

SANDIN

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During the Cambodian crisis in 1969, the school was shut now. The arts faculty, because they trusted their students and worked with them, kept the art department open against the general trend. We were kind of a media center for a lot of movement stuff. We did posters, graphic art, utilitarian stuff for the great movement. One of the problems was that there were all these instantaneous courses and it was a real problem letting people know where they were. Someone suggested the idea of setting up a string of video monitors with a camera and a roller kind of thing to announce these meetings and have them run continuously. We set this up and in the process, borrowed some cheap Sony equipment: a single camera with a RF modulator strung to 6 RF monitors up the column where the elevator was which went to all the lounges. I became fascinated with the image. When the meeting was really crowded we put a camera and a mike in there to cablecast. I just became fascinated with the image on the screen, and I would sit by the screen and stroke it.

So we asked the question of what it would mean to do the visual equivalent of a Moog synthesizer. I didn't know it was going to be more trouble than that. I just went through all the Moog modules and said if you center their bandwidth to handle video and you do the right things with sync, what would they do? The step from that to the analog IP was a very small one in concept. So I had the idea long before I knew any technology to implement it. I got the Moog synthesizer plans and looked at them, understood how the circuits worked.

I thought I was going to knock out the IP in a couple of months so that fall I started to teach myself electronic design. I'd been a radio amateur when I'd been a kid but I certainly didn't know how to design circuits. I could certainly copy things out of Popular Electronics. I was comfortable with it but I didn't know enough. So during that nine months I taught myself electronic design by getting photo boards and building circuits. It took me about a full year to build it before it was running even in black and white.

I met Steven Beck who had been at the University of Illinois and had done this thing which was based on oscillators and relays and stuff and Salvatore Martirano had this early version of the Sal-Mar Construction and was performing on it. Then that's when I met Phil Morton who was at the Art Institute and I saw him showing some tapes over in the corner.

Well, when it got its own color encoder it became a much different instrument. Paik/Abe is a beautiful colorizer but it's traditional. You can't say, I'm going to get up this kind of key situation and put red here, for instance. You can't drive it, you can only ride it. The amplitude classifier and refinements came after that.

I had always the idea of giving it away and letting people copy it. Long before any building started, that was my own philosophy:

to give it away and take this business about being paid by the state to develop and disseminate information very seriously.