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Expert at videodisc convention says future video disc technology to make compact discs obsolete

By Ken Havlat
Staff Reporter

Few limits will hold video disc technology back in the next decade, according to Andy Finney, a producer for the British Broadcasting Corp.

It could make compact discs look like dinosaurs, he said.

Finney was in Lincoln last week for the Nebraska Videodisc Symposium held at the Cornhusker Hotel. The symposium was in conjunction with the Ninth Annual Nebraska Video disc Awards, called the "Nebbies." It is the longest running video disc awards program and is internationally recognized.

Finney was in Lincoln to receive a Nebbie for his disc on "Volcanoes." The program was made in LV-ROM format, and holds not only video and sound but a large information data bank in digital form.

Ron Nugent, video disc group director of the Nebraska Technology Service Corp., was a pioneer in the field of video disc technology 10 years ago, Finney said.

Since then, video discs primarily have been used for academic instruction. Finney said this should change in the next few years.

The first of the new technology, compact disc video (CDV), showed up at this year's symposium. The CDV system allows a viewer to first

listen, then watch. The machines are generally available in Europe and Japan. In Lincoln, the Sound Environment is the only place that carries the players.

In the next two years, compact disc interact (CDI) will be appearing on the market, Finney said. This type of player uses a blue laser which reads smaller pits on the disc. These pits contain all the information, sound and music on a disc. With smaller pits, the disc can hold more information. Nugent added that these new discs have about five gigabytes of space for information.

Philips of Belgium, maker of Pioneer components, is experimenting with a five-inch disc that holds a 2 1/2-hour movie. Nugent said it is nice to speculate on the future but it is difficult to know what the consumer will think of this upcoming technology.

Within the next decade, CDI should be on the market. Using a signal processor and ultraviolet laser, the complete Encyclopedia Britannica could fit on one five-inch disc.

According to Nugent, the complete works of William Shakespeare contain eight megabytes of information. One of these discs can hold four megabytes, he added.

"Hopefully soon we will get money to explore these possibilities," Finney said. "The next generation of musicians have only recently realized

it is possible to put texts and pictures together."

Finney said he also considers Frank Sinatra's album "Wee Small Hours" recorded in 1956, the latest development in music. It was the first concept album released.

Artists will be able to offer visual imagery—all in a digital format—instead of just putting out music.

A current hot topic in this country is the inability to buy digital audio tape (DAT) players in this country. Finney said he does not care for DAT machines because they are incompatible with the millions of cassette decks in the world.

"You would have to buy an entirely different system," Finney said. "They are great for musicians to record their music at a higher quality, but the expense isn't worth it for consumers."

Originally a disc jockey, Finney used to host a radio program on BBC-London called "Break Thru" where he took listeners on a retrospective tour of a musician's career.

Now, he writes a column called Ceetrax for BBC 2 cable television. People with a signal processor can pick up news and other items from their cable, and read the information much like a video newspaper. An estimated 500,000 British viewers (out of 12 million) reads his column.

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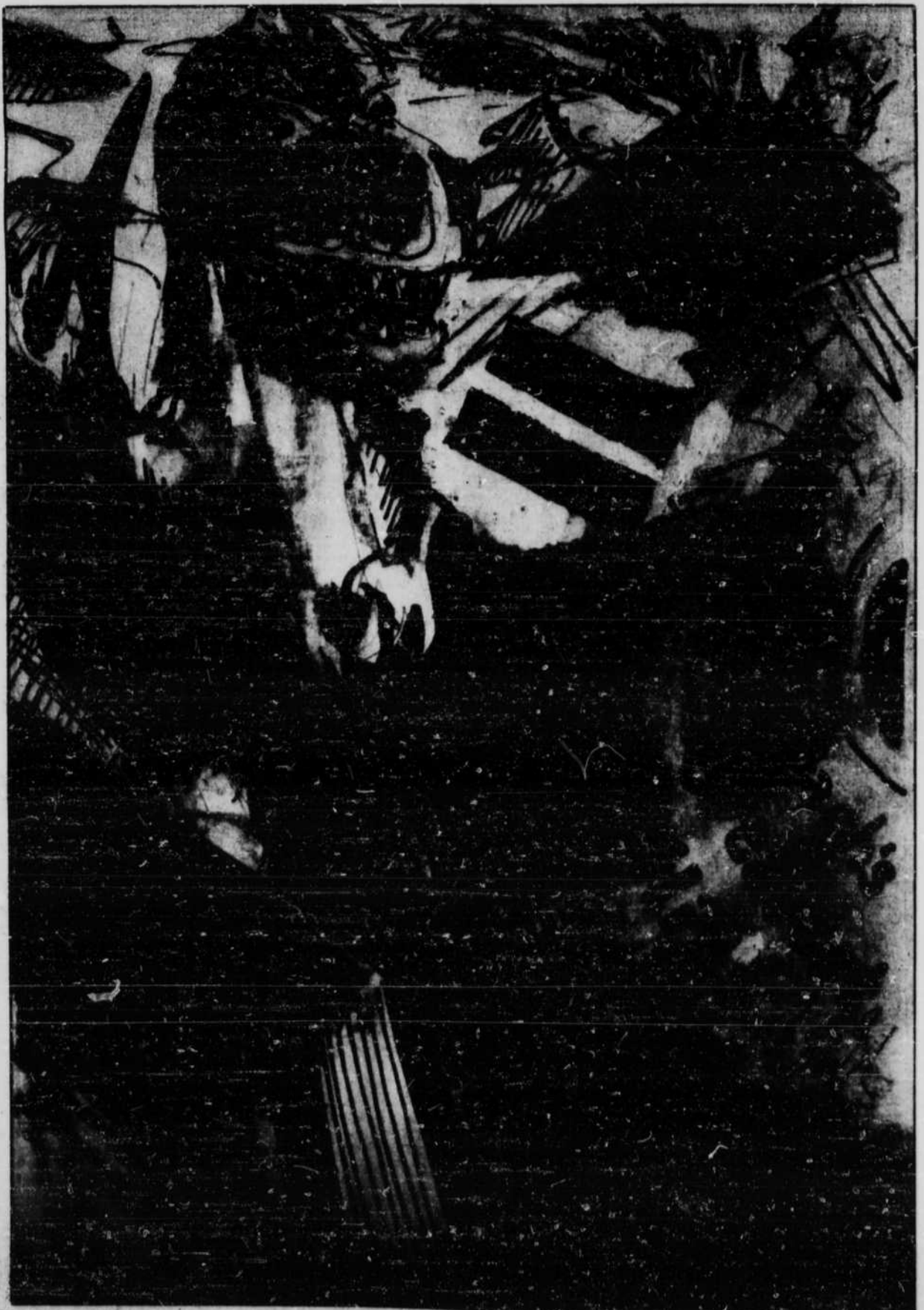
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