

About Media Bus, Inc. by Davidson

Back in 1970, after the close of the CBS venture, some of the Videofreex proposed to build a vehicle, a bus or van, wholly dedicated to portapak video, and to tour with it, introducing people to video, making tapes, doing good works, etc. David, Parry, Curtis and Chuck had enjoyed touring California in a Winnebago hired by CBS, and the vision of a traveling troupe of video missionaries still had great appeal to them.

In 1970, the New York State Council on the Arts was on the verge of providing substantial support for some of New York's emerging video groups, the Videofreex among them. But Videofreex had been registered as a regular profit-making type C corporation. In order to receive a grant from NYSCA, an organization had to be a 501(c)3, the IRS designation for non-profit corporations doing charitable work. The group, still entertaining the video bus idea, incorporated as a 501(c)3 called Media Bus, Inc, and it was as Media Bus, Inc. that the group received its generous measures of public funding from that point on, although the bus idea did not itself survive.

In the spring of 1978, when the last Videofreex turned off the lights at Maple Tree Farm and drove off to Woodstock, they took Media Bus, Inc., a perfectly viable non-profit corporation, with them.

MEDIA BUS, INC. AFTER LANESVILLE... by Bart

Bart Friedman, Nancy Cain, and Chuck Kennedy took the equipment, videotapes, editing console, production equipment, lights, mics, cables, everything, and moved 19 miles east, to Woodstock, NY. They rented a storefront on Tinker Street and set up shop as *Media Bus, Inc.*

Bart remembers, "When we opened for business we realized that we were now well versed in community media and Woodstock welcomed our arrival. With Chuck's help, we were able to look tidy and modern with the beat up U-Matic editing console running smoothly, and we soon attracted our video-pal, Tobe

Carey, who directed us to re-connect the dormant Woodstock cable head-end and to begin where we left off in Lanesville---doing weekly community and arts programming plus enticing budding video freaks to join in.”

After a few experiments, the head-end amplifier was moved from a closet in the Woodstock town hall to a room attached to the Woodstock Community Center at 5 Rock City Road. Local video producers began to emerge, often hiring *Media Bus* to assist in the production and editing of their work. *Media Bus* also took over programming Woodstock cable’s Channel 6..

With the help of NYSCA, NEA and CETA grants, production and post-production fees, and advertising income earned by placing a camera in front of a motorized Rolodex that flipped advertising cards down every 5 seconds, *Media Bus* thrived.

Bart recalls, “We were able to pay two rents, had two cars and were collaborating with the most creative, as well as the craziest people that the ‘80s had to offer.”

One of the new media center’s first adventures in cablecasting came from a NYC producer and gay activist, Lou Maletta, who visited town on weekends and who produced a live and taped program reviewing gay cinema. He chose Christmas Eve to run a gay jock-strap dance film, infuriating many members of the viewing audience. This episode led to years of battles with the town board and various segments of the community.

But, although programmers were constantly being threatened with lock-outs and censorship, the audience kept growing. *Media Bus* continued to support the community by offering workshops, maintaining an equipment pool, presenting visiting artists and hosting media panels.

To deal with the politics of free community media, they formed another not-for-profit corporation called Woodstock Access Television, Inc. (WATV), and nominated a ten member board to deal with philosophical and political issues.

By the mid-eighties Bart, Nancy, and Chuck were ready to move on and let the Woodstock video stalwarts, many of whom they had trained, take over.

Nancy left Woodstock for California in 1984. Read her book, *Video Days*, to see how she fared. Chuck had a number of video engineering jobs before settling down at the SUNY New Paltz. Bart co-founded a company in Saugerties that produced educational media for people recovering from addiction.

Media Bus, Inc. played vital part in the media life of Woodstock, New York, connecting with organizations such as the Creative Music Studio, collaborating with musicians, theater groups, and poets, and providing workshops and media panels with media artists, such as Joel Gold, Jane Aaron and Dee Dee Halleck. *Media Bus, Inc.* was written into the grant proposals of many cultural not-for-profits and became as much established in Woodstock as the Videofreex had been in Lanesville. Some of the programs *Media Bus, Inc.* supported still run today.