

SCANNING TELEVISION

Second Edition

By John Pungente, Neil Andersen,
Kathleen Tyner and Gary Marcuse
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“guaranteed winners with your students... plenty of meat for a teacher and class to chew on in their media explorations ”

A Review by Chris M. Worsnop

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Media teachers who are familiar with the first edition of this video resource will probably be very pleased to hear that a second edition is on its way. This new set of four VHS cassettes or two DVD disks has all the virtues of the first set, plus a few more. In short, it's an improvement on the original.

As before, it is a joint effort from John Pungente's Toronto-based Jesuit Communication Project (JCP) and Face to Face Media in Vancouver, with support from CHUM Television and other producers. Much of the content is taken from CHUM's weekly **MediaTV** half-hour, but this time, more of the selections originate from other sources, and more of the selections address issues of media theory and history.

A team of very experienced media educators - including the major authors of the project, Pungente, Kathleen Tyner and Neil Andersen - has chosen the 51 video selections. You can be sure that they have picked plenty of selections that will be guaranteed winners with your students. Profits go to the JCP, which uses them to promote media education courses and projects across Canada.

The selections are grouped under five headings:

- Seeing Ourselves: Media and Representation
- Selling Images and Values
- Our Constructed World: Media Environments
- The Global Citizen
- New and Converging Technologies

The CHUM content is the familiar, edgy analysis of media and culture that we know from before. The topics are updated to the 21st century, and the treatment remains analytical rather than preachy. The segments are short and fast-paced, usually the work of a single "videographer" on assignment.

There is always plenty of meat for a teacher and class to chew on in their media explorations. Don't be looking for ready-made answers, though. These resources assume that teachers want to stimulate thinking and learning, rather than to inculcate ready-formed conclusions. Furthermore, Face to Face Media, unlike the major text publishers, does not fight shy of presenting challenging or even controversial material. Topics that others might timidly avoid - political or ideological topics, for instance, such as racism or teen suicide - are not eschewed here.

There are interviews with a variety of advertising professionals who frankly explore some of the secrets of their trade, all the time reminding us that advertising contains a component of art as well as hucksterism. On the other side of the consumerism debate is a selection in which Reverend Billy, "minister of the Church of Stop Shopping" displays some of his

impromptu street theatre talent to criticize corporate culture.

The ***MuchMusic*** extract on teen suicide opens up areas for discussion that guarantee some lively debate in class. Look for material on Al Jazeera, 9-11, the Nixon-Kennedy Debates, the Kennedy Assassination, Date Rape, Channel One, the electronic press kit material for the feature film, ***The Matrix***, and the commodification of images of the past (e.g. Martin Luther King Jr.) into advertising.

There is a selection of the Lumiere Bros. first film, ***At the Factory Gate***, together with a deconstruction that raises questions about how truly candid these shots originally were. The very first exploration of documentary objectivity, perhaps. Among the material from other decades there are ***Meet King Joe***, a 1940s propaganda piece about the American working man, and ***Dating Do's and Don'ts***, a 1950s "youth documentary" in which modern youth will find much more than was originally intended. There is also a series of modern, student-produced anti-racism PSAs, that could serve as both examples for other students to emulate in production and as models for studying representation, values and ethics in media and culture generally. The notorious 1957 BBC spoof, ***The Spaghetti Story*** is here too, at last cleared for USA exhibition, to the relief of all those who hankered after it in the 1993 National Film Board of Canada collection, ***Constructing Reality***. From this NFB collection also comes ***Track Stars*** a brilliant Canadian short demonstrating the work of Foley artists in a very action-packed setting.

The *Teacher's Guide*, authored by Neil Andersen, Kathleen Tyner and John Pungente, was still at the publisher at the time this review was written. However, there are draft versions for reviewers to look at . . .

Principal author, Andersen, keynoter at the 2001 NMEC Austin Conference, offers another example of his trenchant and

encyclopedic insight into the media, and into how to teach media.

What do teachers want in a study guide? They want stimulating ideas to feed their own imagination in planning their own lessons. They want background information beyond what is included in the primary text, and they want to be guided to further resources. Occasionally, they want something already formed - a worksheet, for instance - as a time saver. If you see yourself in this description, you are not going to be disappointed by this 96-page *Guide*. It will offer you more potential approaches to each segment in the video collection than you will ever be able to cover in class. And each one is meticulously backgrounded and backed up with suggestions and questions for classroom activity. Some model lesson plans are included, too.

Teachers at the high school and college level will find these materials very useful and stimulating. Middle school teachers could use the extracts selectively. These materials are not generally suitable for elementary students.

The cost is US\$249 for either the VHS or DVD version. Taxes and postage depend on where you live. VHS is available in either NTSC or PAL. Four copies of the teacher's guide are included with each order.

For distribution information and more on ***Scanning Television*** (second edition)

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