

An account of working with video & the new Portapak

July/August 73; Driving home with Portapak in the back - stop at bridge and walk to the stream and set-up tripod in water - the idea, the location, shooting in  $\frac{1}{4}$  hr - playback to check pic and sound all in the same time - re-shoot three times erasing previous takes; pack up. On way over field spot solitary bullock - walk towards shooting without quite knowing what might result; another good recording!

Start ~~not~~ noting ideas down; LAUGH (in Heart Cycle); CAT (in Porter Pack); ~~Budgie~~ BUDGIE; CRY; SONG: TALK; PAINTER; (a variation in Ephemeral Television); GARDENER; PORTAPAK, (a expanded version in Porter Pack).

Start approaching the Portapak idea and find on palyback after each attempt that additions and alterations become quickly apparent. The final version is not shot until later. Others more spontaneous in the fashion of Bullock; ~~Rack~~ RADIO; the radio fills the frame tuned to a programme for ten minutes. WIND; on a gale day the camera is set up in various locations with grass, bushes, trees blowing into the lens.

Begin talking to the camera with no one else around - relaxed in a chair with the VTR running feeling no compulsion to talk but finding it amazingly easy to do so; playback available immediately of course which rapidly became like watching someone else talking - not difficult to be objective about contribution though this is more related to personal ideas I said it right! rather than objectivity as related to someone else - useful for preparing a statement in the same way as these words can be checked back for effect straightaway - re-write as simple too.

Weekend at BGP\* with gear - became effective entertainer (the evening meal) touching recorder of afternoon ride with the kids; recording of the book being printed; shooting of Felipe's Westward tape.

Set-up the studio to look at some film - added another camera to relay off the monitor through mix box - became confused by mix box; the temptation being to 'use' the various effects & making even simple switching obscure after a while - went back to beginning and tried again, forgetting the FX! Came to 'feel' the box, the mix, superimpose and cutting - introduced third camera through Key channel and got to know the box with this very seductive FX - finally found the Key image which seemed to work the best being simple in area and rhythmic in action, this was the film spool on the projector which

\* Bean Gost Press

\* Felipe Ehrenberg of BGP

after a while was lit with a small spot to improve the outline of the white to black areas. This was controllable using a Key Control knob such that the area affected by the white key could be altered from zero - a blank screen to max which produced a distorted image of the spool. Finally all the elements were combined onto the final monitor. The combining images were of great interest the only problem being where in terms of start and finish the combinations might exist. A series of takes were made onto the P and again played back at the end of each one. The time base was simply as long as each one took ie the amount of time it took to produce something that sustained interest, personally of course. The box proved difficult again but gradually on watching playbacks bits were noticed and technically improved by rehearsing certain box manipulations. Work out short piece, record, playback. Finally something had sedimented out ~~xxxxxxx~~ which needed final structuring; the backend of the film seemed to provide the most sympathetic images the Key was to start the piece with a white line on black, there would be a cut to a feedback plus key image also white on black then the introduction of the film then the reintroduction of the Key into the image. The rest would concern itself mostly with the interaction of the Key (abstract) and the mixed, cut and superimposed image (real relative). It was noticed during one of the final takes that the film spool would speed up imperceptibly as the film came closer and closer to the centre such that the rate was noticeably frenetic before the film would actually run-off and suddenly stop the spool dead. It was decided that this would complete the cycle - it was then noticed that the caption 'heart cycle' would appear halfway through the piece of film being used. The completion would be to reveal the process as far as possible by zooming out of the mask (requiring replugging of course during the recording) and dollying the camera around to show the monitors, projector and mix box. These various elements were all put together in ~~xxxxxxx~~ a couple of hours. Three takes were needed to get the acceptable one. The temptation was to keep taking to attempt the masterpiece however the piece by then was not as good as thought originally and a typically good one was preferred since the obvious joy was the making of the tape as much the collision of its various elements. To 'perform' the tape each time was the obvious ideal - here anyway was the recording of one of those performances.

Back to the set-up pieces for the portapak. The laughing man was located and he was asked if he could laugh for ~~the~~ ten minutes. He said he would have a go without being sure; it didn't matter if he couldn't - what would be wasted other than  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour. It was shot first take with the unexpected addition of my stifled mirth at Duncan - which of course assisted Duncan! When played back on the monitor the recording was found to be perfect with other pleasing additions

The visual appearance had to be judged from the camera monitor, not too easy. But it had already been decided not to move the camera in an attempt to follow DM but to let him provide that - he obviously would.

Back to the studio to try a televisual Magritte archetype but. Took some setting up in terms of getting the camera and monitor in the right relative positions. The white sides of the cut panel unexpectedly provided some mirror 'shine'.

\* Duncan ~~Abis~~ MORRIS from Exeter-based  
Community theatre company, Medium Fias (?)

*[Signature]* 12/02