



CHAPTER 18

FAILURE

Failure is one of those things that 'serious people' dread. Invariably, the persons most likely to be crippled by this fear are people who have convinced themselves that they are so bitchen they shouldn't ever be placed in a situation where they might **fail**.

Failure is nothing to get upset about. It's a fairly **normal** condition; an **inevitability** in ninety-nine percent of all human undertakings. Success is rare—that's why people get so cranked up about it.

Here are a few examples from my own personal collection of crumbled dreams. These are excerpts from actual business proposals, presented to guys with suits on, in The Real World.

Even though they all flopped, the very idea of walking into a corporate office and dropping one of these boogers on *Mr. Show-Me's* desk made it all worthwhile—a guy's gotta have a hobby.

The first example is a letter sent to a Chicago attorney, Arnold Silvestri, sometime in the early eighties. . . .

I.C.A. GOES PUBLIC?

Here are some facts regarding I.C.A. (Inter-Continental Absurdities), and the possibility of taking it public.

I have an idea for a new device, potentially worth several billion dollars (patent search enclosed).

By using a modified version of the computer logic

currently employed in the generation of 3-D visuals for flight training simulators, in conjunction with an optical delivery system (yet to be designed), this device would make it possible to:

[1]

Generate FREE-STANDING 3-D images, in any size (on your coffee table at home, or on a larger scale for theatrical use), 'folded out' from any two-dimensional source by PREDICTING and SYNTHESIZING the MISSING THIRD DIMENSION.

[2]

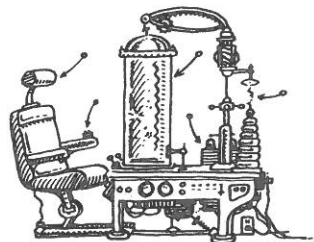
Create a service company which 'unfolds' existing 'flat' movies and TV shows so that they might be rereleased, viewable as FREE-STANDING 3-D OBJECTS.

[3]

Create a cable network which would broadcast material in this medium.

[4]

Sell hardware on a large scale to home and industrial consumers.



This is not a 'holographic' process, and, as far as we have been able to determine, does not infringe on any existing patent.

The device is in three sections. The first one converts the picture data to a digital signal which can then be worked on by the math in section two (where the depth information is synthesized), finally arriving at section three which projects it to any desired size.

I have two partners in this venture: John Law, former VP, NATO Weapons Division, General Electric Corp. (his card and copies of correspondence enclosed), and Jerry Roth (card not available at this mailing).

John informs me that seventy percent of the materials (hardware and software) to do this project is available NOW, off-the-shelf, from within the aero-space industry. **None of it is secret**, and, through his industrial contacts, can be obtained without much trouble. It will also be his responsibility to locate R&D talent. Jerry's field of expertise is software and marketing.

By John's estimate, plans for a working prototype could be viewed within two years, at a development cost of 1.5 million dollars. There is no current estimate as to the cost of building the prototype.

The first person contacted for funding was Robert Armao (an attorney/PR man/investment adviser to Nelson Bunker Hunt, the Pahlevi family, etc.), who told me that the project was 'very speculative,' and, therefore, I must be willing to give up a seventy-five percent interest, PLUS pay his fee, PLUS pay his expenses.

In the most respectful way possible I informed him that these terms were located somewhere between science fiction and usury.

The next day I met with Tom Phillips and Archie McGill at Rothschild Venture Capital. They wanted a 'business plan' and other assurances (almost to the point of showing them a working model) before getting involved, and then stated that their limit would be no more

than 2 million (which would create big problems when the device was ready to manufacture).

By coincidence, I had to make another stop at Armao's office to meet a friend after the Rothschild meeting (the offices are across the street from each other in Rockefeller Center). When I arrived, Armao asked me to come into his office, introduced me to a guy from some 'investment fund' and stated that he (Armao) would **no longer require a fee or expenses**, and that I would only have to give away forty percent for this first 1.5 million.

I told him I would think about it. Since that time he has tried to contact me in Los Angeles, but I was in New York.

Realistically, the deal is worth giving up no more than twenty-five percent (including the brokerage), which would then leave something further to bargain with when it's time to raise the heavy capital for manufacturing.

This brings us to the matter of 'going public' (which might or might not be the right move at this time, but is a possibility being given serious consideration).

If we agree that the earning potential of the **D.S.S.** (Depth-Synthesis System) is tremendous—although highly speculative by some standards—and that any film or stage venture is equally speculative (*but not as potentially lucrative*), we might consider:

[1]

The plight of those unfortunate persons who, especially at the end of the year, need to 'dispose of money.' Surely these suffering wretches can be approached with a creative suggestion or two.

[2]

We should also consider that the research facility which must be stocked and staffed to build the

D.S.S. has a continuing value and potential for the construction of other inventions once the primary objective is achieved.

I mentioned a figure of 100 million to do all of this. That might be high . . . but, if it can be raised, why not? Other companies have raised more to do less.

The next document explains the meeting mentioned above at Rothschild Venture Capital, held at a time in the long-forgotten past, when CDs weren't even on the market. . . .

**A PROPOSAL FOR A SYSTEM TO REPLACE
PHONOGRAPH RECORD MERCHANDISING**

Ordinary phonograph record merchandising as it exists today is a stupid process which concerns itself essentially with moving **pieces of plastic**, wrapped in **pieces of cardboard**, from one location to another.

These objects, in quantity, are heavy and expensive to ship. The manufacturing process is complicated and crude. Quality control for the stamping of the discs is an exercise in futility. Dissatisfied customers routinely return records because they are warped and will not play.

New digital technology may eventually solve the warpage problem and provide the consumer with better quality sound in the form of compact discs [**CDs**]. They are smaller, contain more music and would, presumably, cost less to ship . . . but they are much more expensive to buy and manufacture. To reproduce them, the consumer needs to purchase a digital device to replace his old hi-fi equipment (in the seven-hundred-dollar price range).

The bulk of the promotional effort at every record company today is expended on 'NEW MATERIAL' . . . the latest and the greatest of whatever the cocaine-

tweezed rug-munchers decide to inflict on everybody this week.

More often than not, these 'aesthetic decisions' result in mountains of useless vinyl/cardboard artifacts which cannot be sold at any price, and are therefore returned for disposal and recycling. These mistakes are expensive.

Put aside momentarily the current method of operation and think what is being wasted in terms of **GREAT CATALOG ITEMS**, squeezed out of the marketplace because of limited rack space in retail outlets, and the insatiable desire of quota-conscious company reps to fill every available slot with this week's new releases.

Every major record company has vaults full of (and perpetual rights to) great recordings by major artists in many categories which might still provide enjoyment to music consumers if they were made available in a convenient form.

MUSIC CONSUMERS LIKE TO CONSUME MUSIC . . . NOT SPECIFICALLY THE VINYL ARTIFACT WRAPPED IN CARDBOARD.

It is our proposal to take advantage of the **positive aspects** of a **negative trend** afflicting the record industry today: **home taping** of material released on vinyl.

First of all, we must realize that **the taping of albums is not necessarily motivated by consumer 'stinginess.'** If a consumer makes a home tape from a disc, that copy will probably sound better than a commercially manufactured high-speed duplication cassette legitimately released by the company.

.....
We propose to acquire the rights to digitally duplicate THE BEST of every record company's difficult-to-move **Quality Catalog Items [Q.C.I.]**, store them in a central processing location, and have them accessible by phone

or cable TV, directly patchable into the user's home taping appliances, with the option of direct digital-to-digital transfer to the F-1 (SONY consumer-level digital tape encoder), Beta Hi-Fi, or ordinary analog cassette (requiring the installation of a rentable D-A converter in the phone itself . . . the main chip is about twelve dollars).

All accounting for royalty payments, billing to the consumer, etc., would be automatic, built into the software for the system.

The consumer has the option of subscribing to one or more 'special interest category,' charged at a monthly rate, **WITHOUT REGARD FOR THE QUANTITY OF MUSIC THE CUSTOMER WISHES TO TAPE.**

Providing material in such quantity at a reduced cost could actually diminish the desire to duplicate and store it, since it would be available any time day or night.

Monthly listings could be provided by catalog, reducing the on-line storage requirements of the computer. The entire service would be accessed by phone, even if the local reception is via TV cable.

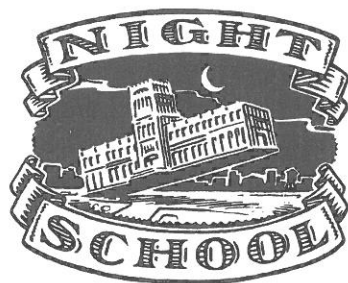
One advantage of the TV cable is: on those channels where nothing ever seems to happen (there's about seventy of them in L.A.), a visualization of the original cover art, including song lyrics, technical data, etc., could be displayed while the transmission is in progress, giving the project an electronic whiff of the original point-of-purchase merchandising built into the album when it was 'an album,' since there are many consumers who like to fondle & fetish the packaging while the music is being played.

In this situation, **Fondlement & Fetishism Potential [F.F.P.]** is supplied, without the cost of shipping tons of cardboard around.

Most of the hardware devices are, even as you read this, available as off-the-shelf items, just waiting to be plugged into each other in order to put an end to the record business as we now know it.



Another miserable flop was a concept for a late-night TV show. In 1987, assisted by Danny Schrier, an aggressive young agent at ICM, I embarked on a depressing journey into the air-conditioned wilderness of TV-Land, pitching ideas to groups of individuals worthy of further anthropological study. It all began with a meeting in the ABC network office, on or about March 13, 1987. . . .



NIGHT SCHOOL

A late-night adult program, sixty minutes, five nights per week. Show will be preceded by a warning:

"This program deals with reality, using easy to understand colloquial American Language. If you fear (or have difficulty accepting) either of the above, feel free to change the channel. You have ten seconds."

NIGHT SCHOOL will have a 'permanent faculty' and a pool of 'visiting professors.' Frank Zappa will host

the show. Daniel Schorr has expressed interest in the position of '**PROFESSOR OF RECENT HISTORY.**'

In that capacity, it would be his job to show raw, uncut news footage from the daily satellite feed, point out the material other broadcasters have deleted, speculate on the possible motivations behind the deletions, and refresh people's memories about recent events connected to each day's breaking stories.

A summary will be provided of what our elected officials really did for their paycheck in Congress each day. Votes on House and Senate business will be treated like sports scores.

Satellite interviews with political figures willing to take the risk will be a nightly feature.

Schorr will be based in Washington. Zappa will be in Los Angeles. Questions may also be asked by members of the live band in the L.A. studio.

Working on a twenty-four-hour delay, yesterday's news footage will be converted on a daily basis into three-minute rock music videos for a segment entitled **"NEWS IN HEAVY ROTATION."**

At least two brand-new music videos will be constructed each day, using Zappa's music (over three-hundred songs in the catalog, on digital audio tape, ready for synchronization), or those of any other artists willing to license their material at a special rate, and agree to ancillary usage, with rights controlled by the production company.

MTV has shown interest in a joint venture on this segment. The **"NEWS IN HEAVY ROTATION"** weekly summary would air on MTV each Saturday. MTV would split the cost of production for the clips, and promote **"NIGHT SCHOOL"** each day on their channel. **"NIGHT SCHOOL"** would cross-promote