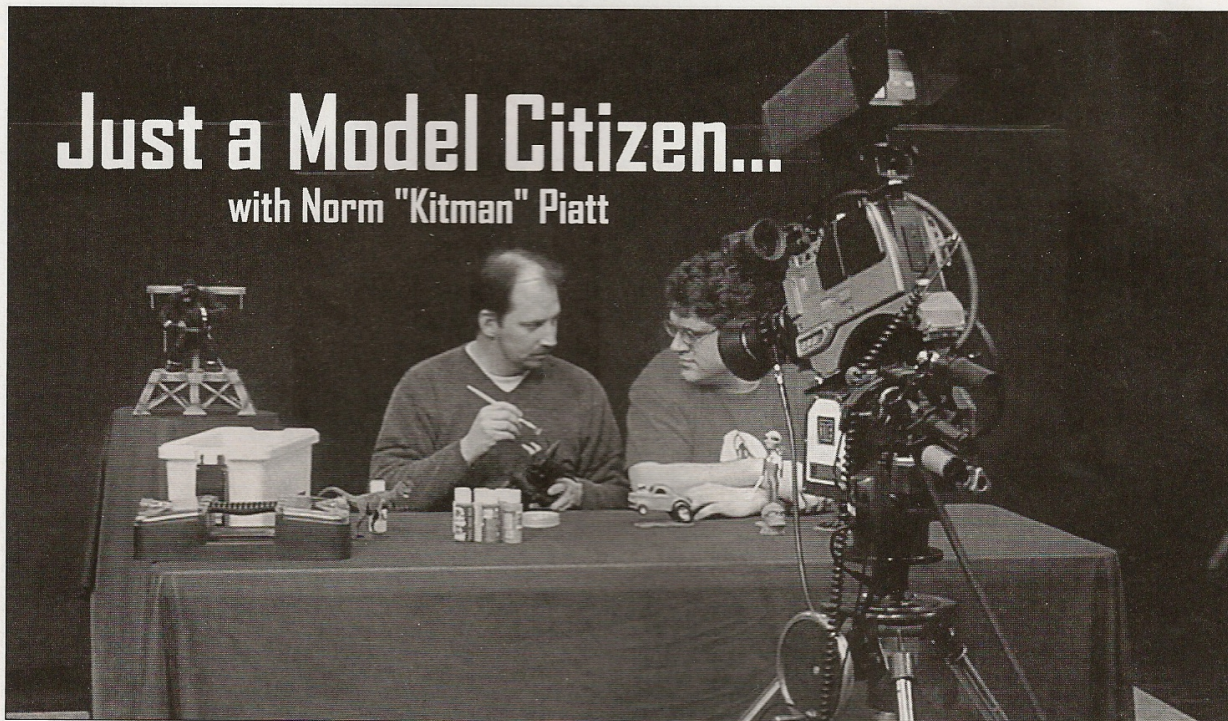


Just a Model Citizen...

with Norm "Kitman" Piatt



Who may you ask is the Model Citizen? That would be Rob Mattison: Creator, Producer and Star of Model Citizen, a Public Access TV show in Wisconsin. Rob has taken on the responsibility of producing the airwaves' only true model building show. Rob takes the viewer through the creative process of model building, painting and converting in vinyl, plastic and resin. Model Citizen is the "New Yankee Workshop" of modeling. A working classman, Rob's style is reminiscent of Norm Abrams, with plaid shirt and jeans and easygoing manner. Rob treats the viewer as an equal as he and co-host, Chris Gierke and technician, Troy Gierke, take you on a modeling journey each episode. The show is educational, fun, artistic and just plain cool!!!

Model Citizen offers us inspiration. In each episode, Rob and Chris show the viewer step-by-step instruction in diverse topics as Monsters, Superheros, Sci-Fi, Dinosaurs and Spacecraft Vehicles. Each episode offers something new for the viewer to learn and appreciate. Rob and Chris each have their own segment in the show and demonstrate their skills, displaying techniques and give tips on model building. They usually build and finish the subject within the episode's time. They have had guest stars and have done filming at model shows. They have interviewed people like Wayne "The Dane" Hansen, Mike Parks of Mad Labs and Larry Johnson of Action Hobbies.

Here's a bit of modeling background on the guys: Rob has been perfecting his modeling skills since a young boy growing up on model building. To quote "I built my first model, the Glow Dracula back in '69 - '70 and never stopped building and painting Monsters and Dinosaurs,

except for a period in the late 70s and early 80s, when all I could get to paint were lead figures for the lack of models. Thank goodness for Billiken, Horizon and Screamin (and other earlier companies). I found the hobby again and got into it big time."

A self-taught artist, painter and sculptor, Rob has put his talents to good use in creating the Model Citizen TV Show. For Chris, his modeling background goes like this. To quote: "I've been in the hobby for 7½ years now. I'm a late bloomer. I didn't get going until I was 20, but that doesn't mean I love the hobby any less than anyone else. In fact, Rob was the one who got me going. He was working at a local comic store when I happened in one day and noticed these magnificent 3-D rendering of some of my favorite comic hero's. They were the Horizon kits. I talked to Rob about them for a while, and next week my parents went in and brought me the Venom model and it's been gung-ho ever since." Being somewhat self-taught, Chris says he's picked up a lot of good advice from *Modeler's Resource* and other magazines as well as modeling videos. He found out little things here and there along the way. "That's one thing I love about the hobby; there is really no wrong way to do anything. It allows you to expand your imagination and creativity."

Let's talk to Rob, Chris and ask some questions about the show and get some opinions on the hobby from them. Hey guys, I've watched several episodes of Model Citizen and I really enjoyed it. Not only did I pick up on a bunch of new techniques, I got to see some really great models. The gallery segment is really cool. I like how the camera works around the model and there are excellent choices for back-



ground music. The fact that you do diverse subjects is cool too.

MR: *Would you tell us when and how the show originated?*

RM: Back in '95 some friends and I were attempting comedy on our local Public Access channel. One week we didn't have any plans, so I built a Plymouth Prowler, I edited it. It turned out to be only 13 minutes long, so I put it up on the shelf until I could add to it. 3½ years later I pulled it down and showed it. A couple months later a friend, Aaron Diede, asked why I wasn't doing a model show? He said he would help with it so.....In the first episode all you see is my hands and hear me as I build a Polar Lights Snap Dragon and add some painting touches. We got Chris to come on for episode 2 and within a couple of months Aaron saw the show was in good hands and went off to pursue his music career. Along with Chris came his older brother, Troy, who is our Tech Engineer. We all direct, edit, host (except Troy) and do whatever it takes to get the show rolling.

MR: *What is it like producing and starring in your own TV show?*

RM: I figure, I'm 38, have 3 kids and I'm balding; what do I have to lose?! Except my dignity, and my wife promised to let me know when I cross that line!

CG: It's cool that the main thing we set out to do was spread the word about modeling and to have fun. I hope that comes through in our episodes.

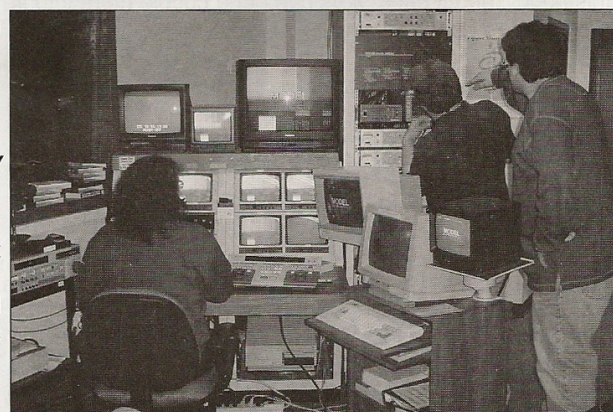
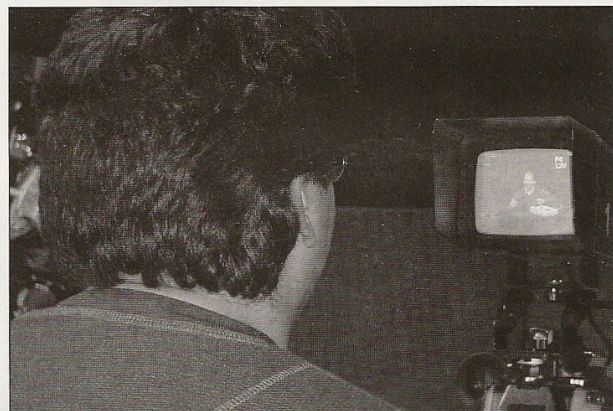
RM: Also, producing as a team makes it a lot easier than trying to do it alone. We all take turns and do what it takes to get Model Citizen on the air. Troy is our tech guy. He got into Model Citizen because of his love of electrical gadgets (editors, etc.). He wanted to learn how a TV station worked. He has no desire to be in front of the camera, but without his help we would not have accomplished a fraction of what we've done.

CG: We are not a polished TV show; not by any means. We are all still learning. We have no budget and the kits we build are from our own collection.

RM: We have a long way to go, but we are just three guys having fun at what we love to do...build models!

MR: *How long does it take to produce an episode?*

RM: If the episode is a one take segment, like the ones we





are currently working on, we can get about four episodes done in approximately 12 to 16 hours. On the other hand, if it's an edit job with interviews and separate shots, it could take 12 hours to complete one episode. Our goal is to have a new episode each week (we currently do one a month) in the very near future and we're doing all we can to make that happen. If anyone wants to contribute to the show, e-mail or get in contact with us with the addresses provided.

MR: *What impact do you want to make on the modeling community?*

RM: We just want to see the hobby grow. So, if we all do what we can to promote the hobby, maybe it'll stay strong or even gain in popularity. There are a lot of us who love this hobby, and if each of us can get a couple more into it, so much the better.

CG: Wow, hard question. I don't know if we are trying to make an impact as much as we are just trying to spread the word about how cool and fun modeling is. If you consider that an impact, I guess that's it then.

MR: *In your opinion, where do you see the hobby going?*

RM: I see the plastic industry at high point (thanks PL), Resin in turmoil, but still in good shape with lots of great artists and product, and vinyl at it's lowest, although GEOMETRIC still has a great line of vinyl. It's not like what it was with Screamin, Horizon and Billiken, although just in the last couple of months vinyl seems to be coming back, I hope.

CG: I've heard talk the hobby is dying. I don't believe that. The hobby is merely settling down. Some of the big names are gone, Screamin, Horizon and others, but there's a bunch still hanging around (GEOMETRIC, Jimmy Flinstone and Action Hobbies). The buyer just has more to choose from. I think that in the near future the hobby will start picking up again, but it will never see the surge it did back in the late 80s early 90s.

MR: *What would you like to see the major model companies do to strengthen the hobby?*

RM: Like all things, regularity. Waiting for months between models gives a hobbyist time to get side tracked and God forbid, move on.

CG: We have to get kids involved! That is the only way to

have the hobby live on. So they have to make affordable kits for kids. To some extent Polar Lights have been doing this in styrene kits, but one company isn't enough. I think that companies like GEOMETRIC have to get involved more. Whether it's smaller, more affordable kits or maybe having some kind of contest. I'm not really sure. (GEO has the Micros that I'm using to introduce my niece to the classic monsters).

MR: *Would you accept support from the model companies for your TV Show?*

RM: Since it's Public Access we really can't advertise but we can have sponsors. We would love to have anyone in the modeling industry for a guest appearance. Just contact us.

CG: Hell Yeah!! This season we're going to be having more kid modelers on the show and we would really like the model companies to support this effort to bring modeling to the kids. Remember, we have no budget.

MR: *What can we do locally in our own communities to get Model Citizen on the air?*

RM: First, do you have a local PA Station and, if so, do they accept individual producers? If so, check the policies of the station and if you can sponsor a show, get in contact with me and we will work it out.

MR: *In your opinion, of the major model companies, who is doing the better job at bringing attention to the hobby?*

CG: Hands down Polar Lights. I understand that it's hard for the figure community to go mainstream, but PL has the best chance merely because of affordability.

RM: I agree Polar would top the list. Although there are a lot of great companies I think Polar Lights is really going at it pushing and making some great old and new models.

MR: *Do you plan to make videos available to us modelers in the future?*

RM: Yes, we are just trying to see what we can do to make it cost and time effective. Once we iron those things out, we will make them available.

MR: *Well, that just about wraps it up, guys. Is there anything you would like to add?*

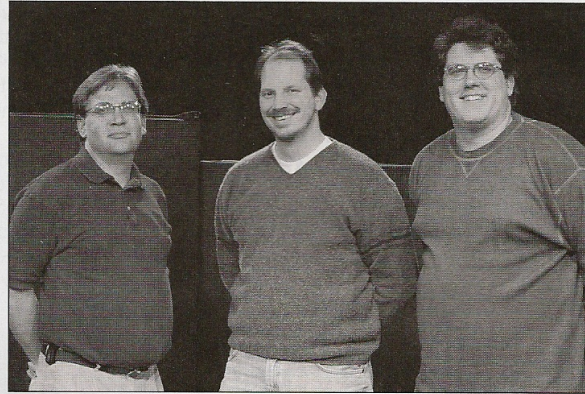
RM: Yes, we are working on a website for the show. We will be upgrading the site soon with photos and modeling tips from forthcoming episodes log on at:

www.execpc.com/~mattison/modcit.htm

MR: *I'd like to thank you guys Rob, Chris and Troy on behalf of the modeling community for your efforts to bring our hobby to the general public and for giving us modelers a chance to go behind the scenes of the making of Model Citizen. We wish you the best for the show.*

Footnote: Since this interview was conducted, Rob has been hired on full-time to help PACTV in programming and production and Troy has been hired on part-time as an engineer. Not bad for a couple of Model Heads.

Do you have tips, questions or comments or like to donate resources to the Model Citizen, you may write to **PATV c/o Model Citizen 800 Wisconsin St., Mail Box 55 Eau Claire, WI 54703** or contact by e-mail: <mattison@execpc.com>.



**Above, from left:
Troy Gierke, Rob Mattison and Chris Gierke**

