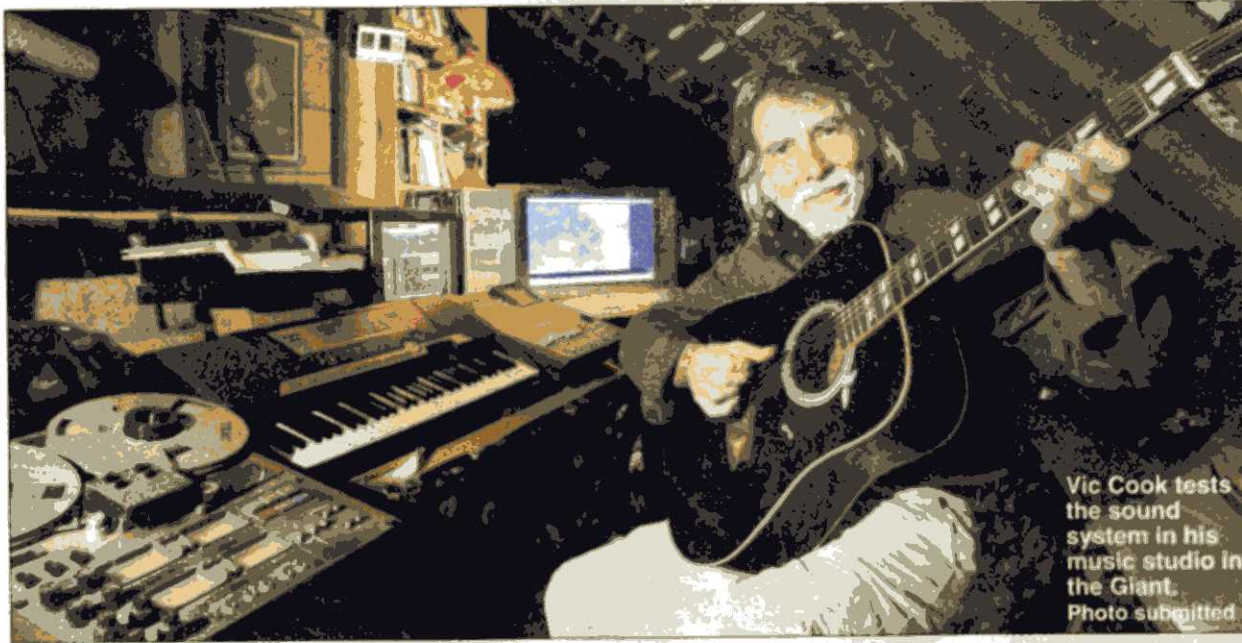


Local environmentalist: Going green starts in your backyard



Vic Cook tests
the sound
system in his
music studio in
the Giant.
Photo submitted

Vic Cook hasn't received a utility bill in years and attributes that relief to being grid-free.

The grid is the power supply in America and although Cook said it's been a decent source of electricity, it's time for citizens to break away from corporate dependence and make their own power from natural resources.

"I also encourage people to understand that it's time for the lawns to be left alone and let them grow naturally," Cook said. "Take that money you would have spent on a riding lawn mower and buy a solar electric system. Then, you can unplug from the grid."

It took Pendleton resident Cook the equivalent of eight years of sweat and tears to build the perfect 21st century eco-friendly home, dubbed "The Giant."

News articles compare the Giant's outer appearance to that of an upside-down wooden arc. Its contents include a music and recording studio, an insulated refrigerator made from a hollowed tree and a separate freezer cooled by a microchip. Its superb insulation requires only a

few kerosene heaters for warmth in the winter and air conditioning is provided by underground sources. The home - surrounded by 90 acres of woods - is powered by six storage batteries that are charged by solar panels with a gasoline-powered generator for back up on cloudy days.

Cook calls his invention "a statement."

"I wanted to use stuff in the forest to build a museum, kind of a tribute to nature that also serves as a place for me to live," he said. "I've never paid a utility bill; all of my energy comes from the sun and I catch and purify rainwater."

Monies saved from utility costs fund Cook's creative endeavors. A feature film on the Giant is even in the works, produced and directed by Cook in his sun-powered production studio.

"The movie is a romantic look at the nature around me here; kind of a love story about nature," Cook said. "It's a slow motion

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INDIVIDUAL ACTION

•Green

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look at my surroundings accompanied by full orchestra score and acoustic guitar music."

Cook's love of nature was inherited from his dad.

"My dad would take me out in the woods and at the lakes to fish and if the fish weren't biting, he'd paint pictures of the scenery.

That, for me, developed a great love for nature."

EASIER THAN YOU THINK

Although Cook started brainstorming plans to build his eco-friendly home 30 years ago, going green can be quickly achieved with a few simple lifestyle changes, he said. A spokesperson as well as inventor, Cook travels around to museums and other orga-

nizations to spread his message on homemade electricity. His next stop will be at Minnetrista Cultural Center in Muncie.

"I'm going to encourage people to learn to make their own electricity. It's free and a great thing for the American family."

Besides, he said, burning coal for energy is a culprit of global warning.

"Making your own electricity forces individuals to be conservative, but in a pleasant way. For instance, I know how

much energy that I can use per day, Cook said. "I really feel like an unlimited amount of electricity is corrupting consumer and

most have no idea where it comes from."

Be there

For reservations to see "The Giant" or for more information, call Sue Blakely at (765) 778-2757 or email earthship@aol.com.