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## Clickable TV: Works in Progress

By [Kolby A. McDonald](#)

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The convergence of television and the personal computer is a reality and, because of broadband transmission, functionality and interactivity are coming to a television near you.

Recognizing the creative potential of such a fundamentally different viewing experience, the [American Film Institute](#) (AFI) in Los Angeles joined with computer chip manufacturer [Intel](#) to sponsor the AFI/Intel Enhanced TV workshop.

Participants are partnered with industry mentors for a six-month series of seminars, lectures and presentations. The goal is for each of the nine project producers to develop a prototype of an enhanced TV production. Today, competing technologies complicate execution. The AFI workshop teams profess to be "technologically agnostic," concentrating on design flow and concept rather than engineering.

The AFI's objective is to take producers from the traditional linear world and "let them dream up ways to work in the non-linear, interactive realm," said Anna Marie Piersimoni, the AFI's director of enhanced TV. This week, production teams presented their works-in-progress to a gathering of industry executives, writers and multimedia design professionals at the AFI's Mark Goodson screening room.

The technical specs for each piece are as varied as the material itself. Producer Georgia Bergman, a veteran music industry executive, showcased her enhanced version of the Irish-rock documentary "From a Whisper to a Scream." Interviews with musicians Bono and The Edge of U2 and

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Adding dimensions and layers to a story is ideal for the documentary format. Interactivity should appeal to documentary viewers who seek out information overload. "[Expedition 360](#)" (formerly titled "Pedal for the Planet") is the ongoing journey of Australian adventurer Jason Lewis, who is attempting to circumnavigate the globe using only human power: by pedal boat at sea, on in-line skates and bikes on land.

Lewis and producer Maurice Jacobsen, of San Francisco's [Video Free America](#), presented their Web-friendly version of the voyage at the AFI. Jacobsen envisioned an enhanced version of the evolving, real-time documentary as a TV experience for the Web. About 150 hours of footage have been shot of Lewis' trans-world journey that started in 1994 in Greenwich, England. The Web version will let the viewer (Jacobsen terms them "vusers," a combination of viewers and users) experience the adventure as it happens.

When Lewis resumes his journey of the world in April, he'll be outfitted with an array of high-tech communications equipment. An [Iridium](#) satellite phone, an INMARSAT-C satellite transponder and receiver for e-mail and global positioning and an [AMREL](#) waterproof, shockproof and fog-proof industrial laptop will keep him in contact with his backup team and educational Web site. Jacobsen predicted that there will be three versions of the site: text only and simple images, a QuickTime version with highly compressed video and a cutting-edge site accessible with T1 lines.

Designers at Santa Monica's [Lab 903](#) created "Expedition 360" graphics in Photoshop and animated them using [Discreet's flame](#). Chris Swain at [Spiderdance.com](#) (creator of MTV's [webriot.com](#) game show) suggested the site's main interface. A route map of the expedition can be used to navigate through the site or played as a time line to recap the entire journey. For every hour of linear video there will be three hours of sub-video to link to, parallel multitracks that provide additional information.

On Dec. 16, all the participants will return to the AFI to present their final prototypes. Because of the various enhanced TV authoring tools, producers have come up with multiple solutions. Funding and execution of these prototypes is not a done deal.

In the post-linear medium of enhanced TV, content creators face new challenges such as how to create an interface that

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