

A technical glossary

It's never too late to increase your knowledge of today's computer jargon. You may not know as much as you think.

By John Moretti

The Bottom Line

Because computers have become integrated into almost every aspect of our lives, it is crucial to understand the technical terms associated with them. Whether you are a computer novice or a technical whiz, the following user-friendly glossary is guaranteed to give you insight into the often overwhelming world of computer technology.

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Let's face it. As digital is established as the new standard for audio production, most of us will become more dependent on computers. Whether you use or plan to use a computer for direct-to-disk audio recording, sequencing, sample editing and archiving, generating score sheets or simply balancing the books, it's important to understand enough basic terminology so that you can understand the problems.

The following is a purely practical exposé of what all of those intimidating terms really mean:

- **386, 486.** The average number of pages found in the chapter titled "Plugging in the Mouse," in a manual for one of the newer-generation of IBM-compatibles.
- **A/D.** Anguish/Despair. The point in time near the beginning of a direct-to-disk recording session during which you realize the software has just enough bugs to prevent the completion of a project before the client's deadline.
- **Aliasing.** The practice of addressing an uncooperative computer with various derogatory nicknames — the majority of which are unprintable.
- **Bias.** A preference for the Macintosh's eloquent graphical-interface system brought on by a DOS-system user's struggle with its cryptic command language.
- **Buffer.** An ingredient found in many analgesics that calms the digestive tract during release of beneficial medication.
- **Brightness.** A measurement of the mental capacity needed to decipher the gobbledygook contained in a software manual.
- **Byte.** The largest portion of a meal that a computer user is able to consume between problems.
- **Card.** A thin, magnetically coded plas-

tic rectangle useful for deferring the cost of necessary computer accessories.

- **Clock speed.** The perceived speed at which time passes while working toward a deadline — slowly at first and more quickly as things begin to go wrong.
- **Contrast.** The difference between a light area and a dark area (i.e., the difference between the darkest area of a computer screen and the circles under the eyes of a computer user).
- **CPU.** An acronym for Corporal Punishment Unit, a slang name for the computer's "brain."
- **Crash.** An instantaneous loss of consciousness caused by too many problems, too little sleep, and a diet rich in sugar and caffeine.
- **Cut-and-paste.** A procedure used to remove certain words from magazines and/or newspapers to write a threatening anonymous letter to the company that sold you the faulty computer gear.
- **D/A.** Despair/Anguish. The point in time following A/D (Anguish/Despair) during which the frustrated user realizes he can still beat the client's deadline — if he can convince the 12-year-old neighborhood computer whiz to debug the software.
- **DAT.** Diacritical Audio Termination. The ability of software to identify and accidentally delete only irreplaceable audio files.
- **Default.** A figure of speech used by someone who has just accidentally erased a hard disk. (i.e., "It's default of desoftware.")
- **Disk fragmentation.** A spinal condition caused by too many late nights hunched over a keyboard.
- **Dither.** A state of flustered excitement caused by a screen message, such as "eras-

Moretti is a writer, producer and cartoonist based in Denver, CO.

ing hard disk now."

- **DOS.** Destroyed Optic Syndrome. An eye condition brought on by prolonged viewing of a tiny, monochrome screen turned to full brightness in a dimly lit studio.
- **Dot pitch.** A slang term for throwing frozen hockey pucks into the monitor of a misbehaving computer.
- **Extended memory.** The mental capacity needed to recall important commands without re-reading an entire manual chapter.
- **FFT.** Fastest Failure Time. The length of time between completing setup of a computer-based studio system and the first failure of an integral piece of software/hardware — usually several hours.
- **File.** A police department document that describes when and where a computer novice was found running naked through the streets, screaming hysterically. Also see "dither."
- **Floppy.** The state of your legs following an 8-hour session in front of a computer screen.
- **Hard drive.** A term used to describe the drive home through morning rush hour after an all-night attempt at recovering the data from a crashed hard disk.
- **Hertz.** The sensation caused by crushing a misbehaving computer mouse between your teeth.
- **Import/export.** A fly-by-night computer box house that sells unsuspecting computer novices hardware that was assembled by ex-pro-wrestlers who were paid "by the piece."
- **Interface.** A slang term combining the prefix "inter" (Latin for "between") and "face." The time between grimaces caused by protocol incompatibilities.
- **I/O.** Idiot/Opportunity. Customers who allow themselves to be talked into buying unnecessary items rather than admit they don't understand what the salesperson is talking about.
- **Lockup.** The "guest quarters" of the police department where you stay after being booked. Also see "file."
- **Mac.** An inexpensive, quick meal that contains the four basic food groups and that may be consumed during a "hard drive."
- **Megabyte.** Ingesting an entire pizza in one mouthful, thus simultaneously replenishing the body and making up for the time lost rebuilding an accidentally deleted audio file.
- **Megahertz.** The sensation caused by crushing a misbehaving computer mouse between your teeth the day after you've had a triple root canal.
- **Message.** A recorded communication left on an answering machine, informing a user preoccupied with a serious software glitch that the client's deadline has been moved forward by 24 hours.
- **MIDI.** Masochistic Inclination Dare In-

dex. A numerical system used to rate a user's tendency to ignore crucial safeguard procedures, such as backing up important sequencer files.

- **Millisecond.** The short period directly following an on-screen message, such as "erasing hard disk now," during which the user's mouth opens but emits no sound. Derived from "Milli Vanilli."
- **Oversampling.** Procuring and swallowing enough free samples at the grocery store to warrant an eviction by security. Also see "sample rate."
- **PC/AT.** Paltry Cost/Antique Technology. The direct ratio of cost vs. user-friendliness discovered after rejecting an expensive Macintosh platform for a less-expensive IBM-compatible one.
- **PCM.** Pre-Catastrophe Mode. The lack of concentration caused by gross overconfidence. This usually precedes the accidental deletion of an impossible-to-re-create digital sample.
- **Peripheral.** The portion of human vision that weakens after long periods of time spent staring at a computer screen.
- **Playlist.** A mental list of enjoyable activities repeatedly recited as incentive to finish a long and stressful period in front of a computer screen.
- **Port.** A dark-red, extremely sweet wine, available at many all-night convenience stores. Often used in conjunction with analgesics.
- **Power spike.** The figurative name for a jackhammer, one of the few known tools that can remove the contents of a jammed disk drive.
- **PPQN.** Parasympathetic Panic Quotient Number. A numerical system for rating the brain's ability to withstand absolute crisis before instructing the parasympathetic nervous system to shut down the heart. Also see "dither."
- **RAM.** Read And Mangle. A type of computer processor that converts the information stored on a disk into unintelligible on-screen gibberish.
- **Real time.** The actual time of day or night, as opposed to that indicated by a wristwatch severely damaged by the fist-pounding that follows a disk crash.
- **Resolution.** A promise you make to yourself to change to a less-stressful career, such as selling penny stocks.
- **ROM.** Random Order Malfunctor. The apparently non-sequential order in which software and hardware snafus occur.
- **Sample rate.** The rate at which you are able to procure and swallow free samples at the grocery store, where you normally would be buying groceries, if there was any money left over from carpal tunnel syndrome therapy.
- **Screen saver.** Any type of computer screen covering that can withstand the impact of a hurled piece of furniture.
- **Scrubbing.** Removing printing ink and glue from your hands by a combination

of washing and hard rubbing. This action usually follows "cut-and-paste."

- **SCSI.** (pronounced "scuzzy") The condition of your body following 36 non-stop hours of trying to install properly a connection between a computer and a synthesizer. SCSI stands for "Shower Critical, Smell Inescapable."
- **SDIF.** Sentient Device Impatience Formula. A mathematical formula used to determine how much impatience can be exhibited by the user before a new computer senses it and freezes the keyboard.
- **SMPTE.** Sacred Mystic Pagan Technology Entity. An imagined, wrathful and vindictive gatekeeper of the digital domain, believed by many computer users to decide the fate of precious data.
- **Software.** Comfortable guest clothing provided by the police department. Also see "lockup."
- **SPDIF.** Sentient Paranoid Device Impatience Formula. A mathematical formula used to determine how much impatience can be exhibited by the user before an older and emotionally abused computer senses it and freezes the keyboard.
- **System prompt.** A letter from the bank (the system) requesting (prompting) you to make last month's installment payment on the loan that financed the computer.
- **Time code.** An ambiguous description of the length of time required to perform a given function, provided by a software or hardware manufacturer's marketing department.
- **Time squeeze.** A situation in which a client's deadline is approaching faster than the computer is working.
- **Utility.** Publicly provided electrical power that flickers, surges and disappears at precisely the wrong time.
- **VGA.** Vasoconstrictive Gelatification Aptitude. A measurement for a monitor's ability to turn your eyeballs into something akin to overcooked pasta.
- **Waveform.** The way in which your body begins to sway slowly from side to side before toppling over. Also see "crash."
- **Waterfall.** The manner in which a beverage flows over the lip of a jostled container and directly onto a keyboard.
- **Windows.** Handy structural openings through which you can leap after the power dies, instantly obliterating all audio files that are not backed up.
- **WYSIWYG.** (pronounced "wizzywig") A hair style caused by trying to install an add-on board in a computer without first disconnecting the power supply. WYSIWYG stands for "Wattage You Suck In When You're Grounded."

In today's increasingly technical world, it's sometimes hard to keep your sense of humor. The editors of *BE* hope you enjoyed this lighthearted treatment of computer "gobbledygook." April Fools!

Trade Terms You Thought You Knew

"Familiarity breeds contempt" (Aesop, "the Fox and the Lion").

According to "Webster's New World Dictionary," a definition is a statement of what a thing is. According to industry experience, definitions of trade terms might be more useful if they provided a clear indication of what can and will go wrong.

Tossing about humorous definitions has, on more than one occasion, helped the author "resist the urge to toss about malfunctioning gear and uncooperative colleagues."

Here then, a collection of glossary terms - steeped in reality - culled from many years of blood, sweat and tears.

by John Moretti

Acronyms: A complex form of language perfected by engineers who don't want others to understand what they're talking about (i.e., "Looks like your R-DAT is SOL. Think we need to tweak your SPDIF I/O to keep that RF from leaking into the IC.")

Advance tone: An inaudible tone of a specified frequency that triggers another piece of equipment to malfunction.

Air time: 15 minutes before whatever needs to be on the air is finished.

Alignment: A common problem with the front wheels of rapidly aging and abused station vans.

Analog: Descriptive of a system that uses electrical voltages to generate and store unwanted noise.

Audio feed: Important audio transmitted when the receiving equipment is not working properly.

Band: A group of untalented musicians with marketing support.

Bidirectional mic: A microphone that picks up unwanted sounds in two directions at once.

Board: An electronic device that routes and combines separate channels of unwanted noise.

Board fade: Decreasing mental capability brought on by too much time spent in front of a board.

Bulk eraser: A powerful, hand-held electromagnetic device used to obliterate audio from tapes that are not to be erased.

Card: A modular assembly of integrated circuits that fails soon after being installed in an inaccessible location.

Cardioid mic: A directional mic that picks up unwanted sounds within a heart-shaped pattern.

Carrier: Radio frequency signal upon which unwanted noise is transmitted.

Cart: An abbreviation of "tape cartridge"—a plastic shell, containing a length of endless tape, which is immune to failure unless used.

Cart machine: An electromechanical device that jams carts.

CD: A good way to ensure future financial stability while employed in the volatile business of broadcasting.

Channel: A circuit through which erroneous information or unwanted noise flows.

Combo: Small band in which a broadcasting employee might play to supplement his or her income.

Compact disc: A flat, round digital storage medium, which is virtually indestructible until removed from its container.

Condenser mic: A type of microphone that picks up unwanted sounds by means of one or two vibrating plates. ▶



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Console: 1) A mixer through which different channels of unwanted noise are routed to recording equipment, other consoles or the transmission chain. 2) A natural habitat in which "Post It Notes" thrive and reproduce. 3) A natural collecting area for cigarette ashes and spilled coffee. 4) To attempt to lessen the grief of one who's on the receiving end of a lousy book.

Crosstalk: A style of interpersonal communication often used by management when addressing employees.

Cue tone: An inaudible tone of a specified frequency used to trigger an outside event, such as a cart machine jamming a cart.

Current: A measurement of the electricity flowing through one's body by mistake.

Cutoff frequency: The number of times in a given period during which a fatigued engineer accidentally removes flesh with a pair of wire strippers.

Decode: To transform from code into another form or language (i.e., "Would you decode what the Chief Engineer just said?").

Directional mic: A microphone that picks up unwanted sounds mainly from one direction.

Disc: An integral element of the spine which, when forced out of alignment from continuous grovelling to management, causes intense lower back pain.

Distortion: The difference between that which is sent and that which is received (i.e., the difference between what you *meant* as a professional suggestion that management consider upgrading the station's aging equipment and what management *perceived* as a sarcastic inference that your children's toys contain superior electronics).

Drop out: The educational status of many announcers.

Dry: The state of one's mouth following a budget review.

Dub: The blank tape that is supposed to have a copy of the master tape on it.

Dynamic mic: A type of mic that picks up unwanted sounds by means of a vibrating coil of wire.

A Guide To Interpreting Specs

Manufacturers have developed a special language to proclaim the many virtues of their products. Ordinary language does not seem to do justice to the many wondrous things they make for us. Sometimes these virtues cannot be completely understood by the average person unless they have the anointed translation. Here is your guide to knowledge:

New—Different color from previous design.

All New—Parts not interchangeable with previous design. Exclusive Imported product.

Unmatched—Almost as good as the competition.

Design simplicity—Costs cut to the bone (manufacturer's costs).

Foolproof operation—No provision for any adjustments.

Advanced design—The advertising agency doesn't understand it.

It's here at last!—Rush job; nobody knew it was coming.

Field-tested—Manufacturer lacks test equipment.

High accuracy—Unit on which all parts fit.

Direct sales only—Factory had a big argument with distributor.

Years of development—We finally got one that works.

Unprecedented performance—Nothing we had before ever worked this way.

Revolutionary—It's different from our competitors.

Breakthrough—We finally figured out a way to sell it.

Futuristic—No other reason why it looks the way it does.

Distinctive—A different shape and color from the others.

Maintenance-free—Impossible to fix.

Redesigned—Previous faults are corrected, we hope.

Hand-crafted—Assembly machines operated without gloves on.

Performance proven—Will operate through the warranty period.

Meets all standards—Ours, not yours!

Satisfaction guaranteed—Manufacturer's, upon cashing your check.

Microprocessor controlled—Does things we can't explain.

All solid-state—Heavy as hell!

Broadcast-quality—Produces noise.

Latest aerospace technology—One of our techs recently laid off by Boeing.

High reliability—We made it work long enough to ship it.

High accuracy surface tolerances—Feels smooth.

Built to precision tolerances—Finally got it all to fit together.

New generation—Our old design didn't work; this one should.

Mil-spec components—Got a deal at the government surplus auction.

24-hour service—Given 14 hours, we can usually find a second person to ignore your problem.

Customer service across the country—You can return it to us from most airports.

The origin of the previous guide apparently rests with Sequoia Electronics in Los Gatos, Calif., though no individual can be pin-pointed with the blame. For information, you may call the company at 408-356-3232.

Fade: To gradually become unconscious because of constant pressure and insufficient sleep.

Fader: A broadcasting employee who has run out of coffee.

Feedback: An unpleasant, high-pitched squealing sound made by management during a budget review.

Final mix: The final product of a production session that does not meet the requirements of a client.

Flat: The state of carbonation in a soft drink purchased from a break room's vending machine.

Food groups: There are only three food groups that broadcasting employees consume on a regular basis: carbohydrates (sugar), alkaloids (caffeine) and sludge (partially hydrogenated tropical oils found in non-dairy creamers and junk food).

Fringe area: The area of a broadcasting employee's head where hair is beginning to thin due to excessive pulling before (and after) the ratings arrive.

Gain: To add body weight by consuming the staples of an announcer's diet. See Food groups.

Gate: An electrical device that allows only unwanted noise of a certain strength to pass.

High impedance: A characteristic of the consumer-grade audio equipment used to outfit many stations. See Trade out.

Holiday: See Workday.

Inaudible tone: An audio tone beneath the range of human hearing that generally is used to cause another piece of equipment to malfunction.

Induction: A formal inauguration into the glamorous world of broadcasting - usually the first tiny paycheck.

Initial sound: The scratching sound made by a GM who's perfected a rapid, indecipherable signature.

Input: Any suggestions or thoughts communicated to management, which are subsequently ignored.

IPS: British colloquial pronunciation of "hips."

Jack: A tool for lifting heavy loads, such as an aging and abused station van with serious mechanical problems. See Alignment.

Kill date: Any length of time, up to several weeks, before a timely announcement, promo or commercial is actually terminated.

Lavalier mic: A small microphone, usually hung around the neck or attached to the wearer's lapel, which has the unique ability to pick up embarrassing internal body sounds.

Lead: Industry gossip or hearsay about a job opening that doesn't exist.

Line-in: A circuit or cable through which amplified unwanted noise is fed into a system or piece of equipment.

Line-out: A circuit or cable through which amplified unwanted noise emanates from a system or piece of equipment.

Low impedance: Low resistance to electrical loads. The human body is considered a low impedance device.

Megahertz: Severe injuries inflicted by molten drops of solder, various engineering tools or electrical current.

NAB: A yearly convention at which broadcasters brag about their jobs and simultaneously look for better opportunities within their fields.

NABET: A yearly convention where the language of acronyms is perfected.

Nondirectional mic: A microphone that picks up unwanted sounds from all directions.

Ohm: British colloquial pronunciation of "home."

Out cue: The sound that precedes dead air.

Output: The electrical point in a piece of equipment from which unwanted noise emanates.

Pan: To direct unwanted noise to either the left or right channel of a stereo mix.

Patch: A temporary fix for the worn tires of a rapidly aging and abused station van.

Patch cord: A cord that is not quite long enough to connect different pieces of electronic equipment.

Peak indicator: A title given in lieu of a raise, signaling the employee that he or she has reached the "compensation ceiling."

Phone patch: Electrical circuit or cable that feeds the noise generated by a telephone line directly into broadcast equipment.

Potentiometer: A device used to over-modulate an audio signal. Often called a "pot."

Power: That which turns a mild-mannered human who finds himself in his first management position, into an insufferable tyrant.

Primer: A document issued by the FCC to complicate the definition of a rule or concept of the Commission.

Promo: An announcement about any contest, program or event sponsored by the station, which will be much less successful than anticipated.

Proof of performance: Electrical measurements that prove that the station has not been operating within designated parameters.

Propagation: Transmission or dissemination of unwanted noise.

Public file: A file that does not contain the important documents it's supposed to.

Rack mount: A rack or cabinet of standard dimensions into which equipment does not fit.

Reference monitor: (1) A monitor speaker that faithfully reproduces unwanted noises. (2) A monitor speaker that allows the listener to hear the poor quality of the recording equipment and medium.

Resistance: What one encounters when making a case for desperately needed new equipment during a budget review.

Resistor: The person whose bonus is based on keeping the bottom line as low as possible.

Rough mix: A preliminary mix of an audio production which, when played for a station client, will provide insight into how difficult working with that client will be.

Shotgun mic: A highly directional mic that can zero in on unwanted sounds coming from a considerable distance.

Trade out: A clever method of outfitting a station with inexpensive and inferior consumer-grade electronic gear.

TRT: Total running time; the elapsed time between the beginning of a programming element and the beginning of a period of dead air.

Union scale: An artificially overpriced pay scale for union members that allows the member to make the same amount of money he'd make as a non-union member, with just enough left over to pay ridiculously high union dues.

Variable speed: A function of most broadcasting employees directly proportional to the amount of caffeine ingested.

Windscreen: A haven for second-hand microbacteria.

When he's not producing network radio programming, John Moretti usually can be found playing percussion instruments with his infant son Jacob.

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Was It Hot or Not?

(continued from page 6)

the music trades were concerned. Notice I did not say her *record* was hot (it really was more of a low simmer), just her tattoo. In fact, maybe it was just tattoos that were hot.

What was not hot was the Sinead O'Connor mystique, shaved head, military boots and all. When she sprang fully formed as naive waif art-rockers a couple years ago, the shorn Sinead look took off among more extreme fashion-conscious young women.

Unfortunately, for her longevity, Sinead's outspoken views about the national anthem came at a time when middle America would settle for nothing less than unrestrained patriotic zeal. Suddenly, a vast number of fashion pace-setters who had taken their cue from Ms. O'Connor found themselves merely bald. Talk about the emperor's new clothes . . .

Now I know that the last thing the industry needs is yet another awards show. Still, the Mercury Award is one that really makes sense. The award, established in part by the RAB, Group W and the Interep Radio Store, honors excellence in radio campaigns. The premiere of the "Merks" (if I may be the first to coin that term) is later this spring, and it will be hot, particularly considering that the Clio Awards—the mother of all advertising-oriented award shows—seems to be floundering right now.

Returning to the technological side of the industry, a hot topic last year—and one that may stay hot in 1992—was the expanded AM band. The 100 kHz tacked onto the top of the AM dial was incorporated into the FCC's AM improvement docket 87-267, with stations producing the most interference getting first dibs.

AM stereo broadcasters were also given special preference for the expanded band—the first time the FCC has even looked twice at that technology in years. (Maybe AM stereo will get hot again? Maybe not.)

At any rate, the expanded AM band as part of a program to reduce interference is hot. In my mind, it supplanted the NRSC AM standard on the heat index. It's not that NRSC is no longer a good idea for stations, but it's a maturing technology.

The FCC's AM self-inspection guide also was hot; the FM hard look policy

was not. Abandoned by the Commission, which maintained that it successfully reduced application errors, the hard look policy is now just a bad taste in the mouth of consulting engineers everywhere. If the FCC now would only adapt its self-inspection plan for FM as well as AM stations, things would be moving in the right direction. Think of it: bureaucracy with the nobler purpose of education, rather than aggravation.

Now I know that the last thing the industry needs is yet another awards show. Still, the Mercury Award is one that really makes sense.

Another hot topic was the new consumer digital equipment under development last year. Both Philips' digital compact cassette (DCC) and Sony's Mini Disc (MD) got quite a push at the summer Consumer Electronics Show, but it was Philips backward-compatible DCC that really got the attention of some industry observers. True, it offers only near-CD quality audio, but DCC is riding the crest of a promotional wave that has swept under Sony's unusually cautious efforts to hype MD.

What was not hot in that arena was consumer DAT, of which the recording industry seems to have made an example. Powerful lobbying efforts and the Serial Copy Management System (SCMS) that recorders are to be encumbered with are keeping the technology from advancing. On the professional side, DAT is seeing some new applications, particularly in the area of data logging, but the bloom is off the rose for consumer DAT.

That's about all I have room to go into here, but as I said, the full list accompanies this story. It was quite a year, and 1992 looks even more interesting. I can hardly wait to see what ends up hot next year—and what cools off.

Tune in next time,

Alex

Defining Television's Terms Of Endurement

"I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me."

—Abraham Lincoln in a letter to A. G. Hodges

by John Moretti

A lengthy tenure in broadcasting has taught me two important lessons: 1) The ability to get a job done often depends on uncontrollable external influences, and 2) humor is a far more effective means of stress control than primal screaming.

With those thoughts in mind, here are a few terms whose new definitions are somehow more appropriate than their original ones:

Character Generator—

Broadly speaking, a live shoot. Specifically, any visual or verbal cue—such as a director announcing "we're on the air"—that transforms the gathered masses into camera-hogging fools.

Component Level Adjustment—

A process by which rocks, scrap lumber, or engineering handbooks are used to bring equipment to a level position.

Digital Effects—

The effects of upgrading to an all-digital facility. These include an incredible shrinking budget, a proliferation of complex engineering manuals, and a panic-stricken staff.

ENG Mixer—

A small, informal gathering that follows the field coverage of a news event. Crew members of competing facilities enjoy each others' camaraderie, brag about their current jobs, and simultaneously hint that they are on the lookout for better employment opportunities.

Fixed Lens—

A lens assembly whose focusing mechanism has become frozen due to contamination by sand, salt air, or soda.

Head Refurbishing—

Any of a multitude of stress release methods, including, but not limited to, libation, sensory deprivation, primal screaming, or watching professional wrestling.

Imaging Device—

Any device used to make self-conscious talent better looking, including lighting, makeup, toupees, wigs, or cosmetic surgery.

LCD—

Lowest Cost Device, which often proves true the saying, "you get what you pay for."

Noise Reduction—

Any of a variety of ways to silence a meddling or ill-behaved client, including, but not limited to, peanut butter, video games, and duct tape.

NTSC—

Not The Same Company. Often used to describe the general atmosphere after a change in ownership, despite the new management's assurance that "Nothing will change."

PAL—

Purposefully Ambiguous Language. A term that refers to vague technical explanations used to manipulate management into buying equipment it doesn't need.

Portable Mixer—

A mixing console that seems light at the exhibit booth but whose weight steadily increases during actual use.

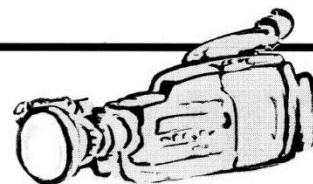
SECAM—

Sudden and Enigmatic Chromatic Aberration Mode. A chip camera anomaly that only seems to occur at crucial moments.

Wireless Mic—

A microphone whose shielded cable has been ripped out.

Writer and producer John Moretti spends his free time studying technological trends and is anxiously awaiting the introduction of the battery-powered battery recharger.



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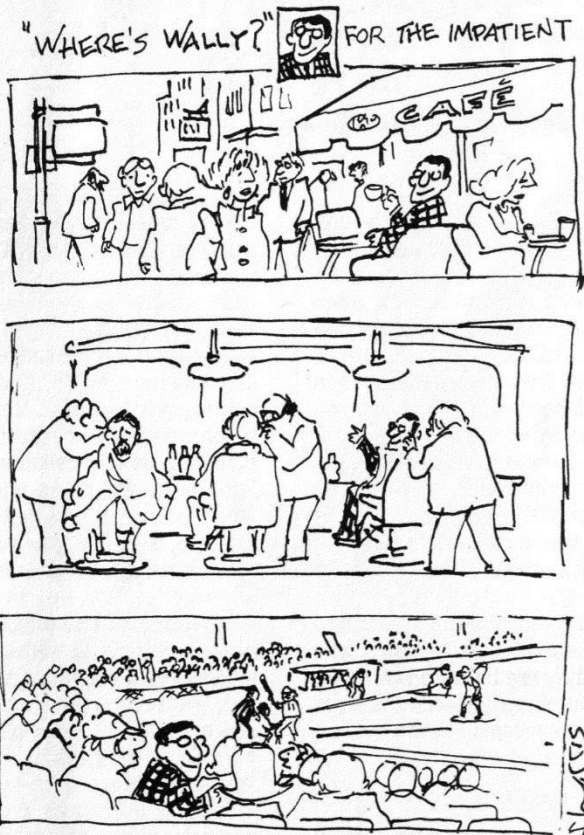
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THE WRITING LIFE



A PARENT-WRITER'S DICTIONARY

"I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me." (Abraham Lincoln in a letter to A.G. Hodges)

"Things are not always what they seem." (Phaedrus, *Book IV; Fable 2,5*)

"Why me?" (Me, in a journal entry, after an afternoon of diapers, dogs and door-to-door salespersons)

I'm not sure whether it was the time my tummy-troubled son scored a direct hit on a lengthy bond-paper printout with a fusillade of "projectile," or if it was the dog's attempt to dig his way through the kitchen linoleum, but something along the way put a tint of sarcasm upon my vision of the glamorous writing life, and thus altered the meanings of some familiar terms of the trade.

Backlist—1) A pathological lateral curvature of the spine caused by constantly holding squirming children at hipside while researching topics at the library; 2) an itemization of domestic chores neglected while attempting to simultaneously care for a child and complete a writing assignment.

Bimonthly—The frequency of distraction-free sex with one's spouse

between the birth and departure for college of a child.

Cover letter—Old correspondence used to shield important manuscripts from toddler fallout.

Docudrama—The adventurous events that take place during the recovery of a finished document from the hands of a cranky toddler.

Gagline—1) The guttural polysyllabic utterance a child makes while inserting a manuscript into its mouth; 2) the guttural polysyllabic utterance a parent makes while changing the diaper of a child introduced to solid foods.

Page rate—The speed at which a curious toddler can turn the pages of a finished manuscript into a puree of saliva and paper.

Slush pile—The result of a toddler with an immoderate page rate.

Tearsheet—A piece of plain paper presented to a restless toddler to divert its attention from an inviting pile of printed pages. Some experts believe that introducing tearsheets to toddlers only increases their innate desire to shred manuscripts.

—John Moretti

STICK TO YOUR DREAMS

In an interview during the filming of the movie *JFK* (published in *Hollywood Scriptwriter*), screenwriter Oliver Stone offered these words of wisdom to beginning writers:

"Experience life as deeply and meaningfully as possible. I think that is the best raw material there is. To get to know people. To feel empathy for them. Even the weird, the odd, the lopsided, the underrepresented. Too often I think we make movies about normalcy. Sometimes, we impose normalcy as a state of mind. So, I think life itself is the flower bed of creation."

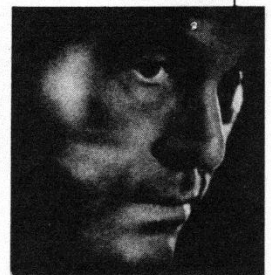
"Second, more mundanely and I suppose just as importantly, is tenacity, persistence in honing your skill. Trying to improve oneself all of the time."

"Writing is a lonely, self-effacing art. I am very aware of that because as a writer/director I do a bit of both. I do spend a lot of hours alone. Writing is a monastic activity. Directing, of course, is a much more overt activity. Often, after directing, after being out there, I feel very comfortable to return to a quieter state of mind. I think you need to write and keep writing. Not just saying you are a writer, but actually doing it. Year after year. I believe if you keep writing, you will get better, much as you would throwing a basketball. There are many bleak moments when you want to abandon it. It has happened to me several times. It happens to people who are aiming for the difficult and even the impossible sometimes. . . ."

"Certainly there are many writers who have had only a couple of screenplays rejected and have thought of quitting. What kept me going was maybe stubbornness and a lack of good sense. There were many times I wanted to quit. Many times I wanted to drop it and thought I was doing the wrong thing, that it wasn't meant to be, and that I was pushing my luck with hubris or whatever you can call it. But somewhere in the heart of me I always felt I had something to share, and that if I just kept it up long enough, one day it would come to be."

"So there was a dream, and I stuck to it. And I don't know if it's because I stuck to it, or because it was meant to be. One never knows that."

—Dawn Youngblood



Oliver Stone