



June, 1994

Volume Two, Number Five

ELECTRONIC CAFE REPORT

by Einar Ask

In 1980 a rear projection television clicked on at Lincoln Center in New York. Another television did the same in Los Angeles. For one weekend, random passers by were able to speak with the people they saw on the television 3,000 miles away. This "Hole in Space" was a telecommunications project put on by Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz, two video experimenters who met in Paris in the '70s.



This experiment has grown and evolved over the years into what has become known as "The Electronic Cafe." The EC utilizes the discontinued Panasonic visual phone as its basic, entry level connection. The visual phone allows an inexpensive video and audio connection with anyone, anywhere on the planet. This global connectivity has created The Electronic Cafe International — ECI. One goal of the ECI is to increase communications between cultures at the "regular people" level.

This month the Electronic Cafe comes to our Northwest CyberArtist meeting. The Belltown Pub will be connected in

CyberArtist

real time over standard phone lines to the Electronic Cafe in Santa Monica, California. We will be able to talk with Kit and Sherrie over a visual phone.

Unlike the satellite connection that David Letterman used to talk to his mom in Norway (with full motion color video and high quality audio), the visual phone displays a small B&W still image of the person on the other end of the line. There is silence for about 8 seconds every time an image is transmitted.

Also unlike the satellite connection, the visual phone uses standard phone lines, so it is as affordable as any telephone call.

The phone has video inputs and outputs, so we will be seeing the images displayed on larger monitors at the Belltown Pub.

The meeting will be divided into three parts.

1. We will first be shown a videotape containing "raw" footage of an EC event.
2. We will talk with Kit and Sherrie.
3. There will be a live music demonstration across the phone lines using Lone Wolf MidiTaps, drum triggers, sequencers, and sound modules. Brett Battey will have his Macintosh running the Max program that he used at Synesthetics, and a similar setup will be located on the other end of the phone lines!

Locally, there is a movement to get a permanent EC installation into Seattle. Bob Moses has been involved in this for

about six months now. Stark Beatty moved here two years ago and has known the EC folks for several years. They are optimistic and feel that Seattle will have an Electronic Cafe in the future.

Until we get a permanent installation we locals will be enjoying demonstrations such as the one at Monday's meeting.

In July there will be a benefit fund raiser for the *Beyond Fast Forward* festival. An admission fee will be charged and the money will go towards supporting the event in September.

Janet Galore is involved in the *Random Access* program at Coca and will be including Electronic Cafe experiments during the summer.

At *Beyond Fast Forward* there will be a demonstration on September 22nd.

I am excited to see this installation on Monday. I have a very practical reason for wanting the EC to grow. I have a lot of relatives in Norway that have never seen my kids, and airfare to bring the clans together is pretty expensive. My grandfather never got to meet my wife before he died. ☹

**JUNE MEETING:
ELECTRONIC CAFE
PREMIERE
MONDAY, JUNE 6**

**BELLTOWN PUB
2322 1ST AVENUE
7:30PM**

**ON JULY 11TH:
TO BE ANNOUNCED**

AUGUST: TRIMPIN

**SEPTEMBER:
THECLA SCHIPHORST**

PUBLISHER'S CORNER

by Steve Turnidge

Hello, everyone!

I need to report on the collaborative effort joined in creating the newsletter last month. (Looked great, didn't it!).

Well it was great, but I learned many things. Collaboration is difficult if you are trying to fit many people into what has evolved as a one person task. For those of you who are about to do a collaborative effort involving computers, here are some tips.

1. Make sure your files match. I am using several fonts that the other people didn't have, and these were substituted on the other end. When I received the newsletter file back to print it and put it in Acrobat format, there were fonts substituted that I didn't have. This was a challenge.

2. Don't use linking and embedding in your documents which require applications the others don't have. The images in the newsletter were done with Corel 4.0. I have Corel 3.0. When I opened the file, all the graphics were grayed out. This was a challenge.

3. Use graphics targeted for the platform they will be used on. I spent days trying to get Mac EPS files to behave on my PC system. (I had to cheat to make it work...)

All in all everyone worked very hard and the collaborative effort took many times longer than DIY. But — going into such a situation with head up and eyes open makes life much less challenging.

And now for something sort of the same...

Well, this is a month of firsts. This is the first month we are not having our scheduled meeting at the Art Institute (not including last July when we roamed the streets for an hour...). This is also our first 21 and over meeting. (Being that it takes place in a pub...). It is also Seattle's first Electronic Cafe.

It should also be a month that we begin to take a close look at our organization. We have been nicely protected from the typical "user-group" problems, such as dues, postage, printing, mailing, tracking money, all those things. I think it is time to consider our group becoming an independent entity. Think about things you are willing to do to help our group survive and grow. The first thing you can do is let us know if this is junk mail. Our mailing list is over 450 now, and the cost of copying and postage approaches \$400 a month.

How it started...

When we first approached Rane for support of our group, we were *NEMUS* and we had 24 paying members. Rane was asked to cover printing and postage to help out the group. They accepted. We copied the newsletter at Rane and had them pay the five bucks for postage. Then we became Northwest CyberArtists, eliminated dues, activated the entire *NEMUS* mailing list (around 118) and started growing.

All this time Rane has been right there; as we started using Kinko's for our copying, gained more and more pages in the newsletter (up to eight — back to six this month), and added hundreds of stamps to the bill. As the bill was approaching \$300 a month, we had the good fortune to welcome Lone Wolf to Seattle. They jumped at the opportunity to support us and took over the postage costs. (Around \$120 a month.) And we're still growing.

I would like us to figure out a way to become self-supporting. It's time for us, as a group, to accept reality, choose independence and put our decisions into action.

How to do that is a real challenge.

Our key resource is an extremely creative membership. Here's what I'd like you to do:

Try to get on-line. Join the CyberArtist mailing list. Find out how to get the newsletter from our Internet site, and let me know to take your name

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LONE WOLF

RANE

off the snail mail list.

Post ideas on how the group can make money to support its needs. If you have skills you are willing to donate, let the list know, and we'll all figure out how to apply them. 

--BOOK REVIEWS--

By Bret Batty

LIGHT MOVING IN TIME: STUDIES IN THE VISUAL AESTHETICS OF AVANT-GARDE FILM
WILLIAM C. WEES
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
1992

The idea of non-narrative works is still an unfamiliar one in the realm of film and video media. Try to imagine yourself either in a theater or in front of your television watching an image on screen that changes over time but does not tell a story. Imagine that the image is, as music or poetry often are, either about the medium itself, or about something that can at best be expressed only obliquely through the experience of that medium. Such is not our expectation when we sit in front of the screen. We expect drama and direct representation in the film media above all others. Even MTV is more about using visual effects to represent the familiar in novel ways than an attempt to express the unfamiliar or to explore the visual sense for its own sake.

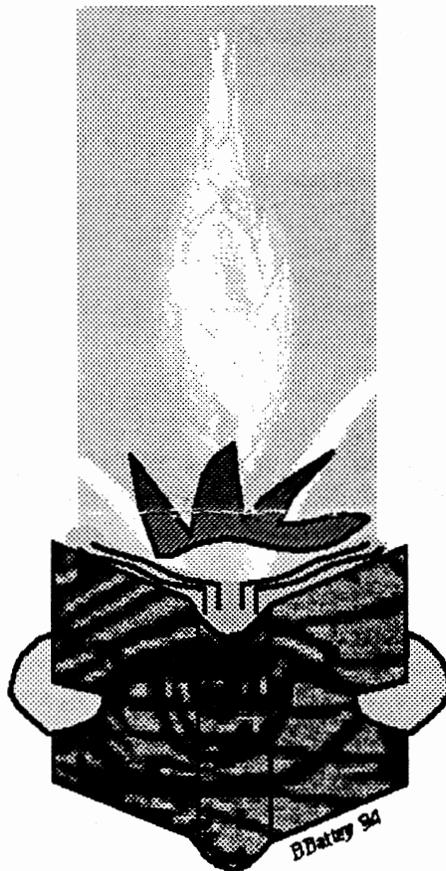
Wees's *Light Moving in Time* is about artists who are united in their use of film to explore visual perception in and of itself. Their films explore "different ways of seeing"—from hallucinations, optical illusions, and dream imagery, to mystical visions and the phosphene patterns and neurological noise we see when we close our eyes. The works of these artists, if they can be said to be documentary at all, document an inner experience rather than an objective drama or story.

Wees provides an essay on the history of the science of sight and of techniques for capturing the experience of sight in visual media. This is followed by a series of essays on the artists, peppered with references to representatives of alternative experience such as William Blake and Aldus Huxley. In order of presentation, the artists are:

- Stan Brakhage (attempting to capture the images of 'untutored eye': the eye that has not yet been trained to filter and conform images to a cultural standard)
- Kenneth Anger (light as expression of spiritual essence in esoteric and occult traditions)

- Jordon Belson, James Whitney, and Paul Sharits (film as documentation of transcendental experience)

The book contains fairly dense prose, and it is not recommended for those with low tolerance for overtly ideological art criticism or esoteric spiritualism. However, for those willing to wade through the gloss of academic grammar and vocabulary, reading *Light Moving in Time* should help stimulate new ideas regarding the potential of film and video to express inner experience.



**INTERACTIVE MUSIC SYSTEMS:
MACHINE LISTENING AND COMPOSING**
ROBERT ROWE
MIT PRESS, 1993

Since interactive music systems research is still a young discipline, there are few introductory resources available to individuals who wish to investigate such systems.

Rowe's *Interactive Music Systems* is an adaptation of his 1991 MIT Media Laboratory Ph.D. thesis. As such, the focus of the book is research rather than practice—that is, on creating the systems rather than using those systems. This is

partly a reflection of the state of the art, since aside from such items as M or the 'phrase synthesizer' in Cubase, there are few pre-packaged interactive music products available. If you are interested simply in making interactive music, buying one of these packages and experimenting will probably be your best introduction to this field. However, if you already are or are thinking about developing your own interactive systems, Rowe's book should prove to be a worthwhile guide. The style is academic and theoretical, as is the musical aesthetic, so if the Keyboard Magazine style is your favored flavor of instructional material, you may want to wait for a different book.

Rowe begins with a general classification of interactive music systems, followed by an exploration of the structural elements which support sensing, processing, and response in these systems. This is followed by a brief discussion of commercial development systems, such as MAX. The remainder of the book details Rowe's own system, *Cypher*, and basic transformative and generative algorithms implemented in MAX. Connectionist methods (neural networks and complex systems of agents) and artificial intelligence are also discussed. The categorization schemes and examples provide ample material for stimulating new ideas for developers of interactive systems, and the wealth of references will be valuable to anyone interested in pursuing further research on a particular topic.

An accompanying CD-ROM is available for \$30. It contains audio and program examples for Macintosh platforms. This includes patches for Opcode's MAX and a complete version of Rowe's *Cypher*. I have not yet reviewed the CD-ROM.

By the way, MIT Press seems to be positioning itself as the provider of books and journals in electronic arts systems research. Computer Music Journal, Presence (Teleoperators and Virtual Environments), Artificial Life Quarterly, Evolutionary Computation, Leonardo, and other juicy journals are published by MIT. Numerous book titles from artificial intelligence to computational theory to visual perception systems are available. If you have Internet access, you can email MIT Press for their catalog at mitpress-order-inq@mit.edu, or gopher to gopher.mit.edu.





Mr. Einar's Neighborhood

Common Ground

by Einar Ask

It's sad in one way to see Star Trek The Next Generation jumping onto the big screen. I'll miss the strange moments of inspiration that I got from it on a weekly basis. Of course we'll have reruns forever, but I'll miss the fresh stuff. Yes, I know there'll be another series, but the first year is always awkward. It's like moving and getting new friends. It takes a while to get comfortable with everything.

The talk about the show's retirement has started me thinking about how broadcast television has become a universal medium in the U.S.. Almost any member of our society has access to a TV, and with that in mind I think about other people who might be sharing an experience when I'm watching a program.

I'm thinking about universal mediums now because of the poking around that I've been doing on the Multi-Media front. I've been trying to size up the potential audience, and one thing is immediately obvious—anything that is designed for use on a computer will not be available to "everybody". And the relative few who do own computers don't all have the same kind. As I still know people without VCRs or answering machines—or even a desire to get one—how much hope do I have that if I hand someone a CD-rom in one particular format they'll be running the same hardware as I do?

I'm used to distributing music or words on a very standard media like cassette, paper or floppy disk that pretty much everybody can use in their own homes. I'm sort of disgusted with the several formats of CD-roms on the market. CD-I, MAC, PC for example. Maybe it's like VHS/BETA all over again and eventually there will be some sort of

common ground, but it doesn't do the small time guy much good to have several formats out there. It costs a lot to support multiple formats if you have to produce several mostly identical products. Interestingly, a friend at work got junk mail from CyberSex and it seems that they understand compatibility problems. They market a "virtual reality sex simulator" that requires no computer at all. For like \$40.00 or so.

Yeah, sure.

I wish I wasn't so spoiled by high resolution displays, 16 bit stereo sound, animations and so on. It would sure be easier to find common ground on the lower levels of technology. I haven't gotten bored with the straight text information I find on CompuServe or the Internet. I'm stimulated by the act of pulling information out of my telephone line and the fun of doing a bit of digging and experimenting to get the right stuff. I hope straight text will always have a place on CD-rom.

I downloaded a 41 page document on CompuServe in the Multi-Media forum. It covers most aspects of the hardware and software requirements for making the little buggers work. It also lists costs for making your own CD-roms and addresses and phone numbers of duplication houses. I would like to get every interested party together briefly at the next meeting (if you're not completely whacked to silliness by the Electronic Cafe) and set up a separate meeting for the CD-rom project. We need to talk about content. It appears that there are several people who are thinking about what they could submit, and I expect that once we get some of the bugs worked out, there will be more coming in. If we include video and audio from the Synesthetics show, it might be fun to have

voice overs and descriptions provided by the people involved. It would give you a chance to explain the details of your setup to the world!

Gee, maybe we should be keeping a video or photographic record of the various projects being built for BFF. Maybe we should be thinking about an interactive presentation that shows the stages of construction from the drawing on the napkin to completion

I know we're not going to be outdoing Peter Gabriel here, but we might as well try.

Regarding the audio CD project, it seems at first glance that we can fill it up in short order. Don't be afraid to submit something for it! If you need help - just let me know. I'm still figuring we can just split the cost of mastering and duplicating, which should amount to relatively little, depending upon how many people are involved. If enough people have material ready, we could master this this month. Let's talk!

If you want to submit something don't hesitate — please call me or see me at the next meeting — or on June 4th at my next show.

This will be the last performance in Seattle for some time for Eric Muhs of the Metal Men. I'm glad to get one more chance to play with him. Also on the bill (at this writing) is Rob Angus and Jeff Greinke, whose style of music transports you to other planes. They are fascinating to watch and hear. Julius Brown will project his computer based visuals which were seen at the *Synesthetics* show. I will be bringing in a bunch of my older controllers, like the MIDItrees & Speaking Orbs, as well some new projects.

See ya!

Einar 481-3483

CompuServe 71774,640



Internet Corner

How to join the on-line CyberArtists List:

send email to
listproc@u.washington.edu. Leave the
subject line blank and include only the
following in the message body:

subscribe cyberartists yourname

How to join the on-line Electronic Cafe intrest group List:

In order to be part of the ecafe list, you
must send email to
listproc@u.washington.edu. Leave the
subject line blank and include only the
following in the message body:

subscribe ecafe yourname

Call me at work if you have any
problems getting signed on. Please pass this
on to all others interested in the Electronic
Cafe.

Edward M. Galore,
lemaire@cac.washington.edu,
(206)543-5970

Happenings

MORE NOISE PLEASE

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SATURDAY, JUNE 4TH @ 9 PM

-WITH-

METAL MEN

muhs and hawkley rev it up
one last time

ROB ANGUS & JEFF GREINKE

digital travelscapes

EINAR ASK (THE SAME) & JULIUS BROWN

computerized metal trees o lights

BLACKHUMOUR

will encourage attendees to consider their options

FRANK JUNK

will perform on many typewriters

BRAIN WASH

d.rea.j.ferguson.c.rowan.e.muhs
will improvise in an interesting way

PSEUDOBEAT

e.graf.a.griffen.j.hawkley.e.muhs
will percuss to great extent

DB & Mr. HINRIX

will make noise with their mouths

DANCING WITH THE DEAD

A PERFORMANCE BY ALAN READE
WITH SLUGG JELLO, JERI FRANCIS,
ANNE COOPER, AND JOE DRAY

911 Media Arts Center

#17Vale Avenue North, just below Capitol Hill
June 24 and 25 (Fri and Sat)

8pm and 10pm

\$6 general admission, \$4 for 911 members
Call 911 for further information at 206/682-6552.

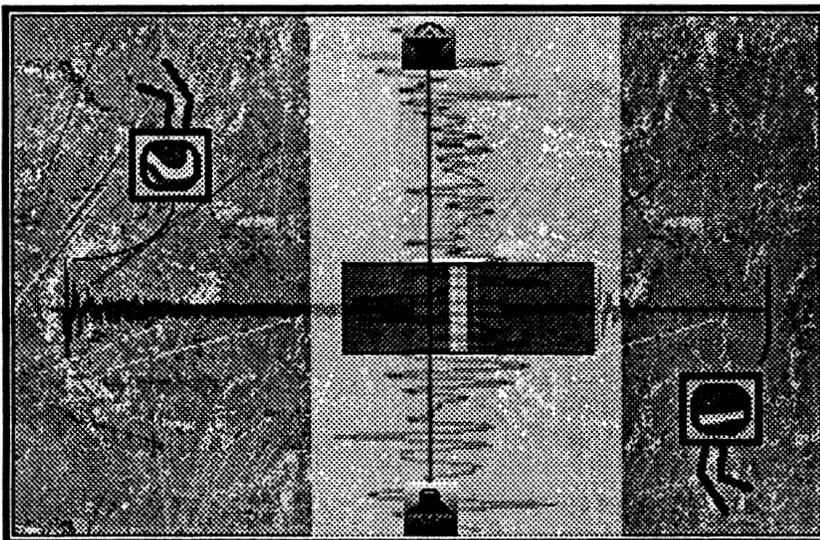
"Dancing With The Dead" is a multimedia meditation on dying and surviving written and performed by Alan Reade. It incorporates poems, music, video, slides, and dance to paint a rich portrait of disappearing people-people we lose to disease, time, and failing memory. But the performance is also about the various ways we remember or forget these people: impersonal but storable data versus perceptions that are colored imprecisely by our senses.

The musical lineup for dancing With The Dead includes cellist Slugg Jello and guitarist Jeri Francis; some of the songs are more rock-oriented and more bluesy than Alan's previous show, "TV or Not TV," which enticed audiences more than a year ago at 911 Media Arts Center and Tugs Belmont. "Dancing With The Dead" is also the result of several successful collaborations, featuring videography by Joe Dray, choreography by Anne Cooper (who choreographed "Guitar Outlaw" starring Duffy Bishop), and sensuous slides by erotic photographer Geoff Manasse.

Alan Reade, Seattle's premier multimedia poet, is known for his word play and prop driven monologues set to electronic music. His visuals enthrall audiences by mirroring the everyday world in a new light. With its pathos, black humor, and clever writing, "Dancing With The Dead" promises to be a lively look at spirituality and survival in the shadow of mortality.

Bob Moses has an old '286 computer with associated stuff that he needs to get out of his house.

Get a message to him at bobmoses@pan.com if you'd like to buy it cheap...



B. Batty '94

The Information Backroads

By Bob Moses

This month's meeting marks a significant milestone in the evolution of Northwest CyberArtists. We're about to go global, bringing people from virtually every corner of the planet into our meetings. Starting June 6th, we'll be able to link anywhere in the world there's a telephone, and interact with people at the other end. We'll have the opportunity to play music, dance together, play games, engage in discussions, or virtually any other type of activity.

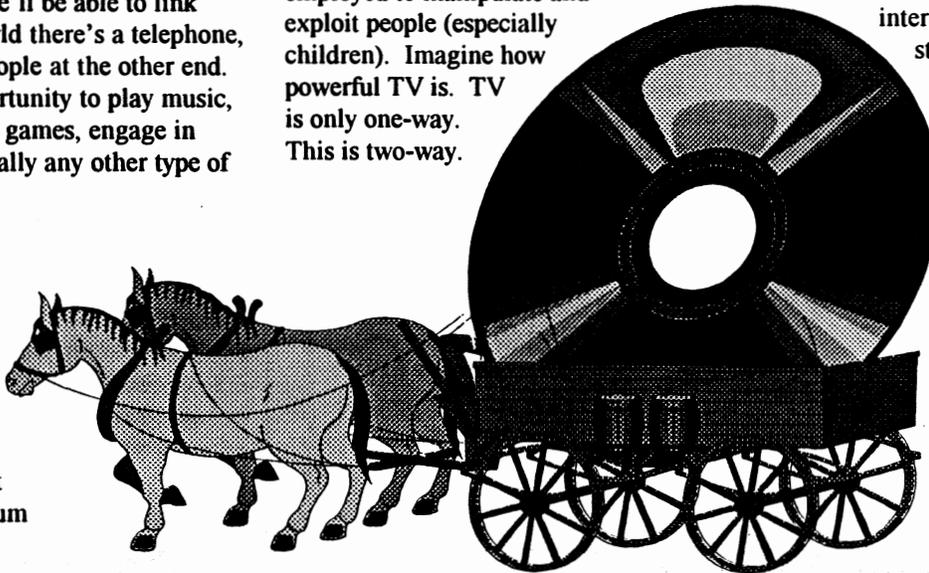
I don't know what to expect from the Electronic Cafe. Will it be like the Donahue show with a bunch of yapping people at both ends? A medium

for grass roots activities? Or will it become a cyberpunk hangout, featuring interactive art? I guess it will be whatever we make of it. Information technologies are extremely powerful. They can be used to bring people together, circumventing barriers in space and time. Or they can be employed to manipulate and exploit people (especially children). Imagine how powerful TV is. TV is only one-way. This is two-way.

One lesson we learned while setting this up is that there's a good ways to go before we have the ultimate technology at our disposal. We had to design and build our own teleconferencing equipment, and our "Visual Phone" was discontinued by it's manufacturer a long time ago. To really do this right, we need to tap into the internet and send video and audio streams through it. Does

anyone out there know how to do this? We're looking for people to help make this happen.

But in the mean time, we have the opportunity to make the most out of some pretty cool technology. This is going to be a fun ride. Fasten your seat belts!



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