



Alternative Energy with the Experts

A series of videos by Scott Andrews

Reviewed by Richard Perez

Here is a series of three videos about the small scale use of renewable energy in home systems. Each video is about 50 minutes long and features an expert in the field. I was impressed with the professional technical quality of these videos, they are far from “homemade.” The picture quality is very good, the editing seamless, and the sound quality is excellent. Poor audio has been one of the main features in most RE videos to date.

Each video covers a particular renewable energy source in a very general fashion. The video on photovoltaics is called *Residential Solar Electricity* and features Johnny Weiss of Solar Energy International as the instructor. The wind video is called *Residential Wind Power* and features Mick Sagrillo of Lake Michigan Wind and Sun. The hydro video is called *Residential Microhydro Power* and Don Harris of Harris Hydroelectric is the instructor. Each of these individuals is truly an expert in their field.

These are general information videos suited to the beginner in renewable energy. They cover the characteristics of each particular RE source. The wind and hydro videos contain much useful information about choosing the proper site and evaluating its RE potential. The PV video is far more ambitious and covers controls, instrument, inverters, and batteries in addition to the power source—PV. All the videos follow the “question and answer” format with the narrator (Scott Andrews) asking the essential question of the particular expert. Each video contains quite a bit of

footage of actual systems and their operating environments. These videos are not in the “talking head” format which we’ve come to expect in most amateur RE videos. They are interesting to watch, even for experts, and informative to beginners who are probably seeing these working RE components for the first time.

My only complaint is that these videos contain a mixture of general and very specific information. While these videos do not contain enough information to enable one to design, install, and operate these systems, they do contain bits of data specific to installation and operation. For example, Johnny Weiss shows us how to make an electrical connection on heavy cable, but there is no data on sizing the cable. Don Harris shows us how to field strip the alternator used in a hydro and this doesn’t suit the “general” nature of the rest of the info in the video. I suspect that Scott Andrews included the specific info because it is very visual and really suited to video display.

The “Alternative Energy with the Experts” is the best series of introductory videos we at Home Power have ever seen. And we get to view more than a few. The information is concise, the presentation professional, and they are fun to watch. Watching Don Harris measure flow in his creek and watching Mick Sagrillo put up a Bergey 850 wind generator is entertaining and contains much useful info for the RE novice.

Access

These videos are available from Scott Andrews, PO Box 3027, Sausalito, CA 94965 • 415-332-5191. Each video costs \$44.95 and that includes shipping inside the USA. Scott has a deal of \$105 for all three videos (shipped prepaid in the USA). They are easily worth the price.

