



In This Issue

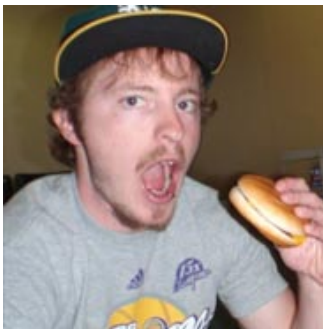
By Ross Lenihan and Ben Sampson

For the Winter 2011 issue, "Columns" explores local/global concerns through the lens of documentary filmmaking and the digital revolution. What we refer to as New Media - media conceived, distributed, and consumed digitally - has certainly created contradictions for regional cultures and the international community, but with these contradictions comes new and exciting opportunities for social change and action. And, as is the case with most paradoxes, we are left with a multitude of dualistic concerns: How can New Media balance both the autonomy of local communities and the ongoing impact of corporate globalization? How does New Media create new social networks while loosening or sometimes even dissolving time-honored social traditions? And how can New Media help equalize forms of human expression while simultaneously reinforcing productive traditional hierarchies?

In examining local/global issues via the documentary form, "Columns" consciously sought an interdisciplinary approach to a genre whose relationship to truth and power stands unique among the many branches of cinema. Thus, "Columns" invited the work of both scholars and filmmaker practitioners in an attempt to place academic investigation into dialogue with "on the ground" application. This combined viewpoint illuminates different facets of New Media that neither perspective could explain in isolation, thereby acknowledging the advantage of pursuing both theory and practice in this "new" (digital) media age.

And while the subject matter called out for a diversity of participation, it naturally lent itself to a diversity of approaches as well. New Media incorporates a variety of mediums, and thus needed to be investigated through a variety of media types. In terms of text-based analysis, "Columns" contacted key scholars in the field of local/global issues in the era of New Media. The writers Dr. Patricia Zimmerman, Sam Gregory of [WITNESS](#), and Dr. Thomas Zaniello each bring an extensive history of scholastic and/or participant interaction with media study and advocacy. In terms of audiovisual-based analysis, "Columns" conducted video interviews with three documentarians that have embraced New Media in their work and advocacy: Robert Greenwald of [Brave New Films](#), Ian Inaba of the [Citizen Engagement Lab](#), and Amie Williams of Bal-Maiden Films and [Global Girl Media](#). While the video interviews have been edited together and organized according to topic, readers can also access the full interview transcript for each filmmaker.

These articles, interviews, and videos cannot possibly hope to encompass the multitude of questions, concerns, and promises elicited by New Media, documentaries, and their impact on the micro and macro world. Yet they nevertheless highlight important channels of discourse while sounding the call for further investigation.



Author bio:

Ross Lenihan is a second year Masters student in Cinema and Media Studies at UCLA. He completed his BA in Film Studies at UC Berkeley in 2007, before working as the lead researcher and production assistant for the Citizen Engagement Laboratory (CEL), a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that seeks to organize issue and identity-based communities through digital media and technology. His current research focuses on American guerrilla documentary film and its relationship to new digital media.



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Benjamin Sampson is a PhD student in Cinema and Media Studies at UCLA. His research interests include industrial analysis, marketing studies, audience segmentation, and visual essays.