario with a clean-cut Canadian Mountie paired up with a rough Chicago cop.

Writer/producer Paul Haggis describes the two characters as "the Mountie that all Americans believe is Canada, and the cop that all Canadians believe is America."

The success of *Due South* proves that the Canadian entertainment industry must continue to set its sights beyond domestic success. Garth Drabinsky, Canada's premier entertainment entrepreneur, said "financing cultural identity is very expensive. When producing, Canada has to produce for a world market, especially since governments are advocating cuts to cultural funding."

Witness the critical and economic success of John N. Smith's, *The Boys of St. Vincent.* The powerful TV drama was on many critics top ten lists last year, and in June 1994 made an impressive $1500 a day in New York's Film Forum, a 180 seat auditorium. The film has subsequently been shown in Britain and Australia. Last winter A&E broadcast the film, although it cut three minutes of controversial footage.

Nevertheless, Canadians should take tremendous pride in such international triumphs. Blowing our collective horn is the best way to ensure that the "Canadian voice" isn't lost as national and cultural boundaries fall by the wayside in an era of globalization. •

Microclips

Compiled by:
Lorne Bell
Lisa Lazar
Tim Moriarty

New Novel From Verne

A newly discovered novel, by the 19th century author Jules Verne, has been published, 131 years after it was originally written. The novel, *Paris in the 20th Century*, looks ahead to life in Paris in the 1960's.

Verne imagined a city where people traveled by subway and gas driven cars, used calculators and computers and communicated by telephone and fax. He described a place dominated by electricity.

It's apparent that Verne was concerned with these technical innovations. He believed modern inventions would be detrimental to society and wrote that people in the 1960's would never be satisfied with what they had, constantly wanting more.

In this novel Verne wrote about the future through the eyes of the protagonist, Michel Dufrenoy. Alan Riding, of the New York Times, had this to say about Dufrenoy:

"...(He) lives in a hostile overcrowded society that is driven by finance and technology, and is totally indifferent to society."

The rejection of Paris in the 20th Century did not discourage Verne. He went on to write many classic science fiction novels, such as, Journey to the Centre of the Earth, 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea and Around the World in Eighty Days.

To access this book, e-mail Project Gutenberg at hart@vmd.cso.uiuc.edu

Graphics courtesy of Carl Mandel

Electronic Warfare

How about applying a futuristic technology to the ancient art of warfare? Does the concept seem far-fetched? Not according to United States, Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich.

In an edition of New York Times Magazine, Gingrich was quoted as saying, " Virtually every soldier in combat in 2010 will have, somewhere on their body, a personal telephone linked by satellite to a world telephone network." Gingrich also added," The telephone will probably be a personal communication system that will also have computer and faxing capabilities."

Critics of Gingrich's futuristic ideas charge that the military cannot test every product they design. They say it is conceivable products entered into war will be untried and unreliable.

They also warn that there is a possibility electronic equipment can get jammed or destroyed as a result of the electromagnetic pulse created by nuclear weapons. This would pose a serious danger to armies that relied on their computers for warfare.

But the most persuasive argument is that technology can only advance armies so far. They say when it comes to winning wars, factors such as, morale, tactics and training take precedence over technology.

So where does that leave the future of warfare? Critics beware! Battles involving telecommunications and computers is an idea that has been brewing in the Pentagon for several years. In an era when civilian technology is changing and expanding, how can military technology afford to stagnate?

CIA online

The CIA has a web server. Among the information listed on the server are: names of CIA personnel, the history behind CIA events and the most frequently asked CIA questions. You can visit the site at: http://www.ic.gov

Learning on the net

To create an MBA learning environment on the 'Net. Asian universities and sponsoring corporations have invested millions of dollars for "Distant Learning Programs." MIT is supplying the project with educational content. Paving the way for future remote site education is the focus of the project and it includes e-mail and online video conferencing.

Children's Displays

The Internet offers an alternative to hanging children's artwork or stories on the refrigerator.

With the help of folks at *Manymedia*, parents can get their children's works into a Net directory. Even family video clips are welcome.

Hot Places to visit on the Internet

Spinal Tap: gopher://spinaltap.micro.umn.edu/11/fun/

Practical Jokes: http://www.umd.umich.edu/~nhughes/htmldocs/pracjokes.html

Nirvana.... Lyrics: http://www.ludd.luth.se/misc/nirvana/lyrics/lyrics.html

NHL: http://www.wpi.edu:8080/~defronzo

Today's News: http://www.cfn.cs.dal.ca/Media/TodaysNews/TodaysNews.html

Ultimate Television: http://cinenet.net/UTVL/utvl.html

Movies: http://www.cm.cf.ac.uk/movies/person-form.html

Art Crimes: http://www.gatech.edu/desoto/graf/Index.Art_Crimes.html

AstroWeb: http://fits.cv.nrao.edu/www/astronomy.html

The Muppets: http://www.ncsa.uiuc.edu/VR/BS/Muppets/muppets.html

CDnow! Internet Music Store: http://cdnow.com

Extra-terrestrials: http:/www.metrolink.com/seti/seti-top.html

Horror Movies: http://www.ee.pdx.edu/~caseyh/horror/horror.html

The Frisbee Page: http://raptor.sccs.swarthmore.edu/~dalewis/frisbee.html

Sports Schedules: http://www.cs.rochester.edu/u/ferguson/schedules/

Women's Internet Resources: http://sunsite.unc.edu/cheryb/women/wresources.html

The Enviroweb: http://www.envirolink.org

Online Books: http://www.cs.cmu.edu:8001/Web/books

Douglas Adams Worship Page: http://www.umd.umich.edu/~nhughs/dna/

Star Trek Voyager: http://voyager.paramount.com

The Jihad to Destroy Barney: http://deepth.armory.com/~deadslug/Jihad/jihad.html

Sports Server: http://www.nando.net/sptsserv.html

LeWeb Louvre: http://sunsite.unc.edu/louvre/

Computer Landscaping

A recent report in Newsweek magazine revealed no measure is too elaborate when it helps to beautify the environment.

Computer generated graphics may soon be used in planning the clearing of forests. Traditionally, sections of forest have been cleared alongside beautiful, intact wooded landscapes leaving eyesores. The hope is that 3-D computer programs will plan logging patterns which leave a natural-looking and less ravaged landscape.

What is Picasso owned a computer?

by Susannah Dudley

Michelangelo, Da Vinci, Picasso, Aptiva. Missing the connection? Art. Art, you say? Michelangelo painted the Sistine Chapel. Da Vinci created the Mona Lisa. Picasso made abstract art ... well, art. Aptiva ... is it easy to use?

A virtually unknown and misunderstood genre, computer generated art is beginning to take off. Admittedly, it sounds strange and many traditionalists do not consider it art at all. But it makes sense. First hands, then animal hair, then synthetic brushes were used to create art. It follows that computers should also be used as an artistic tool.

Computer art is not as easy and sterile as it sounds. A computer whiz does not simply install a graphics program into the computer and let the mouse take over. While an understanding of computers is necessary (many computer artists play around with different graphics programs incorporating one into the other or create their own software), creativity and experience with other artistic mediums is just as important.

Creativity and computers? Is this possi-

ble? David LeBer, a computer technician at the Ontario College of Art stresses that computer artists are "well educated in other areas" such as painting and sculpture. They combine this knowledge with computer technology.

The almost unlimited uses of programs has added to the increasing sophistication of computers. This has resulted in computer art being seen as an exciting new way of expression. It enables the artist to combine different media and experiment in ways otherwise not possible.

"The artist can create a piece using different techniques available in a program. They can go into a program and create a line with charcoal. Then they can mix this with watercolors. They can place this underneath a digital image (photograph)," explains LeBer. "These are things that if you were working in traditional mediums, you could not do," he adds.

"You can use computers in all different ways. You can use it as a tool to create the artwork, to reproduce artwork, as a distribution tool," says LeBer.

"There have been (similar) programs available since the seventies," said Tom Roberts, a Toronto artist and teacher, "but the programs available now are a lot more sophisticated. Those programs dealt with numbers and lines. Nothing like what you can do now."

Surprisingly, computer art has been around since the sixties. It began with "scientists doodling on their computers because they were the ones who had access to computers," said Elizabeth O'Grady, an organizer at Data Access, a Toronto computer artist co-operative.

"For a long time, artists were interested but the computers didn't have the power. The artists had to put in a lot of work and a lot of time to produce a small piece of work."

But what exactly is computer art? "Different people have different ideas about what computer art is," explains O'Grady. Basically there are two approaches. The first deals with replicating traditional art forms on the computer.

The artist creates the effect of traditional materials, for example, oil paint, charcoal or pencil using the computer. The image stays the same, but the style changes.

With the second approach, artists focus on the different or unique elements of computer technology. "These are people who explore what's new in the technology. To me, this is more interesting than what can be reproduced," said O"Grady. "With traditional art work, once it's done, it's done. With digital work, you·can manipulate it." The artist can rework the same piece over and over, giving it a different look each time or add other elements such as music.

This leads to interactive media art. The artist creates a work by digitizing film, pictures and music and combining it. Digitizing is a process whereby a machine (a scanner) is hooked-up to the computer enabling the computer to scan material and transfer it onto the computer.

But, there is also a downside to computer art. "A lot of what's special about a work of art, especially in painting, is the way an artist moves his or her hand. With the computer, everything is limited (to how the computer interprets the data)," said O'Grady. "Also, in traditional work there is an element of chance. With digital you can 'save as' then go onto another track. It's almost too easy. It encourages a way of thinking, like a butterfly, flitting back and forth, here and there. Some people get lazy and don't think through what they want to do."

Despite society's advancement into the computer age, there is still much debate

> "...curators are threatened by electronic art. They are afraid they might no longer own the realm where people go to see art."

> "These are things that if you were working in traditional media, you could not do."

over whether computers should be considered a new art medium. Among those resistant to computer art are curators and gallery owners. The main reason is not enough is known about this art form. However, O'Grady said "curators are threatened by electronic art. They are afraid they might no longer own the realm where people go to see art. That they might lose authority over what is good and bad art."

O'Grady warns that technology both enhance and hinder the art industry. "There is a lot of art that uses the technology because it is there, not because it is the best [medium] for it. I call those people 'technology happy'."

A more serious reason, though, has to do with copyright. "With a Rembrandt there is only one," explains O'Grady, "but once something becomes digital, it is everywhere. You lose the uniqueness, the rarity."

Unfortunately, copyright is also a problem for the artists. Once the art work enters the digital world, it is up for grabs. Anyone can take a piece created by someone else and make whatever changes they want. While some software provides a sort of copyright feature, this does not allow the artist to keep track of where their art is going, and it does not allow the artist to make money.

A system to protect artists is in the works. Called E-Cash, it would operate similar to a credit card. An Internet user would have an account with the net. If a person wants to "download" something from the net, the account would be debited. This way, an account is kept of who has what art and the artist receives their royalties.

You probably won't see computer art at the Art Gallery of Ontario for a while yet, and the computer will not replace the traditional art media altogether, but as the world moves more and more towards multi-media it will definitely become more common place. •

YTV host makes it in the broadcast biz

Aashna Patel has made a name for herself in the industry and believes other minority women can do the same.

by Michelle Matsdorf

YTV's Aashna Patel calls herself a "PJ". As a program jockey for "YTV news" and "Y-ZUp", an entertainment show, Patel is one of the station's full-time, on air personalities. A graduate of the radio and television arts program at Ryerson, Patel is no newcomer to the business.

The 24-year-old native of India received her first public exposure to the entertainment field when, as a teenager she sang and danced at Canada's Wonderland for a summer job.

During high school she volunteered at CityTV, where she co-hosted a program called *Sounds of Asia*. She has also sung the national anthem at a number of Toronto Blue Jays baseball games.

An established station, YTV has been on the air for six years and Patel has worked there since the age of 21. When she graduated from Ryerson, she was called to an audition at YTV and she was selected to be a "PJ" on the show. Now, Patel hosts and produces "Y-Z Up". In the future, she would like to have her own entertainment show.

Patel has made a name for herself in the industry and she believes other minority women can do the same.

"I don't think it's always just about the color (of your skin)," said Patel in a telephone interview. "It's about appearance and not being attractive. If you're not attractive and trying to get a job, you will have a hard time."

She said politics play a large part in determining which women succeed in television.

"It's very political when it comes to how someone looks," said Patel. "It's more difficult for an unattractive woman than it is for a minority woman."

In discussing the opportunities for minority women on television, Patel notes that "Minorities haven't been open to it. Most people who send in their resumes are white, so there are less minorities applying."

She attributes the lack of applications by Indian youths to the way they have been raised.

"Parents (of Indian children) push their kids to be lawyers and engineers, but now kids are branching out and doing different things."

For Patel, encouraging Indian youths to get involved is important. "I have lots of young Indians who come to me and ask me how to get involved," she said.

Patel's first interview three years ago is an experience she will never forget. "I remember my first interview was with Mila Mulroney," she said. "It was nerve-wracking because I was so excited."

Patel receives constant training at YTV, taking improv classes every two weeks with the other program jockeys. Currently, she is working on a pop - music album that is due out in September. The track contains 16 songs written by Patel herself. Her words of wisdom for students: "If you just work on perfecting your craft, that's the best thing you can do for yourself." •

Humber College

Technology breeds contempt

Confessions of a woman longing for a return to the age of simplicity

by Maria Birmingham

If the truth be known, I am a technophobe. I really don't understand all the enthusiasm about the countless technological advances in today's world. If I had my way, I would never deal with anything more technical than a toaster. Sometimes I think I should have been born at the turn of the century, instead of living in an era where technology is at the core of everyday life. Sure there are some forms of technology that don't frighten me all that much—VCRs, stereo and remote controls. Heck, I can even use automatic tellers (although, maybe having the added incentive of money popping out of nowhere has something to do with my confidence). But sit me down in front of a computer and I turn into a pathetic, sweaty-palmed basket case.

It's not so much that I'm afraid of the unknown, but once I sit in front of that screen, I feel as though I have no control. As a defenceless technophobe, I've convinced myself that my actions will send any computer to an early grave. My fear is rooted in the fact that computers were not a part of my early education. I can remember when we got new electronic typewriters in high school, and I thought they were the most advanced piece of technology I'd ever seen. My generation was busy reading *Mr. Mugs* books and learning to use the Dewey Decimal system. We weren't learning with computer games as kids do today. I don't even remember using a computer until I was in my early teens.

Even if I were really committed to learning about these machines, I'd still find it frustrating. The computer industry is only adding to my technophobia. User friendly? Whoever created that expression has never seen me working on a computer. Sure, on the surface they seem quite simple to use—move around the little mouse, click here, click there and voila. I wish. I can't even count the number of times I've started work on the computer, pushed a few buttons and found myself stuck in some other world where my text has decided to twist itself into a neat little design on the screen. How am I supposed to learn how to use a machine that doesn't seem to follow any logic?—push ctrl+alt+F4. While you're at it, click on the icon once, or is it twice? DOS, prompt...Even if I understand it today, come and see me tomorrow.

If I could have a simple list of instructions that would lead me through this maze of commands, I'd be content. But no, every program, every icon, every application brings me into territory that quite frankly, I'm not all that keen on exploring.

I've sat in rooms full of computers, pretending that I really know what I'm doing when I can't even turn the thing on. I end up trying to talk myself through it. "Okay, stay calm, take a few deep breaths...power switch, power switch, it's around here somewhere." Usually, I nonchalantly lean back in my chair, and watch someone who looks like they know what they're doing. Is it any wonder in an environment where I'm completely lost? Call it technophobia or call it stupidity but I know I'm not alone in my contempt.

Bottom line? I'll never trust any computer. I don't care what it can do. I don't care how many programs it has on the hard drive. And I can't (and never will) get excited about upgrading or optimizing its memory. If the program I'm using is working, that's all I need to know. I'm not looking to develop any kind of relationship with this thing.

Although I find a real sense of comfort in loathing my computer, I know that I've got to find a way to move beyond my phobia. I have to accept the fact that computers will always be a part of my life.

But sometimes I can't help but slip back into my technophobic world of naivete and dream...dream that I'll wake up tomorrow and find on my desk, not a little grey box full of infinite data, but a simple piece of paper and a pen. Yes, I am a technophobe, but I'm working on it. •

A survey by Dell Computer Corp., in the fall of 1993, questioned 1,000 adults and found a high level of technophobia. The poll found that 32 per cent of adults are intimidated by computers and worry about damaging one if they use it without assistance. Similarly, 22 per cent don't feel comfortable setting a digital alarm clock.

A clinical psychologist from California says that up to one-third of those who fear technology actually experience reactions like sweating, nausea and dizziness—physical symptoms that are indicative of a phobia.

THE INFOMERCIAL REVOLUTION

by David Millan

He appears on the television screen after midnight. "Get on the line RIGHT NOW!" screams Tony Little, imploring the television audience to call him while phone lines are still open. Tony is muscular, tanned and his long blond hair is pulled into a ponytail. He bounds across the set and wiggles his midsection. He rubs his hands at the prospect of demonstrating his Ab Isolator, a situp device resembling a shock absorber, on a rather large woman selected from the studio audience. Tony Little is a little scary.

WORLD RENOWNED!

Tony asks the woman to perform a normal situp. As she struggles, the enthusiastic crowd yells "NO!" Then Little hands her his new Ab Isolator to stabilize her body motion. He screams in a coarse voice "This is all you have to do to get rid of those love-handles!" and the crowd cheers in appreciation. Tony has the energy of a speed addict who just drank a pot of coffee.

Infomercials have conquered the late-night airwaves on a majority of Canadian cable stations. Infomercial producers are now trying to secure daylight programming as well. Recent changes to CRTC regulations have made daytime hours available for infomercials.

Formerly, Canadian sellers who wanted

Vanna: pushing white teeth and getting green bucks

to pitch their wares during the day had to buy airtime on American television stations near the Canadian border. Thus Dave Nicol, the Loblaw's guy, pushed his President's Choice products on Buffalo TV stations.

The infomercial industry, only a decade old, grossed over a billion dollars in North America in 1994. Susan Powter, the infamous *Stop the Insanity!* health guru, has earned almost $100 million from her infomercials.

"The growth of the industry is phenomenal," says Scott McClullan, a representative of the Canadian Direct Marketing Association (C.D.M.A.), "The prospects for production in Canada are exciting." Cheaper production costs in Canada may make it a hot-bed for the creation of infomercials.

As the industry grows, so does the quality of productions and diversity of selling techniques. In their infancy, infomercials featured washed-up television stars selling hair replacement techniques and "risk-free" investment schemes. Infomercials became the final resting place for such unforgettable performers as Lyle Waggoner, Robert Vaughn and Danny Bonaduce of *The Partridge Family* fame.

But now major film and television stars are cashing in on the infomercial bonanza. Drawn by the success of Cher's spot for a hair-care line, for which she reportedly received over a million dollars, stars are tripping over each other to host infomercials. Stars promoting merchandise include Angela Lansbury, Vanna White, Holly Hunter, Victoria Principal and Ted Danson.

Similarly, selling techniques on infomercials have changed. Although the hard-sell pitchman is still the role model of the industry, we also see other styles of promotion being applied in programs. For example, *The Gravity Edge* (a workout device and infomercial) presents short, fictional stories using actors to showcase the benefits of their product. Other infomercials copy the format of successful regular

programming, like Dance Mix USA 95, a CD promotion, which resembles Muchmusic's *Electric Circus*.

Lucy Huth is a marketing assistant with Northern Response Ltd, a Toronto based company that licenses infomercials from the U.S. Huth says most infomercials run for "probably a month" to test the market. "If viewers respond to it, it (the infomercial) succeeds" says Huth. Additional new programs are added if the concept is profitable. Northern Response's most popular infomercial of 1994 was *Bruce Jenner's Power Walk*.

Attrition in the infomercial market is high. Only one in ten are successful. The rest are forgotten after their initial run.

Those who fear a takeover of our televisions by pony-tailed personal trainers and salesmen of vacuum-powered haircutting machines can take solace in the words of Gary Dickens, president of AVH Solutions. Dickens says broadcasters in Canada are unwilling to give up large chunks of daytime programming to run low quality infomercials, fearing harm to the reputation of the network. In the United States, infomercials now account for one-quarter of programming time on cable systems.

AVH Solutions is pioneering a new wave of infomercial-type programming. Dickens coined the word "edumercial," programs similar to infomercials but without the hard sell. Companies, such as Midas Muffler, sponsor educational programs reflecting their industry (ie. auto repair) without mentioning the company by name in the show. Hopefully, the viewer will remember the sponsor as well as the program. "The purchasing decision is left up to you...the company is trying to provide a service to the public," says Dickens.

C.D.M.A. representative McClullan sees changes in the infomercial industry. "There is more image-advertising being built into the infomercial right now."

This style of promotion emphasizes a lifestyle as opposed to the hard sell of a product. "Infomercials are getting more into the mainstream," says McClullan.

Dickens believes only quality, informative shows will be allowed on Canadian networks during prime programming hours. AVH Solutions' INCO special ran next to prime time. This may be the future for

infomercials— truly informative programming with single sponsors and no hard sell.

Large corporations are hopping on the infomercial bandwagon. The list of companies experimenting in the form includes Kodak, General Motors, MCA Records and American Airlines. In Canada, which lags behind the U.S. in infomercial production (mainly because of the CRTC's defunct rule against daytime broadcasts), Ford of Canada has had positive public reaction to its infomercial.

Jo Jo's Psychic Alliance takes over the television screen at 1 a.m. Jo Jo is surrounded by strange astrological symbols and golden stars. Her set is a jungle of fern-like plants. Jo Jo's long platinum blonde hair is collected into a ponytail sticking straight up from the top of her head. Her eyes are set close together; she looks slightly cross-eyed. Her fingernails are long, her blue dress puffy, and she wears gaudy jewellery.

As a steady stream of guests gives testimonial to the life-changing advice given by members of the Psychic Alliance, a phone number runs at the bottom of the screen with the disclaimer "Entertainment Only." Soft piano music emphasizes the seriousness of the testimonials.

Who watches this stuff?

American studies say 50 to 80 per cent of the population watch it. A poll by InfoCision Management indicates that the average buyer of infomercial products is married, 36 to 45-years-old, owns a home, is highly educated and makes decent money. No wonder major corporations want a stake in the industry.

It is probable that as more big-time companies produce infomercials, the cheap products and fly-by-night operatives will be muscled off the air. Jo Jo and Tony Little may be pushed off the airwaves by Pepsi, Acura and Proctor Silex.

The change is well under way. TCI Cablevision of Florida introduced a new channel on January 3 called *Florida Travelvision*. The channel's programming is a combination of advertiser-sponsored programming and infomercials. TCI plans to add as many as 25 new single subject stations, and ultimately spread nationwide if the venture is successful. In ten years, will we have an all-Chrysler network?

The 500-channel universe is heading our way. It has been suggested that new cable technology will allow us to watch whatever we want, whenever we want. But new channels may only mean more advertising, as opposed to more quality programming.

As huge corporations break into the infomercial market, there will be growing pressure on stations to provide programing time for the advertisers.

Gary Dickens has heard rumours that the CRTC may approve an infomercial channel before the end of the year. •

Susan Powter: Infomercial Queen

LIMITED TIME ONLY!

CALL OUR SPECIAL NUMBER

Principal: selling perfect skin

SPECIAL TV OFFER!

Q & A: Computers give comics a color make over

Ken Lashley is one of many comic book artists working in the world of superheroes. He has been drawing for Marvel Comics for two years and produces a monthly book called X-Calibre.

by Christy Laverty

Q: What changes do you see in your own book because of new advances in technology?

A: Paper quality for one. There wouldn't be any need for a paper change if the coloring process hadn't gotten any better.

People who read and buy comic books are demanding changes; they're demanding a better product.

Q: What about changes in comics as a whole - as an industry?

A: They've made comic books one of the most beautiful media going.

People don't think of new comics, they usually think of old comics and that grainy quality. You see the new stuff and you're just blown away because some of the stuff they're doing with the coloring is unbelievable.

Q: How or where do you think the changes began in the industry?

A: It probably all started with Image comics, when they (a group of artists) left Marvel. They (Image Comics) went to Olyoptics and got this incredible coloring system. The rendering is like 15 colors for a skin tone.

Q: What helped make these changes and advances possible?

A: There is very little hand rendering, except for spotting where the color should be. You don't physically color the book.

You can use computers to manipulate the colors; swirl it and blur things and get things out of focus and tighten things up and sphere some images. You can do absolutely anything. Marvel has a list of special effects. There are something like 85 different things I can do just by giving them a code.

Q: How does this change things for you as an artist?

A: Marvel has told me I don't have to draw as much as I did before, and I don't have to give as much information. They can do so much with color now, artists don't have to give all the shadows, they can put them in.

Q: How have all these changes and new technologies affected industry standards?

A: It's almost like the infancy of comic books. People are experimenting with new technologies and paper quality.

Kids demand a certain kind of detail.

Image has changed the industry drastically. They take so much time to do their product that they have raised the industry standards.

More is better and that's what they want. There's something for them to sink their teeth into. •

Illustrations by Ken Lashley

Paid to Pl

M **o s t people o n l y dream of enjoying their jobs to the point of elation. In fact, most people would probably settle for some satisfaction in their daily grind.**

J azz Virk and Randy Rakhra, both 25, consider working in their film and video production company "an excuse to play." They are still amazed that people hire them to do what they love. The innovative friends develop everything from corporate videos to movie trailers.

"People actually pay for creativity," said Virk.

"And you're not stuck at some nine to five job. You can be innovative and literally let your mind loose," added Rakhra.

Virk graduated from the University of Toronto and later Sheridan College where he took cinema studies. He then worked as a manager for an insurance company for four years. Rakhra moved to Texas to manage a Ramada Inn for a year after completing his business diploma at Sheridan College. These "unsatisfactory" job experiences gave them the necessary motivation to prepare for a career change.

The two high school friends met one night over a year ago to catch up on each other's lives.

"I said I hated my job and I hated working in Texas, so we said, 'let's make commercials'," remembers Rakhra.

A couple of beers later that fateful night Pyrymyx Film and Video Production was born. The business partners believe they have found their niche.

Virk had directed a successful music video and designed the logo for the band Punjabi By Nature three years ago. That video led to spontaneous word-of-mouth advertising and landed him several job offers. He soon realized employment opportunities were increasing, and that starting his own company was a realistic option.

It took about nine months of planning and preparation before the official Pyrymyx headquarters in Mississauga was inaugurated. Prior to the office opening, the team received clients at their parents' homes.

"We were getting too much work to keep taking clients in our parents' homes so we decided to open our own studio," said Rakhra.

Personal savings and investments, funds from previous and upcoming projects and some

by Mary Luz Mejia

graphics by Pyrymyx Film and Video

parental aid, enabled the studio concept to materialize. Rakhra keeps up his end of the investment by working several shifts a week at a restaurant. Meanwhile, Virk is almost always at the studio where he said he practically "lives".

"We didn't gamble on anything. Our next project came through and after saving our own money and planning we decided
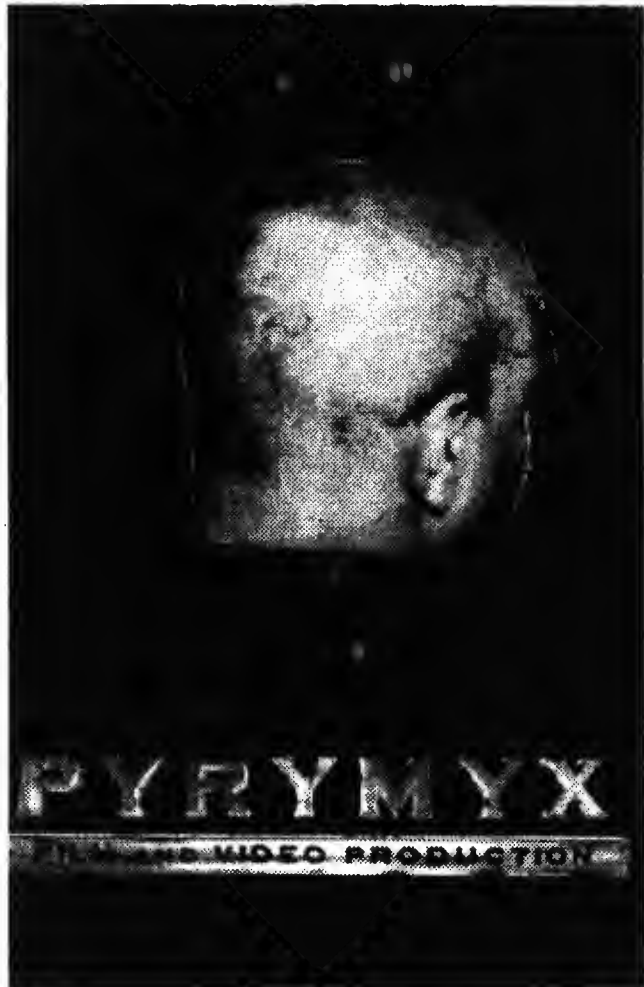
Jazz Virk models his new "hair" on a sample business-card. The team opted for a company logo instead.

ay at Work

Michaelangelo's *God Creating Adam* before Pyrymyx

the time was right," said Virk.

Because the company is small, part of this planning foregoes the traditional company hierarchy. Technically, Rakhra handles most of the business and marketing duties, while Virk works on the editing and production end of things. The bottom line, however, is that "everyone chips in," which means everyone's creative input is welcome and wanted; including the client's.

"There are so many new things constantly coming up with technology. I can't keep up to date with everything," said Virk. This is why Rakhra and Virk's brother Suny, who does the company's graphic designing, are also involved in the continually evolving creative process.

Computers are the "bread and butter" of the operation. The company uses Macintosh 950 computers to do all of their editing, special effects, animation and graphics. The partners have invested an initial $40,000 into software, such as Video Fusion and Swivel 3-, to increase the amount of computer manipulations at their disposal. Rough copies are sent to a downtown Toronto laboratory with online suites that produce the final draft to specification. Rakhra said this is a less expensive method, since an online suite can cost around $500,000.

Virk said he never really considered the importance of computers in the film industry before he got into business for himself.

"I never thought computers would assist you in film or video. We did research and found that computers are definitely the way to go.

With a computer you have access to

"We were getting too much work to keep taking our clients in our parents' homes, so we decided to open our own studio."

what you want to do," said Virk. He added that while school gave him the historical and technical education he needed, every day at the company is a "learning experience."

"We have no time to get bored," added Rakhra, "this is like still being in school."

The team said they literally learn as they go, expanding their list of

services with the demands of each new client.

Marketing themselves as a multi-purpose, one-stop shopping package, they are attracting more and more interest. Apart from the production of music and corporate videos, Virk and Rakhra have entered into merchandising, logo/graphic design and have directed a two minute movie clip.

For students interested in pursuing this sort of multimedia work, Virk and Rakhra suggest, "stick to your guns." Both agree that to learn the basics, it is imperative to watch everything, from the best to the worst in films. Virk advises students to plan and organize their business ventures and to "never rush it." They also said that continually educating yourself about the trade through conferences, lectures or workshops is vital to success.

Upcoming projects for the team include their own short film called *No Rest*. This horror tragedy will be entered in film contests throughout Canada and possibly internationally. Until then, if you happen to be at a karaoke bar, keep your eyes open for the team's latest work. •
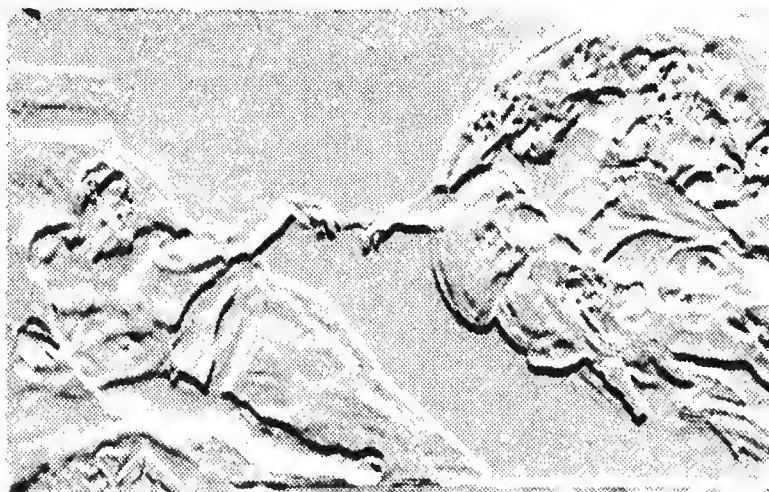
Michaelangelo's *God Creating Adam* after Pyrymyx

California dreamin' 90s style: 90210 and the ties that bind

by
Tim Bingham-Wallis

The scene is set, four young college types are sitting in a small cafe, discussing life in the '90s.

"What's the matter Dyl? Giving up on the Porsche?" says a remarkably well groomed young man.

"You should go with the Cadillac! There's Cadillac and then there's Cadillac," says remarkably well groomed man number two.

"What's the matter with the Porsche. It's not in the shop again is it?" says a blonde, and far too thin girl. "Well I think you should go for a big pink convertible!"

"Now that's you!" exclaim the two well groomed men in unison.

"I'll keep it under advisement" says a less groomed,but still well fed car buyer.

"Ha ha ha ha!" sputter all four.

Yes! They must be joking. In this day and age, what student could be serious about buying a Porsche? With rising tuition fees, horrible employment prospects, and outrageous student debts, few students can afford car insurance, let alone a car.

The scene changes and there they are at the dealership laying down cash for a brand new European sports car.

Am I kidding? No.

Can these people really exist? Yes, for a full hour every week. They are of course the "kids" from *Beverly Hills 90210*.

I must confess I've never watched a full episode. These two scenes are about the full extent of my *90210* viewing experience. I can't watch it. I find it too annoying, but I'm one of the few people I know who hasn't been, at one time, a *90210* junkie.

I had to find out. What makes otherwise well informed, thoughtful and articulate people, religiously tune in to such trashy television?

I have discovered there are two types of *90210* addicts. There are those who admire the characters and see them as role models. It's easy to pick these poor souls out of a crowd. They walk like the characters, talk like the characters, buy the clothes worn by the

See it's easy to read. All you have to do is open a book. It's fun and too cool. The cat... ...in the... hat...

They're rich ...

characters, they even do their hair like the characters.

The other type is not as easy to spot. They hide their addiction well. They rationalize their dependency, and even believe they could quit watching any time, claiming they don't have a problem. Most of the people I know who watch *90210* fall into this category.

Common to all in this latter group is the belief they are superior to the characters. The triumphs and tribulations of the characters are considered trivial and inconsequential.

"There was this one scene where Dylan (a character on the show) was going through a drug crisis," says Andrea Brown a PhD candidate at the University of Toronto, and *90210* aficionado. "He was out in a rain storm trying to light a joint, but the wind kept blowing it out. It was really mellow-dramatic. I kept thinking, whoa, just smoke it! It's a joint! It's no big deal! It's not like it's heroin."

While *90210* fans com-

they're beautiful...

plain about the shallow nature of the characters, they seem unable to pry themselves away.

"I know it's sad," says Derrek Foster, a graduate student in communications at Carleton University. "But it provides a structure to my life."

"It's not like Degrassi (a Canadian drama about high school life) which has to do with normal people. *90210* has to do with upper-class American Beverly Hills glitzy glamour. It can't get any filthy stinking richer than that," says Betsy Carter, a working class gal. "Still, it's part of the world everyone wants to hear about."

If *90210* is a make-believe world, unrelated to the everyday life of its viewers, why do people watch it?

Betsy Carter says it all. "If I miss a show I get updates from the people at work."

For Carter and other 90210 fanat-ics the program is a common reference in our Global Village. When most people in the industrialized, post-industri-

alized and industrializing world finish work, or school, they collectively plunk themselves down in front of the TV. There they sit for hours on end. Their only social interaction is arguing over who gets the remote.

Without social interaction we cannot build communities, or friendships. We are social creatures, and we need human connections. We need to feel belonging, involvement and attachment with other people.

90210 fills this void in our lives. It becomes a social crutch for people who have lost the ability to tell their own stories. Instead, social interaction is sold in a prepackaged and sanitized format. *90210* provides people with an active community without the price of commitment.

Whether the fans emulate the characters or mock them, they all share the same relationship. *90210* provides a benchmark to judge and structure our lives. *90210*'s values are displayed for all, to either be rejected or embraced.

"I couldn't believe the show last night," says Jason Pickup, a dedicated *90210* cynic. "Kelly goes to a rave, and meets these two lesbian lovers. There's a fire and Kelly and one of the women get caught in the bathroom. As the fire gets closer the lesbian

but...

prays to God not to be cast into the flames. She's promptly saved by a man in a shiny red hat. You can't get more blatant than that."

What *90210* provides are morals and values. Its fans either love them and embrace them, or love to hate and reject them. Either way the adventures on *90210* become experiences for its fans. The lessons learned on the show are lessons consumed by its fans.

However, don't be fooled. *90210* can never replace real life experience, and of course it's not meant to. One thing you won't see on *90210* is people wasting an evening in front of the boob tube. They're too busy buying a Porsche, playing sports or flying off to Paris. They are in control: they don't go to food banks, and they don't work for minimum wage.
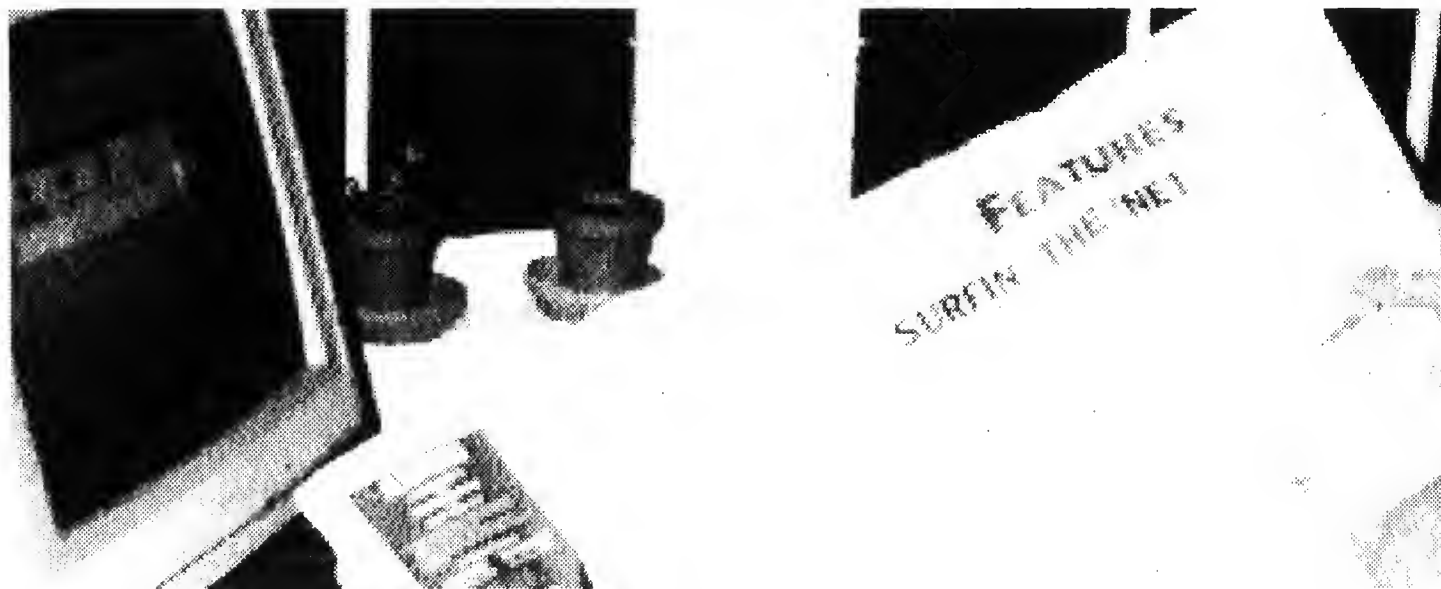
90210 is the perfect illusion for a generation unable to connect, to build its own community, to take control of its environment: *90210* is the perfect tool for a people in denial. •

they're not Sweathogs!

Electronic Newspapers

Which do you prefer? Is it a dream or a matter of time?

by Ann Marie McQueen

Imagine getting up in the morning and putting on a pot of coffee before work or school. Instead of rummaging through the bushes outside for a soggy newspaper, you turn on your personal "news tablet", better known as an electronic newspaper. No more anger because the paper is late, no more black fingertips and fumbling with oversize pages. Just you, a flickering screen, and reams of information at your fingertips.

This "electronic" newspaper has all the features of a regular newspaper: business, entertainment, sports, classifieds, and much more. It could be constantly updated, and you would be able to read several different versions throughout the day, whether at work, home or on the subway. This "newspaper" has a beginning, a middle, and an end. The pages on the screen look like the pages of a real newspaper: the type, graphics and photos are laid out in "newspaper" format.

The tablet is small, about the size of a magazine. It is easily portable in a purse, briefcase or handbag, and has no attached knobs or gadgets. It is completely touch-sensitive, and you can turn the pages just

by touching the corner of the screen. If you want background information on a complicated story, you may touch the story on screen and it will be provided. The additional information remains invisible unless you request it. You may even have articles read aloud to you.

In the last several years, there has been much discussion heralding the "wave of the future" in the business of disseminating information. Those in the industry, like John King, the deputy managing editor at *The Globe and Mail* and Peter Cooney, the assistant managing editor at *the Montreal Gazette*, predict that electronic newspapers are the future for print media. Parts of newspapers and even entire electronic versions of them are already published on the Internet and various on-line services. The hunger for information - fast, readily available, and up-to-date, drives advances for new and better ways to feed it.

The Knight-Ridder Information and Design Laboratory in Boulder, Colorado has already created a prototype for a tablet to contain the "electronic newspaper". It is small, touch-sensitive and easily portable. The tablet would have a docking station where it could have new editions of the newspaper down-loaded onto it. As Arthur Fidler, head of the lab, told *The Economist* when the prototype was created, simplicity

is the key to success.

"The format retains one crucial advantage of an old-fashioned paper," said Fidler in 1993. "You can read things in any order, and skip from one item to another, while still knowing where you are with respect to the paper as a whole."

In 1995, Fidler's prototype remains just that, a prototype.

"The tablet is not a reality yet, because the hardware companies are still developing the technology to drive it," said Peggy Bair, Director of Information and Technology at the Knight-Ridder lab in Boulder. "They tell us it probably won't be ready until 1997 at the earliest."

Bair said many different companies and consortiums are working on the technology necessary to make the tablet a reality. Once they make the breakthrough, Bair predicts rapid changes in the way we receive our printed news. One of those changes will involve a memory card, which each person would carry with them. The memory card could plug into outlets that would be available at airports, kiosks, or at work, said Bair. By using them, people would be able to update their newspaper throughout the day, obtaining the most up-to-date information available at the time.

"Wherever you are, you could get infor-

mation," said Bair.

In Canada, Peter Cooney, assistant managing editor, and Michael Dugas, the electronic imaging manager at *The Montreal Gazette*, created an electronic version of their paper over a year ago.

The "paper" was produced on a Macintosh computer, using QuarkXPress (a program used to handle layout and design of newspapers), with QuickTime Movies plugged into it to achieve visual and audio elements, said Cooney. Far from the prototype developed at Knight-Ridder, the Gazette version of electronic newspaper was created to show both people in the newsroom, and in Canada, what the future of newspapers might be.

"It was interesting to see the reactions," said Cooney. "People were able to see the information which we already produce and sell quite successfully, in a multi-media form ... how you can take one dimension and easily add a second dimension."

The one-time edition was produced in February, 1994. Cooney said the ideal is much more like the prototype designed at Knight-Ridder.

"A daily multi-media newspaper - portable, rugged, with a battery life of three or four hours," said Cooney. "We're just waiting for the computer world to give us technology."

While we are waiting, newspapers are already being published in an electronic form online. Compuserve, America Online, Prodigy and others have a section that carries news and current events. The news section is the staple of the online service, and their items are constantly updated using a variety of sources. Compuserve offers news items compiled from Reuters and The Washington Post. America Online has a section called *Today's News*, which offers newspaper articles from wire services, and electronic versions of newspapers including *The New York Times, Chicago Tribune* and *San Jose Mercury-News*. Prodigy has one of the largest areas for headline news, which is constantly updated and covers a wide vari-

ety of topics. On Prodigy, which uses an interactive network of newspaper affiliates to provide the news, (including *The Los Angeles Times, New York Newsday,* and *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*) the coverage is enhanced using both pictures and sound.

The online systems really only offer "versions" of electronic newspapers at this point. The systems lack graphics and the "look" of a real newspaper. The Internet is a different story. One of the features offered on the Internet is called World Wide Web (WWW). Using a graphic user interface (a graphic user interface, or GUI, is an operating environment that allows you to use pictures and menus to enter commands) called "Mosaic", electronic news sections look more like newspapers than they do on online systems. WWW, or "the Web", gathers news from all over the Internet, but instead of seeing it as a line of text, you see an entire page of information, complete with graphics and pictures.

"This is the year for news to show up on the Internet," said Peggy Bair, referring specifically to Nandonet, an electronic version of an Illinois newspaper.

Some newspapers in Canada are online, although the information they offer is limited. Both Southam and Thomson Newspapers have "gone online" to varying degrees.

"The Ottawa Citizen has a version of the electronic newspaper," said Mary McGuire, assistant professor of journalism at Carleton University in Ottawa. "They make certain things available online, like the front page, the classifieds, maybe movie reviews."

The Globe and Mail has offered online

services through its electronic division since 1977. InfoGlobe Online and InfoGlobe Extra deliver the full text of the paper to subscribers every day via modem, by 6 a.m. The services also allow the subscriber to search back issues of *The Globe*.

"The service uses both text and pictures," said InfoGlobe marketing manager Sandy Salem. "It is set up more like a series of business articles than a real newspaper."

Will widespread electronic publishing become a reality? The experts believe it is only a matter of time.

"There are no limits with electronic publishing," said John King, the deputy managing editor at *The Globe and Mail* . "If you are used to getting your Globe, you can be in Inuvik and read it... you can have it delivered to you at the top of Mount Everest." However, King said he does not expect to see this degree of access to information in his lifetime.

"Approximately 50-60 per cent of the cost of producing newspapers comes from the printing process," said Peggy Bair. "Newspapers are going to have to deal with the financial and environmental pressures they face."

Bair estimates that the electronic tablet will be widely available in about 20 years. "It makes no sense to put something that changes so often onto something so permanent as paper."

Diehard newsprint fans may argue with the experts about turning on a computer instead of opening the paper, but technological progress is hard to ignore.

"Who's to say if eventually you will turn on your computer and have a complete newspaper delivered to you?" said McGuire. "Ten years ago no one envisioned the fax machine as a necessity for business."

For what many call a dying industry, the electronic tablet concept may hold the most promise for the future of newspapers. •

> "There are no limits with electronic publishing. If you are used to getting your Globe, you can be in Inuvik and read it...you can have it delivered to you at the top of Mount Everest."
> -John King-

> "A daily multi media newspaper-portable, rugged, with a battery life of three to four hours."
> - Peter Cooney -

The ants hadn't exactly invaded Gary Westhouse's home. All he needed to do was repoint the bricks in his wall.

But the hundreds of ants crawling around between the storm window and the outside window were interesting enough to provoke quite a discussion between Westhouse and his friends at their place on the airwaves.

Westhouse, 72, is a "ham" (or radio amateur) who operates an on-air discussion group called "A 'Net for Toronto's Skywide Amateur Radio Club" on alternate Mondays. Ants are just one of the many topics on which he has held court.

"You can't ever tell what you're going to talk about," said Westhouse. He only asks they wrap it up in time to watch *Star Trek: Voyager*.

Operators like Westhouse, a ham for 15 years, are often older people looking for a hobby. For them, ham radio is about camaraderie more than anything else.

Ham radio is a non-commercial, government-licenced communications system. Equipment can range from a used $200 hand-held model to a brand-new $5000 transmitter.

Hams provide emergency communications during earthquakes, forest fires, and other disasters. But most hams are never called for civic duty.

For example, take Don Tyndall, a Skywide member and a self-proclaimed "white-caner" (he's blind). A licenced ham since 1983, the 60-year-old Etobicoke retiree works the airwaves for 30 or 40 hours per week.

"I've met an awful lot of people," Tyndall said, "not just on the airwaves but in person."

He calls ham radio a good hobby for "shut-ins," adding that he started because he got bored.

"I've really enjoyed it," he said, "I've had a lot of fun at it."
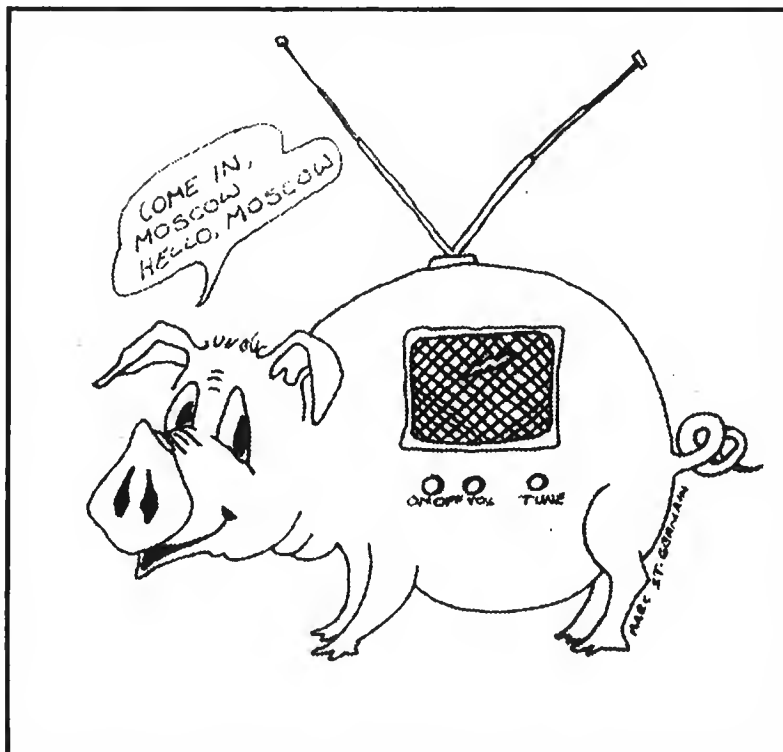
International calls have a special aura. To have proof of their long-distance calls, hams essentially created their own post office called the QSL bureau.

It allows hams to acknowledge each other's contact in writing (via QSL cards) without expensive mailing fees.

"Any country you talk to for the first

Hamming it up on radio

by Jason Pickup

time is a thrill," said Tyndall, who has talked with hams from as far away as Japan and Russia.

And what do long-distance hams talk about?

"A lot of guys talk basically about ham radio," Tyndall said.

They talk shop – exchange radio and antennae information.

But, they talk a lot about computers too, and even the weather.

"You just get yakking, you can fall into any category," Tyndall noted.

Even religion, but not business or politics. Like the Internet, no one is permitted to conduct business on the airwaves. But unlike the Internet where you can find anarchists entangled in ideological struggle with neo-conservatives, politics isn't welcome.

"That has nothing to do with ham radio," said Ollie Schijns, a ham for 15 years. "That's not what it's about."

Schijns is an office clerk with the Radio Amateurs of Canada, a national, Kingston-based organization with 9000 members. Making new friends is what makes ham radio special for her.

"You talk on the air to people you have no idea what they do for a living and it really doesn't matter," said Schijns, who describes her age as "over 50."

And the friendships don't end on the air. No matter where they travel, hams are welcome in the homes of other hams, she said.

A ham's goodwill once benefitted ham radio salesperson Mario Boisvert when he had car trouble. Boisvert called for help on his hand-held unit, and a man who heard it stopped to help him.

Hams can be "anybody" from doctors to electricians, said Boisvert, a salesperson for the last five years at Atlantic Ham Radio Limited in Toronto.

But about 95 per cent of them are male. "That's the bad side of it," he joked.
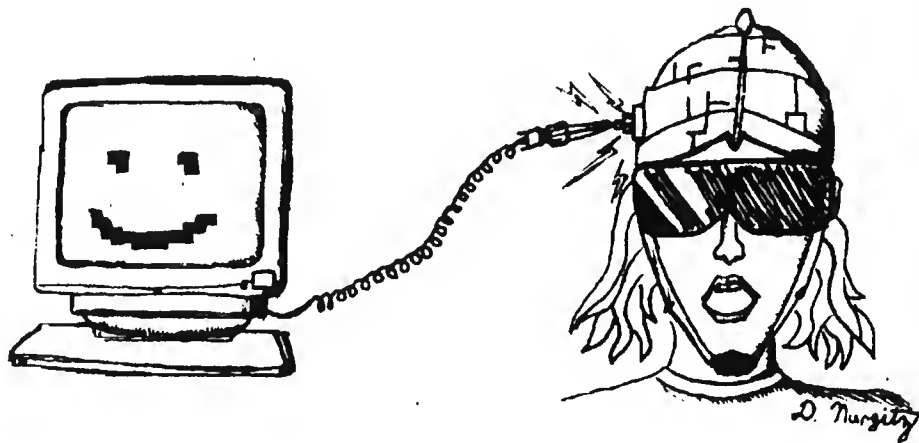
A few hams are as young as 10 or 11 years old, but most are middle-aged and beyond. That makes Boisvert practically a spring chicken at 32 years of age.

Ham radio isn't "physically active or exotic" enough for most young people, Westhouse said.

The Nintendo generation is anything but physically active. But a discussion on ants would definitely kill their interest. •

Netspeaking for the 'Touchy- Feely' Digital Generation

by Lauren Blankstein

I remember when words like 'hard drive', 'mouse' and 'windows' were just what they seemed to imply: a 400 km drive on a winding road in a snow squall, a small furry rodent, and an architectural feature of a building. In the past decade, with computers becoming affordable and more powerful, these simple household words have taken on entirely new meanings which are now part of everyday language.

The Internet is setting new boundaries for computers, and with it comes an innovative style of communication. Those well versed in the art of "surfing the 'net" are not fazed by this language, but it truly amazes computer novices like me.

"Cyberspace," a world-wide computer community, has developed a mode of communication complete with its own vocabulary, etiquette and slang ("cyberlingo"). "Netspeak" (online colloquialisms) has done what many thought was impossible - endowed the computer with a human touch.

In face-to-face conversations, expressions such as a wink or smirk indicate a person's true intentions. "Emoticons" are electronic hieroglyphics that effectively translate body language onto the Internet. Symbols, such as question marks, semi-colons and brackets, once used only for punctuation, are now combined to form rudimentary computer sketches. They're placed in or at the end of sentences, and give words underlying meanings. To see the image, emoticons must be viewed sideways. For instance, :-D infers that something was said with a big smile, :,-(implies that the person is sad or crying and '-) illustrates a wink (joke or come-on!?!).

Acronyms have also found their niche in netspeak. They're a significant entity because they help speed up the typing process. It's a lot faster typing "ROFLAHMS" than "rolling on the floor laughing and holding my side".

There is a certain etiquette (translated to

"netiquette" in cyberspace) one must follow to avoid being misunderstood online. As Nancy Tamosaitis explains in her book *net.talk*, one executive was sending all of her e-mail in capital letters. She received an angry message from a colleague asking her to PLEASE STOP SHOUTING online. It's considered bad form to type in all caps because in the cyberworld this translates into shouting :-o.

There is much more to computer talk than the stereotypical "techi" language. "Cyberlingo", online slang, is playful, sarcastic and mixes computer terms with basic English phrases.

The following is a sampling of words that have taken on new meanings with netspeak:

"Evangelist" - Anyone who knows, or act like they know a lot about a particular software topic, and likes to flaunt that knowledge.

"Perot" - To quit with no advance warning; named after the former presidential candidate Ross Perot.

"Wired" - Connected to the Internet.

"Mouse potato" - The computer generation equivalent of the couch potato; a person who would choose time on the computer over physical activity.

"Flame" - To be verbally abusive during an online discussion.

"Cyberpork" - Tax money that's shovelled into construction of the information superhighway.

Somehow I just can't imagine "cyberpork" ever rolling off my tongue in conversation! But then again, just last year I thought the 500 channel universe was some sort of new age, high-tech cable service. •

:::POOF:::
(I'm out of here)

This article could have never been written without the help of net.talk and The Complete Idiot's Guide to Computer Terms .

FYI, these were some of the emoticons and acronyms I found funny:
@;^[) - Elvis
@@@@@@@@:) - Marge Simpson
?-) - black eye
:%)% - acne
<:-O - Eeek!
:-') - Smiley has a cold
=):-)= - Abe Lincoln
POW - Problem Older Woman
PABG - Pack A Big Gun
NUL - No! You're lying!
RTFM - Read The F***ing Manual
SNAG - Sensitive New-Age Guy
UAPITA - You're a pita (bread)!
YABA -Yet Another Bloody
      Acronym

Jus' call me @;^[) when you're talkin' 'bout me on the 'net man. Thank you, thank you very much.

MATT GROENING

Even pop-culture figures such as Elvis Presley and Marge Simpson have their own identification codes on the Internet.

Humber College

ElectroMagneticFields

Computers' hidden hazards

by Shellee Fitzgerald

Recently I've read some disturbing news about computers, but the one sitting before me seems harmless enough. It looks almost friendly in its compact form—eager to make my life easier by helping me complete tasks quickly and efficiently.

From the pile of research I've placed at the side of my computer, some ominous headlines jump out at me. They read: "Indecent Exposure", "Micro Madness Peaks Worry Over Dangerous Emissions" and "Currents of Death". The titles suggest that some unpleasantness surrounds computers.

Is it possible that computers are hazardous to our health? These articles suggest they might be.

For a growing number of people, the computer is not a friend at all; rather, it is an enemy (some would argue a deadly one).

All of us have probably been afflicted with eye strain or a nasty headache compliments of our computer, but we certainly don't consider these problems life threatening. However, the nagging theory that computers are linked to cancer has been gaining momentum since the 1970s.

The theory is that electromagnetic fields (EMF's) – the invisible energy forces produced by electrical devices like computers – are extremely harmful. The electromagnetic radiation emitted is suspected of promoting development of malignancies like brain cancer, leukemia and breast cancer.

We are exposed to EMFs on a daily basis. They're emitted by typical household conveniences such as microwave ovens, televisions, and hair dryers. Computers have become a particular concern because of their pervasiveness in workplaces, schools and homes .

If EMFs are suspected to be so dangerous, why isn't there a warning label, like a skull and cross-bone graphic, affixed to my computer—like the ones you see on aerosol cans, paint tins or other toxins—to advise me of this danger?

Photo by Shellee Fitzgerald

Friend or Foe? The possible health risks of computers have fueled a raging debate.

The simple explanation is that despite strong suspicions, science has been unable to prove a clear link between EMFs and cancer. Study after study has yielded only inconclusive results, although recently detected trends have added fuel to the debate.

According to *Science* magazine, a recent joint Canadian-French study of more than 223,000 electrical workers who experienced prolonged exposure to EMFs revealed a higher than average number of leukemia cases among the workers.

Similarly, two Swedish studies have linked EMFs with increased risk of leukemia in children and adult males.

Since the late 1970s, studies have repeatedly revealed a similar association, but have failed to show a clear link. In the April 18, 1994 issue of *Macleans* magazine, Dr. Anthony Miller said one explanation could be that scientists haven't been able to identify the role EMFs play in the development of cancer because they haven't identified the biological mechanism involved. "It may be that surveys aimed at finding a link aren't studying the right factors," said Miller.

While the associations between EMFs and cancer have forced the Swedish government to impose regulations requiring low emission computers from manufacturers, this is not the case in Canada.

A recent Ontario government paper on EMFs concludes:

"The weight of current scientific knowledge does not support the assertion that the electromagnetic fields or radiation normally emitted by VDTs (video display terminals) produce adverse health effects on the operator."

Without concrete scientific evidence, there is no pressure on the government or manufacturers to advise people of potential risks, or to set low emission standards for computers. However, manufacturers are starting to voluntarily offer low emission computers in response to public concern. Older, cheaper models remain suspect.

"It took us 25 years in the labour movement to prove that asbestos was a work hazard, and it wouldn't surprise me at all if we're not dealing with issues that will take another 25 years to prove."

Linda Torney, president of the Labour Council of Metropolitan Toronto and York region, believes EMFs are a serious occupational health hazard, and suggests governments traditionally drag their feet when it comes to health hazards—particularly in the workplace.

"Scientific studies still go on," said Torney, "but the point here is that it took us 25 years in the labour movement to prove that asbestos was a work hazard, and it wouldn't surprise me at all if we're not dealing with issues now that will take us another 25 years to prove. In the meantime, workers continue to be exposed."

Indeed, like many controversial scientific matters, the debate will likely rage for years. Experts say the extremely complicated nature of EMF research does not promise any quick answers.

In the meantime, the overly cautious or paranoid need not live in fear. In recent years, growing public concern over electromagnetic fields has given birth to a mini-industry of gadgets and tools aimed at minimizing EMF exposure.

EMF detectors or Gaussmeters which measure the strength of EMF emissions around your home, workplace or school can be purchased for around $150.

Other devices to protect people from the suspected dangers of EMFs are special screens and covers that reduce the electromagnetic rays emitted by computer monitors.

Many experts say while you cannot completely avoid EMFs, you can greatly reduce your exposure by simply keeping your distance, what some call 'prudent avoidance', since the strength of EMF's drops off rapidly with increased distance. Computer users are urged to place themselves at least 28 inches away from their terminal, and to stay at least four feet from the sides and backs of neighboring computers, because that is where EMF emissions are most intense.

After sitting in front of the computer for several hours now, I have to wonder how many of these potential "death rays" I've absorbed over the years. One could develop paranoia contemplating it, but I guess I'll have to wait several years for science to either confirm or quell these fears. In the meantime, while I continue using the computer, I'll be sitting at least 28 inches away from it. •

The New Workplace

Setting up shop on the homefront

by Lisa Stocco

Every morning Donna Hughes wakes up with her husband and her young daughter. As she sends her husband off to work, she waits for her daughter's babysitter to arrive so she too can go to work. The difference is Donna doesn't leave her home. When she "goes to work", she doesn't go any further than her kitchen table.

For both social and economic reasons, the needs of the modern North American work force, have been changing.

Due to rising unemployment rates, among other things, people have had to find economic support through alternative means. Therefore, it is not difficult to imagine that many will find themselves in the same situation as Donna Hughes - working from their home.

The use of information-technology products has made "telework" (working from a home environment) a reality.

Donna Hughes not only works from her home on a contractual basis (as do most teleworkers), but she also recently completed a Master's degree at York University. She plans to begin working on her PhD in September of this year.

According to Susan Milazzo, in her article "*The Flexible Workplace*," growing interest in of the home-based office is the result of a combination of factors. These factors include: the increasing pressure for equality between the sexes, the ris-

ing costs of daycare for single-parent and dual-income families, and the growing concerns about air pollution and efficient energy use.

According to Hughes, there are several advantages to working at home, both for the employer and the employee.

"The stress of commuting to work everyday would be greatly reduced and workers would have increased flexibility to balance work and personal responsibilities," said Hughes.

She said there is significant money to be saved including transportation, vehicle maintenance costs and parking fees.

There are also considerable savings associated with food, clothing and child care expenses.

"The working environment becomes more personal, and individual comfort increases," said Hughes.

Hughes also mentions, "The employer would experience an expanded pool of potential workers, which would include employees who need to stay home due to immediate circumstances."

According to Dallas Malm, who wrote the article "*Managing for results*," the employer might also benefit from a reduction in employee absenteeism.

"A person not feeling well early in the morning may feel better and more able to work one or two hours later, but a commuter would be more inclined to take the whole day off."

According to these experts, there is a wide range of social benefits to working from home. These benefits include a reduction in traffic congestion, accidents and environmental pollution.

In theory, these experts agree the adoption of telework could contribute to the harmonization of work and family life.

But a 1992 report on telework entitled, "*Working At Home: A Guide to Implementation*," cautioned that, "certain requirements must be met before working at home becomes a possibility."

Hughes agreed with the report. She stressed that for each benefit created by telework there is a drawback.

"Technology is advancing so quickly that many of us can't keep up and many social, economic and managerial concerns remain with regard to telework," said Hughes.

The few studies that have been conducted show the most successful home-based employees are independent, self-motivated individuals who require a minimum amount of direct supervision.

Unfortunately, many employees do not fall into this category and according to Hughes, this is where the problem arises.

"The workplace is changing so quickly that telework may soon not be the choice of the employee, but rather, the demand of the employer," said Hughes.

"Telework is a great solution to temporary situations, such as childcare, but its long-term effects on the workplace and on individuals is unknown," said Hughes.

"As another example, personal contact has always been a crucial part of the business world. It remains to be seen whether technological advancements, such as video-conferencing and the video-telephone, would provide the same level of efficiency," she added.

The problem of how to supervise employees also becomes a key concern for management. According to Hughes, the future is uncertain because so much research still needs to be done.

"Technologically we have the ability to implement telework now, but socially we are not equipped to deal with all the issues it involves," said Hughes. "Without the research, we cannot accurately foresee the future." •
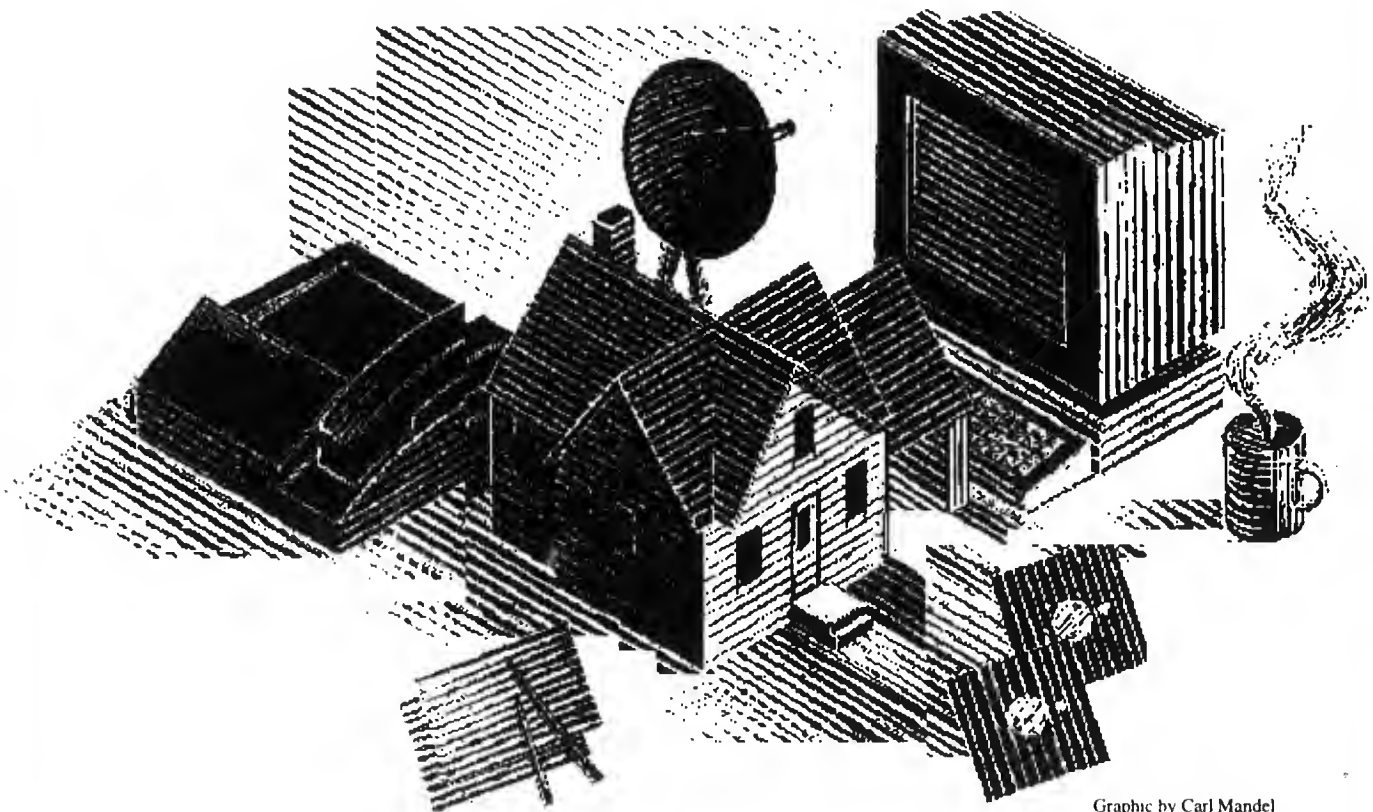
Graphic by Carl Mandel

Pictures versus platforms in western politics

by John Bryden

The year was 1960, the golden age of television. After one single event, television would never be the same. TV's role in the presentation of information and the education of the public would take on new meaning and be changed forever.

The event was the first U.S. presidential election debate ever held on television: the older, wiser statesman, Richard Nixon versus the younger, charismatic John F. Kennedy.

Nixon spent days prior to the debate poring over research, going through the debating process and learning the issues. Kennedy, on the other hand, spent time sun-tanning and relaxing.

"It was Kennedy who came out looking better because the image was so much more important than perhaps the substance at that point in time and that's TV," said Rob Moore, media communications assistant for Toronto Mayor Barbara Hall.

Moore has experienced television's influence at every level of government. He worked as an executive assistant for Liberal MP Dennis Mills, and was a communications advisor for Jean Charest during the 1993 Conservative leadership race. In his current job with the mayor, Moore recognizes the difference between television and other media.

"Television is largely an entertainment medium, it's something that people don't put on necessarily to become educated," said Moore. "Some do and people always will, but it has largely become an entertainment medium, not an educational one. So you have to compete within that framework, so how you look is important. There is really no way around that."

In comparing television with

> **"Television is largely an entertainment medium. It's something that people don't put on necessarily to become educated."**
> *-Rob Moore-*
> *media communications assistant to Mayor Barbara Hall.*

Would Sir John have been elected if he had lived during the television age?

print, it has become evident that the same story will be reported differently. Television provides much simpler coverage of news stories and focuses on the visual impact. Print, on the other hand, provides more information through analysis and opinion.

According to Matthew Mendelson, author of *The Media's Persuasive Effects: the Priming of Leadership in the 1988 Canadian Election*, television's focus is on the visual or melodramatic effect. Viewers evaluate candidates on their behavior and their looks rather than knowledge. A candidate's charm and charisma are more persuasive than their words and ideas.

"If I wanted to talk about a plan (Barbara Hall) had for tax reforms, you would have to start conveying that through newspapers because it is a more in-depth medium," said Moore. "If I'm looking for just straight recognition, I would go for television because more people watch television than read the paper."

During the 1988 federal election, the Tories used television to their advantage. The result? For the first time since John A. MacDonald, the Conserv-ative Party won a second con-secutive majority.

"Television is such a huge thing, it dictates a lot of what you do in trying to communicate in politics and (Brian) Mulroney was good," said Moore. "Mulroney had been involved in the process a little longer than (John) Turner had."

Pauline Browes, a former cabinet minister for the Conservatives was a

member of parliament for nine years. Browes experienced first hand how politics was covered in the media.

"We have only started to scratch the surface with the possibilities of television, not only in our lives but in politics as well," said Browes. "The 1988 election was the first electronic medium election. Public opinion changed many times during that 55-day period. Prior to that it would take public opinion three weeks to change. That's why the performance of an MP on TV is absolutely crucial for today."

> ## Because of changing public opinion...
> ## "the performance of an MP on TV is absolutely crucial."
> ### - Pauline Browes -
> *former Conservative cabinet minister*

Through television, the Conservatives were able to shift the focus of the election onto the leaders, rather than the local candidates. Today, that shift has stayed. Individual leaders take precedence over parties as a whole.

"I think the former conservative government over the period of 10 years did a lot to elevate the status of the leader and sort of decreased the level of the local parliamentary representative," said Moore.

Moore also gives credit to the influence of the American system.

"It influenced a lot of people to become more specific on the (leader), more than all the other people working in the party," said Moore. "When I worked in the federal campaigns you definitely got a sense that no matter how hard you work at the local level, there are a lot of decisions that are going to be made based on the leader. I don't know if that's just television but I'm sure television has a lot to do with it."

According to Mendelson, the content of the news is less important than the politician being exposed to the media and presented to the public.

In 1992, the charismatic Bill Clinton tooted his own horn on the Arsenio Hall Show.

Voters are persuaded by television. "Undecided" voters are easily influenced and because they represent a large percentage of the population they can have an enormous effect on the outcome of elections.

Browes understands whatever you say has to be credible and stand the test of time, but she realizes that TV's power outweighs the written word. As a result, public opinion quickly changes.

"This is what I found during the 1988 election, when the debate was on the free trade agreement," said Browes. "You could really feel on the street what had been on CBC and CTV news the night before. If people were hinting for (in favor of) free trade and that had been the commentary, you would get that on the street the next morning. If (the commentary) had been negative toward free trade, that's the feeling you got the next morning on the street."

As we progress through the technological age, television will play an even larger role than it does today. It will remain our society's primary mode for knowing and learning about itself. As long as that is true, the politicians using this medium to spread their ideas will continue to conform to television, whether they like it or not. •

Self-serving Journalism

Who are journalists really looking out for?

by Howard Elmer

In an episode of Murphy Brown, the cynical FYI crew challenged each other to go out and find a good news story. The laughs were garnered as each one of them could only come up with tragedies, conspiracies, and cover-ups. Murphy and company had conditioned themselves to seek out only the bad and the sinister. Those were the stories that ran, and those were the stories that brought them personal glory.

Being a journalist is one more vehicle that can be used to achieve fame, and some in the field are blinded by that prospect. That does not mean journalists are consistently corrupt in their reporting, it's more gray than that. The manipulation of real events, through words or images gives the journalist a bigger story, and creates a temptation to cheat.

If your story needs a bit of a nudge to get it to roll, and if the addition of a juicy but unsubstantiated fact really punches it up, do you run with it? These days a lot of journalists do.

At a reading of her new book *On the Take* (stories of Mulroney government corruption) Stevie Cameron handed out photocopies of Conrad Black's review of her book. She told the audience she had spent the entire month of August with her libel lawyer, going over every detail in the book. "If I couldn't prove it, out it went," she said. She has not been sued for libel, so that seems to prove that enough of the facts were correct to keep Mulroney's lawyers at bay.

Cameron seemed to enjoy discussing Black's review. But, what she did not talk about is what Black said at the end of that review. Black said, "The author has a chronic inability to distinguish between important and unimportant facts."

According to Black, the book was a non-event, stories of petty thievery, wrapped in a fog of conspiracy.

Black's views hinged on the fact that Brian Mulroney had opposed patronage and porkbarreling while in opposition.

He noted that, "Mulroney acted with notably less official probity than other Canadian political leaders, but didn't have

> "It was his masquerade as a reformer of political ethics that was most irksome to his critics."
> -Conrad Black-

the self confidence to acknowledge that part of government is taking care of one's friends. It was his masquerade as a reformer of political ethics that was most irksome to his critics."

So who did the book serve in the end? It served Stevie Cameron- bringing her money and fame.

It can be argued that Cameron's facts are real. But then so are risqué photos of Chuck and Di. Who do they serve? Some of the paparazzi are as famous as the people they photograph, and the tabloids who display and cash in on these photographs.

Still not convinced? Consider that some news events are like side-show freaks, the staple of every carnival. The bearded lady and the dog-faced boy offer those willing to pay a voyeuristic glimpse of a narrow reality. Not extraordinary, and

not life changing, just different. It's news, if it sells.

George Bain, a long-time political journalist, devotes a whole chapter of his book *Gotcha!* to the 1985 tuna scandal that was broken by Eric Malling of the 5th Estate. Bain uses this as a classic example of a media witch hunt.

The scandal broke on Sept. 17, 1985. It began with the words: "Good Evening. I'm Eric Malling with a story about cans of tuna fish, public confidence and politics. The tuna fish was tainted and unfit for human consumption, according to experts at the Canadian Fisheries Service. Their boss - federal Fisheries Minister John Fraser - wasn't convinced."

In this brief piece, the phrase 'unfit for human consumption' came up six more times.

The program created a firestorm of accusations of influence, peddling and cover-ups by the Mulroney government. By week's end, Fraser had quit the cabinet, Mulroney was under attack, and 400 Star-Kist workers were out of jobs.

Bain noted upon review, that there was not one single document from either the Star-Kist company, or the Fisheries Inspection Service that used the phrase 'unfit for human consumption'. In fact the tuna was passed by the Fisheries inspectors for sale in Canada and abroad, provided the Star-Kist company label it as a second-grade product. At no time was it proved that the tuna was 'unfit for human consumption'.

Bain goes on to say, "The tainted tuna scandal makes a textbook example of a media feeding frenzy. In current political journalism there is a latent predator tendency, ready to induce a level of psychosis at the sight of scandal."

This kind of misinformation benefits others too. John Turner, in the House of Commons, yelled, "Get that rotten fish off the shelves."

This rhetoric is what opposition leaders pray for and what the media thrives on. As a result, the statement 'unfit for human consumption', won Eric Malling a Gemini for Documentary reporting.

Since writing her book, Stevie Cameron has yet to face a lawsuit. This gives credence to the possibility that she is telling the truth. But can we say the same about other journalists?

Michael Kronenwetter, an American freelance journalist who has written extensively about freedom of the press, talks about the power of television in his book *Journalism Ethics*.

"Television news often prides itself on its balance, on presenting spokespeople for different sides of a public issue. But even this supposed proof of objectivity can be used as a weapon with which to prejudice the public's perception of the issue. Some people are attractive, some are not. Some are well groomed, some are scruffy. Some are moderate in the way they speak, others are extreme. By piling these images on opposite sides of an issue, it is easy for viewers to confuse their reactions to what somone is saying, with their reaction to the person that is saying it."

Confusing and dangerous indeed. In this age of technology, camcorders and video-tape can bring down a government, disband an airborne regiment, and start race riots. The power of images is immense, and so is the temptation to manipulate images for personal gain.

The self-serving journalist has great power through selection of topics, framing of issues, filtering of information, emphasis and tone. Let us beware. •

"In current political journalism there is a latent predator tendency, ready to induce a level of psychosis at the sight of scandal."

-George Bain-

Hooking Up
What you need to know

You've heard all of the hype, and you know you want to get "wired" to the world; you just don't know how. Here are some quick and easy ways for you to get started.

by Tim Moriarty

Equipment

First, you need a computer. An IBM compatible or Macintosh is preferable if you want to connect to most services but neither is absolutely necessary.

Next, you need a modem (modulator/demodulator that allows data to be transferred through the telephone lines), which connects your computer to the telephone line in your house. To fully harness the capabilities of the "online" world it should probably be at least 14,400 bps (bits per second which refers to how fast it works). Newer modems are twice as fast at 28,800 bps, and are slowly coming down in price. In buying a faster modem, you will eventually save money on connection charges because you will spend less time waiting for images to appear on your screen.

Finally, you will need software. Programs that utilize the modem and allow you to send and receive messages by talking to other computers, are generally referred to as terminal programs and are normally included with the purchase of a modem. If your modem doesn't include a terminal, you will need to get one. On modern modems, dialing and connecting are usually done through the terminal program.

What's Out There?

There are three different types of places you can call once you have set up your computer and modem: Bulletin Board Systems (B.B.S.), online services and the Internet.

B.B.S.' are usually run by computer and telecommunications hobbyists out of their homes and often cater to specific interests such as sports or religion.

Because they are usually free of charge and run by individuals, they can be somewhat limited. Resources such as, storage space, news feeds and multiple phone lines are simply not available to these hobbyists because of the many costs involved.

Online services do have these resources but they are rarely free. For example, services like *CompuServe*, *Prodigy* and *America Online* charge an hourly or monthly fee for access, but in turn offer resources such as up-to-date stock quotes, Reuters and Associated Press news feeds, online shopping and electronic mail (e-mail).

Each online service may have its own software that you will need in order to connect with them. This software is usually free of charge because they want you as a regular customer.

Time charges for these services can stack up if you use them often enough. If you are on a budget, your best bet would be to try each service then decide which one best meets your needs and cancel the others.
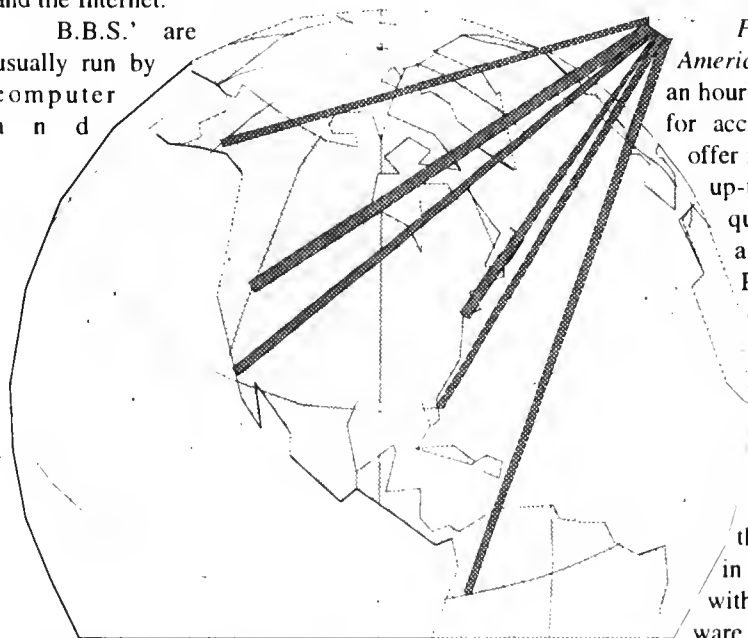
Getting Connected

Originally designed by the U.S. military to keep communications open in the event of a nuclear war, the Internet has become a giant web of information available to anyone who is connected to it.

Getting connected can be very easy or very difficult, depending on how you go about it. Connecting directly is very expensive and not an option for most people. Direct connections are usually made by large corporations, governments, educational institutions and Internet providers. It is through these Internet providers that most people get connected because they simplify the process.

Different providers will give you a range of access, depending on how much you pay them. From full access to e-mail only, the more you pay, the more you get. Many online services are also Internet providers. You may want to consider the amount of access they offer when choosing one.

In return for this access, the provider will again charge you an hourly, monthly or yearly fee.

Different providers may also supply you with software enabling you to simplify your access. The most popular way to do that now is through a graphical user interface (GUI). The GUI allows you to simply point your mouse where you want to go and then click a button to get there. If you're not using a GUI, you have to type out long commands to go anywhere and it's easier to get lost.
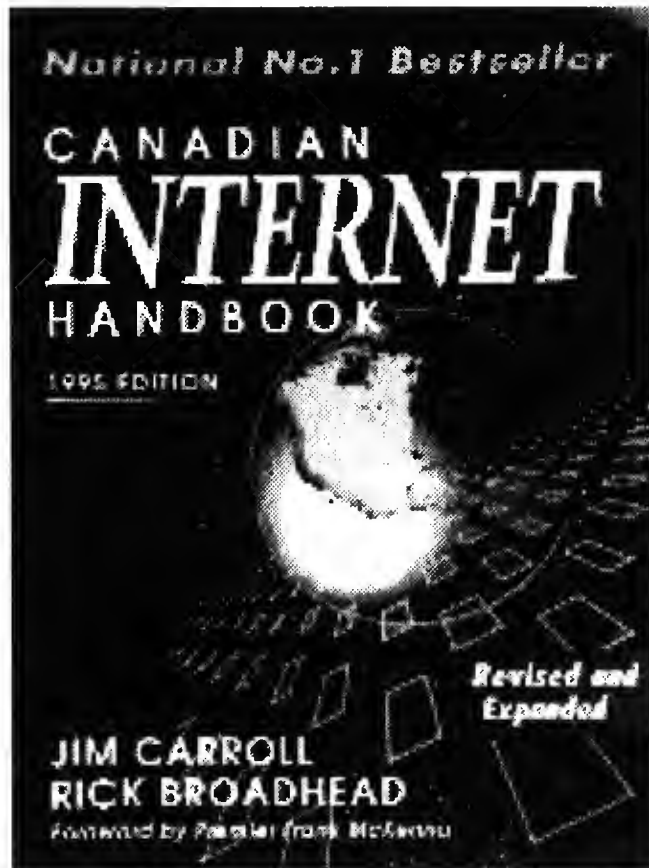
If you are planning to "surf" the 'Net, the best recommendation I can offer is to buy a book that can be used as a reference manual when you need help. The best book I have found so far is the *Canadian Internet Handbook,* by Jim Carroll and Rick Broadhead. It gives a comprehensive background on how to access the Internet from Canada, what you can do once you're connected, and how to do it.

As soon as you are hooked up, you will have access to multitudes of pertinent as well as useless information. You'll experience everything from Parliament Hill and the White House to German romantic poetry and a complete listing of every Star Trek episode ever made. It's all there. •
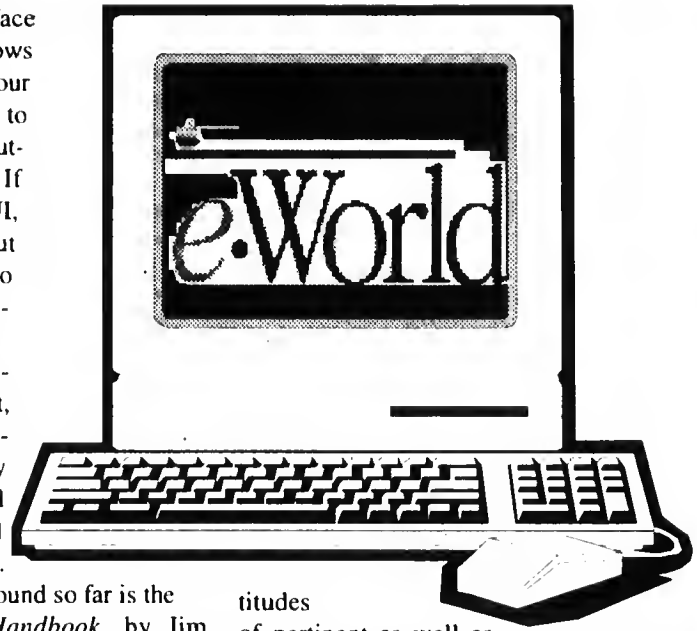
National No.1 Bestseller

CANADIAN INTERNET HANDBOOK

1995 EDITION

Revised and Expanded

JIM CARROLL
RICK BROADHEAD

Foreword by Douglas from McEwen