

YOU OUGHT TO BE IN PICTURES

How to Make Your Own Video for Peanuts



If you're up late and channel surfing, I'm sure that you've seen 'em — right-wing talk shows, gospel choirs, high school football games, and every possible assortment of Garth and Wayne wannabes. It's called Public Access TV and you owe it to yourself to check it out!

Every city is slightly different, but most with cable television service have some sort of a facility for public access. Here in Tucson, Arizona, part of the city's cable franchise charter requires that a certain percentage of income go to support public access television as an expression of free speech. In every sense, it's a way for the public to have access to communicate with their community.

CrossTalk, the University of Arizona electronic percussion group, wanted to make a video. My first visit to the AccessTucson, our public access facility, proved fruitful. By becoming a member (no cost), I could take a series of courses (very low cost) that would teach me about using the gear and the facilities (essentially free after taking the courses).

I attended a video production course for a paltry \$75, and learned how to use a digital video camera, lighting system, and editing software. In addition, storyboarding, continuity, general style issues, and scene construction were discussed. At course's end, small groups created a five-minute short.

Next, CrossTalk scheduled the studio, arranged for volunteers and hired some of the staff of AccessTucson. The advantages of partnering with public access TV were many. We were able to shoot in a real TV studio with a huge soundstage, backdrops, professional lighting, and multiple cameras. We had high quality gear (four cameras) and an experienced crew (a director, producer, lighting director, camera operators, grips) to turn to for ideas.

An eight-hour shoot produced 15 hours of video. Editing was done in Final Cut Pro, and they were nothing short of outstanding! By partnering with the folks at the Triestman Center for New Media at U of A, we were able to deliver our final product in uncompressed digital video, DVD, MPEG 4, QuickTime, and VHS Tape.

The final product: A 30-minute documentary of CrossTalk, complete with four full-length performance videos, interviews with the students and the directors, and professional quality titles and navigation on the DVD. We were able to do this for far less than you'd pay for a single digital video camera. You can view the videos from <http://alternatemode.com/videos.Shtml>.

So, if you want to make your own videos, your first stop should be your local public access TV station. It's all about the freedom of expression!

—Norm Weinberg