

George Barber Bio by Janet Lee

The footage may be found but the wit is all his own. Though debased Hollywood footage forms the substantial core of George Barber's work, nevertheless he transforms it so greatly it becomes something quite unique. Initially, Barber carved out a niche for himself in 'Scratch Video', by making great use of colour and multilayering fast imagery. Then he moved on and incorporated into this mix the repetition of sounds and spoken phrases. ('The Greatest Hits of Scratch Video' Vol. 2) In this work, by extracting isolated moments from Hollywood and cleverly inserting them into specially made music tracks, he was able to short-circuit movie 'grammar', destroy the 'sense' and offer them up anew. Ultimately, they became films commandeered into the service of a much more abstract and painterly aesthetic. Whoever can watch "THE DEEP" starring Brooke Shields after the Barber treatment it got in "YES FRANK NO SMOKE"? Again, "ABSENCE OF SATAN", if ever there were a quintessential video art moment, it would be the repetition of Paul Newman shutting a car door cut with a descending helicopter.

Current with Scratch, he unexpectedly has always had an interest in writing and this matured to good effect in 'TAXI DRIVER TWO', a short starring Johnny Morris featuring a memorable Robert De Niro evening class. In more recent times, he seems to have combined the two strands. In "PASSING SHIP" for example, he utilizes a 'Chelsea Girl' split-screen format, inserting one of his own personal monologues alongside a generic Hollywood disaster film - 'Airport III'. As in the film, he hijack's the show.

George Barber's work has an unusual breadth and is rarely less than alive, busy and entertaining in its aims and effect.

1977-80

St. Martins School of Art. First in Sculpture A.

1980

helped found ZG magazine and worked on it for 6 issues.

Played in "The Church of Friendly Valley" a pop group who dressed as mormons and played funk.

1981

"Divorce" was shown widely at the Ica, Film Co op and its equivalents in Europe.

Worked as a journalist for the music paper 'Soundmaker' and studied part time at the BFI.

1982-84

Successfully completed a film and video post graduate course at The Slade, University College.

1984

Lectured on video at The London College of Fashion and also gave talks at the Royal College of Art. Awarded #1000 from Arts Council of Great Britain.

"The Greatest Hits of Scratch Video" Produced and directed a compilation video cassette which later, in the words of Mike O'Pray (film critic), became the most widely seen independant video ever..."

The tape has been featured in The Sunday Times, Face, Honey, 19, NME, Melody Maker, Sounds, Time Out, City Limits, Zig Zag and The Disco Times! Furthermore, the tape has also been shown on French, German, Italian and Swedish television. Extracts have also been on BBC 1, BBC2 and BBC Bristol. Stephen Bode, writing in the Braknell Video magazine, dubbed me 'the Henry Ford of independent video!'

1985

Phonogram, CBS, Virgin, RCA and Chrysalis Records.

I have supported myself on various projects for the companies above.
The ART OF NOISE video 'Legs' is probably the most well known.

Article on my work appeared in Art Monthly and Independent Media.

My work was among the most requested at the ICA video library.

1986

Awarded bursary from the Arts Council of Great Britain

Work shown at the Edinburgh Festival.

"Hard Core Video Lovelies" shown at the Montecarlo festival.

Started teaching and lecturing at Harrow, Epsom, Leicester and Royal College.

1987

Commissioned by Arts Council to produce a tape reworking some of their films. I began using video mixing desks to process stills. Did the cover of the NME, Listener and ELLE.

Also I was working for the German pop magazine "New Musik Express" and doing editing work - the 'Big Words Small Worlds' program being amongst the most prestigious.

TAXI DRIVER 2 completed and shown at Bafta, Channel 4 21st December 87.

Voted best video of the year at Braknell video festival and 2nd best in City Limits.

1988

A short radio play broadcast as part of the Kaleidoscope Radio 4, Christmas celebrations.

March; 'The Venetian Ghost' - a tv short about the last Doge of Venice who ends up living in California is finished and will be broadcast in December.

May: Curator at The Museum of Moving Image of Independent Video exhibit.

1989 1001 COLOURS ANDY NEVER THOUGHT OF 4mins

1991 JAZZLAND 3mins

CURTAIN TRIP 5mins