

How TV Wrecked the Black Panthers, by Kathleen Cleaver

CHANNELS

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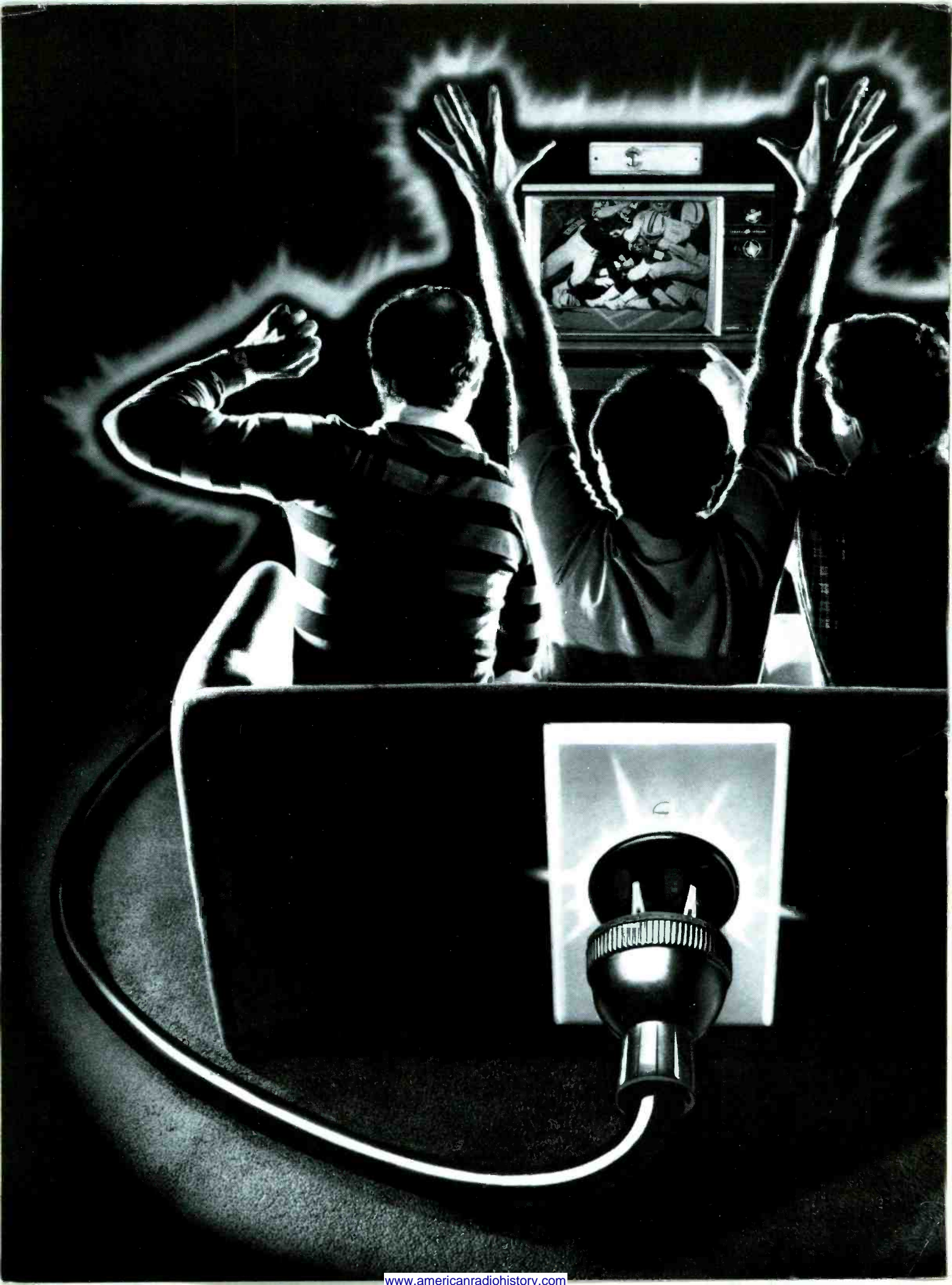
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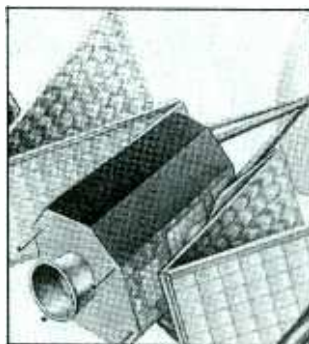


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The 1983 Field Guide to the New Electronic Media

SPECIAL PULL-OUT SECTION



A comprehensive, untechnical survey of the new electronic landscape that is just coming into flower. This first annual *Channels Field Guide* gives order to the panoply of new technologies, systems, and services by sorting them out according to families, species, and subspecies.

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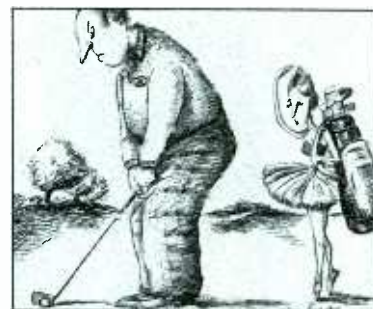
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Public Eye: Who Killed CBS Cable?

The same people who pushed CBS into cable turned the screw that forced the network out

BY LES BROWN



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The Season of the Reagan Rich

TV's escape into wealth this year is markedly different from the movie escapism of the thirties

BY MICHAEL POLLAN



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The Media Front: Where Israel Lost in Lebanon

Israel's defense against American television—considered crucial to the nation's future—could not hold

BY MILTON VIORST



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Smuggling Television into Mexico

Leading manufacturers are looking the other way as billions in contraband cross the border

BY NEAL WEINSTOCK

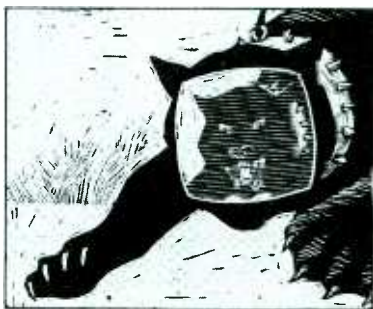


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How Television Wrecked the Black Panthers

The author, who served as Panther information officer, recounts TV's role in the group's rise and fall.

BY KATHLEEN CLEAVER



PAGE 98

From



to



to



Celebrating a Decade of Innovation



Home Box Office, Inc.



Teed Off at Hollywood

Re "Get TV Out of Hollywood" [Sept/Oct]: While we all agree Hollywood programming is worthless, I find it hard to believe that all the talent capable of righting California's wrong resides in New York City. Why not decentralize the industry and give the entire country a chance?

LOU SCHULER
St. Louis, Missouri

It's funny, but several months ago, someone asked me what was wrong with television, and I replied, "Hollywood." If more top advertising and television executives were committed to creativity instead of golf, television would be much closer to first rate.

PAUL L. FRUMKIN
Los Angeles, California

Sabotage?

Re "Information: America's New Global Empire" [Sept/Oct]: Herbert Schiller wants to throw a sabot into the electronic devil-machine that will once again subjugate all those developing nations.

Once it was the Spanish conquistadors, then the British Raj, then the machines that destroyed cottage industries. Now it is the big bird in the sky and the damnable IC chip. Where will it all stop?

Well, back to my mule and plow on the back forty.

EDWARD WEGENER
Birmingham, Alabama

The Market for News

Re Book Review, *Ninety Seconds to Tell It All* [June/July]: William Simon notes the ascent of the news media to unprecedented levels of "prestige and power," but goes on to assert that "this power is not compatible with our capitalist system, in which the free market is supposed to be the supreme arbiter."

What nonsense! The popularity of

news, as broadcast or published in the modern media, has grown so much recently precisely *because* of the free-market system, as the proliferation of all-news channels so convincingly illustrates.

CHARLES PAIKERT
Associate Editor
Chain Store Age Executive
New York City

Dreading 1984

Re On Air, "The Myth of the Media's Political Power" [June/July]: I wish Jeff Greenfield's network, CBS, as well as the rest of the broadcast media, took his advice on covering a Presidential campaign. It makes me sick to think what television "news" will do come 1984.

ERIC J. TANNENBAUM
Bloomington, Indiana

Inviting Abuse

Re On Air, "Congress Shall Make *No Law* . . ." [Sept/Oct]: Mark Fowler says, "I believe that broadcasting deserves the same protection that print has under the Constitution." But by advocating removal of any and all controls on content in broadcasting, he would invite abuse of the medium. He would deprive the public of any adequate response to the hit-and-run tactics to which broadcasting, far more than the print media, lends itself.

KENNETH LISENBEE
New York City

Freedom of Access

Re The Public Eye, "Whose First Amendment Is It, Anyway?" [Sept/Oct]: Considering their backgrounds, the founding fathers would surely have said that it's government regulation that limits freedom. A profitable market for public access may come in time, as demand grows—but please, not through government force.

PATRICK NOLAN
Jackson Heights, New York

For Wide-Open Spaces

Re At Issue, "Does the Public Own the Airwaves?" [Sept/Oct]: In his argument [against public ownership of the airwaves], Erwin G. Krasnow offered only simplistic analogies that strayed from his final point.

But he did say that without a signal supplied by the broadcasters, "the spectrum is just so much empty space." Considering the present state of the art, perhaps we should bow our heads and pray for that happy, happy day.

GEORGE ALBERT NEILL
Capitola, California

Prime Time's Put-Down

Re "Why the New Right Is All Wrong About Prime Time" [Sept/Oct]: "Bunkerizing" is done to tell us how horrible we are as everyday Americans, nothing more or less. Archie is a subject of ridicule. Alan Alda's troop is out to show, among other things, the nastiness of the U.S. military.

I do agree, however, that the huge amorphous glob of the polity may endure—due to a resilience born of a simple survival ethic.

ROY TRABAND
Amarillo, Texas

Odd Coupling

Re Program Notes, "Couples: Behind the Doctor's Door" [June/July]: Michael Schwarz had the ridiculous idea of comparing this intelligent program with idle-chatter programs such as *Queen for a Day* and *Let's Make a Deal*. If he had a little more understanding and compassion for his fellow man, he would not have missed the point.

DONNA LAKES
Worth, Illinois

Cable U.

Re Quo Video, "Careers in Cable" [Sept/Oct]: I am currently enrolled in a master's

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LETTERS

degree program in telecommunications management at Michigan State University, in which many people concentrate solely on cable. So Cincinnati is not the only university that "prepares students for middle-management positions in the cable industries."

CHRISTIANNE MCMILLAN
East Lansing, Michigan

Fan Mail

Your magazine is addressing a most significant aspect of our culture at a major time of change. I have already quoted it in my public speaking about television.

GORDON F. VARS
*National Association for
Core Curriculum
Kent State University
Kent, Ohio*

Rarely have I appreciated a writing style so original and clear as Michael Pollan's. His articles in the June/July issue, "Signature" and "A New World: The Electric Library," were beautifully composed and easily worth the entire subscription.

PAUL C. MARSH
*Home Box Office
New York City*

Re The Public Eye, "Living in a Nielsen Republic" [April/May]: This is the most enlightening and brilliant commentary on the subject of politics in broadcasting I've read in a long, long time. Not a single word oversells the increasing threat to our public interest of Fowler's Follies.

BEN BRADY
*Professor
California State University
Northridge, California*

Your September *Channels* was superb!

MARK S. FOWLER
*Chairman
Federal Communications
Commission
Washington, D.C.*

I became aware of *Channels* when it was chosen as Magazine of the Month on the *Talking Books* program (recorded material for the blind). The articles are interesting and instructive, and certainly contemporary. So I thought I would tell you about it and thank you for taking part in the program. It's really a life-saver for those of us who cannot read the printed word. I feel so continually frustrated just wanting to *know* everything and being unable to find out. Magazines like yours are a big help.

ESTHER OLSON
San Francisco, California

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It's as simple as that. But all news retrieval services are not created equal. Some offer you a limited number of databases. Some don't even give you the complete stories you may request—giving you instead short abstracts. Still others use computer mumbo-jumbo and require extensive training before you can use them.

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ters, as well as all the world's major wire services, including the UPI States Wires. NEXIS includes sources such as The Washington Post, Business Week, Latin America Weekly Report, Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, The Economist, Japan Economic Journal, the BBC Summary of World Broadcasts. All the information of a full library of more than 50 current and historical information sources is at your fingertips.

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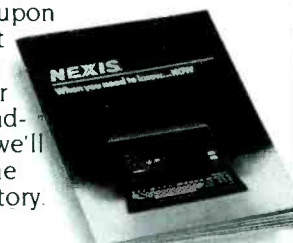
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CROSS CURRENTS

Computer Bytes Man

"THE PATIENT, a highly successful Philadelphia business executive, first came to see me in the summer of 1980," recounts Dr. Stephen Lande, a psychologist and behavior therapist at the Temple University School of Medicine. "He complained about stress, anxiety, insomnia, and an unusual lack of interest in his job. 'Common enough problems,' I thought at first. After all, stress, anxiety, and feelings of dissatisfaction with one's work have practically become our psychological mainstays." But then, Dr. Lande continued, "I dug a little deeper . . ."

The digging uncovered an intense, irrational aversion to computers, a neurosis now common enough to be given a name: cyberphobia. "This fellow," Dr. Lande said, "was a high-powered, intelligent man who for five years resisted recommendations to computerize his thriving company. Whenever he thought about having to go out and test computers he froze, and whenever he thought about having to work on something that could perform faster and more accurately than he could, he became incredibly anxious."

Dr. Lande's cyberphobic patients have ranged from university department heads to computer systems analysts; from business executives to middle- and lower-level employees. Their complaints have been various: hypertension, insomnia, and sexual difficulties. A recent study on the subject conducted by St. Joseph's, another Philadelphia university, concludes that, as computers make their way inexorably into the workplace, the number of cyberphobic individuals seeking psychologists' help will increase substantially. The St. Joseph's study found that 30 percent of the nation's office workers are uncomfortable working near video display terminals. In some instances, the reaction can be more severe than discomfort and hypertension; nausea, vertigo, and even hysteria can result.

Dr. Lande considers computer phobia similar in many ways to fears about sexual and social performance. "A common performance anxiety, for example, is the fear many people have of taking tests," he said. "People become very anxious when they compare their own speed and accuracy to that of computers. Others dread making a serious or costly error while operating their company's computer."

In a therapy procedure known as "flooding," the doctor asks the patient to envision the worst possible thing that could occur while operating a computer. "The purpose of this exercise is to help accustom the patients to their phobic situation. Since the worst imaginable situation rarely occurs, the clients begin to feel more comfortable with the kinds of problems that really do arise."

In the case of the Philadelphia business executive, Dr. Lande says, "he had set very high standards for himself and disliked having to compete with the computer. But it wasn't until he was forced to give in and computerize his company that his anxious feelings became so overpowering as to force him to seek professional help." The doctor's happy footnote to this story: "Systematic desensitization helped the businessman make peace with his computer."

Despite his personal success treating patients with computer-based worries, Dr. Lande stresses the need for more research into the problem of cyberphobia. "But I do think," he concluded, "that it makes good sense for any company about to introduce computers to be aware of how much anxiety they can produce, and to be more sensitive to the possibility of phobic reactions among their employees." B.J.

Profit-Tiers

THE PRIZE for enterprise goes to San Jose's KSTS-TV, Channel 48, which has concocted four ways to make money on a single channel. The scheme includes a three-tier pay-television service at night that one might think took its inspiration from a Chinese menu. This is altogether fitting, since one of the services is Chinese. Another is Japanese. The third is, well, in a universal language.

In what is surely the country's most bizarre permutation of STV (over-the-air subscription television), KSTS-TV sells Japanese-language programming from 7 to 9 P.M. nightly, Chinese-language programming in the next two-hour block, and hard-core pornographic movies starting at 11 P.M.

Transmitted with differently scrambled signals, the Oriental program blocks are available to subscribers for \$19.95 a month each. For an extra \$4.95 a month, they get the X-rated fare as well. The San Francisco Bay area, which is the station's

market, has an Oriental population of around one million. People who want to skip the Japanese and Chinese programs can subscribe just to the porn flicks—furnished by a national packager, Private Screenings, which normally serves cable systems—for \$11.95 a month.

By day, the versatile UHF station serves a fourth market. It provides a standard commercial broadcast service devoted to business programming.

L.B.

The Play-by-Play's the Thing

TAPING a Shakespeare play as if it were a baseball game may seem irreverent, but to Joseph Papp, director of the New York Shakespeare Festival, doing it any other way creates merely "the pretense of a real live event."

Papp's NYSF and ABC Video Enterprises recently collaborated on the taping—before an audience in Central Park's Delacorte Theater—of the festival's latest production, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, to be presented on cable during the winter season.



Finding enough programming to meet the needs of the new medium is as difficult today as it was in television's early days, so rights to plays both classic and obscure are being snapped up for possible cable production. But prohibitive expenses and dubious profits have kept many of these plays from reaching the studio, where they would undergo a costly reworking for the screen.

Papp's *Dream*, in contrast, was taped almost exactly as it had been staged originally, with video director Emile Ardolino adding a new wrinkle: Taking his cue from television sports coverage, he called the shots for the final tape from a choice of eight camera angles, instead of the usual three or four.

The approach should give cable producers new ideas. For one thing, the savings on set reconstruction, editing, studio

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KXA211

use, and time make live taping in the theater economically appealing. For another, while live taping for cable has been tried before, often with dull results, the eight-camera method livens things up considerably.

Other Papp productions for television have been re-created in the studio, taped and retaped scene by scene several times, and then edited at some length. But this play was not being "translated" for television, only taped for it, straight through, on three consecutive nights. In preparation for the cameras, the actors' makeup was toned down, the lighting heightened, and the entire play rehearsed several times so movement could be anticipated. But there could be no other advance planning. If one of the planes flying by drowned out some dialogue, the director could only hope that the next night's take might replace it (although Papp did admit there might be some inserts taped after the audience had left for the night). The final version will probably percolate with extraneous sounds, among them an intermittent bullfrog serenade from the pond behind the Delacorte stage.

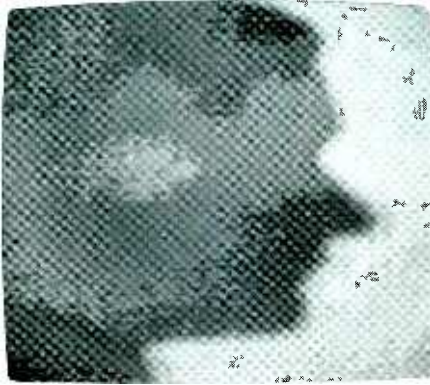
There might be other rough edges too. "Decisions are made on the spot," says Papp. "Like in early television—you made mistakes and some of the stuff was junk, but there was a kind of passion in the work." With eight cameras rolling simultaneously—with the sequence of shots that will fill the final tape being chosen live, at great speed, and under immense pressure—imperfections are inevitable.

"Our approach was to capture the event as it was happening," insists director Ardolino. If, in the process, he recaptures a bit of early television's electricity, his "play-by-play" version of Shakespeare should find plenty of fans.

s.w.w.

Levittown-by-Satellite

HIS HAIR is yellow rather than blond, and he wears it shaved high above the ears so that it sits like an island atop his head. He grew up in Levittown, Pennsylvania, but these days he spends most of his time in Amsterdam, Holland, his expatriation having begun in avoidance of the Vietnam War. Tom Klinkowstein, thirty-two-year-old "performance artist," is an unlikely avatar of the Communications Age. Yet he is one of perhaps nine or ten Amer-



icans whose art is wedded to international telecommunications systems—electronic mail, satellites, slow-scan television, and facsimile.

Klinkowstein has organized, among other things, the Artbox Group, an international community of artists who use the computer time-sharing network of I.P. Sharp, a Toronto-based firm, to communicate with each other and mount productions. With a portable computer the size of an attaché case, Klinkowstein can enter this network by making a phone call or dialing a telex number. His messages—images and words—can be retrieved by other Artbox artists anywhere in the world.

One of his more complex setups, not a message but a performance entitled *Levittown*, was beamed on four screens to an audience in Utrecht. One screen carried slow-scan images of an American shopping center built in the fifties in Klinkowstein's hometown, another displayed a list of the contents of a 1950s suburban American home. A video tape of a modern-day Dutch shopping mall unspooled on the third screen, and the fourth carried a succession of still photographs depicting Klinkowstein's Levittown childhood.

This video bazaar was accompanied gastronomically by hamburgers and french fries from McDonald's, and aurally by Sousa marches recorded in 1963 by Levittown's Benjamin Franklin Middle School band, of which Klinkowstein had been a member.

The images from the Levittown Shop-a-Rama were transmitted live by phone lines and satellite, in slow-scan, from a television camera operated by one of Klinkowstein's friends. The text describing the contents of a fifties Levittown household was retrieved in Holland from a Prestel computer in London, where Klinkowstein had logged it earlier.

And the point of this elaborate orchestration of screens? Simply to show the Dutch audience that the Western Europe

they know today strikingly resembles the America of the fifties. As Klinkowstein observes: "The message is simple. The technical part is complicated."

An international telecommunications performance of this sort, lasting less than half an hour, may cost between \$1,500 and \$9,000, with much of the money covering telephone-line charges (both facsimile and slow-scan television operate on conventional phone lines). The Artbox artists depend on funding from such corporations as 3M, Xerox, Robot Research (of San Diego), and the Dutch telephone company.

But there is never enough funding to use full-resolution video—real moving pictures—for these performances. Slow-scan has the virtue of being cheap; its images, however, are grainy and crude, moving downward over the screen at the rate of eight pictures a second.

Klinkowstein, a former television producer and graphics designer, says that, despite the aesthetic and financial limitations, mounting an international "electronic circus [is] what I would do if I could do anything." His telecommunications expertise provides him a new kind of freedom, allowing him to be independent of any particular locale. "It's like Vienna and Amsterdam are the same place," says Klinkowstein. And that may well be the message of his artistic medium.

G.M.H.

CBS Without Paley?

There will never be a CBS without William S. Paley, even a hundred years from now. So it makes very little difference that the company's leader for more than half a century—who succeeded in making CBS the network most popular with the masses, yet most respected by the intelligentsia—has relinquished his post as chairman and stepped out of day-to-day operations at the age of eighty-one.

Paley has established such a system of values and such a style of operation for CBS as to make his stamp permanent. All who have worked under Paley are so thoroughly indoctrinated that they live by his precepts and can be expected to hand them down to future generations of employees. CBS will be run by Paley in the same way *Time* magazine continues to be run by Henry Luce and *The New York Times* by Adolph Ochs. Some founders are immortal.

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Who Killed CBS Cable?

The same people who pushed CBS into cable applied the pressure that drove the network out.

AS MUCH as CBS enjoys being first in everything, it will not be boasting of one distinction: its place in history as the first to cancel a major cable network.

Companies much smaller than CBS are hanging in for what everyone knows will be a long stretch of lean years. There is no instant money in cable; even the industry's big winner, HBO, bled red ink for half a decade. The program services that are crowding the satellites today are hoping only to establish themselves, so that they will be mainstays when cable some day comes into full flower as a national advertising medium.

Like the others, CBS went in merely to stake a claim and had no illusions about making profits for several years with its superb cultural channel. Yet CBS Cable folded its tent after a scant year of service.

The announcement, which came quite suddenly in September, set off a wave of dismay and confusion in the cable industry and the business community generally. What did this collapse signify? That cultural programming can't succeed in cable any more than on commercial television? Or worse, that the bubble has burst in the cable-programming business and that a massive bailout has begun?

A producer wondered: "If the great, powerful CBS, with all its resources, couldn't make it in cable, who the hell can?"

Fair enough questions, but no one seemed to consider another possibility—that the action might have reflected CBS's own problems rather than the cable industry's.

The post mortems have dwelled on CBS Cable's unrealistic spending and overly ambitious productions as well as the channel's lack of advertising support. My own findings are that the network really died from lack of parental love. The executives in charge would have been far more comfortable with an all-golf channel.

At the end, in a recession year when cutbacks were indicated in all areas of the company, there was no champion for CBS Cable in the corporate hierarchy, no one to fight for its continuance, not even William S. Paley, chairman and renowned culture



by Les Brown

buff. Paley had given up his post the week before CBS announced the cable network's demise, but the decision to kill the cultural service was made before he stepped down, by the board he has always controlled.

If CBS Cable was a triumph on the home screen, it was a travesty in the executive suites from the very first.

The cable network was born, in fact, to counter a public-relations blunder at the corporate level. On a spring day in 1980, CBS Inc. fired its president and chief executive officer, John D. Backe, without explanation. This challenged the press to find out what had really happened, and reporters ended up speculating from a handful of clues: Backe had been talking up cable in a speech to CBS-TV affiliates and in an interview with *Television Digest*. So the press concluded that Backe was fired because his

enthusiasm for cable clashed with Paley's total commitment to the broadcast medium he had pioneered.

This made for a tidy story, but the press's assumption was dead wrong. Paley and the CBS board had *wanted* Backe to spread the word about the company's interest in cable, because security analysts at the time had been citing CBS as one of the media companies not in stride with the glamorous, rapidly developing new video technologies. The press coverage of the Backe dismissal was a public-relations debacle for CBS, since it conveyed the wrong message to the investment community. Above all, CBS did not want to appear to be standing pat in a changing world. So to undo the damage it had brought upon itself by dealing cavalierly with the press on the Backe story, CBS moved swiftly.

In a matter of days, CBS Cable was born. The new cable network selected culture and the performing arts as its metier, because no one else had yet claimed that turf—and besides, it fit with CBS's image of itself: Culture is class. There were several more practical reasons, as well. Foreign broadcast companies had amassed huge libraries of cultural programs that could be bought cheaply because there was practically no market for them here. And even more important, a cultural service would

Illustration by Keith Bendis

not threaten CBS's television affiliates, who would have rebelled if they thought their own network was going to compete with them. Every broadcaster knows that culture doesn't get ratings, so peace was preserved in the affiliate family.

CBS Cable was taking aim at public television's audience, and it expected to attract advertisers interested in reaching that elite breed. The new network figured also that cable operators would want its service, because CBS Cable would help attract a new group of subscribers. The whole plan seemed feasible—before the complications arose.

First there was the matter of the satellite. CBS Cable wound up on the wrong one. The main cable satellite, Satcom I (now Satcom III-R), was filled to capacity; it was (and still is) the satellite on which virtually all cable systems have a receiving dish trained. CBS was forced to take a transponder on the Westar satellite; it was thus available only to the relatively few cable systems that had two dishes—one for Satcom, one for Westar. In a number of cases, CBS Cable bought local operators a second dish to increase the size of its audience.

Then, even before the network got off the ground, ABC entered the picture with its ARTS channel, a competing cultural service. ABC outbid its rival by striking a quick deal with Warner Amex's Nickelodeon service, which had the evening hours open on a channel programmed for children. The genius of this maneuver was that Nickelodeon was on the right satellite, Satcom, and already was carried by hundreds of cable systems. Hitching a ride with a three-hour nightly schedule (which helped keep its investment low), ABC's ARTS not only stole the march on CBS Cable but established its beachhead in cable with an instant entree into homes. It also took in a partner, Hearst Corporation, to share the losses, which made it easier to stay in cable for the long haul.

A few months earlier, Bravo entered the cultural derby as a pay channel. Owned by a consortium of cable companies, it too had a head start because it was assured a position on all systems owned by the partners.

So CBS Cable found itself with formidable competitors before it had even beamed its first program. Not only did this mean that others would be bidding for the foreign product, thereby driving up prices, but that cable systems already carrying the ARTS and Bravo services had no need for a second cultural service. Out of stubborn pride, CBS Cable proceeded without partners or political connections in the cable field, and rather than bid up the prices of imported fare, it elected to produce its own programs, often on a scale befitting the CBS television network.

For some of us, the CBS channel was the redemption of cable. I for one am grateful for its brief existence. Yet it is clear that CBS Cable lived well beyond its means, given the size of its audience. "CBS Cable is like PBS gone drunk with a bankroll," someone at CBS remarked. "It's crazy. We're years away from getting an audience even as big as PBS's, and theirs is a very small audience by television standards."

After eleven months of operation, CBS Cable was available in 5 million households—not bad if all of them had been watching most of the time, but in fact most were watching very little of the time. One cable operator who surveyed his market found that CBS Cable drew only 2 percent of the viewing, on average. Giving all benefit of doubt, if even 10 percent of the viewers had watched CBS Cable on the systems that carried it, the total national audience would barely have equalled what a local television station attracts with a dinky rerun in a single American city. Fat chance it had of getting national advertising support.

For a while there was some hope that the programs created by CBS Cable would recoup part of their investment in overseas sales. But, as *Variety* pointed out, foreign television systems produce quite enough of their own cultural programming and have quotas for what they import from America. Faced with the

choice, they take the popular sitcoms and action-adventure shows.

The start-up costs for CBS Cable reportedly came to around \$30 million, and a like amount was lost in the first year of operation. CBS Cable had no hope of turning the profit corner until the major cities—the prime markets for cultural programming—were wired for cable. Since that is years away, CBS was faced with the prospect of pumping millions more into the project. Given the outlook, it was not surprising that the company's late-born attempts to find a partner-in-risk did not avail. Rather than try to scale down the operation, CBS decided to pack it in, promising to return with a new cable enterprise before long.

It comes down, apparently, to a great network that was a lousy business. In other times, CBS Inc. might have toughed it out and worked at improving the situation. Paley built the CBS radio network in the thirties against greater odds. But 1982 was a recession year and a rotten one for most of the company's divisions. CBS Records had to lay off 300 employees, and the new motion-picture division, with two films that bombed, drained some \$15 million from profits.

CBS Publications (the old Fawcett magazine group) was a modest performer in a year that was not good for magazines in general; the musical-instruments division was soft. Toys were not so hot, either, and radio was down. Mainly, commercial television carried the company; the stations division had a better year than the network in terms of marking gains.

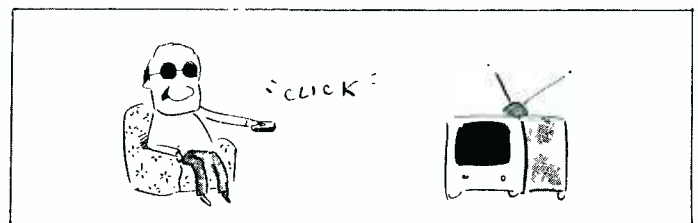
“The executives would have been happier with an all-golf channel.”

The Wall Street analysts were now asking what the company planned to do to stop the cable network's hemorrhaging. This program service, after all, was going to continue depressing profits for years, and even when it finally succeeded, it was never going to make really *big* money. And so the same people who drove CBS into cable applied the pressure that drove the network out.

The day after the announcement that CBS Cable was going under, the company's stock jumped more than two points.

CBS Cable served its ironical purpose. The company is no longer perceived in the investment community as chained to the older forms of technology. There's no doubt that CBS will be back in cable, one way or another, perhaps with an all-golf channel.

And no one can rightfully say that CBS lost heart in the culture channel. Its heart was never there in the first place. ■



Patrick McDonnell

THE SEASON OF THE REAGAN RICH

BY MICHAEL POLLAN

During the Depression, when people were selling apples, and factories were still, and guys were jumping out of windows because they had lost everything, people would go to the movies. They loved those glamour pictures . . . showing people driving beautiful cars and women in beautiful gowns, showing that people were still living the glamorous good life.

—Charles Z. Wick, defending the extravagance of the Reagan inauguration.

IT HAS BEEN nearly three years since California millionaire Charles Z. Wick presided over the lavish inaugural of his old friend Ronald Reagan. Limousines and Galanos gowns are now fixtures in Washington, and the economy has not looked so bad since the thirties. Still, Wick's theory that the poor get a vicarious kick from Republican champagne seems only to gain credence as the nation gains poor people. Turn on the television any night and you'll find the eighties version of those "glamour pictures . . . showing people still living the glamorous good life." The rich are always with us, perhaps, but only now have they arrived on television.

Ralph Kramden, Ward Cleaver, Chester Riley, Archie Bunker: American television has traditionally celebrated the common man. Today, however, prime time seems less confident of its old dreams of middle-class utopia. The season of J.R. Ewing, Jonathan Hart, and Blake Carrington signals a radical change in television's own demographics. Of course, rich people have always surfaced on television—think of Thurston Howell III, or Chatsworth Osborne III—but always on the peripheries, for comic relief or as one-shot villains. Only recently have the wealthy gotten their own shows, and they've made *Dallas*, *Dynasty*, *Hart to Hart*, and *Falcon Crest* four of television's most popular series. Exploiting the success of the wealthy on television, ABC introduced *Matt Houston* this season, and CBS, whose *Dallas* was the first

rich-people show, is offering *Filthy Rich*, the first program to parody the genre. But the spectacle of opulence on television is not limited to prime time; lately the news, too, regales us with formal affairs at the White House, the continuing drama of Nancy Reagan's couture, and the First Couple's holiday weekends at Claudette Colbert's or the Annenbergs'. Indeed, the "glamour pictures" of prime time bear an often uncanny resemblance to those of Washington: *Falcon Crest's* icy matriarch could easily be mistaken for Nancy Reagan, and in fact is played by Jane Wyman, the President's first wife.

If proof were needed of the similarities between thirties entertainment and our own, the popularity of a program such as *Hart to Hart* is it. Modeled on the Depression-era film *The Thin Man*, *Hart to Hart* is a genial fantasy about a debonaire "self-made millionaire" and his beautiful wife, who occupy their considerable leisure time with unpaid, freelance sleuthing. When not unraveling mysteries, the Harts consume conspicuously, though not without taste. They tool around Los Angeles in a bright yellow coupe, jet off to romantic retreats, shop on Rodeo Drive, and lavish expensive gifts on one another.

"The rich are different from you and me," Fitzgerald once remarked. Replied Hemingway, "Yeah, they've got more money." Like the plutocrats at the end of a Depression comedy (such as Frank Capra's *It Happened One Night*), the

Harts are no different underneath their money and their manners from you and me—which is why they can be so casually egalitarian with their chauffeur Max. In hard times, the Harts bring comforting news, for if the rich are really like us, then possibly we can be like them. The Harts imply that there are still great fortunes to be made in America and, better still, that the "good life"—with all the accoutrements advertised on the commercials—is worth sweating for after all.

But the Harts do not typify the rich on television. Blake Carrington, Angela Channing, and J.R. Ewing, the prototype of them all, are much darker and more complicated figures; indeed, they make one wonder whether the current preoccupation with "the glamorous good life" is as benign as it seems to have been in the thirties. Behind each of their dynasties stretches a lurid history of double-crossings, dirty deals, adulteries, and crushed rivals. The prime-time soaps titillate by exploiting the tested combination of sex, money, and power. But their special appeal lies less in the conventions they follow than in one they flout: These programs lavish attention on the villains whom television typically dispatches in a single episode.

There's something undeniably satisfying about all this villainy. If *Hart to Hart* puts us on an equal footing with the rich, *Dallas*, *Dynasty*, and *Falcon Crest* give us the satisfaction of feeling superior to them: We can look down on their skewed values and perverted family lives from



Illustration by Carol Wald

the high ground of middle-class respectability. When Angela Channing coolly threatens to disinherit her grandson if he won't wed a woman he despises (the marriage would tighten her hold on the valley's wine industry), our own superior respect for love and marriage is confirmed. The prime-time soaps also confirm the suspicion that great wealth and power are predicated on sin and, even more satisfying, don't buy happiness anyway.

These are bland comforts, however, and can't fully account for the popularity of these programs. Probably more important is all that the *Ewings*, *Carringtons*,

and *Channings* give us to covet. Most of prime time is bumper to bumper with prosy Chevys and Fords, so it's a luxury to watch Mercedes and Lamborghinis gliding down manicured driveways. The clothes, brand-new in every scene, dazzle too, although instead of the Galanos's and Adolfos one might expect, television's rich favor a look best described as "Hollywood silk"—those slinky, maximum-cleavage numbers that reveal more about the audience's idea of extravagance than about the tastes of the wealthy.

Indeed, the prime-time soaps do not seem very interested in accurately de-

picting the details and texture of upper-class American life. Unlike novels about the rich, or even *Masterpiece Theatre*, class is scarcely an issue in these shows. Instead of putting the *Carringtons* or *Ewings* in any particular relation to society, wealth simply transports them to a dreamy, streamlined realm resembling no real place as much as the facile world of a television commercial, perhaps for a cosmetic or an aperitif.

The rich-people shows also seem to borrow their sense of the good life's tempo from television commercials. Un-

(Continued on page 86)

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like their daytime counterparts, the prime-time soaps go through plots as if they were disposable towels. By swiftly cutting between brief vignettes, an episode can develop as many as four subplots, normally divided between tales of corporate intrigue for the men in the audience (Cecil Colby plots a raid on Denver Carrington stock), and stories of emotional intrigue for the women (Colby renews his steamy affair with Alexis Carrington). With all these plots and fast cuts, an episode of *Dynasty* flies by like a thirty-second "Reach out and touch someone" spot turned on its head. Not only do the rich on television have more things than ordinary people, they also seem to have more life—conspicuous consumption is evidently not limited to commodities.

But there's more to envy the prime-time rich than their cars and gowns and plotty lives. The Ewings, Carringtons and Channings play out irresistible fantasies of unbridled personal power, flaunting their freedom from all of the strictures that bind our own lives. Undeterred by price or opinion, they spend their days gratifying their merest wish, whether that involves picking up a mink or wrecking a marriage. When Alexis Carrington decides to get rid of her son's ill-mannered bride, she simply pays the girl enough money to leave Denver permanently. According to television, the rich are exempt from any abiding standards of conduct; they are free to improvise their own rules. This is a world very different from the one portrayed in thirties films, where the wealthy, stifled by archaic manners, could win freedom only by forsaking their class.

At the Ewings' Southfork, in the Channings' California valley, and in Blake Carrington's Denver, money has loosened the ties of civilization, making for a world of abundant thrills, if few securities. Each of us at one time has wished for a rival's failure, but how many live out that daydream as methodically as J.R. does? In one characteristic scenario, he lures Cliff Barnes into a lucrative oil-well deal, knowing it will force Barnes to borrow cash from his family's business. J.R. doesn't tell Barnes the wells are dry, preferring to watch with undisguised relish as his rival's world comes tumbling down. "My, my," he sympathizes when Barnes comes begging on his knees, "look what a failure you've become."

These cartoonish daydreams of power and freedom have an obvious political significance. Is it only a coincidence that the rise of J.R. Ewing's popularity followed closely on the decline of Jimmy Carter's? At the same time successive crises in energy, the economy, and Iran

were paralyzing the Carter Administration, J.R. extracted Ewing Oil from a Third World quagmire in one brilliant, ruthless stroke, and "J.R. for President" stickers turned up on bumpers across America.

J.R.'s ratings were a tip-off: As the eighties began, Americans had had enough of Jimmy Carter's sober moralizing and dowdy, middle-class tastes. The country was ready for something stronger and more stylish: expediency in foreign policy, glamour in the White House, and an economic recovery propelled by unapologetically self-interested millionaires. As Alexis Carrington and J.R. Ewing are fond of saying, "The ends justify the means."

Today's fantasies of wealth are very different from those of the thirties.



That ethic, which is getting such a workout today, enjoyed an earlier vogue in this country: It ruled the Old West. It's not surprising that every one of the prime-time soaps is set in the West; Americans have always looked in that direction to fulfill their dreams of individual power and collective renewal. All of these programs are about latter-day cowboys, some in white hats, some in black ones, who come in and get the job done. Evidently grasping the enduring power of these images, the President regularly returns to California, dons a big white cowboy hat, and rides around on a horse.

Indeed, the similarities between the imagery of Reaganism and the prime-time soaps are hard to miss. Like the millionaires who propelled Ronald Reagan into politics—Charles Z. Wick, Justin Dart, the late Alfred Bloomingdale—the rich of prime time are all self-made men who accumulated vast fortunes in the West. As Washington society noted sourly on its arrival, the Reagan crowd is

hopelessly *nouveau riche*, deficient in the graces and decorum that distinguish the older monied families of the East. Certainly Reagan's entourage shares more with the Ewings of Dallas than the Rockefellerers of New York.

Television's rich and the Reagan rich also share something more insidious—their nostalgic fantasy of wealth in America. The prime-time soaps and Washington's supply-siders both depict American capitalism as a free-wheeling affair among adventurous entrepreneurs—the Blake Carringtons, Jock Ewings, Angela Channings; both hark back to a time before the giant corporation and the professional manager. Hannah Arendt once pointed out that people will abide the conspicuous display of wealth in hard times only as long as they are convinced the rich are performing a necessary role in society. They do, according to Reagan and the supply-side soaps; both imply that the American dream of self-made success is alive and might be made well by releasing the frontier instincts of the wealthy from the twin shackles of taxes and regulation.

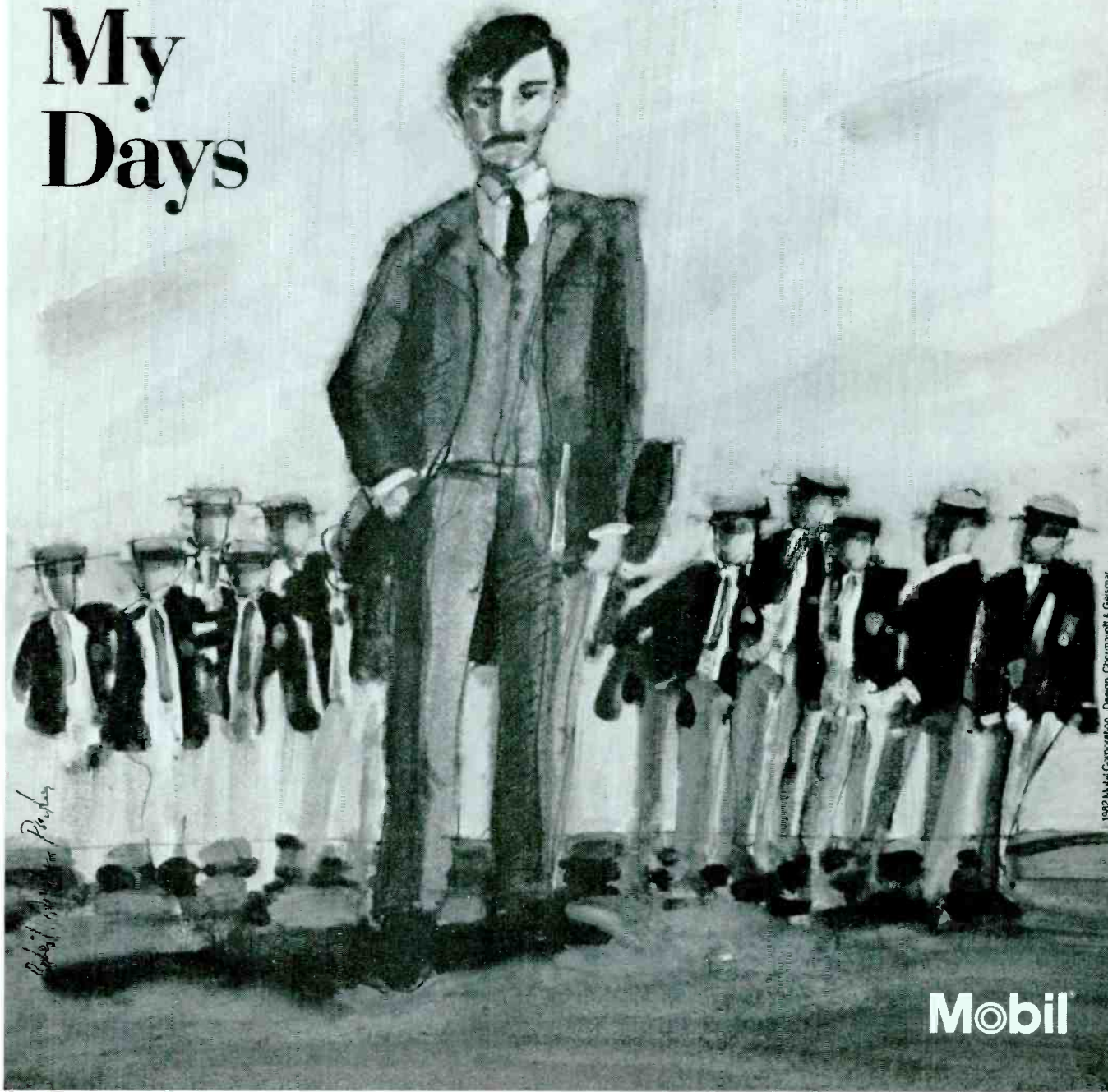
But already signs of disillusion are visible. Reagan is widely perceived to favor the rich at the expense of everyone else, and, even worse, the rich have failed to deliver on their promise of trickle-down prosperity. Perhaps because we seem constitutionally incapable of anger toward this President, his wife has become a kind of lightning rod for our growing animus. *Falcon Crest*, the youngest of the prime-time soaps and last season's only new hit, exploits this phenomenon. In a brilliant impersonation of the First Lady, Jane Wyman pricks all our contradictory feelings about the rich; as with Nancy Reagan, we admire her poise and strength, and despise her as an American Marie Antoinette.

The prime-time soaps make clear that the flip side of envy is resentment. However much we may covet their wealth and power, J.R. Ewing, Angela Channing, and the other supply-side heroes are, as the gossip magazines like to say, people "you love to hate." "Who shot J.R.?" became a momentous national question because there were so many who would gladly have pulled the trigger, including the legions of those we call, for lack of any better word, his "fans." A lot of ugly emotions go into watching these programs, and if they teach anything, it is that our present fascination with the rich and powerful is liable to take an ugly turn. Charles Z. Wick's blithe assumptions about the charms of glamour in high places are only partially correct; he forgets how far it is from Frank Capra's world to Southfork. ■

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THE MEDIA FRONT:

JERUSALEM—It was a hard summer for Israel's image, starting with skeptical questions raised by the press over the invasion of Lebanon in June, culminating with the accounts of the Beirut massacre in September.

At first, most Israelis were stunned by the world's criticism and applauded the government's tenacious efforts to attribute it to the ignorance and bias of the international press. The government's main target was American television, recognized as the medium most crucial to Israel's future, and for months it succeeded in keeping American TV journalists on the defensive. But after the killings in the camps, most Israelis had to acknowledge that the image problem was less in the media than in Israel itself.

Until recently, Israel hardly knew critical reporting. The international press had long portrayed it as a land of settlers making the desert bloom, of brave men fighting for independence—as a peace-loving community permanently on the alert against terrorism. Over the years, the world received a regular diet of journalistic praise of Israel's technology, universities, democracy, hospitals, arts.

Much of the credit for this treatment must go to Israel's image apparatus, a pervasive presence in the country's bureaucracy. The government has a large press office, and every ministry has its information service. The prime minister has a spokesman and so does the defense minister. The army has a press office of its own and so do most of the agencies.

Israel's image-makers are for the most part conscientious, efficient, and accommodating, answering questions truthfully, occasionally suggesting ideas but rarely pushing them on unwilling reporters. They have won the respect of the

WHERE ISRAEL LOST IN LEBANON

BY MILTON VIORST



international press and brought Israel much good will.

But it is one thing for the image-makers to promote positive features for favorably disposed audiences, and another for them to influence daily coverage of breaking news on politics or war. Independent journalism flourishes in Israel; it is doubtful whether an image apparatus in a free society can exercise influence over such coverage at all.

There is a splendid word in Hebrew for image-management: *hasbara*. It means not only propaganda but justification, information, explanation, and education, wrapped into one. *Hasbara* has had positive results for so long that Israelis have been tempted to consider it more important to the world's judgment than the conduct of the government.

Israelis in large numbers criticized the invasion last June, but most were nonetheless upset at the world's disapproval of it. They were sure that Israel was being victimized by dark forces, some carrying typewriters, others clustered behind whirring TV cameras. Their message to the government was to step up *hasbara*.

So, throughout the summer, the image apparatus struggled against the world press, and particularly against the vivid pictures appearing each night on American television: ruined buildings, maimed children, the menacing barrels of Israeli guns, and, after the massacre, the stacks of cadavers.

But as all this appeared willy-nilly on the screen, Israel did little except complain of misrepresentation. Short of smothering the press, which Israeli traditions would not permit, it is unlikely that any policy would have saved Israel's image from the assault of the Lebanese war.

In the struggle against *hasbara*, the in-

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ternational media had an advantage. They knew exactly what they had to do and went about their work with professionalism and detachment. No doubt they were guilty of mistakes, both of fact and emphasis. But Israel's *hasbara* in Lebanon, in seeking to change the world's opinion, faced what was surely an insurmountable task.

Dov Ben-Meir, a Labor Party parliamentarian, was more strident than most in his rhetoric, but his statement on the Knesset floor was by no means inconsistent with what I heard over and over again during my visit to Israel last summer. "The worldwide opposition to the war arises from the fact that the government did not take into account the third enemy in Lebanon [after the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Syrians]: the international communications media.

"Just as the Vietnam War was decided by none other than the television cameras, so in this war the TV cameras caused us more damage than the combined strength of all our enemies in Lebanon. On this point, the government must be criticized sharply—because the matter endangers all the political achievements that follow the successful military operation."

Among those critical of the invasion was Erwin Frenkel, American-born editor of *The Jerusalem Post*. Despite his reservations, however, Frenkel was outraged at the accounts of the war by the international press: "If European reporting has been biased, it is by intent.

"American newsmen are less ideologically encumbered. If the European knows he is making a political statement, the American thinks he is a camera."

Frenkel contended that for the American television networks, "pictorial content becomes the criterion for what is worth reporting." The cameraman, he charged, searches only for "visual action that entices viewers, that raises ratings, that increases advertising revenues."

Frenkel of course is not the first to make these criticisms of television news, which he dismisses as "real-life, action-packed soap opera." But, he lamented, the consequence for Israel, with its own case to make before a worldwide public, was grievous.

Frenkel, in effect, was challenging the news judgment of American television, which in previous wars had come down on Israel's side. But, no doubt for the same reason so many Israelis were opposed to the war, journalists in Lebanon held Israel up to more critical scrutiny than they ever had before.

The *hasbara* debate thus focused on how to change world opinion toward a

military action found objectionable not only by most non-Israelis but by a substantial segment of the Israeli population.

In carrying out a *hasbara* policy, the Israeli Government's first problem was its citizens' expectations. Israelis are as outspoken as any people on earth; out of this Babel emerges a rich and diverse journalism, in which the demands of image constantly clash with the quest for truth. While the Israelis were fighting the PLO in Lebanon, the Russians were fighting in Afghanistan, the Iraqis and Iranians in the Persian Gulf, the British and the Argentines in the Falkland Islands. Not only was news from these three war zones almost totally suppressed, but the various audiences at home demanded nothing better. Israelis would never accept such limitations on news, nor would they expect the outside world to accept them.

Thus, in a sense, the Israeli press ran interference for the foreign press. Erwin Frenkel, for instance, shared the govern-

ment's concern for Israel's good name, but as editor of *The Jerusalem Post* he helped provide information used by foreign reporters to criticize the war. From the start, though the government tried to shape Israeli coverage of the conflict—it won a few victories, particularly over state television and radio—*hasbara* fell victim to the onslaught of Israeli liberties.

The geographical proximity of the war did not help the government either. The British were able to dominate press coverage of the Falklands, as no reporter could get to the war without boarding a British ship. But access to Lebanon is fairly easy. Even during the information blackout imposed by the military in the early days, reporters converged on the battlefield from almost every direction, relying for sources, if not on Israeli officials, then on the PLO, the Syrians, Lebanese refugees, and talkative Israeli soldiers who crossed constantly back and forth between Israel and the war zone.

During this early period, when news-



Israel's image campaign proved no match for photographs such as these.

men were hungry for information and had no opportunity to check facts for themselves, the story that was to haunt the international press for weeks first broke. Its source was the Beirut office of the International Red Cross; it said the invasion had cost the lives of 10,000 civilians and left 600,000 homeless.



The Red Cross figures came from the PLO, which was conducting its own *hasbara* campaign. According to one reporter who was there, the figures were stated quiveringly at a press conference by a junior Red Cross official clearly in over his head. The numbers were grossly exaggerated, and Israeli officials seized upon them with glee. The entire population of south Lebanon, they pointed out, was not 600,000, and the flow of refugees indicated that only a small fraction had been made homeless. Moreover, if 10,000 people had been killed, the task of burial would have been horrendous, and there was no evidence of such a massive use of manpower.

Frenkel was furious with NBC's John Chancellor for using the 600,000 figure as the basis for attacking the war. In America, Israel's supporters cited the figures as proof of television's anti-Israel bias. For weeks the argument over numbers, and consequently over the credibility of the press, superseded the argument over the war itself. The diversion was a victory for Israeli *hasbara*.

But the victory had hardly been earned by any systematic *hasbara* machinery. In fact, such machinery never existed. A high official in the Israeli foreign ministry told me that the government, sensitive to television's role in undermining the American military effort in Vietnam, was more convinced than it had been in any previous war of the need for a *hasbara*

policy. But its heart and mind were elsewhere. Thus, in addition to the handicap of Israeli contentiousness, *hasbara* had no central leadership, no plan. Practically everything that fell into the category of *hasbara* was improvisation and reaction, as often as not the snap decision of some middle-level official, usually a reserve major or colonel called temporarily to active military duty.

The most celebrated episode in Israel's on-and-off *hasbara* campaign arose from just such a decision. In the Lebanese war, unlike most, correspondents were able to cross the battle lines from one side to the other, and when the satellite transmission station in the PLO's sector of Beirut went out of commission, the American television networks requested permission to transmit their reports from the station in Israel. An army unit representing the military censor is permanently on duty at this transmission station. Apparently without much forethought, the officer in charge that day gave his approval, on condition that the correspondents observe the rules of censorship to which they had always been subject in Israel.

The censorship rules permit the army to suppress any information that might jeopardize Israeli security, and during the war the definitions were expanded beyond their normal peacetime parameters. But by a longstanding unwritten agreement, political reports are exempt.

For a few days, the system worked without a hitch, the three networks having established a cooperative drop-off arrangement to get their material from Beirut to Israel quickly and safely. The Israelis even provided escort officers.

Then, on June 21, ABC arrived with an interview of Yassir Arafat, which the censor refused to approve. It was not Arafat's first appearance at the station. A few days before, NBC had transmitted a clip of Arafat kissing babies, which itself became controversial. According to Israel's supporters in the American TV audience, NBC was romanticizing the PLO chief's image. But the ABC interview was strictly political, and the ABC bureau seemed genuinely surprised at the censor's decision. While the censor was not looking, ABC transmitted the interview anyway, and it was broadcast that evening. The censor's office then banned ABC from further use of the transmission station (the ban was lifted two days later).

Relations between Israel and the American networks were at their testiest during this period. Having been barred from the battlefield during the first week of fighting, the cameramen were playing catch-up, turning their lenses, as Erwin Frenkel correctly pointed out, on death and destruction. Ironically, all of the cameramen were Israelis. "They're like cowboys," said Paul Miller, NBC bureau chief. "They just bust loose, sometimes ahead of the army."

The Israeli military command did not know quite how to deal with them. One day they were barred from hospitals, the next from refugee camps. On the whole, they were steered away from human suffering, but not the ruins, and on a few days they were not allowed into the battle zones at all. At the transmission station, much seemed to depend on the judgment of the individual censors. A Foreign Min-



Western journalists on a hotel roof in Beirut watching attacking Israeli planes

istry official admitted to me that the policy was erratic (though he insisted this was the fault of the Ministry of Defense).

In New York, the reigning perception seemed to be that Israel was engaged in deliberate harassment, which was probably only partly true. The whole truth was certainly too blurry to grasp, and the network executives in New York did not take the trouble to try. Of what they saw they were not tolerant, and their response was a trifle vengeful. Though little had been said about England's control of information from the Falklands, news reports from Lebanon began appearing with the label "Cleared by Israeli Censors"—or, in one case, "Deleted by Israeli Censors" superimposed on a blank screen. At the height of debate over Israel's suppressing pictures of civilian casualties, NBC's Chancellor complained on camera of image-management through censorship. "This is an embarrassment," he said, "coming from an ally that fights with American weapons, a country that has received almost \$13 billion in American aid in the last five years. In the end, the censorship itself is damaging Israel's image."

The Israelis' dismay at the treatment they received from New York was, interestingly, shared in some measure by the network men in the field. The American television people in Israel see their work as a contest with the censors. On the whole, they told me, the rules are fair and reasonably applied. Sometimes they lose, but more often they win. "On transmitting the stuff from West Beirut, the army people went out of their way to help us, and they think we spit in their faces," said Charles Wolfson, head of the CBS bureau in Tel Aviv.

"The Israelis were not as hypocritical on the Beirut stuff as they seemed," said NBC's Paul Miller. "They did not try to sanitize the news. They did not interfere with the editorial content of the stories. The people making the decisions simply didn't realize or understand what we were doing. We know our business better than they know theirs."

Shortly after the ABC incident, the Israeli government decided to close its transmission facilities to news acquired in West Beirut. "We should not have agreed to it in the first place," said Ze'ev Chafets, who was then director of the Government Press Office in Jerusalem. "The trouble was, we had no policy to cover the situation. Why should we provide a platform for the PLO, our enemy?" The decision was hardly more than an inconvenience to the networks. By then they had established a system for getting their West Beirut material transmitted through Cyprus or Damascus.

By early July, when I arrived in Israel,

the Lebanese front had stabilized and the acrimony between the networks and the Israeli government had in large measure abated. Israelis still talked constantly of *hasbara*, but they had no more idea of how to realize it than they had had before the war began. If journalists were on the trail of stories not particularly flattering to Israel, the government still made no special fuss.

By now, journalists' trips into occupied Lebanon had become more or less routine, and I signed up for a visit to Beirut. I drove a rented car to Geshet Haziv, a lush, well-kept kibbutz near the Lebanese border, where the Israeli Army kept an information center. That evening



Colonel Zvi Lanir, who is responsible for visiting journalists, told me he assembles the dozen or so escort officers under his command for a meeting each night, after which he decides what the journalists can and cannot cover the next day in Lebanon. But he added with some bemusement that the television correspondents and cameramen live "in a world of their own," impossible to control, so he has largely given up trying to discipline them, and they go where they like.

With three of us and an escort officer jammed into the tiny rented Fiat, we set out early the next morning for Beirut. I had been in Lebanon a year before, and I recognized that much of the damage in the towns through which we passed had resulted from the fighting in 1975 and '76 during the Lebanese civil war. No doubt many TV newsmen, never in Lebanon before, were unaware that the invading Israeli Army had merely added to these ruins. The trip was grim enough last year. It is worse today.

Our escort officer was a young lieutenant from Tel Aviv, an economist in civilian life, and after an hour or so he made clear that he shared our view that the war

was a mistake. But he did his duty. Though he never said so, he was obviously following instructions to encourage us to see Israel's Lebanese allies, the Phalangists, and to keep us away from the Palestinians, whether in the towns or the refugee camps.

In Beirut, we spent an hour or so at the border interviewing refugees fleeing from West to East to escape Israeli bombing and shelling. Then we visited the Phalangist headquarters for a briefing that turned out to be not at all favorable to Israel. We could talk with whomever we liked, and we could even have gone off to the PLO headquarters in West Beirut, though that technically would have been a violation of the rules. We could not persuade our escort to let us see a refugee camp, but on the road back to Israel we stopped several times to listen to bereaved Palestinians tell us of their missing sons and daughters.

Our escort officer was no doubt a link in the government's chain of *hasbara*, but his technique was soft-sell, to say the least. NBC's Paul Miller told me the escort officers—whom he called a "control mechanism"—rarely interfered with television coverage; whether that was out of laziness or commitment to a free press was not clear. The print journalists, though subject to more bureaucracy, agreed that the escort officers were at most a bother, but not an obstacle to their work. "If the Israelis had a system," Miller said, "there were a million holes in it." Whatever the aim of the *hasbara* campaign—at a minimum, one would assume, it was to discredit the PLO—its execution was fitful, half-hearted, makeshift.

When I returned home to Washington, I phoned Dr. Daniel Thursz, executive vice president of B'nai B'rith, this country's largest Jewish organization. I told him I had been in Israel looking at the impact of the *hasbara* policy on American television coverage. I knew that Thursz had been studying much the same question, but from the perspective of the audience.

"Thanks largely to TV," Thursz said, "the PLO is no longer perceived just as a Moscow-trained band of terrorists. There is a greater recognition in the Jewish community that these are human beings who love, kiss, weep, and have wives. There is a greater understanding and sympathy for the rank and file even of the PLO, and most surely of the Palestinians as human beings."

That is clearly a conclusion that the Israeli Government did not want the Americans to reach. Some would say it proved television distorted the news, but others said it proved the medium had done its job. ■

THE BANFF INTERNATIONAL TELEVISION FESTIVAL CONGRATULATES THE WINNERS OF '82

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A VOYAGE ROUND MY FATHER THAMES TELEVISION INTL,
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BEST DRAMA SPECIAL: NO AWARD

BEST LIMITED SERIES:

A TOWN LIKE ALICE ALICE PRODUCTIONS PTY LTD., AUSTRALIA

BEST EPISODE FROM A CONTINUING SERIES:

HILL STREET BLUES, 'PERSONAL FOUL'
MTM PRODUCTIONS, USA

BEST TELEVISION COMEDY:

THE BENNY HILL SHOW THAMES TELEVISION INTL, LONDON

BEST SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DOCUMENTARY:

FDR AN ABC NEWS SPECIAL, USA

BEST ARTS AND CULTURE DOCUMENTARY:

INUPIATUN: IN THE MANNER OF THE ESKIMO
CINETEL FILM PRODUCTIONS, CANADA

BEST OUTDOORS AND WILDLIFE DOCUMENTARY:

THE SHARKS WQED, PITTSBURGH AND THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC
SOCIETY

BEST CHILDREN'S PROGRAM:

KLIMBO, LE LION ET LA SOURIS SOCIETE RADIO-CANADA

BEST OF THE FESTIVAL:

A VOYAGE ROUND MY FATHER THAMES TELEVISION INTL,
LONDON

SPECIAL JURY AWARDS:

DAUGHTERS OF THE NILE MOLENWIEK PRODUCTIONS,
HOLLAND

THE SAVING OF THE PRESIDENT GEORGE WASHINGTON
UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER IN ASSOCIATION WITH WJLA-TV

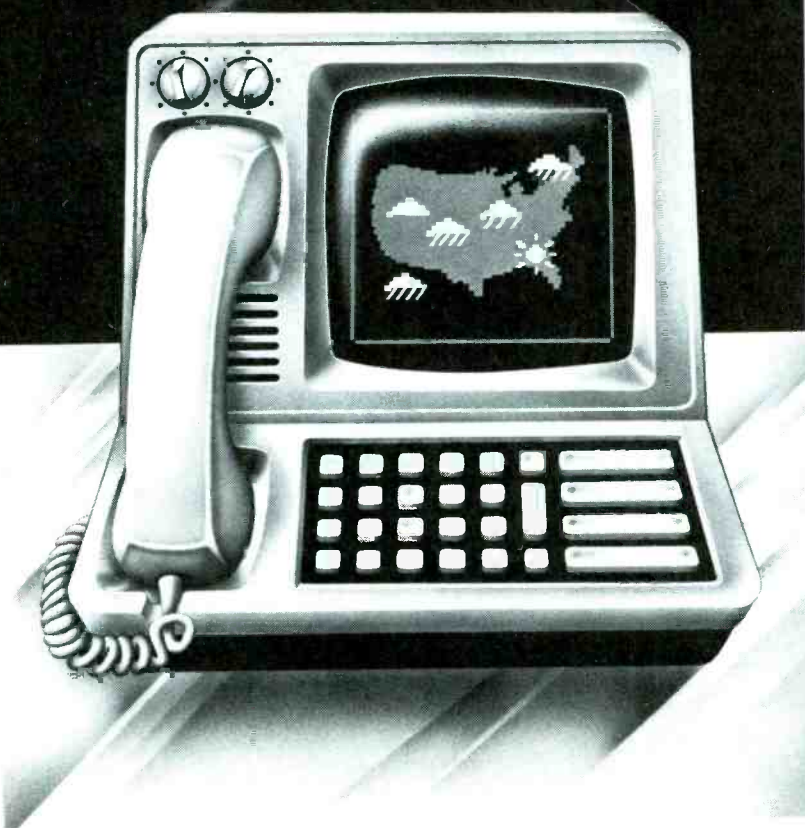
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FRANCE INTRODUCES A NEW TELEPHONE SYSTEM THAT ISN'T ALL TALK.



As one of the first countries to recognize the future significance of an information based society, France invested some 30 billion dollars in the modernization of its telephone system and the development of a range of products based on the convergence of telecommunications and computers. This is known today as the 'Telematique Programme'.

Using the advanced technology of TDM and packet switching (Transpac), the French telephone line is being transformed into a multifunctional tool, permitting information to be transmitted in all forms: Oral, visual, and by means of the 'Telewriter', even handwritten or drawn.

Once equipped with a video screen, the telephone user will have access to Teletel (the French videotex service), offering services such as armchair shopping, reservations and electronic mail, as well as a wide range of information including entertainment, travel and even electronic directories, which will be given a 250,000 terminal trial in France during 1981. (This system is technically compatible with Antiope broadcast teletext service.)

Recently, the USA's largest computer information service for the home signed a distribution agreement for a quarter of a million of these low cost Teletel terminals over the next three years.

Another Telematique product, the digital fax terminal, will produce hard copies of the information provided by Teletel and will also serve as a low cost copier.

A further major development is the 'smart card', employing a micro-computer. The added security and intelligence this provides will be invaluable for both point of sale and Teletel home based transactions.

For further information, write to Intelmatique, C/O France Telecom, 1270 Ave. of the Americas, N.Y., 10020.

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Leading manufacturers look the other way as billions
in contraband cross the border.

Smuggling Television into MEXICO

DEWIE SANDLIN denies being a smuggler. In his cell in the blinding white blockhouse that is the Reynosa municipal jail, visible across the Rio Grande from McAllen, Texas, Sandlin is tight-lipped; he says a guard told him they'd raise his bail if he talks. At the equivalent of \$45,000, his bail is already beyond his reach.

Sandlin's dream of a rare bit of gainful employment turned into a nightmare when, flying south over Mexico, he caught sight of Mexican government planes nearing his twin-engine Beechcraft. They shot him down over the Laguna Madre, a tidal lagoon 100 miles southeast of Reynosa. He says the Mexicans gave him no warning before they ripped his wings off, forcing him to crash on a spit of beach. Edouardo Reyna, a lawyer with Mexican customs, offers another version: The *federales'* planes flew above and below Sandlin's to signal him to land. Reyna says Sandlin tried to outrun the cops. With a cargo of reasonable size, he probably could have, but his plane was weighed down by greed, its stripped interior double-loaded with contraband. It wasn't drugs, diamonds, or antiques: Sandlin was carrying television sets and video-cassette recorders.

When Sandlin took off from Brownsville International Airport in Texas, he filed a flight plan calling for Nuevo Laredo, in the Mexican free-trade zone (a government-created region with special import-export regulations), as his destination. Nuevo Laredo is northwest of Brownsville, but Sandlin flew south, with more than a ton of electronic equipment aboard his "flying charter service." If, as charged, Sandlin was attempting to smuggle the goods past Mexican customs, he's not the only pilot to have done so: Some two billion dollars' worth of consumer electronics is smuggled into Latin America each year, much of it to Mexico, and most of that through the border towns of Brownsville, Laredo, and McAllen.

From this small area of South Texas alone, at least thirty pilots taking part in the smuggling have unwillingly emigrated to Mexican prisons. More than twenty-

five others have died ferrying televisions and VCRs across the border. The Texas end of this illicit trade is carried on openly; exportation of almost anything is legal in the United States. Importation to Mexico is the illegal part; tariffs, licensing regulations, and other restrictions—designed to protect Mexico's own electronics industry—effectively forbid legal entry of electronic equipment.

Typically, the products on a smuggler's plane are purchased at a legitimate American dealership and transferred to the planes in full view of U.S. customs officials. Indeed, ventures like Sandlin's are condoned and encouraged by several major American and Japanese corporations, among them the leaders in the consumer-electronics industry.

"What do I think of the border trade? We love it," said a Sony marketing executive on the floor of the air-conditioned Consumer Electronics Show last June in Chicago, a long way from the heat of South Texas. "Just don't use my name.

"Two years ago," he continued, "there was a new Mexican official who tried to stop the trade. They gave him a choice: Take the bribes, or else. He took the bribes and retired. It's too big for anybody to stop. We have no Mexican distributor and we don't care. It wouldn't pay to set up a Mexican distributor . . ."

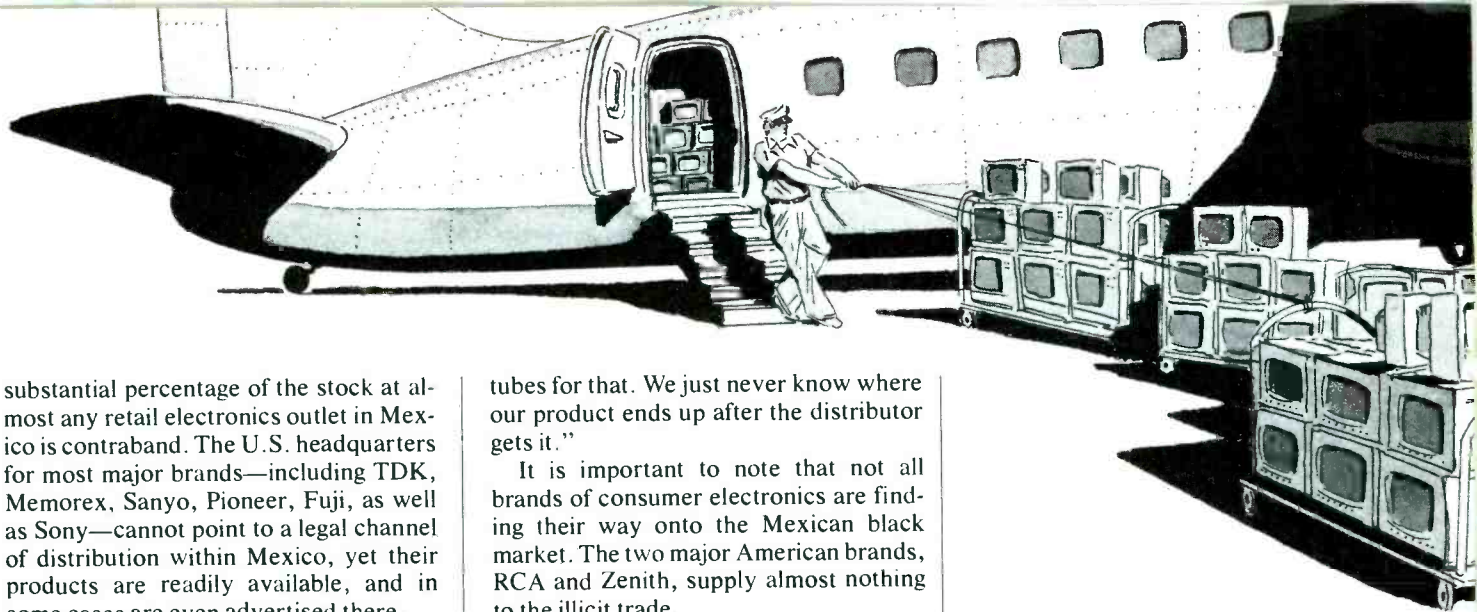
Almost all the Sony products available in Mexico have been smuggled in. At places like Mexico City's Tepito market, as well as at legions of smaller retailers, black-market consumer goods ranging from food processors to satellite earth stations are readily available. Indeed, a

Illustrations by Andrea Baruffi



Neal Weinstock writes frequently about the electronics industry for View, Economic World, and Millimeter.

by Neal Weinstock



substantial percentage of the stock at almost any retail electronics outlet in Mexico is contraband. The U.S. headquarters for most major brands—including TDK, Memorex, Sanyo, Pioneer, Fuji, as well as Sony—cannot point to a legal channel of distribution within Mexico, yet their products are readily available, and in some cases are even advertised there.

Consider the case of TDK, one of the best-selling brands of video tape in Mexico. TDK actually manufactures its products in Mexico, in the free-trade zone along the U.S. border, but the company is not allowed to distribute from there to the rest of Mexico. According to TDK's export department, the Mexican market "is handled by" Denko International, a distributor based in Miami's free-trade zone. But Dennis Sacasa of Denko says that his company exports no TDK products to Mexico. "Any distribution there is mostly through smugglers in Texas," Sacasa says. "TDK has no legal distribution in Mexico."

This has not discouraged TDK from advertising its products in Mexico, however; one reason for the tape's popularity there is the company's advertising in Mexican magazines. Lou Abramowitz, TDK's national advertising manager, says that "while there is no specific Mexican ad budget, we run in *Geo Mundo* and *Mecánico Popular* in all Latin American markets." The Mexican editions of both magazines contain TDK ads. Television commercials for TDK products are also common in Mexico, but Abramowitz disavows any knowledge of these. He points out that distributors do much of their own advertising, "and we supply them with separations, point-of-purchase materials, and other aids, which they don't necessarily pay for."

Despite the advertising support TDK provides in Mexico, Abramowitz says he knows little about the ultimate destination of his company's products. "Distributors in Latin America are very independent. We don't know who their customers are, just as we don't see the list of retailers from our distributors in Texas," he says, pointing out that any distributor can ship anywhere in the world. "We do not intentionally assist smuggling from Texas to Mexico, or anyplace else. We're not going to take our whole operation and throw it down the

tubes for that. We just never know where our product ends up after the distributor gets it."

It is important to note that not all brands of consumer electronics are finding their way onto the Mexican black market. The two major American brands, RCA and Zenith, supply almost nothing to the illicit trade.

The preponderance of Japanese products on the black market can be traced to a difference in priorities between American and Japanese manufacturers. Says Michiaki Ina, former editor of the English-language Japanese business monthly *Economic World*: "What is the most important goal to an American corporation? Profit. What is the most important goal to a large Japanese corporation? Volume." In the late seventies, recession hit the audio and video business in America. Even though the video business has rebounded in the last two years, profit margins for the electronics companies remain slim. Still, Japanese companies, stressing production volume over profits, have kept their factories running. (Sony, for example, has historically cultivated a high-quality image through limited distribution, but lately its products are showing up at cut-rate dealerships all over the United States.) As a result, Japanese consumer-electronics goods have been pumped into the U.S. like gas into a bag, and they've tended to burst out through a seam along the Mexican border.

Until very recently, Mexico served as an excellent escape valve. While the recession in America was slowing sales of audio and video equipment, Mexico's new oil wealth created a strong demand for such consumer goods, a demand that the Japanese—whose bill for oil imports was mounting—were anxious to satisfy. But Mexico has its own consumer-electronics industry, producing outdated television sets and radios, and the government has sought to protect it from Japanese and American competitors. In Mexico, a smuggled set costs more than a domestic one but clearly is considered worth it; the demand for black-market television equipment has been enormous.

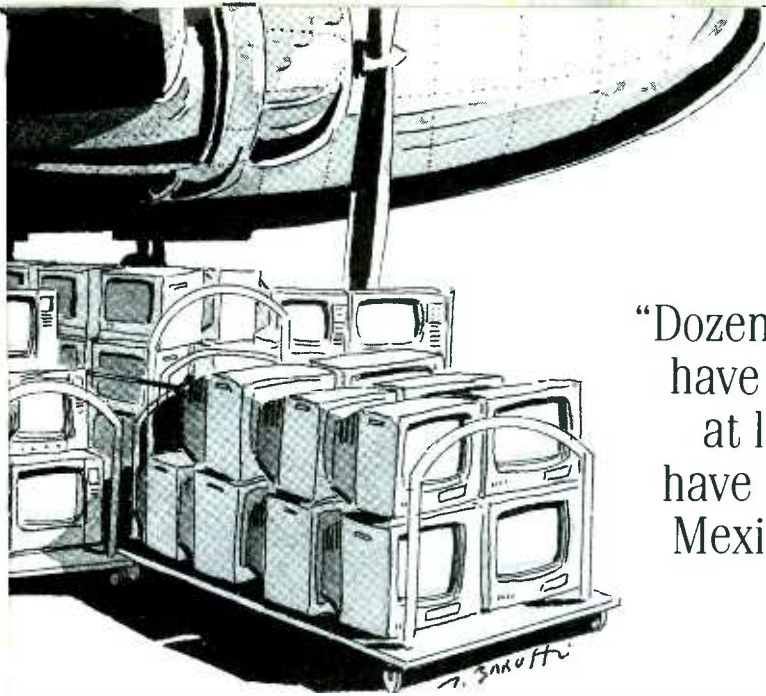
Smuggling has always existed along the Mexican-American border; it has seen good and bad times for all kinds of merchandise, but there has never been anything like the last few years. "I've

been knocking around the Caribbean for over twenty years in this type of operation," says Thomas Mack De Long, a former pilot. "The business has been going through to Mexico for over thirty years. It ain't nothing new." De Long flew his first electronics cargo in 1978. "Yes," he says, "come to think of it, things sure began to spurt up around then."

An employee at Vision Electronics of San Antonio, the Sony supplier for Brownsville, McAllen, and Laredo, offers his perspective: "When things slowed down here [during the recession in the U.S. electronics industry in the late seventies], we might have sold 20,000 units. So somebody up there at Sony decides that your quota is 30,000 color TVs for the next year. That's when the border opened wide." The strong Mexican market was making up for slackening American demand. An executive for another Sony distributor in South Texas acknowledges that most of his product was destined for illegal export.

"Nobody could pump enough product in there—it was a bottomless pit," says David Black, former regional sales manager of Brother International, now national sales manager of Alpine Electronics in California. In 1981, more than a billion dollars' worth of video and audio equipment (all consumer products) was sold in the American towns along the stretch of border from Laredo to the Gulf, an area with a population of only 400,000 (which would make the per capita expenditure for consumer electronics by every man, woman, and child in the area more than \$2,500).

FROM Tokyo to Mexico, there are five important stops along the path of a contraband television set or VCR. From manufacturer to distributor, to retailer or secondary transhipper, all is legal. However, as Lou Abramowitz of TDK explains, in each link of the chain from man-



“Dozens of pilots
have crashed;
at least 25
have landed in
Mexican jails.”

ufacturer to distributor, no one wants to know and/or is allowed to know who his customers' customers are.

The same holds true for the border-area retailer, who sells the products to the “coyote” who will arrange their passage over the border. Says Hector Hall, manager of a Metex consumer-electronics store in South Texas, “I sell it, and the customer picks it up in a truck. If a customer wants one TV or a hundred I tell the salesman never to ask any questions.”

The coyote then hires pilot and plane (though some coyotes own and fly their own planes) and, if the retailer hasn't already obligingly done so, transfers the product into plain brown boxes. In South Texas border towns such as Laredo and Brownsville, flattened boxes labeled Sony, Panasonic, JVC, Sanyo, and Pioneer—the most visible evidence of the electronics trade—can often be seen bouncing and rolling like tumbleweeds down the dusty streets. Stacks of cartons awaiting removal tower above the buildings.

Since it is legal for an American to export almost anything from the U.S. as long as the appropriate forms are filed, many coyotes take the trouble to file them. According to Fernando Macias, port director of U.S. Customs for Brownsville, “there are certain categories [of exports for which forms are filed] that represent almost 100 percent illegal goods. We document it, and give it to [the Mexicans]. The only reason this succeeds is because somebody in Mexico allows it.”

The coyote's most important job is to find that somebody in Mexico and pay him the appropriate *mordita*, or “little bite.” The *mordita* doesn't always guarantee safe passage to Mexico, however. *Federales* who capture smugglers receive a hefty bonus, sometimes including the captured plane. The bonus is typically 40 percent of the value of the captured cargo, split up among

its finders—enough to make a patriot of the most corrupt cop. A U.S. customs official surmises that smugglers only get caught when “somebody paid the *mordita* to somebody who stood to make more on his share of the 40 percent.”

Paying too small a *mordita* is not the only mistake that can land a person in jail, either. “Why, a couple of these boys have crashed before even getting to the river,” says David T. Duncan, a lawyer representing insurance companies in six different claims involving private air crashes in Mexico. Himself a licensed pilot, Duncan says that “when you try to put an overloaded plane into a short field landing, you're not going to make it.”

Despite the occasional mishap, the border trade operated smoothly and profitably until earlier this year. But it was not a crack-down in Mexico, or a new policy on the U.S. side, or some courageous whistleblower, that broke the Mexican connection: It was the devaluation of the peso, which put smuggled goods out of reach of most Mexicans. In February, the peso was devalued from twenty-seven to the dollar to forty-eight. In August it was allowed to rise to more than a hundred, as the world oil glut brought Mexico's heavily mortgaged prosperity to an end.

After the February devaluation a panic seized the border trade, as distributors frantically sought to unload their goods, and Mexicans to buy them, in anticipation of the inevitable crash of the peso. Metex's Hector Hall said in June, “We're selling about half a million to a million dollars' worth a month now. Right after the peso was devalued [the first time], I just decided I was going to get rid of merchandise one way or another. Sometimes we sell for no points [profit], or below cost. This is a very risky business right now. There is tremendous unemployment and high inflation in Mexico, and people just can't buy televisions as before.”

Chuck Sugarman, president of Vision Electronics, confirms that the border area was “real busy” in June, in anticipation of a second devaluation. “It probably cleared itself out,” he says. Sugarman says he has seen this cycle many times before, but never on a scale so large.

The crash in August put distributors like Sugarman in a tight squeeze, since manufacturers kept feeding them TV sets and VCRs that had suddenly become almost impossible to unload. As one South Texas distributor described the predicament, “We've had several discussions with Sony recently. We're trying to get them to understand what the problem is. If only Sony could have come down here and seen.”

At least one manufacturer seems to have understood quite well what was happening: At the same time that the crash of the peso crippled the border trade, TDK's Mexican advertising disappeared.

IT WAS early in June that Dewie Sandlin dragged himself out of his crumpled Beechcraft, his tooth broken and face bloodied. He ran to the water and swam for eight hours in the Laguna Madre, trying to elude the *federales*. Finally he crawled into a fishing boat, promising money to the fisherman if he could stay in the boat and rest. But Sandlin had no money; as he slept, the fisherman turned him in.

“They know the risks,” said Texas Governor Bill Clements a week after Sandlin's capture, speaking at a United Press International convention on South Padre Island. Clements said the Mexican agents “were certainly within their rights” to shoot down Sandlin, who now faces the possibility of a ten-year jail term in Mexico.

Surely Sandlin will not be the last of these pilots to end up in a Mexican jail, despite the devaluation's effect on the border trade. “After each devaluation they slink away,” says a U.S. customs officer. “Then a few months later they're back in business.”

If the border trade does end, it will be because the crisis of the Mexican economy this time stretches those months into years—and not because the chain from Japanese manufacturer to Mexican homes has been broken.

Can anything be done about all the corporations and executives who play a part in the smuggling? Can't the trade be stopped somewhere further up the chain of command than at the level of the small-time pilot? Probably not. Everybody else has an alibi. ■

How TV Wrecked the Black Panthers



by Kathleen Cleaver

THE CALIFORNIA ASSEMBLY was debating a new gun law when twenty-two armed black men wearing black leather jackets and berets burst onto the floor. It was May 2, 1967. The scene, carried on the news, looked like an invasion.

The men were Black Panthers; they were led by Bobby Seale. They had made their mark in Oakland, electrifying the black community by initiating armed patrols that challenged the city's notoriously brutal police—who were outraged to learn that the Panthers' patrols were completely legal, and demanded a change in the law.

The Panthers had come to Sacramento to protest the attempt to ban their patrols. After reading a statement to the press that emphasized the constitutional right to bear arms and the need for blacks to protect themselves against armed police, Seale took his delegation into the capitol to hear the debate. Unsure where to go, he asked a reporter for directions. The stunned journalist pointed the Panthers to the assembly floor—where the legislators sat—instead of the visitors' gallery. When the Panthers marched double file into the assembly, surrounded by cameramen and reporters, pandemonium erupted. News of the "invasion" in Sacramento was carried all over the world, making the Panthers notorious overnight.

By making the event seem more like a revolutionary uprising than the civil protest planned by the Panthers, television promoted them as a symbol of armed resistance, despite the efforts of California's police and lawmakers to suppress them. A pattern of such sensationalized coverage also encouraged the Panthers to see themselves as television portrayed them—as revolutionaries—and to exploit the impact of that image.

For the ten years preceding the formation in 1966 of Oakland's Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, attitudes of blacks across the country had been profoundly changed by dramatic televised scenes of mass protest against racist institutions. The repeated

sight of civil-rights demonstrators tolerating attacks by racist mobs and Southern police infuriated millions and provoked a gut-level urge to fight back. The national recognition gained by the civil-rights movement inspired thousands of blacks to challenge their oppressors. Black communities across the country debated the best way to combat racism. Malcolm X, the respected and strident advocate of armed self-defense instead of nonviolent resistance, proposed black nationalism as an alternative to integration. Following Malcolm's assassination in Harlem in 1965, his ideas spread rapidly through black ghettos. After the startling conflagration of Watts that summer, the question was no longer whether or not to fight back, but how best to do so. The next summer, Stokely Carmichael proposed "Black Power"; that fall the Black Panther Party was formed.

Television's selective coverage of the most startling developments in the black movement fired the imaginations of young blacks, who ignored their more moderate leaders and gave vent to the frustrations of the black community. The Black Panthers began their patrols of Oakland's streets. They carried weapons to dramatize their conviction that armed self-defense was necessary; they deliberately sought public confrontations with the police to deflate the psychological power police had over blacks. Flamboyant, provocative, and theatrical, the Panthers' tactics were designed, in Huey Newton's words, "to capture the people's imagination." Their aggressive style perfectly suited television's dramatic requirements.

When Newark and Detroit exploded in the summer of 1967, America seemed on the verge of a black revolution, and the Black Panther Party was preparing to become its political vanguard. The rapid spread of revolutionary consciousness among young blacks could not have happened without network television, which disseminated news of radical developments from around the country. This is not to say that television coverage was accurate. In fact, it thoroughly distorted the nature of the changes in black consciousness by concentrating on the superficial. But the pictures were so extraordinary that belief in the feasibility of revolution grew.

That fall, after Huey Newton was arrested for killing an Oak-

Kathleen Cleaver, former communications secretary of the Black Panther Party, is an undergraduate at Yale University.

Illustration by David G. Klein

land policeman, television again riveted national attention on the Black Panther Party. (Newton was the first black revolutionary to kill a white policeman.) If convicted of murder, Newton faced the gas chamber. The right to self-defense was central to his case, and crucial to the Black Panthers' philosophy.

The Panthers started a grassroots campaign in the San Francisco area to defend Newton and emphasize the political issues affecting his case. Seeking widespread television coverage to publicize their appeals, the Panthers demonstrated outside the courthouse each time Newton made a pre-trial appearance. As the demonstrations grew larger, media attention intensified. By the time Newton went to trial in June 1968, more than 5,000 protesters massed outside the courthouse, and press from all over the world covered the trial.

The Panthers' success in mobilizing support for Newton thrust them into the national spotlight, but it was the frightening crescendo of violence in the late sixties that kept them there. The riots following Martin Luther King's assassination, the ninety-minute gun battle between Oakland police and Black Panthers, the protests against the Vietnam War, the riots outside the Chicago Democratic convention, all convinced radical whites to support the Panthers' cause. This expanded the political base of the movement, and helped contradict the media's false portrayal of the Black Panthers as a group that hated whites.

Frequent television exposure subtly legitimized the image of the Black Panthers. Their exaggerated rhetoric inflamed young blacks. Panther chapters formed, many spontaneously, in major cities. Thousands of young blacks imitated the Panthers' style, speech, and dress. Television helped the party gain more than thirty-five chapters in less than three years, but its sensationalizing made the Panthers loom far more glamorous and ferocious than they actually were; this affected the types of members and enemies the Black Panthers attracted.

The dramatic effectiveness of the Panthers' televised image ultimately undermined the organization's cohesiveness. Its uncontrolled growth destroyed internal discipline, while nationwide police repression eliminated experienced leadership. As the organization became bogged down in court, the screening and education of recruits deteriorated; efforts to organize the community were sapped by the pressures of countless trials. The rising toll of deaths in shoot-outs frightened black community residents and left the Panthers isolated as crazy extremists.

More systematically than any other black group, the Black Panther Party exploited television's power to publicize its aims and programs—and used television to counter attempts by authorities to discredit and dismantle the organization. But the Panthers paid a heavy price: As membership boomed, many recruits fatally confused their flamboyant tactics with the substance of their goals. Unfortunately, the fundamental concerns of the Black Panther movement would never be transmitted by television. Behind the revolutionary bravado was a commitment to obtaining justice for blacks, a commitment that remained invisible, overshadowed by television's emphasis on violence. Some people mistook the ruthless determination conveyed by the Panther image as an endorsement of brutality instead of a humane dedication to protect an abused community. Few Panther recruits understood that the theatrical actions were primarily a way of dramatizing a revolutionary message, only the initial step in organizing a movement for social change. Most were simply thrilled by "being on TV," as if that were an end in itself. For too many, style became substance, means became ends. To some extent, the revolution became like television itself—slightly unreal—provoking the rebuke in a popular poem of that era: "The revolution won't be televised." ■

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Ask Dr. Spudd: Etiquette for the Couch Potato

The Couch Potatoes, as introduced in our previous issue, are "an elite group of about five hundred television fans who like nothing better than to vegetate in front of the tube, recumbent, all eyes." The following is an excerpt from Dr. Spudd's Etiquette for the Couch Potato, written by Jack Mingo and illustrated by Robert Armstrong.

Dr. Spudd: How do I keep my set in perfect viewing condition? Is there such a thing as a maintenance-free TV set?

Alas, there is no such thing. However you can do a little of the upkeep yourself without having to hire a trained professional. Wipe screen and knobs every few years. Beer and the T-shirt you wore yesterday will do the trick.

Timing is important too. No use wasting time cleaning your TV before absolutely necessary.

Here are some guidelines: Clean the body and knobs of the set when you can no longer read the channel markings because of the accumulated crud. Cleaning the screen is more a matter of personal judgment. It will tend to collect layers of dust on its surface. How to tell when that time has arrived: when you can no longer tell whether the TV is on or off.

- Adjusting the antenna:

Shout, "Sweetie will you come in here and do me a big favor . . .?"

- Adjusting color:

It's too complicated. Most shows look better in black and white anyway.

- Adjusting the volume, horizontal hold, etc.:

Follow the instructions on adjusting the antenna.

- Dusting the top of your television the easy way:

Buy a cat.

When is it okay to talk during a TV show?

Almost never, especially if you're viewing with serious Couch Potatoes. That goes for the commercials, too, because true Couch Potatoes watch the commercials with the concentration they apply to the programs. If you are viewing with very close friends or relatives, the

rules are a little looser. Nonetheless, conversation should be as brief as possible and should consist only of one of the following: (A) requests for food or drink; (B) questions or comments of interest to all (for instance, "Isn't that Sonny Tufts there behind the fat lady in the back of the crowd?"); (C) unusual and extraordinary circumstances or emergencies (for instance, "I meant to wait until the station break but the building is on fire. Sorry for interrupting.").

What about food? Is it true that a Couch Potato's second best friend is his or her toaster oven?

Absolutely. Here are some nutritional guidelines for the Couch Potato: (A) Food should be hassle-free as often as possible. Noisy foods should not be eaten. (B) For stamina, always eat from all five major food groups: sugar, salt, grease, carbohydrates, and alcohol. (C) Unless specified that the gathering is to be what's quaintly called "Bring Your Own Face Stuffing" (BYOFS), the host of the party is expected to supply the food. (But it is always in good taste for

guests to bring a little something as a token: several twelve-packs of beer, six or seven dozen doughnuts, or maybe five pounds of taco-flavored cheese puffs. Unless, of course, it is to be a large gathering—in that case one should arrive with a little extra.)

What is the best way of having sex while watching television?

TV and sex don't mix. You could be distracted and miss something interesting on the tube.

What kind of letter is effective when a TV station cancels your favorite show?

Be abusive. Make personal threats against the management. Learn the names of their spouses and children. Be as specific as possible about what you intend to do if they refuse to reinstate your program. Example: "Cancel *My Mother the Car* and I'll cancel little Suzy and Jimmy . . ." etc. Chances are they'll break under the pressure, and you probably won't have to go through with the threats you made.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF COUCH POTATO ETIQUETTE

I. THOU SHALT NOT change the channel without unanimous consent. (This is not as difficult as one would imagine. If almost everybody wants to change the channel, remove the dissenters from the house. Who needs disgruntled people around when you're trying to watch TV? If the person complaining owns the house where you're watching, lock him or her in the bathroom.)

II. THOU SHALT NOT talk when the set is on, nor shalt thou make distracting noises.

III. THOU SHALT NOT block the vision of thy neighbor.

IV. THOU SHALT eat food that is nourishing to thy Couch Potatoism.

V. THOU SHALT keep thy color lifelike, thy contrast bright and thy horizontal held.

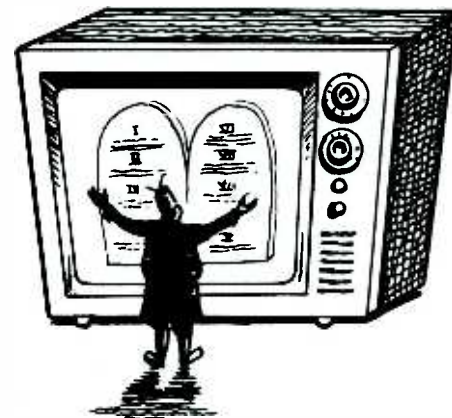
VI. THOU SHALT have no other entertainment before me.

VII. THOU SHALT NOT watch anything educational or British.

VIII. THOU SHALT NOT interfere with the TV reception of thy neighbor.

IX. THOU SHALT wear thy Couch Potato T-Shirt Viewing Tunic.

X. THOU SHALT sit without moving, listen without ceasing, and not let thine eyes wander from thy flickering tube.



SfM entertainment



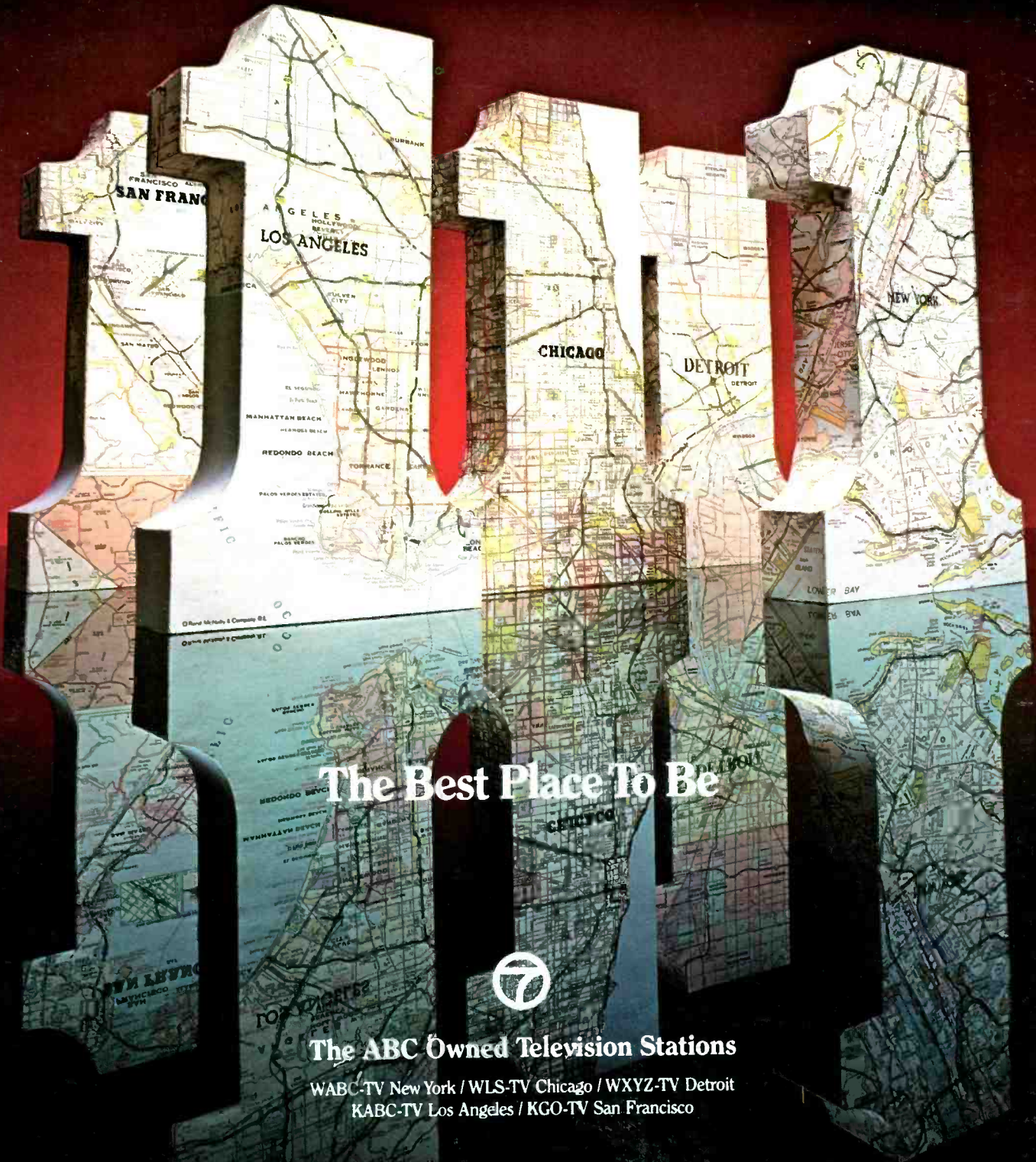
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