

O.E.C.A. goes network

by Harris Kirshenbaum

The Ontario Educational Communications Authority, based at Channel 19 in Toronto, has been in operation since September 1970, providing "something of value in television" as an alternative, non-commercial, educational television outlet. But the concept of OECA is more than only educational TV, as they are heavily involved in education through film, videotape, audiotape, records, telephone, mail, and printed matter. These 'support materials' are an integral part of the educational concept developed and kept in practice by programming director Jim Hanley.

OECA produces about 2000 new programmes a year, thought to be considerably more than any other similar media educator. Aside from producing those programmes, OECA runs several other programmes involved in distributing small format videotapes to schools and libraries (VIPS Programme), providing free videotape programmes to cable companies in remote communities, offering media training to more than 5000 students and teachers annually in workshops conducted through a mobile van service and the Toronto 'Utilization' Centre, marketing their own programmes to the U.S., Britain, Sweden, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Brazil as well as across Canada, co-ordinating the production of School Radio Broadcasts with the CBC, and distributing more than 7,000 audio tape copies of educational radio material to schools throughout Ontario. OECA is also at work on developing a computerized videotape information retrieval system to provide improved individual access to specific material.

In the past five years, OECA has proven its capability to fulfill its mandate by the production of several excellent programmes of great originality, with plenty of solid content that have been both informative and entertaining. Among the very best have been **Media Circus**, a totally experimental programme last season that ran three hours in its final form, and dealt with the ideas of television, its sociological effects, its capabilities and future, and its legalities. Where else on major market television could you see the host of one live programme having a telephone con-

versation with the host of a concurrent live show, and see them both on split screen?

True North was an OECA production bought by the CBC for national exposure, that dealt with the many sad realities of Canadian history and public affairs. A bright and lively programme incorporating music, animation, and comedy with stock footage, dramatizations, stills, graphics and plenty of hard-hitting analysis. Michel Magee, Barbara Frum, Roy Paine, Angèle Arsenault and La Troupe Grotesque made a team to rival the finest in this area of programming anywhere.

Nightmusic features FM-type disc jockey Rainer Schwarz doing a visual radio show, using film and tape inserts over music and interviewing performers in the most casual TV show ever seen. **Nightmusic** continues this fall with many new ideas and concepts including experimental video techniques co-ordinated by new director Jim St. Lawrence, and expanding its music interest to the field of jazz as well as contemporary rock.

Elwy Yost hosts two programmes, **Magic Shadows**, a weekday evening show which serializes feature films into four or five half hours for kids, and **Saturday Night at the Movies** which shows the Hollywood films of bygone days in uncut, uninterrupted viewing sessions.

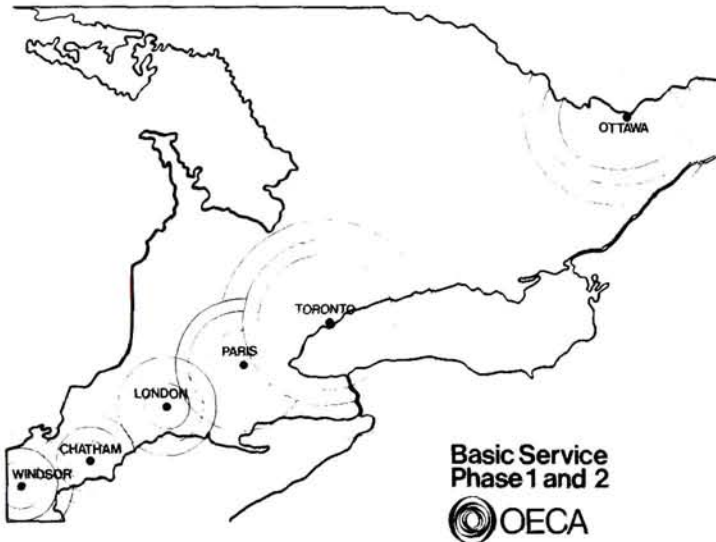
All of these, of course, are in addition to school broadcasts, acquired programmes like **Sesame Street** and **The Electric Company** complete with Canadian content inserts (gotta change all those 'zees' to 'zeds'), programmes produced under co-production arrangements like **Witness to Yesterday**, and productions of educational value produced in other countries like the British Information Film series, **Helen, A Woman of Today, Globe Theatre**. OECA even found an educational rationale to bid on the complete series of **Monty Python's Flying Circus**, but when the CBC found out they exercised their option and grabbed it up again. Additionally, some 10% of programming is currently French, and this sector will be increased to 12-15% in the coming season. The Summer Academy programme entitled **Brush Up Your French** includes daily televised episodes in the series **Suivez La Piste**, followed by, for registered students, a phone call from a French tutor who gives each student ten minutes of pronunciation drill, and weekly workshops in cooking,

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pottery, macramé, or weaving held in French at La Chasse Galerie.

Getting the Programmes to the Audience

Currently, all the OECA productions and their full range of programming is carried on UHF channel 19 (Cable 13) in Toronto, making the possible audience some 2 million people. This has been Phase I of the three phase plan to cover the bulk of Ontario, reaching eight million people spread over an area the size of France, Italy and West Germany combined. Channel 19's broadcast radius is to be increased from 35 to 55 miles with the move of the transmitting antenna to the CN tower later this year. The current antenna is on the CBC tower on Jarvis Street.



Also this fall, Phase II goes into operation, incorporating five relay stations which will carry the identical signals to Kitchener, London, Chatham, Windsor and Ottawa. Channel allocations are Channel 28 in Kitchener and area, Channel 18 in London, Channel 59 in Chatham, Channel 32 in Windsor, and Channel 24 in Ottawa. This will bring the educational TV signal to 75% of the province's population. The method of signal carrying will be relay from Toronto down the south western corridor from point to point, and by microwave to Ottawa. London will have the only OECA-built tower, Chatham and Windsor operations will be shared with present CBC installations. The Kitchener transmitter is being shared with Global's Paris operation, and Ottawa will be served from the Ryan Tower, where all present signals for the area originate. This latter will be the first part of the project to go into operation, and is scheduled for mid-October, with the others following by January 1976.

The Network Implementation Project (NIPS) has been paving the way for the introduction of the new network to be dubbed **TVOntario**, (TVO) by placing stocks of small format videotapes of past programmes along with playback equipment into Ottawa area libraries and publicizing their presence with posters and brochures. Area cable companies have been running previews of material to be aired in the fall, and community groups have held screenings as well.



TVO plans for Phase III are the opening of the rest of the province, up to some 84% of it at least. By 1980 there will be, funding and co-operation allowing, transmitters in Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Dryden, North Bay, Peterborough, Brockville, Kenora, Kirkland Lake, Sault Ste. Marie, Belleville, Fort Frances, Timmins and Kingston. As a further coup to the fledgling network, CRTC has recently granted approval for the educational signal to be telecast on VHF Channel 9 in Thunder Bay. This marks the first time that an educational channel has been given a VHF frequency, and will mean wider availability for viewers in that area.

According to OECA surveys, Ontarians watch on an average of over three hours of television daily. While that may sound like an incredible figure, the network expansion will make educational programming available to most residents of the province within five years and much sooner to most of us. While there are holes in the ETV programming, and while some shows do miss the mark, as they do in any field of mass communications, OECA has the mandate and proven capability to produce what people will watch, enjoy and learn from. According to surveys, they have captured up to 20% of the Toronto market, one of the most highly saturated TV areas in North America, comprising six major commercial networks, as well as offering cable subscribers access to up to 19 different stations. OECA sets the challenge for itself in its publication, **Another Way to Learn:**

"We're not in the numbers game, trying to attract viewers just to boast we have a big audience. It's simply that we realize it's not enough to produce good programming. You have to let people know what you've got, get them to watch - and be good enough so they'll come back for more."

Don Torney,
Channel 19 Station Manager

While eight million Ontarians wait to have TVO prove itself to each one of them, pre-production is in full swing at 2180 Yonge Street, and we anxiously await the results of this very large-scale experiment in educational television that may prove itself a model for similar operations world-wide. □

The Canadian Film Development Corporation

**is happy to announce
that the following films
will be released this Fall.**

AHO, (AU COEUR DU MONDE PRIMITIF) by François Floquet and Daniel Bertolino, Productions Via le Monde Inc., Montreal

THE FAR SHORE by Joyce Wieland, The Far Shore Inc., Toronto

IT SEEMED LIKE A GOOD IDEA AT THE TIME by John Trent, Quadrant Films Ltd., Toronto

JOS CARBONE by Hugues Tremblay, Cinénord Inc., Chicoutimi

LIONS FOR BREAKFAST by William Davidson, Burg Productions Ltd.

LITTLEST CANADIAN by Jean Lafleur and Peter Svatek, Dal Productions Ltd., Montreal

M'EN REVENANT PAR LES EPINETTES by François Brault, Les Ateliers du Cinéma Québécois, Montreal

ME by John Palmer, World Leisure Corporation Inc., Toronto

MOURNING SUIT by Leonard Yakir, March Films Inc., Winnipeg

MUSTANG by Marcel Lefebvre and Yves Gelinis, Productions Mutuelles Ltée, Montreal

125 ROOMS OF COMFORT by Patrick Loubert, Haig-King Film Arts Ltd., Toronto

LA PIASTRE by Alain Chartrand, Association Coopérative de Productions Audio-Visuelles, Montreal

POUR LE MEILLEUR ET POUR LE PIRE by Claude Jutra, Productions Carle-Lamy Ltée, Montreal

L'ILE JAUNE by Jean Cousineau, Cinak Inc., Montreal

SALLY FIELDGOOD & CO by Boon Collins, Image Flow Centre Ltd., Vancouver

SUDDEN FURY by Brian Damude, Films Can Productions, Brampton

SUPREME KID by Peter Bryant, Seventh Wave Films Ltd., Vancouver

LA TETE DE NORMANDE ST-ONGE by Gilles Carle, Productions Carle-Lamy Ltée, Montréal

TI-CUL TOUGAS by Jean-Guy Noël, Association Coopérative de Productions Audio-Visuelles Montreal

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