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Television today and tomorrow

MARCH 1980
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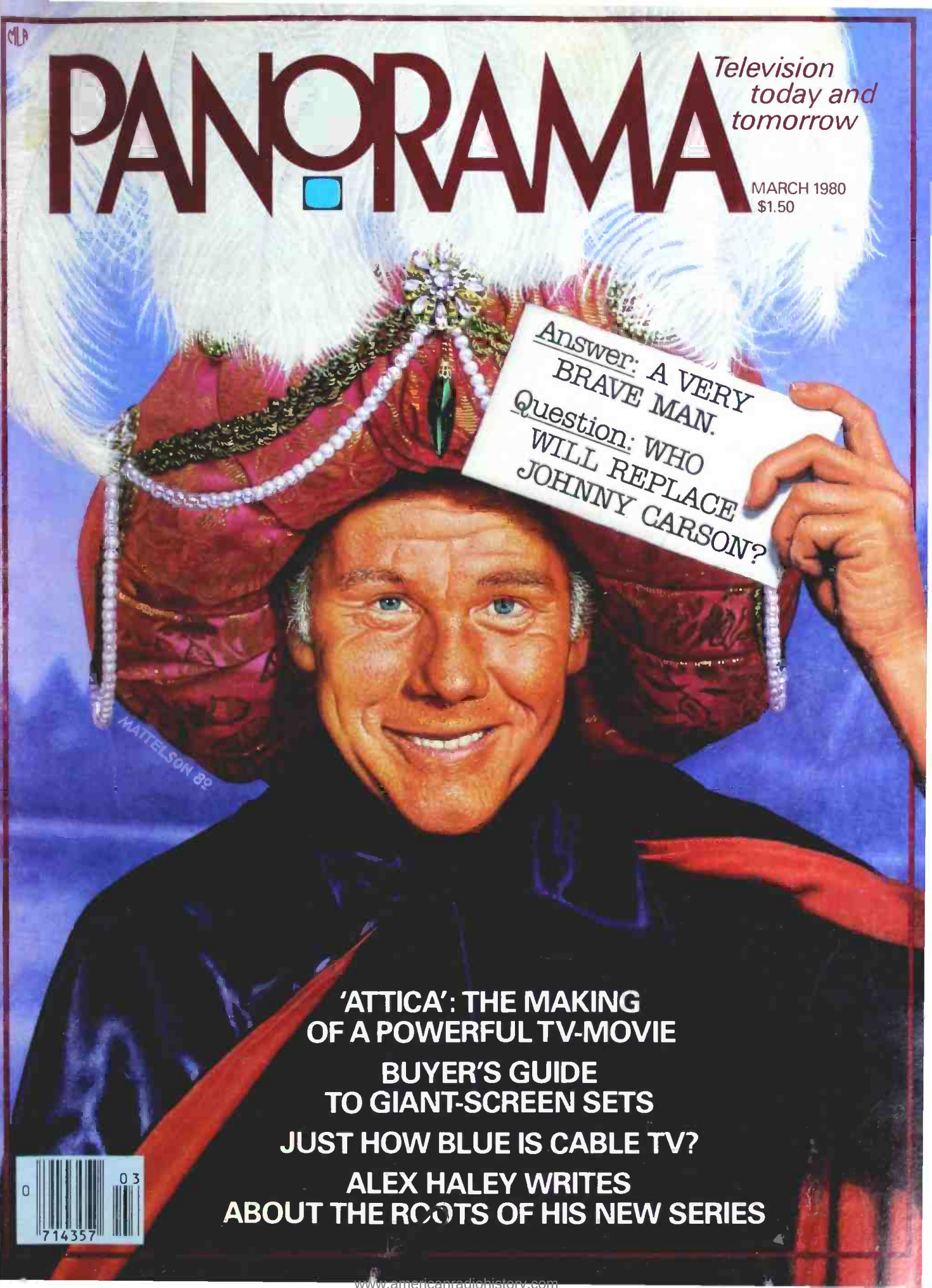

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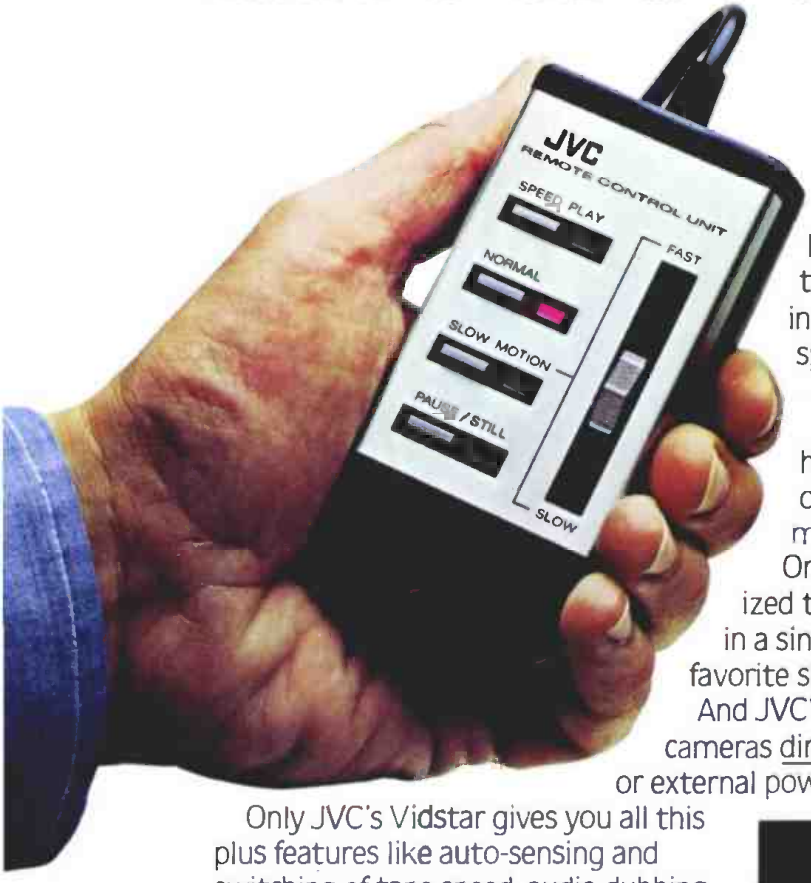

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PANORAMA

Television today and tomorrow

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PERSPECTIVE

By RICHARD REEVES

The Anchorman vs. the News Director: A Dialogue

Another anchorman was fired a couple of months ago. Or, he quit in disgust. It depends on whom you talk to. The usual story. A network owned-and-operated station in one of the country's largest cities. Ratings were down. It's like being a baseball manager.

The guy is—was—one of the best in the business. He has been a lot of places and has a national reputation. He has worked in four cities and had been an anchorman for almost 15 years.

The man who told him he was through is almost 20 years younger—the news director who'd been in town for less than a year. It's his second news-director job; he used to be a producer and he looks like he's headed for bigger things. He thinks the anchorman is a real talent, but...well, it's hard to feel sorry for someone paid, as they say, "well into six figures" for reading the news into a camera.

I talked to them both. The ex-anchorman was renovating the small house he owns, looking less than authoritative in dungarees and a day's beard, walking through plaster and hanging pipes. We had a sandwich at a local delicatessen. The news director and I had a $58 lunch in one of the city's better French restaurants.

This is a dialogue I constructed from those interviews. The anchorman and the news director both talked—separately—about local-television news, where it is, where it's going.

Anchorman: I guess I'm just an anachronistic character. I saw myself providing a service, not building an audience. I'm a professional broadcaster. I can be very boring, but so can transferring information. That's what I do: transfer information. The *shtick*, the promotions, the razzle-dazzle have nothing to do with news.

News Director: Let's face it, television doesn't transmit information very well. Television is feelings and emotions. When he was president of CBS News, Richard Salant used to say, "We are elitists. You are here to report what people *should* know." I don't believe that. I think we should report what people *want* to know. They care about themselves and their bodies, their families, their homes and the smallest community around them—in that order. They don't give a damn about Afghanistan.

Anchorman: This channel was going to be hard news. "News for Grown-ups" was the slogan when I came in 1973. I was sucked in again. When I left, the general manager asked me what I was complaining about. I was making all that money—an obscene amount—and he said, "You knew what you were doing. You bought into the system." I never bought into anything. I'm a journalist. I cover stories; I don't get "involved" in them.

News Director: We're talking about millions and millions of dollars for a few ratings-point differences in local news. This is the most heavily researched business in the world. We know what people want. We look for ultimate likability in our people. Reporters who are willing to give something of themselves on television—or are good enough actors to fake it—who'll expose themselves, stand up there naked and say, "Here I am. Love me." We want reporters to be characters you'd want for a friend—people the audience would want to know. When I look at tapes, I look for one thing beyond some basic skill level: Do I *like* this person?

Anchorman: Most of the people in television news today aren't really journalists. What you see is totally unedited. That's television. The inconsistency, the mindlessness—it's finally come to news.

News Director: Local reporters used to want to be network reporters. That's not so true any more, partly because the pay is better here—$30,000 to $70,000 for general-assignment reporters. A different kind of person is coming into the business. Everybody wants to be a journalist these days. Not because they want to help the oppressed of the world, but because they think it's fun.

Anchorman: It's Barnum news. Laugh a lot and give your opinion: "Oh, that's interesting." And then: "That's awful" or "That's great!" I wanted to do cold, old-fashioned news. Hell, I left one job because I refused to wear a blazer with "7" on it. I don't wear costumes. I wanted to do interviews with the mayor, but they said that was boring. Government is boring, but it's important.

News Director: I tell reporters, "I want to see real people on the air. People out there want to see themselves on television. Quote the deputy commissioner, but show the guy whose house is being torn down. That's the mistake the networks make. The networks see institutions and things. We see people, we see characters. Just like 60 *Minutes*.

Anchorman: We all used to believe in the legend of Edward R. Murrow. That's all gone. The people keep changing with the ratings. I worked for four news directors in the last seven years.

News Director: There's a joke in the business that's not a joke: "Each general manager gets to fire two news directors. Each news director gets to fire two anchormen." That's it—if you don't improve

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the audience, you're gone. It's a business. What we're doing is blending some of the old precepts of journalism with community service and personality. Sure, we're giddy sometimes. We're purposely giddy. We're a friendly bunch.

Anchorman: I don't know what I'm going to do now. I don't think of myself as bitter. I just think it's ridiculous to call ourselves the best-informed people in the world. We're not the best informed, just the most informed.

They both had their points. I tended to side with the anchorman, both because he is a friend and because I'm a bit anachronistic myself. In fact, when I said something about his departure and replacement by a hard-news lightweight, the general manager of the station, also a friend, wrote a note saying I didn't know what I was talking about and didn't understand television news. Maybe. I wrote back saying something like: "I don't care that much about the specifics of the matter. I'm a professional journalist—that's what I do and what I care about—and I think there's something to be said for the old standards and traditions. I'm against making so-and-so an anchorman because I don't think he has the experience or the credentials. I feel like a doctor talking about a chiropractor."

But the news director was right—or he will be. Local-television news is covering the world, a small world, from the bottom up. People like me and Richard Salant and the ex-anchorman are used to covering it from the top down. We *are* elitists. Local-television news is democratic.

Anyway, the ratings at the station have jumped dramatically. When last seen, the new anchorman was presenting a T-shirt with the number "10"—as in the Bo Derek movie—to his female co-anchor. As far as he was concerned, he said, she was the perfect woman, a "10." They both laughed, almost giddily. Then they went on to a local murder. ■

LETTERS

PANORAMA welcomes comments—pro or con—about topics covered in our magazine and about television in general. Readers are invited to address their letters to: Letters Department, PANORAMA, Box 950, Wayne, Pa. 19087.

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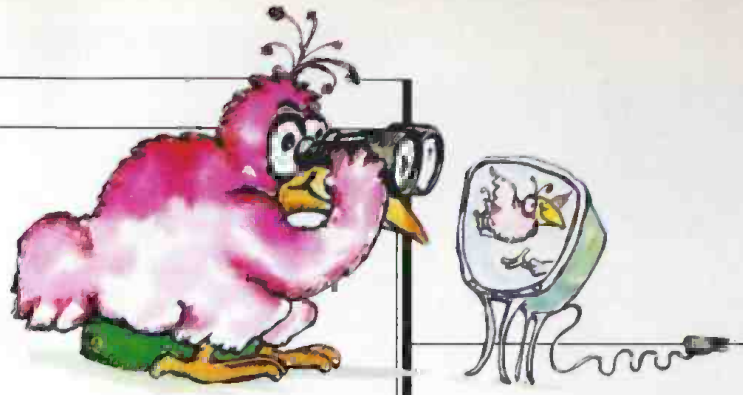
CABLE AND PAY-TV

All Things to All People



By SETH GOLDSTEIN

Can cable TV succeed in its attempt to be all things to all people? Seemingly every minority of any size is being wooed by cable programmers who, unlike the networks, are free of the need to deliver tens of millions of viewers per prime-time hour. Thus, the past year has seen the emergence of Black Entertainment Television, Galavision for Spanish-speaking Americans, and Cinemerica Satellite Network for anyone over 50.

Galavision was the first to get underway as a pay-TV service last October. It began small, going to six cable operators in Florida, Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico, but expects to reach 40 to 50 Spanish-speaking markets this year. The programs, which run from 8 to 15 hours daily, are composed of feature films, variety specials and *novelas* (continuing dramas) made and first broadcast in Latin America. Created by the Spanish International Network, Galavision has invested $1 million in a Hollywood studio and $500,000 for a satellite earth station antenna.

Black Entertainment Television and Cinemerica Satellite Network are classified as basic-cable services, supplied to viewers at no extra charge. Both are delivered by satellite. BET's emphasis is on recent and vintage movies ("Scott Joplin," "Emperor Jones," "Across 110th Street"). Shown only on Friday nights, it hopes to add Saturday and Sunday as the schedule expands.

Cinemerica Satellite Network hopes to reach the 58 million Americans—40 percent of the adult population—past the age of 50 with the most ambitious of the three programming schedules, covering news, health, retirement living, original dramas, classical music and continuing education.

Keeping Up with Farmer Jones

The newest consumer-electronics gadget could be an earth station—that is, an antenna able to receive signals from a satellite and compact enough to fit comfortably in your average back yard, perhaps next to the prize roses. Actually, the first of these 10- to 15-foot-diameter dishes, mounted on a tripod and usually installed in a few hours, are more likely to be found near the chicken coop. Suppliers such as Gardiner Communications in Houston and TeleCommunications Inc. in Denver are pitching their sales at well-to-do farm families with annual incomes of at least $50,000. They're generally out of range of broadcast television and cable signals and presumably willing to spend at least $10,000 on a dish and its installation.

Only a few dozen have jumped at the opportunity, but the potential market, as earth stations continue to drop in price, has program distributors worried. Their chief concern is receiving payment for services at rates comparable to those charged cable subscribers. When the Federal Communications Commission gave its approval to home ownership last year, it left untouched the subject of fees, and there are some among the earth-station suppliers who think owners shouldn't have to pay anything. One solution proposed by TeleCommunications Inc. is to lease the earth stations for $150 a month, with a portion earmarked for the programmers.

And Now the News ...

...Which is the time, effort and money cable program suppliers are putting into the news. Associated Press and United Press International, the leading newspaper wire services, have long provided cable operators with a version of the ticker tape—the latest headlines and financial and sports news run line by line on the television screen. Newscasts weren't about to compete with Walter Cronkite until last year when Ted Turner, America's Cup yachtsman and owner of the Atlanta Braves, announced Turner Communications would establish a 24-hour-a-day Cable News Network.

The service, staffed with broadcast-network veterans such as former CBS correspondent Daniel Schorr, is supposed to get underway June 1, taking up an entire satellite transponder. Money isn't a concern for Turner, a millionaire who has been willing to gamble on transforming his Channel 17 in Atlanta into the Nation's first "superstation." But satellite time may be, ever since RCA lost Satcom III a few days after its December launch. Cable News Network had leased a channel on the new "bird," and thus may face a delayed start.

CNN, meanwhile, is seeking advertiser support to help put news on a paying basis. About the time of Satcom III's disappearance, it reported that Bristol-Myers had bought $25 million worth of commercial time over the next 10 years.

Welcome to Town

Big cities are the new frontier for cable services. The industry has had relatively little trouble wiring small towns and rural communities that otherwise couldn't get broadcast signals, but has foundered in the great metropolises where the cost of doing business was more than they dared spend. Even when cable has gotten a foothold, as in New York and L.A., it bled red ink until a few years ago.

But once there were signs of a change, the old allure returned, with major cable operators now clamoring for franchises. The prospects are bright enough to have brought together Warner Communications and American Express in a joint venture called Warner Amex Cable Communications, which established a $250 million line of credit to develop the urban market at a cost estimated at $50 million per city.

In December Warner unveiled its plans for a four-tier pay-cable system to reach 1.6 million residents in the Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island boroughs of New York City. The proposal, one of about 30 New York will consider, would offer just about every available satellite service on a total of 80 channels. It would take four-and-a-half years to construct. ■

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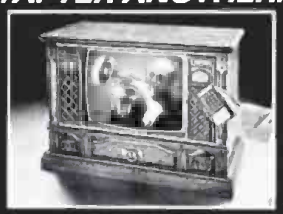

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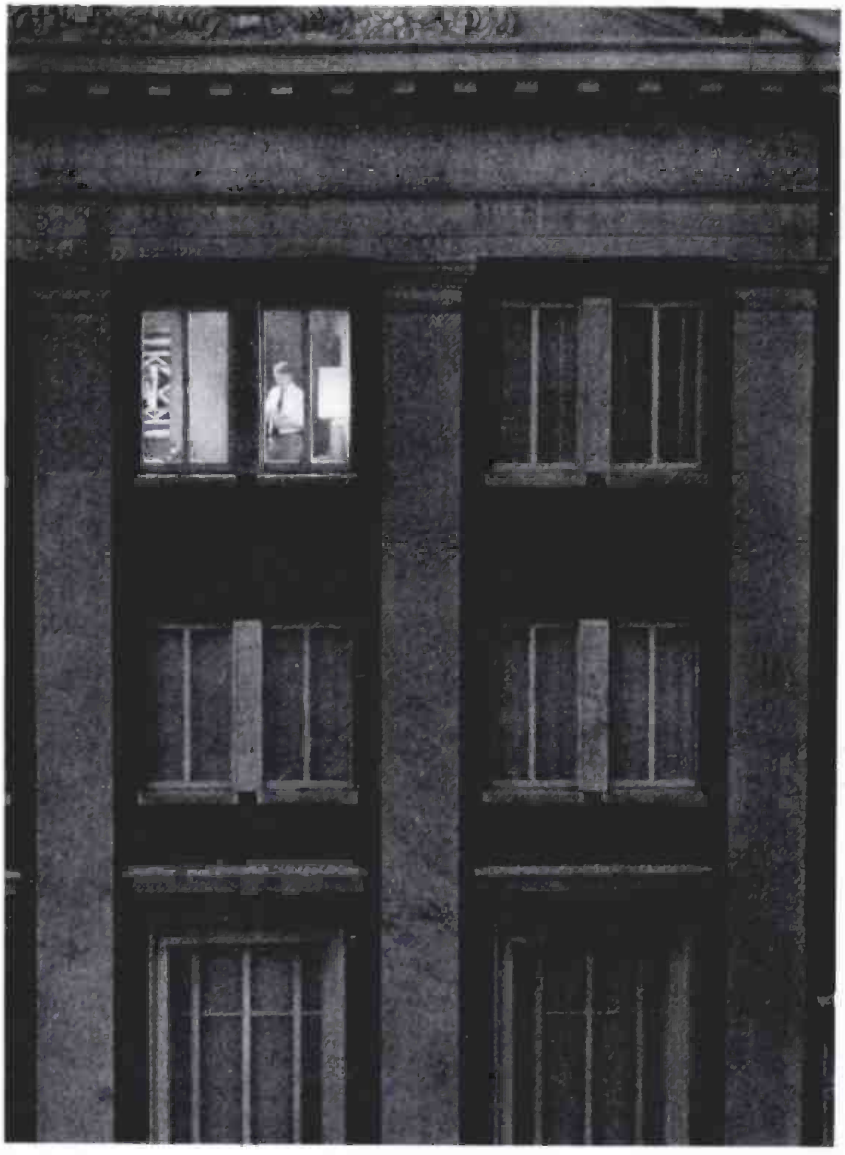

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Thanks to you, it works. For all of us. United Way

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THIS MONTH

MARCH 1980

Castro: Too Touchy for TV... Loni Will Become Jayne... Madison Avenue Eyes Cable FCC Children's Crusade Marches On... After Monty Python, What?

WHAT'S HAPPENING

HOLLYWOOD

Don Shirley reporting

Nonaligned network. NBC has mashed a potential hot potato by calling off plans to produce a movie about the life of Fidel Castro. Brandon Tartikoff, who is president of NBC Entertainment, got the idea for the film from a Castro interview on CBS's *60 Minutes*. Discussions with a producer and a writer were held, and the movie was announced in a trade-paper article. But finally NBC decided that the subject was too touchy. Says Tartikoff: "You have to have a point of view when you do a film like that, and there was no point of view that would have satisfied everyone involved." He singled out the possible reactions of sponsors as an inhibiting factor: "Who wants anti-Cuban militants picketing in front of their offices?"

Almost Saturday. Here's a fresh idea: ABC is planning an 11:30 P.M. comedy show featuring a troupe of young actors who will do sketches with a topical flavor, assisted by a different host and musical guest each week.

Sounds like NBC's *Saturday Night Live*? Well, there are plenty of differences: this one will be broadcast on Friday—hence the name *Fridays*. And it probably won't be live, but taped a day in advance. It will be an hour long instead of 90 minutes and will originate in Hollywood instead of New York.

Producers John Moffitt and Bill Lee have worked on series for Richard Pryor, Dick Van Dyke and Dick Clark. Chief writer Jack Burns was half of the Burns and Schreiber comedy team and co-wrote "The Muppet Movie." *Fridays* is scheduled for an April debut, and at least 13 weeks are planned.

Feather in their cap. Public television—where a miniseries is likely to be an adaptation of a literary classic, often imported from Britain—is turning to an original, all-American project called *The Yazzies*, an epic about a Navajo family spanning the years 1860 to 1980.

Producer David Sontag originally pitched his idea to NBC, which was impressed enough to pay for the Budd Schulberg scripts and the rewrites by Larry Littlebird, a Pueblo Indian. But post-*Roots* enthusiasm for *The Yazzies* waned, and NBC changed its mind. Then WQED, Pittsburgh's public-TV station, stepped into the breach and began a fund-raising campaign for *The Yazzies*. As much as $11 million could be required to complete the entire saga. Sontag hopes to start shooting before the end of 1980, in Navajo country, with Indians cast in all the Indian roles.

The face of Jayne. Loni Anderson, Miss *WKRP in Cincinnati*, will play Jayne Mansfield in a CBS movie, but she says she wouldn't take the role if the film were headed for the theaters instead of the home screens. She believes a theatrical feature would include more nudity and sex scenes—and that such material would distract attention from her portrayal of "a chubby brunette with a high IQ who was determined to be famous."

Anderson is particularly grateful for TV censorship standards as they apply to the final part of Mansfield's life: "She did some weird things at the end that our script doesn't deal with, thank goodness. If she had stuck around, she would have been too, too pathetic."

The makers of the film hope to snag Arnold Schwarzenegger to play opposite Anderson as Mickey Hargitay, Mansfield's muscle-bound husband.

NEW YORK

Doug Hill reporting

Ads multiply. Signs are everywhere that the advertising community is beginning to take cable TV very seriously indeed. The two major advertising trade groups have formed committees to study it, many agencies have in the past few months assigned executives to follow it, and the advertising giant

WHAT'S ON

Some of the noteworthy programs and events that are scheduled for television this month. (Check local listings for dates and times in your area.)

Fred Astaire

Luciano Pavarotti

COMEDY AND VARIETY

United States. Larry Gelbart's new series about a contemporary marriage pits Beau Bridges against Helen Shaver. NBC.

Fred Astaire Night. Vintage footage, interviews with partners and colleagues and a showing of the 1950 film "Three Little Words" celebrate Astaire from his top hat all the way down to those wonderful feet. PBS.

GI Jive. New York's Roseland Ballroom is the setting and Van Johnson the host of a nostalgia trip to the Stage Door Canteens of World War II. PBS.

"Liza": An Evening with Liza Minelli. Liza's song-and-dance stage act, with show stoppers like "Cabaret" and "New York New York," videotaped on tour in New Orleans. Home Box Office (cable).

MUSIC

The Most Happy Fella. A revival of Frank Loesser's 1956 hit, taped

continued

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Bristol-Myers has committed $25 million over the next 10 years to buy commercials on it—specifically, on the new 24-hour Cable News Network being started by the pioneering Ted Turner.

Key to the shift in attitude were the first cable-ratings reports from A.C. Nielsen last year, which proved beyond doubt that pay-cable can compete with and often beat the networks in homes that have it. "That really stirred things up," said one adman. "It's suddenly reached the point where everybody's involved."

Perhaps the best symbol of the new getting-to-know-you atmosphere is a booklet prepared by Nielsen's chief rival in the ratings game, the Arbitron Company. Arbitron recently formed its own cable-ratings division, and is offering cable-system operators a manual explaining the rudiments of advertising practice.

Murphy said so. The nuclear power industry probably isn't going to like an upcoming CBS movie called "Element of Risk." Starring Janet Margolin, it is based on the novel called "A Short Life," which closely parallels the story of Karen Silkwood, the young woman killed in an automobile crash while trying to reveal what she believed were safety violations in an Oklahoma nuclear plant.

The novel, and Time-Life Productions' original script for CBS had as heavies a band of unscrupulous plant managers who were stealing plutonium to sell to foreign governments. But according to producer Malcolm Harding, the script was rewritten to eliminate the "side issue" of thievery and concentrate on safety.

Though Harding says the film is not "anti-nuke," there are several incidents of radiation leakage, one of which in the end kills the woman played by Margolin. "The bottom line," says Harding, "is 'How safe is nuclear power?' It's just a matter of time until somebody makes a mistake. It's Murphy's Law: if something can go wrong, it will. That's the point we're pushing in the film."

Nonetheless, the parents of Karen Silkwood, who believe the novel defames their daughter, have filed a multimillion-dollar lawsuit against CBS, seeking an injunction to prevent the telecast.

Watching points. The next frontier for the National Captioning Institute—which is to start offering entertainment programs with hidden subtitles to the deaf this month—may be sports. One idea being examined is to hook electronic scoreboards in stadiums directly into the captioning system, so that viewers with the special captioning decoder boxes could display the score on their screens at any time. John Ball, president of NCI, says not being able to hear the announcers tell the score audibly, especially in the final moments of close games, can be excruciating.

A second proposal under consideration is to have a captioning editor at sports events who would key into the system not only the score and time remaining, but also background statistics on players and other supplementary information. It's thought such a feature might attract sports enthusiasts who aren't deaf, but who sometimes wish they were when listening to certain commentators.

WHAT'S ON

continued

Joanna David in Rebecca.

John Belushi in "Animal House."

in performance for the small screen (see page 34). PBS.

Pavarotti: King of the High C's. The incomparable tenor, up close and personal. PBS.

DRAMAS AND MOVIES

The Shakespeare Plays. This month, the king's the thing, with "Richard II" and "Henry IV, Part I" (see page 76) the offerings. PBS.

Mystery! Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* unwinds in four parts, starring Joanna David and Jeremy Brett. PBS.

Kings of the Hill. A new series, created by Alex Haley and Norman Lear, about two boys—one white, one black—growing up in the South of the Thirties (see page 65). CBS.

On Giant Shoulders. An award-winning British docudrama about a thalidomide child. PBS.

Attica. America's violent prison insurrection revisited in a docudrama version of Tom Wicker's book "A Time to Die," starring George Grizzard as Wicker (see page 44). ABC.

Animal House. A college fraternity, toga parties and John Belushi in nonscholarly pursuits. Showtime (cable).

The Day Christ Died. Chris Sarandon stars in this Easter-season TV-movie. CBS.

The Kids Are Alright. The rock group The Who, in concert and out, are profiled in cinema verite fashion. Showtime (cable).

Amber Waves. Dennis Weaver and Kurt Russell in a TV-movie beautifully photographed in western Canada's wheat fields. ABC.

King of Hearts. Philippe de Broca's whimsical 1967 antiwar film that became a cult classic. With Alan Bates and Genevieve Bujold. Showtime (cable).

WASHINGTON

Steve Weinberg reporting

Year of the child. The Federal Communications Commission is pushing ahead with an inquiry that could lead to more television shows for children, despite pressure from broadcasters to back off.

The agency has published five options for increasing the diversity of children's programming. The most controversial option would require stations to air specified amounts of children's programming each week, within certain hours of the day. The FCC staff has recommended two-and-a-half hours per week of educational programs for school-age children and five hours for preschoolers. Broadcasters say such Government intrusion would collide with the First Amendment. They also complain that emphasis on greater quantity would stifle programs of improved quality, and they believe that they have upgraded children's programming in the past decade.

FCC chairman Charles Ferris has said he will support mandatory programming standards only "with very great reluctance." Furthermore, Ferris is aware of the possibility that the time isn't ripe for further FCC intervention in kidvid: "Perhaps we have gone as far as we can go as a nation, or as a government, in ensuring that commercial television is able to educate and inform our children. Perhaps, given the other things we ask of that medium, our expectations in 1974 [when the FCC issued a policy statement on children's programming] were too great." Public comments on the options are due by June 2, rebuttals by Aug. 1.

Outsiders. Under Congressional pressure, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting is spending more money to stimulate diverse programming on public television stations. But headaches have accompanied the increased spending. The main headache is independent producers, who obtained Con-

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gressional backing in demanding a bigger slice of the CPB pie. The trouble is that CPB isn't sure just who is an "independent producer."

The debate is more than semantic. It has consequences for viewers of public television, who now see a great deal of programming from just two sources — public-television-station employees and foreign producers, especially the British. Independents range from Hollywood big-timers to individuals working out of a warehouse in mid-Iowa. CPB has managed to anger the Hollywood types and some non-Hollywood independents with its definitions of who qualifies for funding. At stake is part of $24.5 million for the current year, and a larger hunk of the nearly $26 million for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1. "We want greater diversity, so the stations aren't producing so much of the programming," says Bruce Wolpe, legislative assistant to Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Cal.), whose district includes Hollywood and who has been spearheading the Congressional drive.

George Stein, a CPB vice president, agrees that more independent producers might make a difference in viewing fare. "The people who have a fire in their belly are the ones who do things differently. But," he adds, "quality programming remains the goal. Not all independents are as proficient or as responsible as station producers."

The day-to-day programming decisions at CPB will be made by Lewis Freedman, a former CBS producer, who began work in January in his newly created position. CPB board members, Presidentially appointed, will have less to say about what's on the air. "Lobbying of the board members will be cut down," Stein said. "It was a hell of a way to do business, with political pressures. Freedman won't be completely free of pressure, but he will be able to use his guts."

Unequal time. An influential congressman wants to encourage more robust debate about Presidential candidates on television this year but is facing an uphill battle.

Lionel Van Deerlin (D-Cal.) is chairman of the House subcommittee that has jurisdiction over broadcasting. A bill he has introduced would allow expanded television coverage of debates and encourage stations to air documentaries and other special programming during the campaign.

Currently, the law says that broadcasters must make comparable amounts of time available to all candidates. The law is supposed to promote fairness, but Van Deerlin believes it has had a chilling effect on coverage. "Unfortunately, equal time has come to mean minimal time," Van Deerlin said.

Van Deerlin's bill is admittedly modest, applying only to candidates for President and Vice President. And it doesn't have any bearing on paid political broadcasts. But even his modest attempt may run aground in the Senate. Van Deerlin's counterpart there, Sen. Ernest Hollings (D-S.C.), said he may not support repealing part of the current law. A temporary suspension of the law for 1980 may not be easy to get by Hollings either. A top aide explained that Hollings "wonders if we need to do anything at all, especially involving free time. The only instance in which a problem has arisen so far involves paid time, and Van Deerlin's bill doesn't even address that."

LONDON

Richard Gilbert reporting

Anything goes. The mighty and the mercenary in Britain are once again lying uneasy in their beds: satire is back. Not since *That Was the Week That Was* in the Sixties has the nation had a TV show that could sink its fangs into events and draw blood.

Now the BBC has come up with *Not the Nine O'Clock News*, a heady blend of political astringency reminiscent of *TWTWTW* and zany clowning that owes a large debt to *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. One member of the cast, Rowan Atkinson, is already being hailed as the John Cleese (*Monty Python*) of the Eighties.

The BBC, which in the old days won itself a reputation for primness that was summed up in the nickname "Auntie," has been thoroughly modern in the latitude it has given the new weekly program. Taboos have been allowed to crumble—but not without protest from the leading crusader for "moral standards" on television, Mary Whitehouse.

Mrs. Whitehouse, whose reactions are a litmus test for decency among certain sections of the population, was so shocked by one episode of *Not the Nine O'Clock News* that she was moved to write to The Times about it, quoting verbatim from a sexually explicit parody interview with a "Miss World contestant." The Times did not censor her quotes, and neither did the BBC proceed to censor its program. *Not the Nine O'Clock News*, after a winter break, will return to outrage the sensitive in April.

Future shock. The BBC's major fall documentary miniseries will be *The Shock of the New*, an eight-part guide to modern art by Robert Hughes of Time magazine. The programs, which are a joint venture with Time-Life Television and a German production company, are scheduled for the U.S. in October.

Also in the pipeline at the BBC are ambitious documentary histories of Ireland and the aftermath of the Nazi holocaust. Granada TV, meanwhile, is working on a $5 million adaptation of Evelyn Waugh's novel "Brideshead Revisited," starring Lord Olivier and Claire Bloom as Lord and Lady Marchmain. This

WHAT'S ON

continued

NCAA Play-offs.

Dick Cavett in Time Was.

SPORTS

NCAA Basketball Championships. Coverage of the first round—this year featuring a record 48 teams—begins on Saturday, March 8. Later rounds will be telecast the following two weekends, and the two finalists appear in prime time on March 24. NBC.

NEWS AND DOCUMENTARIES

For the Child's Own Good. Controversial approaches to the treatment of troubled youngsters are examined in an *NBC News Special Report*. NBC.

ABC News Closeup. Two installments are tentatively scheduled: one on the uranium industry, another on Cambodia. ABC.

Beautiful, Baby, Beautiful! A behind-the-scenes look at the world of modeling, featuring superstar models Cheryl Tiegs and Wilhelmina. Home Box Office (cable).

The Invisible World. A National Geographic special focusing on cameras and imaging devices that magnify microscopic life, explore galaxies and freeze movement. PBS.

Time Was: The Sixties. Dick Cavett looks back two decades in part five of a six-episode series. Home Box Office (cable).

Manoeuvre. Filmmaker Fred Wiseman follows NATO troops in Europe. PBS.

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WNET co-production, in seven parts, is scheduled for American showing in 1981.

Dash to the tape. After a hesitant start in the past two years, sales and rentals of VCRs are finally breaking into a sprint, with distributors expecting to see 150,000 more machines in use at the end of the year than the present quarter-million. As is the case with TV sets, most people here prefer to rent equipment rather than buy it; the current rate for a VCR is around $45 per month. Foreign manufacturers—Japanese and European—so far have the market to themselves; there are no home-grown varieties.

As video recording becomes more popular, performers, program-makers and broadcasters thumb nervously through their reference books on copyright law—and find few satisfying answers to the conundrums posed by the new technology. Who owes what to whom when a program is recorded off the air or marketed as a cassette? The courts here will have to rule on these questions. Meanwhile, as one speaker at a recent video-rights conference pointed out, "One's view of the business depends on whether one is piranha or plankton in the

continued on page 85

THE RATINGS RACE

TWO NETWORKS BATTLE IT OUT FOR SECOND-SEASON SUPREMACY

By MICHAEL DANN

With the "second season" ratings battle well under way, with ABC and CBS vying for the lead, the industry will be keeping a particularly close watch on the new shows, to see which network—if either—will be able to establish clear superiority.

NBC's sharp decline since its strong opening has it in a weaker position than last year. NBC cannot be counted on even to move to second.

As for weekly series, ABC must strengthen itself from 7 to 9 on Sunday, where CBS has built up one of the most successful nights in broadcast history. The ratings battle Sunday night is particularly important because there are four hours of prime time, as compared with three hours every other night of the week. ABC is hoping that its two new Sunday shows, *Incredible Sundays* and *Ten Speed and Brown Shoe*, will enable it to increase its slim lead over CBS.

CBS's new game plan calls for victory from 8 to 9 on Monday, where it has scheduled *WKRP in Cincinnati* and *The Last Resort*. If these two shows can beat ABC's *Laverne & Shirley* and *Angie*, CBS could make Monday's lineup almost as strong a powerhouse as Sunday's. A Monday victory for CBS would definitely make it a horse race down to the wire between the two networks.

CBS's two new hour dramas, *Knots Landing* and *The Chisholms*, figure to be average shows in the ratings. They are conventional story forms being thrown in against strong competition; CBS will be satisfied if they do a workmanlike job. ABC's *B.A.D. Cats* on Friday evening will be lucky to finish the season against NBC's *Sanford*, with Redd Foxx, a proven ratings champion, returning to weekly TV.

The biggest ratings failure among the new entries is bound to be NBC's *United States*. It starts out with three strikes against it: it's a new form of situation comedy; it follows another show with an unorthodox form (a 90-minute variety series, *The Big Show*, which may be the biggest gamble on NBC's schedule); and it is isolated at the late—and, for a situation comedy, highly unusual—hour of 10:30 P.M. It has been demonstrated repeatedly in recent years that in order to succeed, new half-hour comedies need to be scheduled behind established successes—or, at least, in a block with other like shows, to create audience flow.

The one intangible that nobody in the industry can predict is how well ABC's or CBS's made-for-television movies will do in the second season. CBS's success with its TV-movies was the biggest factor in narrowing the ratings gap because ABC's television films did poorly this past fall. Even third-place NBC did substantially better with its made-for-television movies than ABC. Remember, a whole week can be won or lost by the rating of a single movie.

In addition, CBS was able to take the November sweeps (the crucial fall ratings period) for the first time in years by preempting more than half of its regular schedule with special programming, including strong movies, while ABC mostly stood pat with its series.

Look for a big battle between the two networks in the movies and miniseries area. Whoever wins that struggle will win the second season. A comparison of the networks' TV-movie ratings clearly illustrates what happened during the first half of the season. Here, at left, are the top 30 made-for-TV movies for the first season.

RANK	TITLE	NETWORK	RATING	HOMES
1	And Baby Makes Six	NBC	25.3	19,300,000
2	Aunt Mary	CBS	24.9	19,000,000
3	The Miracle Worker	NBC	23.9	18,240,000
4	Portrait of a Stripper	CBS	22.6	17,240,000
5	My Old Man	CBS	22.3	17,010,000
6	When Hell Was in Session	NBC	22.0	16,790,000
7	The Tenth Month	CBS	21.9	16,710,000
8	Friendships, Secrets, and Lies	NBC	21.8	16,630,000
9	The Kid from Left Field	NBC	21.4	16,330,000
10	Flesh and Blood, Part I	CBS	21.2	16,180,000
11	Love for Rent	ABC	21.0	16,020,000
12	The Solitary Man	CBS	20.9	15,950,000
13	An American Christmas Carol	ABC	20.7	15,790,000
14	The Great Smokey Roadblock	NBC	20.5	15,640,000
15	Before and After	ABC	20.3	15,490,000
16 (tie)	Young Love, First Love	CBS	19.8	15,110,000
16 (tie)	All Quiet on the Western Front	CBS	19.8	15,110,000
18 (tie)	Freedom Road, Part I	NBC	19.1	14,570,000
18 (tie)	High Midnight	CBS	19.1	14,570,000
18 (tie)	Topper	ABC	19.1	14,570,000
21	Flesh and Blood, Part II	CBS	19.0	14,500,000
22	Diary of a Teen-age Hitchhiker	ABC	18.3	13,960,000
23	Mirror, Mirror	NBC	17.8	13,580,000
24	Last Ride of the Daltons	NBC	17.6	13,430,000
25	Disaster on the Coastliner	ABC	17.1	13,050,000
26 (tie)	Mrs. R's Daughter	NBC	16.8	12,820,000
26 (tie)	Vampire	ABC	16.8	12,820,000
28	Marciano	ABC	16.0	12,210,000
29	When She Was Bad	ABC	14.8	11,290,000
30	The Death of Ocean View Park	ABC	14.6	11,140,000

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SKI INVENTION

The Bone Fone was invented by an engineer who liked to ski. Every time he took a long lift ride, he noticed other skiers carrying transistor radios and cassette players and wondered if there was a better way to keep your hands free and listen to stereo music.

So he invented the Bone Fone stereo. When he put it around his neck, he couldn't believe his ears. He was not only hearing the music and stereo separation, but the sound was resonating through his bones giving him the sensation of standing in front of a powerful stereo system.

AWARDED PATENT

The inventor took his invention to a friend who also tried it on. His friend couldn't believe what he heard and at first thought someone was playing a trick on him.

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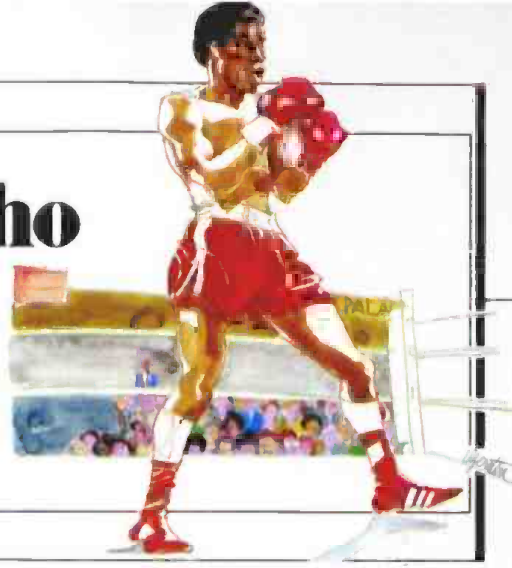
SPORTS

The Kid Who Is Made for TV



By JOHN SCHULIAN

The wind off the desert was as cold as a blackjack dealer's smile. Beside the pool at Caesars Palace, the tinhorns, tarts and old-timers huddled in the unseasonable Las Vegas chill and strained to get a look at a kid who could warm the bleakest day. In 32 hours, Sugar Ray Leonard would win the World Boxing Council's welterweight championship, but now he was showing his admirers that he can jive as well as he can jab. True to form, his timing was perfect.

Howard Cosell, the original jive bomber, was peppering Sugar Ray with questions while a TV camera crew hustled to preserve the moment for history. And then a curious yet wonderful thing happened. Cosell shut up and Leonard took over the microphone.

"Uh, Ray," the producer said, "what we'd like is for you to tell us how you size up an opponent—you know, how you spot an opening, when you know the guy's hurt, how you finish him off. About 30 or 40 seconds' worth, all right?"

Being an economical lad, Leonard stopped at 30.

"Great, Ray, just great," the producer said. "But do you think you could do it again, please? And give us about 10 more seconds, huh?"

So Leonard did it, for he is also obliging. He fleshed out one thought with some extra verbiage, tossed in a brief anecdote, and the next thing anyone knew, he was ambling toward his hotel room and the producer was shouting his thanks.

One is tempted to marvel at how easily Howard Cosell was rendered unnecessary. But that is not the point. The point is that 23-year-old Sugar Ray Leonard is made for TV as no athlete ever was.

His status goes far beyond his hesitant admission that "I always try to smile at the right time." If there were nothing more to him than that, he would be choking on the dust of Joe Namath, who waited until he had a national audience before shaming the haughty Baltimore Colts. And Reggie Jackson, whose fear of failure drives him to greatness when a TV camera is aimed at him, would be at the head of the class lecturing on "The magnitude of me." And surely Muhammad Ali would be lobbying for his just due, since it was he who cradled the palsied fight game in his arms and carried it into prime time.

Yet when these magical figures entered the ratings war, each was already established at the box office. With Sugar Ray Leonard, it was different. With Sugar Ray Leonard, we were present at the creation.

It happened at the 1976 Summer Olympics. Again and again, the storekeeper's son from Palmer Park, Md., pumped his treacherous left hook into the body of a Cuban named Andres Aldama. When the final bell rang, Leonard was at the center of TV screens everywhere, a gold medal hanging around his neck and his gap-toothed smile lighting the Montreal night.

The great thinkers at the three major networks might not have known a boxer from a rutabaga, but they had no trouble recognizing a handsome, articulate, unaffected, appealing kid. There was only one problem: the kid was so weary of punches and poppycock after the Olympics that he wanted no part of making a buck for his bruises. "Boxing as an amateur is in me," he said. "Pro is not in my heart."

And he would have stuck to his word if he hadn't cared so much about his parents. But two heart attacks had left his mother reeling, and the night shift at a 24-hour grocery store was sucking the life out of his father.

So he signed a fat six-fight contract with ABC. He would take everybody who was with him in the beginning—parents, brothers, cousins, trainers—and ride the glory road. When ABC saw what was happening, the network realized that it had more than just another pug on its hands. It had fistiana's answer to *The Waltons*.

It mattered not that Leonard learned his craft in New Haven and Baltimore and Portland, Maine—tank towns, if you will—because here was a fighter who, thanks to his Olympic exposure, literally had a home crowd everywhere he went. At last, Marshall McLuhan's "global village" had come to sports.

Sugar Ray, of course, has done everything possible to see that it stays there. In the process, he has traveled a route far different from two of his fellow gold-medal boxers. One, Howard Davis, has developed a reputation as a pacifist even though he is a world-class lightweight. The other, Leon Spinks, won the heavyweight title in his eighth professional fight, lost it in his ninth and now stands as a monument to wasted promise.

Leonard, meanwhile, remains all the good things that fight champions are supposed to be, and a couple they are not. "I hope you won't misunderstand me," he says, "but I understand what it takes to scale the majestic heights of stardom."

In the sweet science of boxing, the qualifications begin with the ability to hit and not be hit. While the latter never was in question, there were enough doubts about the former to persuade admirers of Leonard's namesake, Sugar Ray Robinson, to taunt the kid as Sweet & Lo Ray. But the undefeated Leonard deserved better. He was the real thing, a showman with killer instinct, a class act who deserved every cent of the $1 million he earned for winning the welterweight title. For while he was beating Wilfred Benitez on ABC, he was also obliterating all comers in the ratings on NBC and CBS.

Something like 55 million people watched his coronation from their living rooms and favorite saloons. The statistic, startling in its own right, becomes even more so when you stop to realize that boxing probably doesn't have one-tenth that many devotees in this country. But what Leonard has done as an electric horseman really doesn't translate until you see him lounging outside the main entrance to Caesars Palace.

A tan suit and a gold medallion set off his unscarred ebony face, and the dowagers crowd around, stroking him with hands they usually use only for slot machines. It makes no difference that Sugar Ray earns his living by spilling other men's blood. He has the dowagers' seal of approval: they've seen him on TV.

John Schulian is a free-lance writer and a sports columnist for the Chicago Sun-Times.

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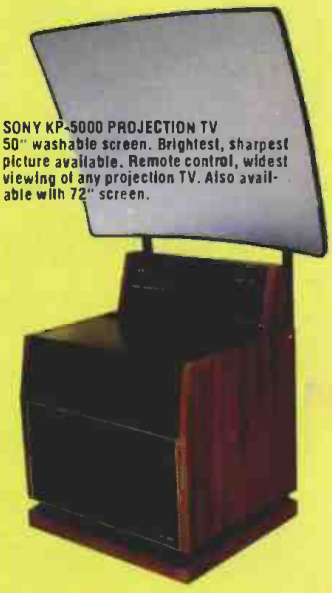

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Q&A

BRANDON STODDARD

'Once You Believe the Form *Itself* Makes Things Work, That's When You're in Trouble'

A network executive responsible for several landmark miniseries talks about past successes, recent failures and the uncertain future of this hazardous programming genre

In 1973, NBC's four-hour adaptation of Joseph Wambaugh's "The Blue Knight" marked the start of a new form of television programming: The miniseries had been born, and it would soon become a staple of the airwaves. ABC followed the next year with a well-received 6-and-a-quarter-hour version of Leon Uris's "QB VII," and after that the battle of the network miniseries was on in earnest.

ABC soon established itself as champion of this form, which was patterned on the British serial dramas shown on PBS's *Masterpiece Theatre*. In 1976, a young ABC executive named Brandon Stoddard was chiefly responsible for his network's 12-hour presentation of Irwin Shaw's *Rich Man, Poor Man*, a show that met with astonishing success. The following year, Stoddard telecast a miniseries based on a book whose author was a relative unknown; his book, licensed to ABC when its characters were still captives of his writing block, was "Roots"; and the result was a 12-hour miniseries whose concluding episode still ranks as the biggest hit show in TV history.

Since then Stoddard has risen to the highest reaches of ABC's corporate hierarchy. Now 42, he was appointed president of ABC Motion Pictures last May. His duties include developing and producing theatrical movies for ABC, but at the same time he also remains in charge of ABC's TV-movies, televised dramatic productions and miniseries.

Stoddard's reign as head of ABC miniseries has been little short of spectacular. Seven months after *Roots*, *Washington: Behind Closed Doors*, a fictionalized account of the Nixon White House, kicked off the 1977-78 season in satisfactory fashion. *Roots II, Ike* and *Pearl* continued Stoddard's long-form winning streak, but in November a funny thing happened to the Connecticut-born Yalie just as he was on his way to the Nielsen hall of fame: ABC's *The French Atlantic Affair* sank like a stone, averaging only a 22 share. NBC and CBS had also been stuck with some long-form disasters, and suddenly a lot of those friendly folks in videoland offices were gloomily predicting that the future of the miniseries was not bright.

To discover whether Stoddard was ready to jettison the program form he helped pioneer, PANORAMA sent freelancer Lawrence Linderman to meet with him at ABC's Century City offices in Los Angeles. The edited results of their interview follow:

PANORAMA: *A number of television industry observers believe that the recent failure of ABC's* The French Atlantic Affair *may have sounded the death knell of miniseries. Are they right?*

STODDARD: No, they're not, although the performance of *The French Atlantic Affair* and a few other recent miniseries has made everybody look harder at these shows. People are talking ominously about long form right now the same way they talked optimistically about it two years ago, but neither position is correct because they're relating to form, not content.

The real reason miniseries haven't worked recently isn't because the form itself is wrong; it's because the *content* of that form has been wrong. Everyone in television, I think, felt that because the first group of miniseries were hits, there was a certain magic to a six-hour or eight-hour show. The idea was that by having a miniseries you had an event and, therefore, viewers would watch it. In television, when something is a hit, it's instantly followed by duplications of the original to the point where we almost kill the golden goose. That happened when 90-minute television movies originally came on the air, and to a degree that's happened to miniseries. But *only* to a degree, for one can argue that what's happened to the miniseries is a sign of growth.

PANORAMA: *In what sense?*

STODDARD: In the sense that the miniseries audience has been educated by the number of shows it's seen and, as a result, has come to expect more from the miniseries. *Rich Man, Poor Man*, one of the first that we did, was very successful, but I think if you tried to put it on today, it wouldn't do very well.

PANORAMA: *Why not?*

STODDARD: Because *Rich Man, Poor Man* was really just a very well-produced soap. It was a well-cast, well-mounted television show without significant thematic material, and that's no longer enough to make a miniseries successful. Audiences now expect and demand more, and those involved in programming these shows have to be aware that audiences don't remain stagnant in terms of their taste. And I think in many cases we programmed on a static level without taking growth into mind.

PANORAMA: *Is that why* The French Atlantic Affair *did so poorly?*

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STODDARD: Well, I can give you lots of wonderful network excuses to explain its failure. I can tell you about casting and production problems, and I can also tell you about Iran being all over the networks that week and how people therefore weren't interested in terrorism shows. In my opinion, however, none of those was the problem. The real problem with *French Atlantic Affair*—after a lot of very difficult soul-searching on my part—was that it simply wasn't unique enough or important enough. It was strictly entertainment, which has not been true of most of our miniseries. If you weren't interested in watching a story about a group of people who hold an ocean liner for ransom, you weren't going to watch *The French Atlantic Affair.*

We also produced it too quickly. We didn't hand-tailor it, the way we normally do when making a miniseries. Instead, we said, "Gee, wouldn't it be nice to have a miniseries during the November sweeps? That's an important period for us, and [in 1978] our *Pearl* miniseries worked, so why shouldn't *French Atlantic Affair* succeed?" Well, that's not the way to develop, produce or schedule a miniseries. That's not the way we've done it previously, and we won't do it again.

PANORAMA: *As* The French Atlantic Affair *proved, a sub-par miniseries wrecks a network's ratings for an entire week. Is ABC planning to cut back on the number of miniseries it presents?*

STODDARD: No, absolutely not. We usually present two or three a year, and we'll continue to do that. As far as ratings are concerned, yes, if you fail in a miniseries you're looking at, say, six hours of failure spread over three nights. If you fail in a two-hour movie, it's only one night that's gone and the next night you're OK.

Which leads me to the next problem miniseries now face: their scheduling. If you put on a miniseries during an important rating period, you don't merely invite competition, you *command* it. The other networks *have* to come after you, because if they don't they may have six hours of a hit against them. This is a competitive business, and whenever another network introduces a new miniseries, you do whatever you can to destroy its welcome on the air. That didn't used to happen, mainly because when the miniseries was new no one quite knew what a threat it could be. After four or five of them, however, whenever we announced a new miniseries, it meant enormous competition.

Really, we thought *The French Atlantic Affair* would work, and so did CBS and NBC. The only reason I say that is because of what they put on against it. Otherwise, why waste movies like "Silver Streak" and "A Bridge Too Far"? But you've got to expect that when you schedule a miniseries during an important ratings period. For about 15 years now, the three most important months in TV have been November, February and May, which are called "sweeps" periods. During those months, local stations are measured on their performance, and their ratings serve as the basis for advertisers to make local TV buys.

PANORAMA: *Are miniseries ever scheduled during* unimportant *ratings periods?*

STODDARD: Sure they are. *Holocaust*, a very successful NBC miniseries, went on in April—a reasonably important month, but not a *major* month for the networks. *Roots* was originally broadcast in January, which also isn't that important a month.

> "I don't think there were many people in the TV industry who thought "Friendly Fire" would be a great hit movie for TV—I certainly didn't."

PANORAMA: *Do you ever feel that perhaps the networks measure themselves* too *much?*

STODDARD: No, I think people on the inside look at ratings only as a measurement and I don't mind the element of being measured. We get a little disturbed about the emphasis placed on ratings by people outside of television, however.

PANORAMA: *Don't you have potential ratings in mind when deciding on whether to proceed with a TV film or miniseries?*

STODDARD: If that were true, we'd never have done films like "The Jericho Mile" and "Friendly Fire" and at least a dozen others. Those films got made because we felt it was important to make them. I don't think there were many people in the TV industry who thought "Friendly Fire" would be a great hit movie for TV—*I* certainly didn't. But it was made because we felt it was an important story. And that's also been true of our most successful miniseries: when we decided to make *Roots*, nobody anticipated the kind of reaction it was going to have.

PANORAMA: *What did you expect the reaction would be?*

STODDARD: I really thought it would be quite successful. But we also knew that we were taking a risk, because TV had never really presented a story about slavery from a black point of view. The real question was whether a miniseries about blacks could be a successful TV venture when most of the viewers are white. If *Roots* succeeded only with blacks it would be a failure in result and intention.

The first time I heard about *Roots* was at a three-hour lunch with Alex Haley, producers Stan Margulies and David Wolper, and Lou Rudolph, who worked for me at the time. I was in charge of ABC's miniseries, movies and novels for TV, and, when Alex talked about his story, I really felt it was something we should do. The book didn't yet exist, but I felt that the essence of *Roots* would go way beyond just the black experience, and that it would be able to touch white, green, yellow, orange, red or blue families as well. It was a distinctly American story whose primary theme was the inalienable dignity of man, and based on that—and not on its ratings potential—we went ahead with *Roots*.

PANORAMA: *At the time, all the* Roots *broadcasts were in the top 13 most watched programs in TV history, and the show's final episode was the single most watched TV program of all time. Were you at all shocked by that?*

STODDARD: I was really bewildered by what happened. I just didn't understand it, and I don't think *anybody* did. I think the truth of it is almost mystical: *Roots* was an idea that simply was not going to be denied. But I didn't anticipate that the show would experience that kind of success.

I wasn't as thrilled as one might expect. My reaction was much more related to confusion than to ecstasy and joy. In retrospect, the fun of *Roots* was the process of making it, which was enormously exciting. The week it was shown just wasn't that much fun for me. I was so tired that at a dinner party at the Bel-Air Hotel, I fell asleep in a bowl of pea soup.

PANORAMA: *Not to single out NBC on this, but it seems that such long-form fizzles as* Seventh Avenue *and* Aspen *were attempts to exploit the miniseries rather than to improve it. Do you agree?*

STODDARD: I think it would be more accurate to say those were repeats of content within the same form. Let me go back to my mention about growth. When we did *Rich Man, Poor Man*, the form and even content hadn't been seen before. Since then, the excitement associated with this new form disappeared because the same content has been repeated five or six times. That's also true of TV series:

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if you do five or six rip-offs of *Charlie's Angels* or several versions of *M*A*S*H*, everyone gets damaged. When something like that happens in a miniseries, audiences lose interest *very* quickly, because you're asking them to invest a lot of their time. We found out that there is no magic in the miniseries form, and that you can't stay with the same content.

photographs. That's why our miniseries have varied from three hours to 12.

You almost have to approach the subject the way a writer does: some ideas work best as short stories, some as novellas and others as novels. Right now, we're in the process of making Herman Wouk's "The Winds of War"; if we put that together with the rest of the story, "War and Remembrance," that miniseries could possibly run for something like 26 hours.

"In retrospect, the fun of *Roots* was the process of making it. The week it was shown just wasn't that much fun for me."

PANORAMA: *Will ABC's future miniseries reflect the lessons you've learned?*

STODDARD: Yes, I believe they will. I'm very encouraged by the film I've seen thus far on *Masada*. I don't know if it's going to be a hit or not, but, based on the initial reactions to what we've seen, it's got a nice smell about it. It's different, it's new, and it's a very important and special story. It isn't just an account of a big fight between 15,000 Roman soldiers and 960 Judeans; it has many more themes that go way beyond the simple story of a war. And I think the audience will recognize that and want to see it for those reasons.

PANORAMA: Masada *will run for eight hours. In discussing miniseries, NBC's Fred Silverman once noted, "Eight hours is a helluva long time. They did 'Gone with the Wind' in three-and-a-half hours." What's your reaction to that?*

STODDARD: The reason "Gone with the Wind" worked so well as a film is probably because three-and-a-half hours was the best length for that particular story. But length depends entirely upon the subject matter you're dealing with. For instance, I don't know how we possibly could have done a multigenerational story like *Roots* in three-and-a-half hours. At that length, *Roots* would have just been a series of

If I remember right, the original scripts for *Rich Man, Poor Man* were designed for eight hours, and we were sure the first four hours were going to be terrific. But after that, everything became truncated and went by too quickly. So we went back to Universal and said, "Look, a lot of these scenes need more time; these characters need a little air to breathe because the action's suddenly going at 78 rpm when it should be 33 and a third." We wound up expanding the series from eight to 10 and then to 12 hours.

PANORAMA: Rich Man, Poor Man *was further expanded into a weekly series. Had you planned that when making the miniseries?*

STODDARD: No. There was a feeling at ABC that it could become a successful prime-time series, but I didn't want to do it. I felt it would be difficult to maintain the quality we had in the miniseries, and we *didn't* maintain it. I *hate* doing one show particularly well and then coming out with something that rips off an audience.

PANORAMA: *Did you also feel that way about* Roots: The Next Generations?

STODDARD: Not at all. We were really pleased with *Roots II* because I think it was a much better show than the original. In almost every area of production, we felt that the quality of *Roots II* was superior to the original, and that's very rare in television or movies or *anywhere*. And, frankly, we're proud of that.

PANORAMA: *In dealing with adult program material, are you subject to a great many restrictions concerning language, nudity, violence and whatever else might be expected to disturb various segments of society?*

STODDARD: I can't describe to you what ABC standards are in terms of program content, because there are so many factors that come into play that you simply can't make any generalizations.

PANORAMA: *What kinds of factors do you have in mind?*

STODDARD: Things like the flow of a scene and the emotion the performer is showing at the time a word is going to be said. The subject matter you're dealing with will be a factor, as will the time period that it's on the air and whether or not there's an on-the-air advisory to viewers about the show's content. Many of these things can be changed by a different sound level or by a fraction-of-a-second edit, or how long you hold on a particular shot. I'm not copping out on this question, because I really believe all this. I have had enormous discussions with our broadcast-standards people on various points of movies and miniseries that we've worked on.

PANORAMA: *What have those discussions centered on?*

STODDARD: Words, or is this scene too sexy or is that scene too violent, whatever. These talks have come up when they say something's got to go and I say I don't believe it should. And most of the time, if a particular situation has been handled with taste and if it's not gratuitous or excessive and is indigenous to the drama, we'll get it on the air. I don't find that we are inordinately restricted by our broadcast-standards people. In fact, many times they make you work a little harder to come up with something that has a little bit more magic to it than a dirty word or a sexual or violent scene.

Finally, I think the context of something will determine whether or not it appears on TV. For instance, the opening scenes of *Roots* contained women with bare breasts. Now that was done because that's the way it was in Juffure. Women

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who were unmarried walked around disrobed, and married women were covered, and we costumed our people that way. That didn't go on the air without some discussion, I'm quick to add, and bare-breasted women hadn't been seen in an American TV drama before that.

PANORAMA: *Still, doesn't it seem to you that films and theater—unhampered by self-imposed censorship—come a lot closer to reality than TV does?*

STODDARD: Oh, I think that's true, but people object strongly to a lot of the sex, violence and language on TV, some of which is probably right, and a lot of which *isn't* right. The real problem we have is that our public is made up of a lot of publics. Some people object vociferously and also threaten advertisers. I don't think those particular threats are that important, but the networks certainly have to be responsive when their audiences are upset.

PANORAMA: *Have you arrived at any hard-and-fast rules about the most effective ways to schedule miniseries?*

STODDARD: Well, one of the things that came out of *Rich Man, Poor Man* is that one-hour installments don't play nearly as well as the two-hour form. *Rich Man, Poor Man* had two two-hour broadcasts, four one-hour programs and two concluding two-hour shots. The one-hours weren't as strong, because just as you were getting into the body of the drama, *boom*, it was over and the eleven o'clock news was on. The two-hour form generally plays better in this type of programming.

Rich Man, Poor Man was presented over a period of weeks, and at the time it was assumed that you couldn't put on a miniseries night after night because you couldn't expect people to change their habits for a TV show. That still held true when *Roots* was ready to go on the air; but, nevertheless, we decided to broadcast *Roots* on eight successive nights, and when the results were in, that was the end of another television shibboleth. Since then, programmers have leaned toward successive nights as the best way to present a miniseries. My own feeling is that it depends on the material and not so much on how miniseries have been programmed in the past.

PANORAMA: *A number of highly placed TV executives are predicting the demise of miniseries on the grounds that they cost far more than installments of weekly series, and that, considering the risks, the additional outlay just isn't worth all the bother. Are they wrong?*

STODDARD: Not about costs. A miniseries hour is up to $800,000 or $900,000, and maybe even higher on some of them. I don't even know what a weekly-series hour costs, but the point is valid: miniseries *are* more costly than series television.

PANORAMA: *When a miniseries is successful, are the additional costs made up in higher advertising revenues?*

STODDARD: I really don't know. I'm not hiding from that; it's just that I'm so far removed from sales that I simply don't know. But I suspect that it all works out, or else we wouldn't continue to do miniseries to the extent that we do.

A television network puts out a balanced schedule which is going to contain commercial hits as well as important shows that may or may not hit. I'm working on one film right now called "The Shadow Box," a Pulitzer Prize-winning play by Michael Cristofer. It has a wonderful cast, it's being directed by Paul Newman, and it's about three terminally ill patients. I don't think it's going to get a good rating, but it's an outstanding play that will make an important film for TV. I think television has an obligation to go forward, to grow, and that's only going to happen when you try to push TV's boundaries out a little bit.

PANORAMA: *Another reason cited for the eventual demise of miniseries is that their reruns rarely do well. Why do you think that happens?*

STODDARD: Well, I think one of the problems with repeating a miniseries is that you have a continuing story that's a bit like a serial. When you repeat it, part of the viewer's interest is gone because the audience knows that the heroine's head will be lifted off the tracks before the train gets to her. So you have to wait a while until there's some audience memory loss as to what the details were.

I also think reruns have a better chance when the first-time audience has been more involved with characters than plot. In *Roots*, character was more important than plot. People fell in love with Fiddler, Chicken George, Kizzy, Kunta Kinte and other characters, and I think the rerun gave people the chance to revisit a family they cared about.

From a programming standpoint, I wish we never had to repeat anything. I'd love it if they'd just say to me, "Brandon, here's 80 billion dollars; go make us a terrific miniseries and don't worry about the costs or the reruns." They don't, because they can't. As is true of every other business, economics plays a large part in TV.

PANORAMA: *That's precisely why a number of TV executives now view the miniseries as an endangered species. Do you believe that would have been the case if* The French Atlantic Affair *had been a hit?*

STODDARD: I think it's silly to say that because one ABC miniseries didn't work, and six did, the form itself is now in question. Maybe other people have more suspicions about miniseries than I do, but I still remember when ABC was presenting two 90-minute TV-movies each week, and there was a lot of talk about the end of the TV-movie. But the TV-movie grew, not so much in form—although it went from 90 minutes to two hours—as in content. Before long, TV-movies had better writing, better casting, better production, and they dealt with more interesting subjects. I think that's what the miniseries is going through. It's a valid form, because there are many stories worth telling that take longer to tell than three or four hours, which is why they're even beyond the reach of theatrical motion pictures.

Let me wrap this up by saying it's as simple as this: people in television once believed that a miniseries automatically meant you had a hit on your hands. We now know that's no longer true, but that doesn't mean the end of the miniseries. What it really means is that once you believe the form itself makes things work, well, that's when you're in trouble. ■

"I'd love it if they'd just say to me, "Brandon, here's 80 billion dollars; go make us a terrific miniseries and don't worry about the costs or the reruns." They don't, because they can't."

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PANORAMIC VIEW

CONSUMING INTEREST

It's the ultimate TV dinner. There on your restaurant table is a coin-operated TV set. Insert a quarter and you get 15 minutes of the same old channels—complete with commercials for indigestion remedies—that you can see for no extra charge at home.

Approximately 100 eating establishments in Southern California now offer small black-and-white Sonys along with table, chair and menu. They're the products of Tele-Vend Systems, an enterprise that began eight years ago with a single set in the coffee shop of the Ramada Inn near the Los Angeles airport. Tele-Vend buys, modifies and installs the sets (with a device that restricts the volume, thank you), and the restaurant owner gets a percentage of the take.

At the Ramada Inn, which now boasts three sets, the food-and-beverage manager reports that the TVs are most popular during the early evening hours, the graveyard shift and during sports events on weekends. However, she adds, "Nobody comes in here just because we've got TV sets."

Which brings up a question: Don't people go out to eat in order to get away from all the distractions of home, such as television sets? George Typaldos, who runs the distribution end of Tele-Vend, says most of his clients run "casual" places—fast-food emporiums, coffee shops, franchise steakhouses. "If you run a fast-food place, you're kidding yourself if you think people go there for the atmosphere," he says.

On the other hand, the sets could be said to upgrade the tone of such places in one sense—"They shut up the kids and keep them seated," says Typaldos. Sure enough, virtually all of the children who entered two Tele-Vended fast-food outlets on a recent afternoon headed straight for the TV sets. After their demands to be allowed to watch television had been granted by fretful-looking parents, the children sat quietly, watching cartoons. Not a single food fight was observed.

Though Tele-Vend is willing to sell its coin-operated sets outside California, it has no plans to go national with the actual installation and maintenance end of the business. Typaldos is content: "We could all become millionaires just putting TVs around Southern California."

A PIECE OF THE ACTION

"We're trying to break the poverty-thinking syndrome; we're trying to create leaders." Cliff Frazier, executive director of the Institute of New Cinema Artists in New York, is explaining the philosophy that has helped make INCA a startlingly successful training ground for young people (18 and up) from low-income backgrounds trying to break into television and other entertainment industries. "The object," Frazier says, "is to get a piece of the action and then move from a position of strength. You want to *own*, not beg, because the more you beg, the more people say no to you."

Among the organizations that have said yes to INCA graduates seeking employment are all three major networks, local TV stations, and advertising agencies. In the Institute's eight years of teaching largely minority students the nuts and bolts of the business, Frazier claims that almost 300 graduates—or 77 percent—have found jobs in the industry, including associate producers on several network news shows and the first black camerawoman for the New York Yankees baseball telecasts.

INCA's studio and classrooms occupy one floor of a well-worn old building in New York's garment district. Frazier, who has himself worked as an actor, director and producer, likes to run the video course as if it were a television station: he's the general manager and the "interns"—50 in each of two sections this year—are the staff. They work eight hours a day, five days a week, for 30 weeks, learning everything from how to set up cameras in the studio to how to read the ratings. They produce, write and anchor a twice-monthly interview program on a local independent station and work as technical assistants on other local productions.

The word "intern" wasn't chosen casually, Frazier says. "We're trying to establish an atmosphere that is more than being a student. It's like interns in medicine—we want them to be one step behind being a professional. We want our people to understand more about what the system is about than the people who run it. Then they'll be able to deal with it."

> "Our capacity for mass communications arrived at the same time as our capacity for mass annihilation. Whether we can use one to avert the other will depend on whether we are more concerned about the message or more concerned about the medium."
>
> *—Newton N. Minow, PBS chairman, addressing the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, Los Angeles*

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> "Somebody once described the American public as having a 13-year-old mentality, and a lot of people have bought that—a lot of people who make decisions for what is published, for what is made in film, what is on television. It just isn't true."
>
> *–Norman Lear, TV producer, interviewed for the NBC program "TV Guide – The First 25 Years"*

FRED-SAN

In most foreign television markets, the local distributors do their own dubbing or subtitling of TV programs imported from America. Japanese viewers, for example, may soon be hearing jokes on *Sanford and Son* to which not even Fred Sanford knows the punch lines. A team of Japanese writers has concocted new jokes for Fred and his cohorts that rely less on American customs and colloquialisms; the new dialogue will be matched as much as possible to the movement of the actors' lips.

Some smaller countries, however, can't afford either dubbing or subtitling, and there have been cases in which translations were simply read over the air, with no attempt at synchronization. Perhaps the most accurate dubbing and translating is done for the huge Spanish-speaking market; frequently U.S. distributors do the job themselves—and even if a title seems to indicate that the show has changed (*WKRP in Cincinnati* became *WKRP Sinfonia de Locura*, which roughly translates as "Symphony of Madness"), chances are the show is not severely altered.

But there are other barriers besides language to a faithful translation: what is acceptable to an American audience may offend foreign mores. Singapore, for example, frowns on longhaired male performers. And *Hazel* was a dud in Latin America, where maids talking back to their employers are a no, not a *si*.

PAS DE VIEW

"He's not doing it for financial reasons. He just loves television." One of the things Rudolf Nureyev most loves about television, his manager Sander Gorlinsky goes on to say, is watching old films of Fred Astaire, from his personal collection of more than 500 cassettes. The 40-year-old ballet star will soon find out whether dance fans feel the same way about him. Nureyev has begun making a taped record of his work for later marketing on videocassettes and discs. It's a hazardous leap for Rudi—he does not have a major distributor in the wings; none have even approached him about merchandising his product.

Nevertheless, Nureyev arranged for a European television company to record a series of ballets, starting with "Giselle" in Bonn, last May, with ownership of the tapes going to the dancer after the telecasts. Scheduled for 1980 are "Romeo and Juliet," "The Sleeping Beauty" and "Swan Lake."

Gorlinsky says he doesn't know when any of Nureyev's performances will be available commercially, but he's sure they "will be perennial best sellers on videocassettes and videodiscs."

Will Astaire be watching?

> "There's a sense among people in broadcasting generally, and television in particular, that they have to be very careful lest they loose the demons of opinion and prejudice upon an unsuspecting world. This feeling creates a calcification, a kind of internal rigidity that does not allow them to appear to be interested in or worried about the subjects on which they report. And the result of that is that every night you can see television news that seems to be impersonal."
>
> *–Richard Wald, senior vice president, ABC News, in a lecture at the Annenberg School of Communications at USC*

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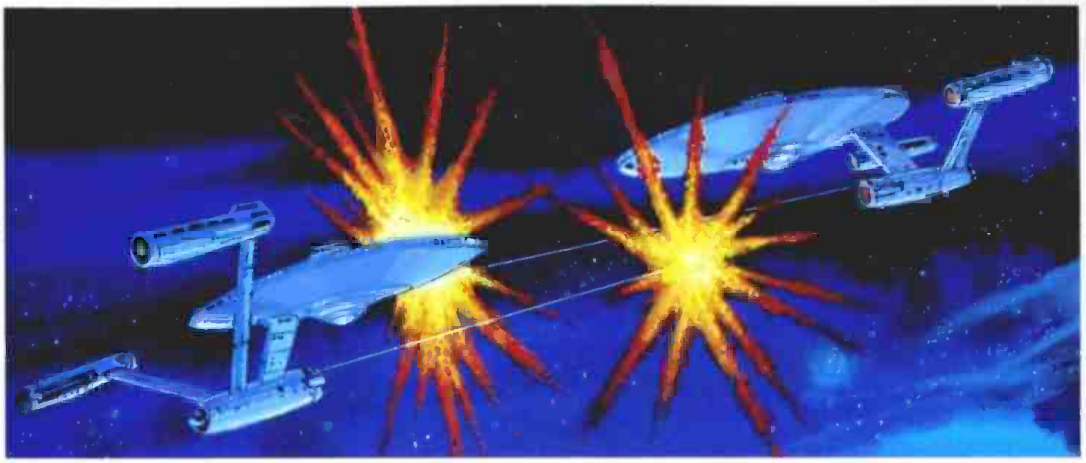
PANORAMIC VIEW



TREKS OF THE TRADE

In the beginning, there was *Star Trek*—the television series. Then came "Star Trek—The Motion Picture." And now there's *Star Trek*—the legal hassle, featuring what appears to be a cosmic blunder.

It all started about 13 years ago when Paramount Pictures Television, co-producer of the popular TV series in the late Sixties, apparently neglected to put copyright notices on about 25 segments of the 78-episode series. Because of that supposed oversight, *Star Trek* sailed into the public domain, a complex legal twilight zone where most noncopyrighted work can be duplicated and sold without payment of royalties to the producer of the original property. For the past five years, at least five video dealers have been selling certain *Star Trek* episodes on videocassettes without authorization from Paramount.

"It's copyright infringement," asserts Walter Josiah, Paramount vice president and chief resident counsel. "We consider those episodes currently being sold pirated."

But dealers who sell videocassettes of the *Star Trek* episodes disagree. Says Allan Greenfield of Video Dimensions in New York City: "Paramount just plain forgot to put the copyright notice on the first year's series. They know it, but they won't admit it." Phil Dupuy, manager of The Sheik Video Corp. in Metairie, La., reports that his store has been selling and advertising four episodes of *Star Trek* for the past 16 months and no one from Paramount has bothered him. Is it possible that Paramount just doesn't know that his store exists? "I'm an authorized dealer of Paramount movies on videocassette," replies Dupuy.

Paramount executives hint that their next move could be to court. It has also been suggested by several of them that Paramount might decide to officially release some of the more popular segments from the science fiction series. It's no secret that the company would love to capitalize on the remarkable "Star Trek" fever that swept the country last December after the movie's theatrical release.

Will Paramount release "Star Trek—The Motion Picture" on videocassette soon? "Not in the near future," says Bob Klingensmith, Paramount vice president of home video and pay-TV. Is the $42 million movie copyrighted? "You better believe it."

"When I went in to pitch pilots of some shows originally... I had a pretty good reputation. I had done *Odd Couple* for five years, *The Tonight Show*. They said, 'Why don't you do what Norman Lear's doing, Garry? Copy, go watch it, you could do it, people yelling at each other. That's good, Garry, make that.' And I just don't do that well. I said, 'No, I want... *Happy Days*—a nice little show.' And it took them a little while, it took two years for *Happy Days* to get on the air. But finally I got my kind of style in. It wasn't wrong, even if it was different.... But now a couple of my shows have become hot. Now I know they are going to people and saying, 'Why don't you do what Garry does?'"

—Garry Marshall, TV producer, addressing a forum of the Television Critics Association, Los Angeles

EXTENDED FAMILY

It was an unlikely combination—the Osmond Family and a TV-movie called "The Day Hitler Died." But it was no joke. The Osmonds' production company was all set to do the film for NBC—until the network pulled out last month, concluding that the subject was too much of a downer, no matter how smiley its auspices were.

The Osmonds, however, are pushing ahead on other production fronts, in the hope of becoming, collectively, "another Louis B. Mayer"—a description used by Paul Klein, the former NBC executive who was to produce the Hitler movie for the Osmond company.

Other Osmond projects include pilots built around Fred (*Fernwood 2-Night*) Willard, the bitingly satirical Second City troupe and the astrology tomes of Linda ("Love Signs") Goodman. And the company is underwriting a movie about the Kent State students who were killed by National Guardsmen

during a Vietnam demonstration.

George Osmond, the chairman of the board (and father of the Osmond brood), insists that nothing is new. "We are a very progressive company," he says. "We haven't changed our patterns. We have our standards, based on a religious background of the Mormon Church, but none of those standards are being violated in any way by the new programs."

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LONG OVERDUE

At libraries throughout suburban Chicago, more than 200 people are wait-listed for the most popular title. Delays of 90 days are common for other trendy favorites. Big deal, you say. Ah, but these card holders are not vying for books. Instead, they're lining up to borrow videocassettes of feature films like "Saturday Night Fever," "Patton" and "The Godfather."

"I've opened up a benevolent Pandora's box," laughs Leon Drolet Jr., director of Suburban Audio Visual Services for a library consortium consisting of three suburban Chicago library systems, and chairperson of the Public Library Association's audiovisual committee. "It's the hottest thing ever to hit the libraries."

Although there are about 50 libraries or groups of libraries throughout the country that currently loan prerecorded videocassettes, the three suburban Chicago systems together offer the most extensive home video programming service. They also were the first.

Since the service began in November of 1978, movie madness has swept the 142 libraries served by the suburban Chicago systems. "Fifty percent of people who borrow our videocassettes never had a library card before. We're bringing in loads of new people to the libraries," boasts Drolet. He reports at least 1200 requests each month for the more than 1000 videocassettes offered, including movies from Paramount, Fox, Columbia and Allied Artists. By the end of 1980, he expects to have more than 3000 videocassettes available for loan to card holders.

"Patton" and "M*A*S*H" are the two most popular titles; public-television documentaries and a variety of instructional programs also are available and—not surprisingly—are the easiest to borrow. All titles come in either VHS or Beta format, and the quantity that the library system orders depends on demand. In the case of a preferred movie like "M*A*S*H," Drolet may order as many as 45 VHS copies and 25 Beta copies. Since the video service was launched, 20,000 loans have been made; only three tapes were returned damaged and one was lost.

Drolet refutes the notion that by loaning prerecorded videocassettes, the library system is competing unfairly with commercial enterprises that sell or rent video programs. "We're really helping the vendors by drawing attention to the fact that these programs are commercially available on videocassettes," he asserts. "It's just like the book best sellers. People don't want to wait a few months to get it for free in their libraries. So they get impatient, and then go out to their neighborhood bookstore and buy a copy."

> "The day of creative exchange between the networks and the creative community is over. It is mechanized, systematized; there's concept testing, pilot testing, script testing; casting is approved or disapproved by the network. You go in with your original idea, and very, very rarely what you see on the air turns out to be either the concept, script or the casting that the creator had in mind originally."
>
> *—Alan Courtney, former president, MGM-TV, now president of Yonge-street Productions, at a Television Critics Association forum, Los Angeles*

> "Shouldn't we have the guts, in our daily campaign reports, to say, if it be the fact, that candidate A or B said nothing new and raced through six cities creating media events? Sure we should. But we haven't."
>
> *—Richard S. Salant, NBC board vice chairman, at a conference of the Radio-Television News Directors Association, Las Vegas*

LOOKING BACKWARD

It isn't unusual to see lines of 30 or 40 people on East 53rd Street in New York, waiting to get into the Museum of Broadcasting. Some 100,000 visitors have passed through since its opening three years ago, making the museum by far the most popular of the Nation's 12 or so television archives.

But the demand seems to grow with the collection, which started with 100 hours' worth of videotape, stands now at 2000 hours and is expected to total more than 3000 hours by 1981. So a major expansion, completed last November, has added a 63-seat auditorium, a "videoteque" where assorted programming, including live network telecasts, appears on a 6-foot screen; and 15 new viewing consoles augmenting the original eight.

Although the museum tries to include all types of programming in its collection, such categories as ballet, orchestral music and opera are noticeably well-represented, as are documentaries and public-affairs programs. With countless hours of broadcast history to represent, priorities had to be set. A museum aide explained the philosophy: "Our role, as an educational institution, is to act as an interpreter of the history of broadcasting. It's like someone viewing selectively."

Still, there's more than enough material to allow viewers their own definitions of selectivity, as evidenced by the museum's list of most-requested programs. Among them: the Beatles and Elvis on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, *Amos 'n' Andy*, Ernie Kovacs and the premiere episode of *I Love Lucy*.

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THE NEW ADVENTURES OF DISNEY

Disney's Wonderful World is no longer a big enough TV world to satisfy Walt Disney Productions. The anthology series, which started on ABC 25 years ago and has been an NBC staple since 1961, has been running behind CBS's *60 Minutes* in the Sunday-night ratings, and the Disney company is looking for ways to diversify its TV holdings. "We'd like to have one or two prime-time series on the air, plus the anthology and some movies of the week and some miniseries," says William R. Yates, who last year was appointed to the new job of television vice president at Disney.

Some of Yates' goals may be reached next season. The company's first television movie outside the *Wonderful World* format, "Amy on the Lips," is a possibility for ABC in 1980-81; it concerns a woman who runs away from her husband and joins the staff of a school for the deaf and blind. Another new departure for Disney is a six-hour miniseries in development at CBS called *A Long Walk Home*, about a three-decade feud between a white minister and a black minister in a small Southern town.

CBS will also broadcast, during the first week in March, a special show celebrating the 25th anniversary of Disneyland—the first nonanimated Disney special since 1961 to run on a network other than NBC.

Meanwhile back on NBC, the *Wonderful World* slot will be used to test pilots for projected series. One, called *Small and Frye*, features two detectives, one of whom shrinks to the height of 6 inches as a result of a meteorite shower.

Will Disney's TV programs mature along with its feature films, which ventured into "PG" territory with "The Black Hole"? Is Mickey Mouse unfaithful to Minnie? "We'll continue," says Yates firmly, "with family entertainment."

BIRD WATCHING 101

The term "higher education" took on new meaning recently when two law schools used a satellite orbiting 23,000 miles above the Earth's surface to transmit coast-to-coast legal seminars.

Last Sept. 4, the first segment of a full-credit course on—appropriately enough—Communications Policy and Law was beamed by satellite from a television studio in Manhattan to the McGeorge School of Law at the University of the Pacific in Sacramento, Cal. It marked the beginning of a unique experiment using video and satellite technologies to improve the quality of legal education. The course was taught by Prof. Morton Hamburg.

"If you want to offer a specialized law course that covers something like cable television, you should bring the most respected teacher in the field to your students," explains McGeorge dean Gordon Schaber, when asked why he chose Professor Hamburg to teach the course.

But Hamburg could not commute to California, because of his responsibilities at NYU and the New York law firm where he also works. Instead, the 25 students in his class at McGeorge watched videotapes of Hamburg's NYU lectures, recorded in classes the previous spring.

Each tape was followed by a live, one-hour question-and-answer session in which the professor appeared on the TV screen and the students talked to him via the satellite. According to Dean Schaber, the technology did not adversely affect the quality of the course. One McGeorge student told Professor Hamburg, "We know you as a person, not a television personality."

Although the 10-week course was experimental, within a year the McGeorge School of Law expects to be beaming back to NYU a course called Public Employee Collective Bargaining, featuring a West Coast authority, Donald Wollett.

"From our observations, the project was successful in that we had a course that would not normally be in our curriculum," says Dean Schaber. "And I think the students worked harder. When your professor's talking to you from 3000 miles away, you don't dare be unprepared."

BEDTIME STORY

Two years ago, when London Weekend Television announced that it was making a candid six-part drama series about two 15-year-old London schoolchildren falling in love, having an affair and eloping, there was shocked reaction from Britain's clean-up-TV enthusiasts and parts of the press. "How Dare They!" was the banner headline in the tabloid weekly Reveille. The unseen series was even accused of being part of the "child porn" phenomenon since, it was pointed out, 16 is the legal age of consent in England.

Ironically, Reveille Magazine is now dead but the drama series *Two People*, which was finally shown on British screens at the end of last year, was well received by viewers and critics alike. It was scheduled on Saturday nights at 10:15 P.M., directly opposite the BBC's top soccer program, yet it won audiences of over 12 million.

The lovesick couple were shown in bed as well as in the classroom, but sensitive direction and skillful dialogue ensured that there were few complaints on transmission. Producer Paul Knight was apprehensive when the scripts by Alick Rowe were shown to the watchdog Independent Broadcasting Authority (a common move for controversial dramas in commercial television), but script changes apparently were minimal. The delay in getting the plays onto the screen was attributable less to the subject matter than to the problems of finding a late-evening slot for the series, and to the 11-week Independent Television strike.

Alick Rowe, an ex-schoolteacher, says the series was based on a true story. He believes the subject is valid for TV drama. But he makes it clear that he "did not want kids to get the impression that we are giving the seal of approval to such behavior. We stressed that sexual commitment is not an action to be taken lightly. I desperately did not want to romanticize it."

The reaction of younger viewers to *Two People* was mixed. At a special preview, a group of schoolchildren suggested that Rowe had made the couple far too mature. But they agreed that his language of bravado and defiance was accurate. None found the play shocking.—*Richard Gilbert*

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ZAP!

The Killer. The Cutter. The Editor. They are the names of new electronic gadgets designed to edit out commercials automatically while your videocassette recorder is busy taping a program.

"I used to produce television commercials by day and figure out ways to cut them out by night," says David Jagger, video engineer and former commercial producer. After a few years of tinkering, he invented The Killer. Since 1978, he has sold more than 1000 of the devices, and his small company, Video Services (Fairfield, Conn.), has begun to prosper. There's one big hitch, though: The Killer will cut commercials only during the recording of black-and-white programs. Every time a commercial appears, The Killer detects the color signal, which triggers a pause button, stopping the VCR from recording. When the black-and-white program resumes, The Killer releases the pause button and the VCR starts recording again. All for $95.

For $250, Shelton Video Editors (Vashon, Wash.) offers its version of a commercial killer. The Editor (formerly called The Exterminator) is designed for color programs as well as black-and-white. According to Keith Hodson, president of Shelton, there's a split-second fade to black between a program and a commercial, which triggers The Editor to stop recording. When the program comes back on, the pause mode is released and the recording begins again. Hodson claims his unit is 95 percent effective, although he admits this figure drops as low as 75 percent for some shows, particularly movies that have a lot of dimly lit scenes. The lower figure has been reported by more than one trade journal.

Shelton Video Editors took another competitor, Muntz Electronics (Van Nuys, Cal.), to court to halt Muntz's manufacturing and marketing of its unit, The Cutter. Shelton alleges that Muntz copied its Editor. The case has not yet come to trial; meanwhile, Muntz now has 5000 Cutters, tabbed at $99 each, sitting on warehouse shelves.

Will the existence of these little electronic devices set off a panic on Madison Avenue? Not in the near future, says William Donnelly, vice president of new electronic media at Young & Rubicam, one of the world's largest advertising agencies. "Sure, by the year 2000 these commercial killers might have some effect on us, but by then, with all the other stunning TV-related technological developments, that may be the least of our problems."

"Criticism of television is now America's largest growth industry."

–Irwin Segelstein, president, NBC Television Stations/Radio, at the American Film Institute National Conference on Film and Television, Los Angeles

"Three years ago, critics were writing that the documentary was dead. They were confusing dead with dull."

–Jane C. Pfeiffer, NBC chairman, addressing the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, Los Angeles

SON OF JUKEBOX

In the early Sixties, there was Scopitone, a French-made video jukebox that used a film cartridge. Plagued by mechanical problems and a shortage of quality, music-oriented films, Scopitone never really caught the fancy of the amusement-machine industry or the public. It did, however, make its way to Sandusky, Ohio, to a bar owned by Joe Barone's father. Today, Barone is chief executive officer of Tele-Show Systems, Ltd.—marketers and distributors of the world's first videodisc jukebox.

Tele-Show Systems will hit the market next fall with a machine that plays videodisc records ranging from current recording artists to classic moments in sports. The $6000 unit (about twice the price of its audio cousin) looks much like a standard jukebox; its 25-inch video screen can be mounted wherever it fits best. Fifty cents buys the user a single selection from among 50 soundtracks, each accompanied by a visual performance, lasting about three minutes. "Our chances for success," Barone admits, "depend, in the long run, on our developing programming dynamic enough to induce John Q. Public to drop his two quarters into that machine."

Responsibility for supplying that programming rests entirely with MTV Productions of Los Angeles. Jack Millman, MTV's president, says he intends to put together "whatever programs are necessary to fit the needs of every box we sell, wherever it may be." "Wherever," as he envisions it, might be a bar in a Northwest logging town or a bus terminal in downtown Miami. Selections will include tapings of rock, country and classical performers, movie clips (from "Yellow Submarine" to "Singin' in the Rain") and filmed performances like the Beatles' first American TV appearance, great moments in sports, world-famous circus acts and even some how-to films. At the moment, nothing is being originally produced for the videodisc jukebox; many of the programs (for which Millman must pay royalty fees) come from such sources as the promotion departments of record companies eager for publicity for their stars.

The amusement-machine industry is taking a wait-and-see attitude. One of the things it's waiting to see is if this new breed of jukebox will have enough drawing power to justify a bar's investment; another is the quality and quantity of the programming. "It would have a certain novelty to it," concedes one veteran observer, "but it doesn't appear practical. That $6000 price tag is awfully expensive."

Jack Millman, however, foresees only one problem with the videodisc jukebox. "When a bar installs one of these babies, a lot of people will crowd around to see it—and it's going to lead to a lot of brawls."

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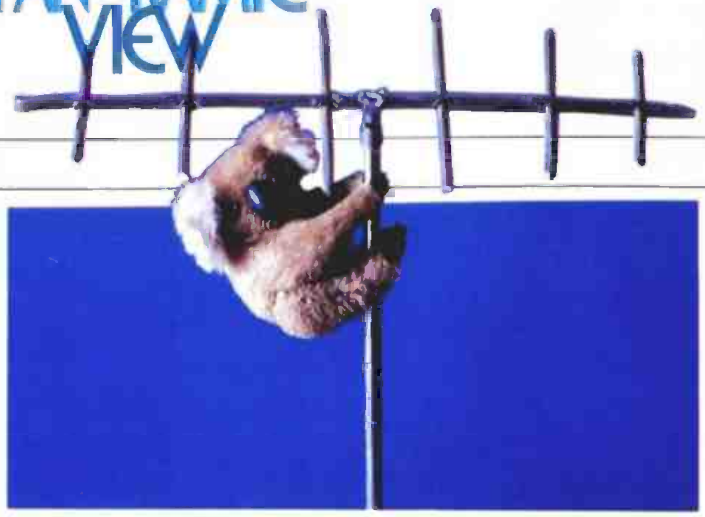
PANORAMIC VIEW



DOWN UNDER COMES OVER

The Australian invasion of American popular culture has opened on another front: television.

An unprecedented amount of Australian television has crossed the Pacific recently to land in the U.S. syndication market, with more on the way. The programs join such other imported Australian artifacts as Olivia Newton-John, Helen Reddy and "The Thorn Birds."

Against the Wind led the television assault. A 13-hour miniseries, set in a critical early period of Australian history, *Against the Wind* scored high ratings for the Metromedia chain of stations last summer and will be shown on the Field Communications stations next summer. Several individual independent stations also have bought it.

Equally impressive ratings have been won by *Prisoner: Cell Block H*, an Australian serial set primarily in a women's prison, which opened on KTLA, Los Angeles, last summer and has since spread to more than a dozen U.S. cities, with more markets on the way.

And two major Australian series are waiting in the syndication wings, with broadcasts expected soon. *The Sullivans* is being imported by Norman Lear's TAT Communications—the first time TAT will distribute a series it didn't produce. The ratings champ in Melbourne for three years running, *The Sullivans* follows an Australian family through World War II, intercutting scenes from the home front with scenes from foreign fields where the sons are serving. More than 600 half-hour episodes already have appeared on the Australian airwaves. *The Don Lane Show* is a popular Australian variety/talk series that will show up in some American markets this month. Lane, who hails from the Bronx, is considered Australia's answer to Johnny Carson.

Then there's a series of Australian documentaries, *The Africans*, which is popping up on American channels. And other Australian series and specials are actively seeking buyers.

Why has Australia—a thinly populated country on the other side of the planet—assumed such a prominent position in the American market for foreign television? Distributors of the Australian shows point out that the common language is an obvious asset now that the "accent barrier" finally has been broken. They also claim that Australia is culturally more akin to the United States than is Great Britain, the traditional leader in foreign sales of English-language TV to the U.S. And Australian television turns out more exportable product than does Canada, another potential rival. "Australian TV is a microcosm of American TV," sums up one of the distributors, "and in some cases Australian TV is ahead of American TV."

FYI

In order to survive in the brave new world of television circa 1980, you have to be able to speak the language, which sometimes seems to consist almost entirely of sets of three-letter initials.

And so, class, let us begin with **VTR**. A VTR is any kind of videotape recorder, including reel-to-reel machines used in TV stations and also **VCR**s, which are videocassette recorders—the kind you can buy for home use. Some VCRs are built on the principles of **VHS**, which stands for "video home system" and has nothing to do with **VHF** (very high frequency) or, for that matter, **UHF** (ultra high frequency), which designates the parts of the communications spectrum that TV signals travel through on their way to home screens.

The people who are largely responsible for the programs using those frequencies are, of course, the three commercial networks, **ABC**, **CBS** and **NBC**, a.k.a. the American Broadcasting Company, the Columbia Broadcasting System and the National Broadcasting Company.

Then there is the noncommercial network, and here's where you have to start paying close attention. Most of this network's programs are presented by **PBS** (the Public Broadcasting Service), which is simple enough. But you also need to know about **CPB** (the Corporation for Public Broadcasting), which administers Federally appropriated funds for public television (sometimes referred to as **PTV**). Some PTV programs are **ITV**—instructional television—which should not be confused with Britain's **ITV**, or independent television, the commercial system over there that competes with the noncommercial **BBC** (the British Broadcasting Corporation), which has become the source of a lot of PBS programs. Others, such as *Sesame Street*, are produced by **CTW** (Children's Television Workshop). In resolutely democratic fashion, the programs shown on PBS are selected and funded through a station vote-counting process called **SPC** (Station Program Cooperative). This process is something like the **NFL** draft.

Now, the NFL, as every loyal American knows, is the National Football League, which has had more success in the ratings than have the **NBA** (National Basketball Association) and the **NHL** (National Hockey League), which is not the same thing as **NHK** (Nihon Hoso Kyokai), Japan's largest TV network. We know about ratings because such matters are measured by a company called Nielsen, which publishes them in its **NTI** (National Television Index), and by another company called **ARB** (American Research Bureau). They keep tabs on **HUT** (homes using television), among other things that networks and stations worry about.

Those worries also include the **FCC** (Federal Communications Commission), which oversees American broadcasting; the **FTC** (Federal Trade Commission), which keeps an eye on television advertising; **ACT** (Action for Children's Television), a citizens' group that campaigns against programs and practices that it thinks are not good for children; **OPT** (Operation Prime Time), **MSN** (Mobil Showcase Network) and **MPC** (Metromedia Producers Corporation), groups of stations forming ad hoc networks for the presentation of programs; **HBO** (Home Box Office), the largest national pay-TV service, which works through cable systems; and **STV** (subscription television), another form of pay-TV, transmitted over the air rather than through cables.

All of these forms of programming can be viewed on your **CRT** (cathode ray tube), more familiarly known as your TV screen. And your picture will stay sharp if your set is equipped with **AFT** (automatic fine tuning).

Class dismissed, and **HND** (have a nice day).

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PIE FOR EVERYONE

There is today a great debate, among those who think of the viewing public as an audience "pie," about how much of that pie will be left for ABC, CBS and NBC once the new television technologies carve out their share.

The networks, having put the question to their research departments, acknowledge that some nibbling will indeed occur. But they console themselves in large part with what might be considered a gastronomic paradox: if cable, VCRs and the like make the network slice proportionately thinner, they will at the same time, according to the networks, make the pie itself much, much bigger.

Their reasoning is based in part on the presumption that the more things we can do with our TV sets, the more time we'll want to spend with them. NBC, for example, predicts that by

1988 cable will be in 30 percent of our homes, VCRs in 15 percent, videodiscs and home computers in 10 percent each. But, says the network, as both the population and the tube's utility increase, the actual number of homes with TV sets will swell from the current 76 million to 89 million—and the people in those homes will devote an average of 51 hours each week to watching TV instead of the current 44.5 hours.

Where will we find that extra 6.5 hours a week? Well, ABC's research chief, who shares NBC's optimism, wasn't giving out specific projections, but he did speak glowingly of the possibility that TV will be making its way into more and more factories and offices, that the Nation might shift to a four-day workweek in response to the energy crunch, and that we might finally get over "the myth that you need eight hours of sleep each night."

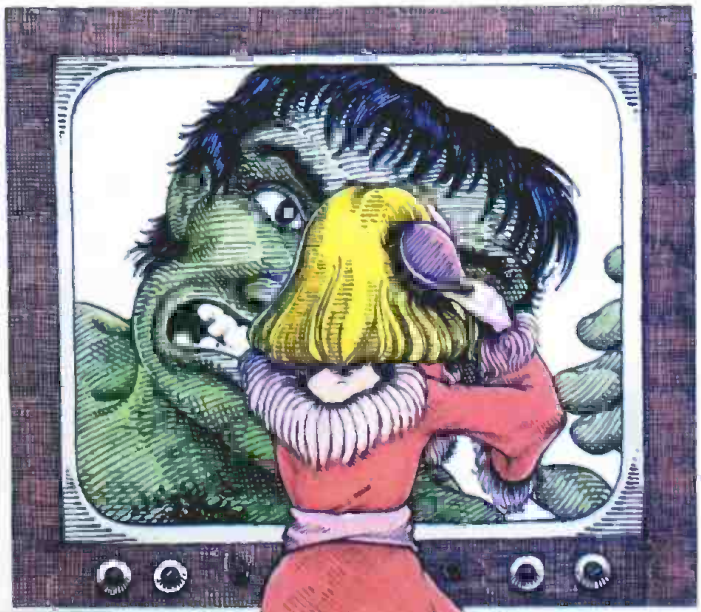
CBS's resident economist is unusual in his willingness to project a possible 10 percent drop in network viewing by 1990, a third of which would be taken, he says, by cable, a third by pay-cable and the remaining third by VCRs and discs. Like his ABC and NBC counterparts, he points out that advertising revenues will be less than equally affected, because some of the new media are noncommercial, and, also, "there *seems* to be more viewing by people who own these gadgets." Still, he admits the expanding-pie theory leaves a sour taste in his mouth. "I never found the argument that we're getting a declining share of a growing world very satisfying," he said.

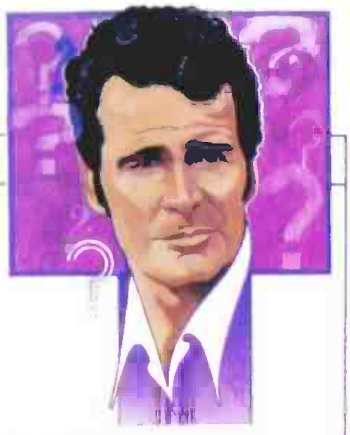
"'The Snake Theatre' tells the story of a family trip interrupted by gas trouble. Experimental theatre in a gas station on the Sausalito waterfront with masks, movable sculptures and original music, using automatic transmission as a metaphor for changing individual and corporate gears in the 20th century."

—from the program schedule of Videowest, San Francisco's "alternative television program"

THROUGH A GLASS BRIGHTLY

Sick of having your TV set stare at you when it's turned off? New York designer Anthony Lombardo has found a nifty solution: hide it behind a two-way mirror. Embedded in the mirror, which can be built in just about anywhere in a room, are microscopic flakes of magnesium that help pass the light through when the set is on. Inconspicuous openings are left alongside the installation to let the TV signal into the set and the sound out to the viewer. Lombardo recommends a brighter-than-usual set; since his average fee runs as high as $6000, one wonders if the same could be said about the owner.





FLASH GARNER?

One of the surest bets in television scheduling is that there will be a new James Garner series on NBC in the fall of 1981. One of the riskiest bets would be a wager on what role Garner will play in his new show.

"I really haven't given it a thought," says Garner. He then gives it a thought. "I'm looking for something where I'd be a deaf-mute in a wheelchair," he announces. Seriously, folks, now that *The Rockford Files* has been filed away (the show was canceled in midseason, due to Garner's bout with ill health—although Universal studios reportedly has since filed a $1.5 million breach-of-contract suit against the actor for failure to return to the set), a new show with far fewer physical demands might be welcome.

He'll take a few months off "to get back in shape." Then Garner will turn out two television movies—one of which might be a pilot. Whatever happens to the movies, NBC expects another series out of Garner for the fall of 1981. But he definitely won't play a private eye—or a lawyer. "Too much talking," says Garner. "You rattle off all that crap and the mind gets jumbled.

"Everybody's into the future," continues Garner. "We took some zingers at Westerns in *Maverick* and at private eyes in *Rockford*, so maybe we could do that with the future. Maybe we'll do *Flash Rogers*.

"Or I might like to do a con man, a hustler."

Do not send your scripts about deaf-mute, wheelchaired, hustling space heroes to Garner. He says his new venture will originate within his current staff.

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Who Will Succeed Johnny Carson?

There are at least four heirs apparent—and others not so apparent

By SAM MERRILL

"There's more money going down in bars right now on when you're going to leave *The Tonight Show* than there is on the entire NFL."—Elizabeth Ashley to Johnny Carson on *The Tonight Show,* Nov. 13, 1979.

One of the most important agents in Hollywood—this man is so important he isn't even called an agent, but a "packager"—sits behind his regular table at The Daisy, a glittering outdoor cafe on Rodeo Drive, nibbles absently at a big, leafy salad called "The Jack Lemmon," sips a Perrier and lime and—between phone calls—explains the Rules of Humility in Television. "Number one: even the biggest stars get canceled eventually. Two: no show lasts forever. Three: no one is irreplaceable. And four: none of the above rules apply to Johnny Carson."

Even as the packager nibbles and speaks, his fourth rule is undergoing a severe test. Johnny Carson, host of *The Tonight Show* for the past 17 years (and that's five years longer than another "irreplaceable" figure, Franklin D. Roosevelt, was President), has told NBC he wants out. His lawyer, Henry Bushkin, is trying to obtain Carson's release from the remainder of his contract, which runs until April 1981. In a move to retain Johnny—or at least buy a little more time to find a replacement—NBC president Fred Silverman has gone so far as to import a heavy legal talent, Milton A. Rudin, to argue the network's case. The packager sums up the current situation succinctly: "If the judge rules with Johnny and Silverman's appeals go belly-up, Carson could be out of there by midsummer. But even if Freddie wins, the longest Carson can stay is till April 1981. So, one way or another, they're going to have to come up with a replacement pretty soon. Jeez, that'd make a hell of a game show, wouldn't it? *The Great Johnny Carson Replacement Sweepstakes.*"

Although NBC executives continue to deny they are actively searching for the next permanent host of *The Tonight Show*—and will probably continue to do so, on the advice of counsel, as long as Carson's lawsuit remains alive—the Great Replacement Sweepstakes has in fact been running constantly, behind the scenes, for the better part of a decade. "In the mid-Seventies, we thought the next host would be McLean Stevenson," says David Tebet, a former senior VP at NBC whose primary function for many years was to act as a sort of liaison between *The Tonight Show* and the network. "But we tried him and he went into the toilet." Then Carson signed his current contract and the pressure to replace him eased—until now. During the past few months, the action has become so hot that the denials of executives and contenders alike have begun to take on the ritualistic quality of Presidential aspirants in midcampaign who, also for legal reasons, have not yet gotten around to formally declaring their candidacy.

When Jack Paar, then *The Tonight Show*'s host, made it clear in early 1962 that his next swan song really would be his last, NBC embarked on a frenzied talent hunt for his replacement. While a succession of guest hosts ranging from Groucho Marx to Mort Sahl to a little-known former band singer named Merv Griffin paraded through NBC's Rockefeller Center studios, ratings dipped, TV columnists solemnly predicted the show's demise and executives at the two rival networks smacked their lips expectantly. After all, Paar had taken Steve Allen's old late-night program, with a loyal but very small cult following, and built it into a substantial moneymaker. On a few occasions, Paar had drawn as many as seven-and-a-half-million viewers, a late-night audience previously considered unattainable. "They said we could never replace Paar," remembers a 20-year veteran of the network wars. "And they were right. Jack was an original. So we found another original and built an entirely different show around him."

The result was an unparalleled TV success story. When Johnny Carson took over *The Tonight Show* on Oct. 1, 1962, he immediately averaged seven-and-a-half-million viewers. Ten years later, the figure was 12 million; today, that number is close to 18 million viewers per night. With a current annual income in excess of $60 million, *The Tonight Show* is the biggest single moneymaker in the medium's history. And during the darkest days of 1978, when NBC's prime-time programming languished in the Nielsen ratings' subbasement, *The Tonight Show* alone accounted for an incredible 17 percent of the network's total earnings. Befitting his position as star of such a show, Carson has been, for the past six years, TV's highest paid performer. His current three-year contract reportedly provides a total income—including salary, RCA stock and insurance payments—of $5 million a year for 25 three-day weeks, 12 four-day weeks and 15 weeks' vacation. *continued*

Sam Merrill is an award-winning journalist and radio reporter. His articles have appeared in Playboy, Esquire, New Times and other national publications.

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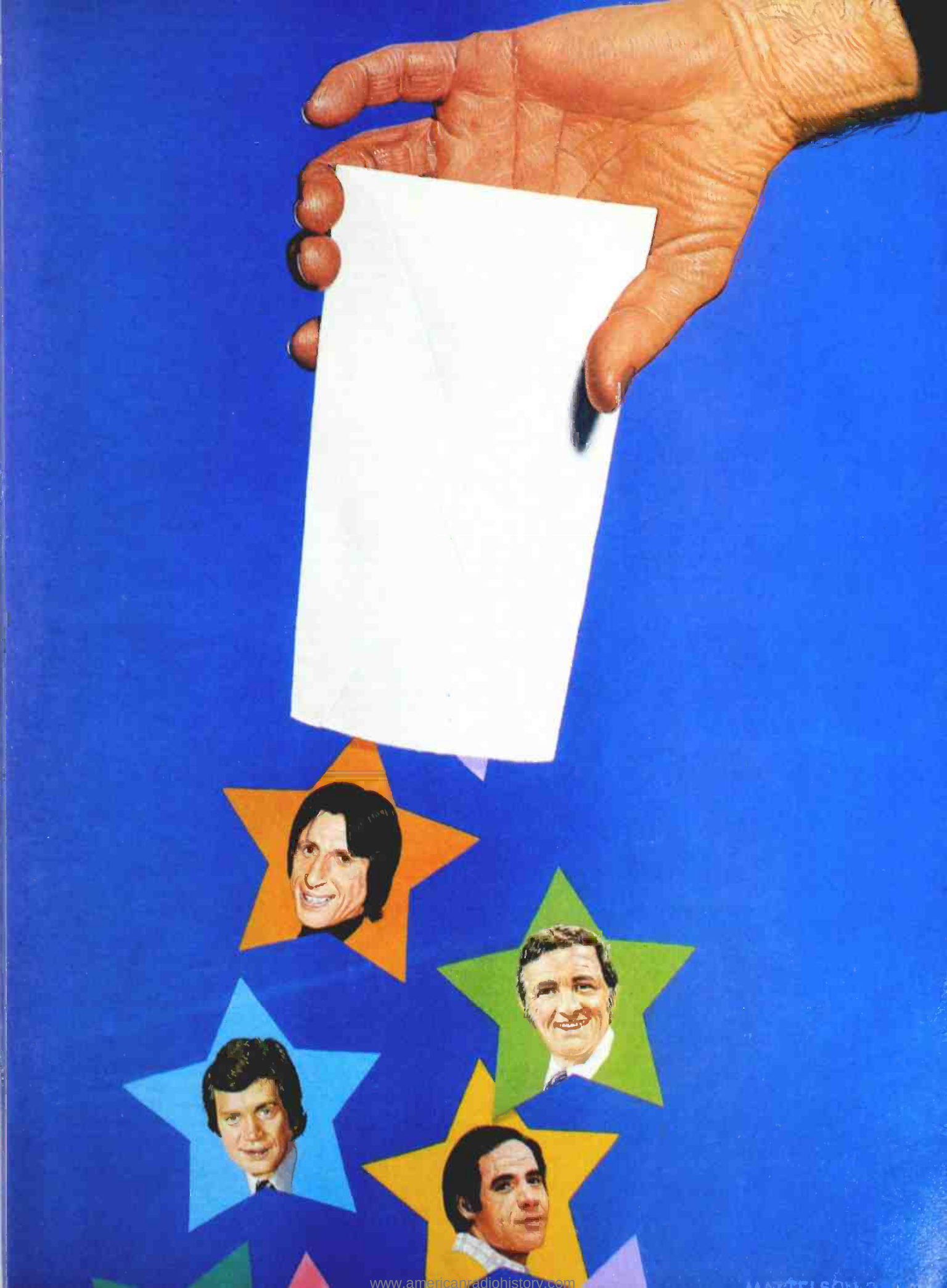

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David Letterman: A storybook case of stepping on the right toes at the right time

Yet Johnny Carson is not a happy man. Some identify the problem as a simple personality conflict between him and Fred Silverman. A former NBC executive who has remained in close touch with Carson says, "When Fred took over, he began pressuring Johnny to work more than his contract called for. Johnny thought that was bush-league."

Then came the 1979 Oscars, on which Carson performed as host for ABC. After the broadcast last spring, ABC's bigwigs showered him with compliments. The response from NBC, meanwhile, was stony silence—not a single executive from his own network even called to say he had seen the show. A few months later, Bushkin, asking for a clarification of Carson's contract, brought suit against NBC. The feud was exacerbated by the fact that Silverman hired Rudin to negotiate with Bushkin instead of simply turning the matter over to the network's own legal department.

"That," says the packager, his Jack Lemmon salad finished, four phone calls completed and his Perrier now reduced to a half-melted ice cube and a twisted slice of lime, "was an *enormous* error. It was almost an admission by Silverman that he couldn't handle the situation. Of course, Rudin got nowhere, and now the whole thing has ended up in front of a judge, which I'm sure nobody wanted."

The bad blood between NBC and its most lucrative property reached a dizzying height of absurdity on Oct. 1, 1979, when *The Tonight Show*'s 17th-anniversary special devastated the competition during two hours of prime time, a ratings triumph that had the industry buzzing for days—and that saw Fred Silverman lavishly praised for having the vision and confidence to turn Carson loose against prime-time opposition. But on Tuesday, Oct. 2, *The Tonight Show* office—a small, rectangular building on the network's Burbank lot—was silent and empty. No flowers, no telegrams, no phone calls.

That night, while warming up the studio audience for guest host Richard Dawson, *Tonight Show* executive producer Fred de Cordova beamed radiantly and thanked the program's fans for their unprecedented patronage the night before. But after the show, when asked if he'd heard from Silverman, De Cordova's grin faded. He was silent—which answered the question. Several days later, Silverman did call Carson to congratulate him on the success of the anniversary show, which, under the circumstances, was a statesmanlike act of peacemaking. But the underlying message was clear: to Fred Silverman, Johnny Carson is not exempted from TV's Rules of Humility—even the King is replaceable.

But with whom? At the moment, the leading contenders are David Letterman, David Brenner, Robert Klein and Richard Dawson. Steve Martin, whom Tebet signed to an NBC contract in late 1977 with the hope that he might some day emerge as a contender, now would probably turn down the job. Yet he remains a longshot. Another longshot is Chevy Chase. A top prospect when he left *Saturday Night Live,* Chase's star has tarnished considerably in recent years. But there are those who still believe that if anyone has what Kenneth Tynan, in a vividly insightful encomium to Johnny Carson in The New Yorker, once described as "the gift of reinventing himself, night after night, without rehearsal or repetition," it is Chase.

A veteran TV writer with several years of experience on the *Tonight Show* staff not only confirms the accepted industry assumption that Letterman, Klein, Brenner and Dawson are the frontrunners, but also helps narrow the field considerably with the following observation: "The Big Boys have already decided several things for sure—it won't be Bob Newhart or Don Rickles or Tony Randall or Bill Cosby or Rich Little or any other comedian with a long history of prime-time exposure. They want somebody fresh. Preferably a comic. Preferably a man, so Joan Rivers is out. And if they *really* had their druthers, what they'd probably opt for is a 35-year-old WASP from Nebraska—in other words, a Carson clone."

Dave Tebet agrees that the temptation to look for "another Carson" is almost overwhelming, but to do so would probably lead to disaster. "They've got to forget about finding another Carson and just try to find another host for the show. A guy who can give you 17 years of 'A' material comes once in a lifetime. Right now, they're just hoping for someone who can do three years before burning out, like Steve Allen, or four, like Paar."

But the search for "another Carson" goes on—at least subconsciously. No other interpretation—not even his own formidable talents—can begin to explain the breathtaking rise to prominence of David Letterman.

Letterman, looking considerably more comfortable in jeans, sneakers and a plaid lumberjack shirt than in the chalk-striped three-piece suits he customarily wears as

Richard Dawson: Not the first choice, but a very dangerous wild card

guest host of *The Tonight Show,* is perched precariously on the corner of his manager's desk at Universal City. Between sips of coffee from an oversized ceramic mug, Letterman describes what was, simultaneously, one of the most fateful and most peculiar events of his life—his first encounter with Fred Silverman.

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David Brenner: A strong contender on the strength of his ratings alone

"The Anti-Defamation League was giving Fred its Man of the Year award, and I'd been hired to perform at the luncheon. At the time, that was a very big job for me, and I was so nervous, I kept going to the bathroom. On one of those trips, I walked right into Silverman, stepped on his toes and scuffed his shoes and nearly knocked him over. I tried to recover by being real friendly—introducing myself and shaking hands. But I was so petrified, I pulled my hand away after about half a second and left him shaking air. It was a nightmare."

Yet Silverman was utterly captivated by the young comic—and, perhaps most important, by the many uncanny similarities between Letterman today and Carson 20 years ago. Both are from America's heartland (Carson grew up in Nebraska, Letterman in Indiana); both worked extensively in radio before embarking on careers in stand-up comedy; both have the sort of lean, rawboned, high-school-jock heterosexuality that is unambiguous yet nonthreatening; both "lay down" well for other comedians, while building their own material around classic pacing, a mischievous wit and an intelligence untainted by intellectuality. It was a storybook case of stepping on the right toes at the right time.

At that point, Letterman was already under contract to NBC, and soon after that peculiar first meeting Silverman tossed him into the shark pool to sink or swim. By most accounts, including his own, Letterman has done a little of both. His performances, excepting a few weak monologues, have been excellent. Even a fellow young comedian, also under NBC contract, who frankly admits his jealousy at the shot Letterman is getting, feels honor-bound to concede, "David is very solid on the interviews"—quickly adding, "but I'm funnier." Yet Letterman's ratings remain low, which up to this point is understandable, since he came into the job with absolutely no national following. His future as a top contender in large part will be determined by whether or not America, as it gets to know Letterman, begins selecting him to go to bed with. That had better start happening soon.

Letterman flashes a gap-toothed grin not unlike Lauren Hutton's, but with more overbite, when recalling his earliest appearances behind America's most famous slab of formica. "On my second show, I made an actress cry. That was a little unsettling. But Freddy de Cordova came out during the break and smoothed things over in about 10 seconds. That's the first impression you get—that every single person on staff is absolutely competent. It makes hosting *The Tonight Show* kind of like driving a Rolls-Royce. But still, it's an exhausting job because there are 90 things going on. You're conducting an interview, hopefully being funny yourself, checking your notes, watching the clock and trying to decipher Freddy de Cordova's hand signals—all at the same time, and all while *attempting* to make the whole experience look like a casual conversation in your living room."

It's a measure of David Letterman's honesty that when directly asked if he really believes himself capable of carrying *The Tonight Show* five days a week, his immediate response is "No." Then that impish smile again, and a sip of coffee. "Well," he says cautiously, "I suppose you hit a stride after a while, and it becomes easier. Also, when Johnny leaves, the show will have to be totally reconstructed to accommodate the style of the next host."

And if *he* becomes the next host, what would *The Tonight Show* look like?

"I'd have fewer old-time show-business types who tell long stories about their latest grapefruit diet or about building their dream house in Las Vegas, and more people with unusual groundings. Like George Willig, who climbed the World Trade Center, and the guy who pedaled across the English Channel in a homemade airplane. As for celebrities, I like the ones who don't care whether or not you stick to the notes. Orson Bean and Wayne Rogers are like that. You just look them in the eye and ask whatever pops into your head. That's the kind of television that keeps you squirming, but it's very exciting."

And what about structural changes?

"I'd like to have something to replace the monologue. Maybe just talk to the audience the way Tom Snyder opens the *Tomorrow* show. Also, Ed [McMahon] and Doc [Severinsen] are so firmly established that if they left—and they probably would—it would be a mistake to try to replace them. I'd probably do something different. What? I don't know. Hey, I don't even know what I'm going to do for a monologue next Monday night. But that's part of the magic of *The Tonight Show*. You never stop squirming."

It's noon, and over Letterman's shoulder, through a picture window, can be seen several dozen colorfully dressed tourists assembling for their daily vigil at

Robert Klein: He has remained safely above the battle

the doors of the Universal City Commissary. Each time a "star" enters or exits, the crowd shifts excitedly. Hands are clasped, backs slapped, autographs signed. Letterman, who has a luncheon appointment, finishes his coffee, excuses himself and ventures out into the throng. His presence among this advance brigade of Nielsen's Army elicits not even the slightest ripple of interest. Most don't even recognize him. And that, in short, is his prob-

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lem. One NBC executive lays it on the line just that simply: "If David had the [ratings] numbers, he'd have the job."

Richard Dawson is different from his rivals in several important ways. He's older than they are—at 47, he's not much younger than the 54-year-old Carson. Dawson is not a comedian. He absolutely refuses to talk to the press about any aspect of his work on *The Tonight Show*. Yet during his guest-host stints, he openly jokes about his desire to replace Johnny on a permanent basis—something Letterman, Klein and Brenner have never dared to do. And there's one more difference between Dawson and the others—a major plus in his column that TV insiders never fail to emphasize: Richard Dawson is the only top contender whose current job consists of ad-libbing daily, on national televison, with a variety of guests from all walks of life and under circumstances that are never entirely predictable. Dawson's program is not a talk show but a game show, *Family Feud*, which, like Carson's old *Who Do You Trust?* 20 years ago, has become not only a ratings success, but a springboard to major stardom for its ringmaster.

Dawson's performances as *Tonight Show* host have been smooth, professional and relaxed. His ratings are fair. The guests like him and the staff gives him high marks for preparation. If circumstances break right (Steve Martin declines, or is not offered the show; Letterman's ratings remain depressed; Brenner and Klein have other long-term commitments when the Big Moment arrives), Dawson just might find himself the only horse in the race.

"At the moment, Richard looks like about a 6-to-1 shot," figures a William Morris Agency handicapper with clients on the inside. (At least one top NBC executive gives Dawson an even better chance than that.) "But no matter what happens, he probably won't be first choice, so his odds are hardest to compute. Right up to the end, Dawson will remain a very dangerous wild card."

It is a general rule on *The Tonight Show* that when Johnny is absent, the ratings decline by about one sixth. The drawing power of every guest host is measured against that standard of diminished expectations. With one exception. After five years and more than 50 guest-host appearances, David Brenner continues to draw astonishingly high ratings. On the strength of his ratings alone, David Brenner becomes a strong contender for Carson's job.

Brenner sits in the half-furnished parlor of his newly acquired New York City townhouse and contemplates the absurdity of that situation. "I've never even met the people at NBC, which shows you that people mean nothing. It's all done by numbers. TV is like blood pressure. If your numbers are good, you're healthy. If your numbers are bad, you're dead."

Like many other comedians—including Klein—Brenner was "discovered" on *The Tonight Show*, and all his ruminations on the future of the program are colored by a profound affection for the show in general and for Carson in particular. "Johnny has more class and taste than anyone in television except maybe Walter Cronkite. That's one element I'd definitely try to keep. The rest of the show would have to be changed to fit my personality. Paar and Allen did wonderful programs, but they were nothing like the Carson show. Paar would sit on a stool and talk about his daughter and his dog. Allen had a whole cast of zany characters. They did shows that fit their personalities, which is why they worked. So does Carson. The next guy better do the same, or *The Tonight Show* will become like the rest of television—schlocky and mediocre. Mediocre? What am I talking about? The rest of TV is mediocre *at best*. I mean, when people see something mediocre on TV now, they applaud."

Which brings him to the subject of David Letterman, whom Brenner apparently views as a manufactured personality, and therefore a symbol of the callous manipulation of popular taste by network executives. "Numbers don't come because of how many times you appear before the public," he insists. "They come because of how the public responds to you. After only three *Saturday Night Lives* and five *Tonight Shows*, Steve Martin exploded. The country fell in love with him. After 85 *Tonight Shows*, the country is still saying, 'David who?' Comedy is like food. You can't keep telling people, 'This tastes good,' if it really doesn't. They'll try it once and maybe a second time, but after that they'll say, 'Hey, this stuff stinks and I'm not going to let you feed it to me any more.'

"I hate when TV executives underestimate the intelligence of the public. But I look at the situation the other way around. The public *overestimates* the intelligence of the TV executives. The next host of *The Tonight Show* should be someone who represents contemporary America, someone who has his finger on the country's pulse. But TV executives have their *thumb* on the pulse, so the beat they're hearing is their own."

If Brenner does replace Carson ("If they pick me, you *know* it won't be America's choice"), he, like Letterman, would open the guest list to a wider variety of people than has been seen on the program in recent years. "I'd have rock stars and public-affairs people and actors you don't see much on TV any more, like Art Carney."

Among current guest-host regulars, Brenner's favorites include Martin Mull, John Davidson, Steve Martin, Robert Klein and Bill Cosby. "But there are many people I think would do a great job who never get the chance. Like John Belushi, Steve Landesberg, Gloria Gaynor, Bette Midler, Alice Cooper, Vice President Mondale and Henry Kissinger. I'd also like to see Yasir Arafat host the show, just so I could hold him hostage in Burbank. It would be nice to see a foreigner as host once in a while, like Jean-Paul Belmondo or Alain Delon or Charles Aznavour. But that'll never happen."

The William Morris handicapper sends Brenner off at 4 to 1 on the strength of his ratings and an excellent relationship with the current *Tonight Show* staff. Network honchos seem generally to agree with that figure by not disagreeing with it. But, of course, don't quote them.

Over the past year, while guest hosts poured through Burbank like pilgrims through Mecca, one of the principal contenders for the *Tonight Show* spot remained safely above the battle in a Riverside Drive apartment in New York City. As the others clawed for rating points, Robert Klein was starring in a Broadway musical, "They're Playing Our Song," observing the action from what seemed a safe distance—until a TV columnist in Chicago "broke the story" that Klein had emerged as the leading candidate for Johnny's job.

"That Chicago story lacked a certain credibility," Klein says, reclining on a sofa in the anteroom of his manager's New York office. "The guy wrote that I've mellowed considerably since turning 40, which is why NBC has decided to turn the show over to me. I'm 37, thank you. I have *not* mellowed and I know for a fact that no one has been directly approached because it's Carson's show and they want desperately to keep him."

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Klein's professional background is, at least superficially, remarkably similar to Brenner's. His reputation was "made" on *The Tonight Show* with a knockout monologue in his very first appearance 12 years ago. "Actually," Klein notes, "that was my second network spot. The first was on *Ted Mack's Amateur Hour* in 1957. I appeared with the Teen Tones and was defeated by a one-armed pianist from Missouri who got a 4000-hour standing ovation." But after hitting pay dirt with Carson, Klein became, like Brenner, a sort of member of the *Tonight Show* family. He has now done the show, as both guest and host, nearly a hundred times, and his broad national following never fails to provide a good, healthy kick in the Nielsens.

Whether he gets the *Tonight Show* job, or someone else gets it, Klein is fairly certain that the next host will not be as important a person in American life as Johnny Carson. "The impact of talk-show television has declined generally in recent years, as the format has become more common. Twenty years ago, Woody Allen or Nichols and May could go on *The Tonight Show* and electrify the Nation. Now, with Merv and Dinah and Mike and Tom and all the local shows, the massive impact of one great talk-show appearance has been blunted. Also, we've become visually spoiled. Especially young people, many of whom don't even have the attention span to get through a concert any more. They need light shows and people breathing fire on stage. Without that constant visual bombardment, they can't even sit still and listen to music."

But young people *can* sit still and listen to Klein. Since last summer, he has had a semimonthly rock radio talk show called "The Robert Klein Hour," a nationally syndicated program carried by 250 FM stations with an audience of nearly seven million people. The show has become such a phenomenal hit, sponsors and syndicators alike are clamoring for him to go weekly. But Klein isn't sure. There are several film offers, an NBC special—and, perhaps, that urgent call from Burbank the columnist in Chicago seems so sure about.

Although he provides witty, insightful and direct answers to other questions, it's difficult to elicit from Klein his real feelings about the *Tonight Show* job, a problem no doubt rooted in his own admiration for Carson. In the early Seventies, Klein wrote an extremely favorable magazine article about Carson but, despite his own celebrity, could not get the piece published. "Johnny was out there like Groucho, improvising and taking chances for many years. I wrote that in my article, but until his first Emmy, nobody believed it. He really wasn't appreciated. So for someone like me, who's been Johnny's fan and booster all my professional life, it's kind of difficult to suddenly think seriously about stepping into his shoes."

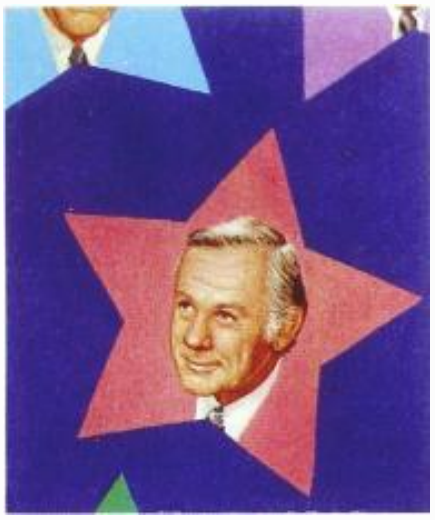
But gradually, over the course of the afternoon, Klein warms to the task. "The first problem the next host will have is the five-day week, because the inheritor of Johnny's job is certainly not going to inherit his vacation schedule. And believe me, that'll be a *real* problem. *The Tonight Show* is much more complex than any of the other talk shows, and more pressured because it's more important. The fact that no one does it five nights a week has helped keep the show fresh. When someone tries to do it every day, it'll be a shock—and a strain." Klein grins shyly, shrugs and confesses, "I haven't had a five-days-a-week job since I was a schoolteacher. And even then I was a substitute."

When told that all the other candidates for Carson's job talked about totally gutting the current structure of the program, Klein readily concurs. "No one will do it the way Carson does, because there's no one around today who can. The show will have to be stripped down and rebuilt to accommodate what will almost certainly be the more limited talents of the next host."

The odds on Robert Klein are, according to the William Morris handicapper, "at worst, 4 to 1. Maybe better. He's a comic. He gets ratings. He has good talk-show credentials. Plus, he's got an inside man—one of Freddie's most trusted people has been a mucho Klein freak from day one."

So the odds are 4 to 1 on both Brenner and Klein, 6 to 1 on Dawson, and the betting line is still hazy on Letterman. Whose number will come up when the deal goes down? The smart money is probably still on Letterman, because, ultimately, what other people think doesn't matter. TV is not a democracy. Fred Silverman is the sovereign of Peacockland and he likes Letterman. Dark horses? Forget about them. Except one. The darkest horse of all is perhaps the only one capable of cracking this field.

Robert Klein gets up, walks to the window, watches the 57th Street traffic slide past for a long moment before speaking. "I think Carson just might continue," he says suddenly. "Not that he's playing public games with us. Johnny doesn't play games—at least not with the public. And I do believe he's very intent upon getting out of his contract. He needs that feeling of freedom to keep his head clear. I can see the change in his work already. He's refreshed, excited, enthusiastic. With his present schedule, and without a long-term contract hanging over him—who knows? I think he just might go on."



Johnny Carson:
The darkest horse
of all

Curiously, David Brenner expressed the identical suspicion at the end of his interview. "If Johnny can know that the door is open and he can walk out at any time, he won't feel trapped and his job will become much easier. Personally, I believe I've seen the difference already. He seems bubbly and up every night."

When asked if he sincerely thinks Carson will stay on beyond his contract, Brenner's first reaction was to toss up a smokescreen of generalities. "You can't think of TV without Johnny Carson. He's a staple in our diet, the only meaningful institution we have left on television. Think about that."

But does he really feel, in his gut, that Carson will stay?

"In my gut? OK, I'll tell you. My gut feeling is that David Letterman better start getting in good with Merv Griffin." ■

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When the producer of 'The Most Happy Fella' wanted to telecast his show while it was still on the boards, Broadway power brokers became...

Most Unhappy Fellas

By HOWARD POLSKIN

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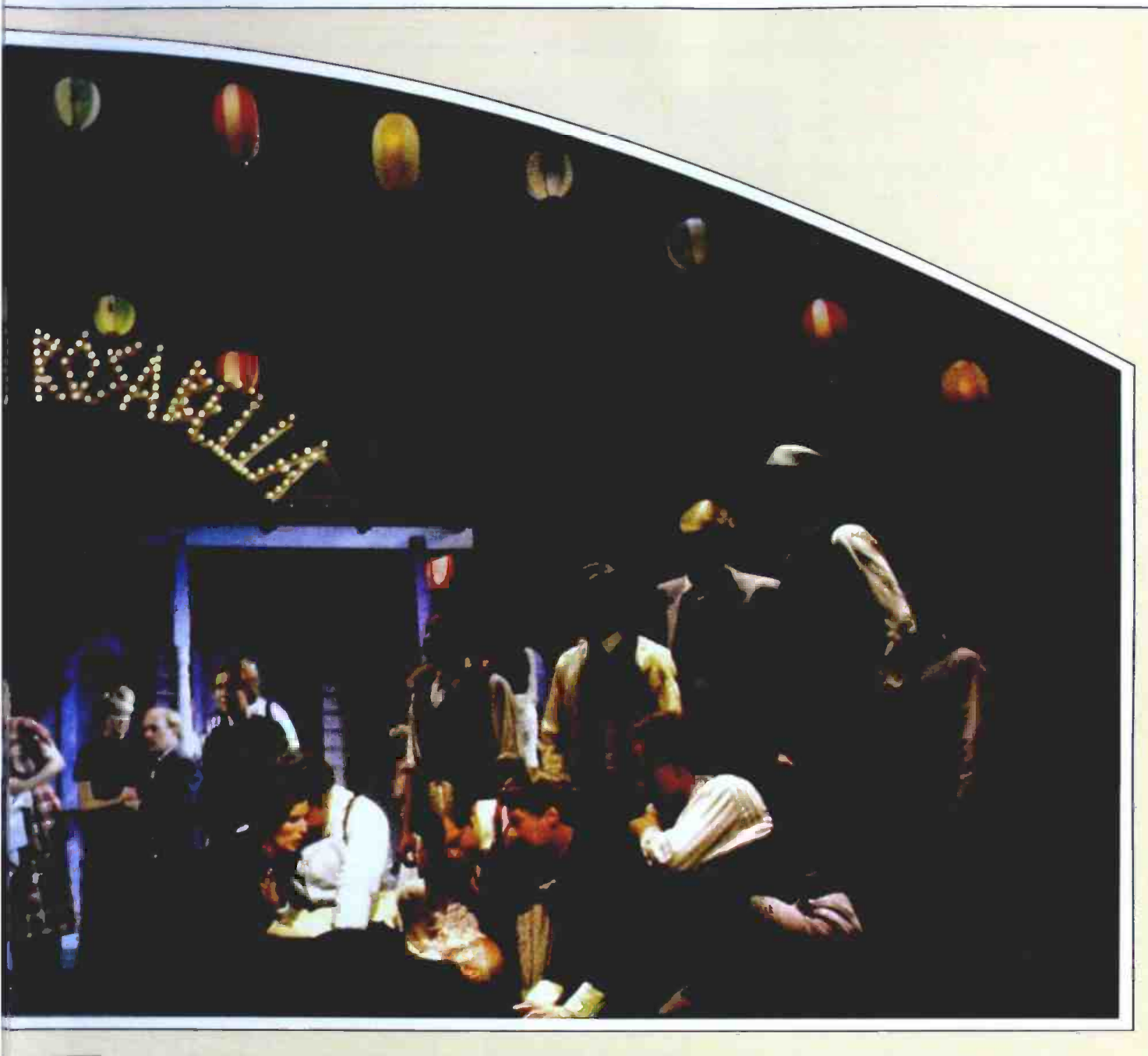

Telecast a play during its stage run? That's blasphemy to Broadway power brokers, but that's exactly what producer Sherwin Goldman had in mind when he put together the deal to revive Frank ("Guys and Dolls") Loesser's 1956 musical, "The Most Happy Fella."

"I would have loved to have had it broadcast on television when it was still running on Broadway," says the feisty Goldman, 40-year-old former president of the American Ballet Theatre and a graduate of Yale Law School. "It would have been like free advertising. People who saw it on television would have come to Broadway to see it live."

Bernard Jacobs, president of the prestigious Shubert Organization, a company that owns and operates 22 theaters across the country, including 17 in New York, disagrees. Says Jacobs: "We do not believe that it is in the best interest of the public or the theater for a show to be televised during its Broadway run. It would kill the box office." The Shubert Organization owns and operates the Majestic Theater, where "The Most Happy Fella" roosted during its brief Broadway run last fall. PBS, which taped "The Most Happy Fella" in Detroit during its pre-Broadway tryout, is planning to telecast it March 5, as part of the *Great Performances* series.

At the dramatic first-act climax of 'The Most Happy Fella,' the critically injured vineyard owner, Tony (played by Giorgio Tozzi), is comforted by his sister, Marie (Adrienne Leonetti), while his bride-to-be, Rosabella (Sharon Daniels, center left), looks away in stunned disbelief.

"The Most Happy Fella" lasted just six weeks on Broadway, closing on Nov. 25. The New York critics gave it a lukewarm reception. The show is a sentimental soap opera about an immigrant Napa Valley vineyard owner (played by Giorgio Tozzi) and his mail-order bride. What the play lacks in plot it makes up for in its score, which is ambitiously operatic. It contains some 40 musical numbers, including "Standing on the Corner," "Abbondanza," "My Heart Is So Full of You" and the rousing "Big D."

"Because of the big scenes with all those actors, 'The Most Happy Fella' needed a big New York theater like the Majestic," recalls Goldman. "I went to Bernie Jacobs in the winter of 1979. He asked me how I would finance it, since it's a very expensive show to produce. I told him probably through public television. Then I was going to put it on videocassettes and videodiscs, and have it sold in

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"Television and theater should go hand in hand—not fist against fist"

At the play's end, Tozzi and Daniels share a tender moment.

stores. Bernie thought it was interesting." (Jacobs has a different recollection of their first meeting. He says he was not aware that Goldman's plans included television and adds that he would not have been receptive to booking the show if he had known about those plans.)

Goldman needed heavy backing for "The Most Happy Fella," which has a cast of 42 performers, and requires 35 musicians and a stage crew of 30. Partially underwritten by Exxon, *Great Performances* anted up some $100,000 for the television rights for the next three years and $400,000 for television production costs. "My scheme was to get money from public television to cover the costs of the show," admits Goldman. "But I would get the subsequent rights for videotape and disc. This show was made for the home-video market." Goldman also admits his plans in this area are still vague.

Jacobs and the Shubert Organization were not happy fellas when Goldman followed through with his scheme. If the play had lasted until its scheduled air date in March, Jacobs says he would have thrown the play out of the theater, unless the broadcast was delayed. "Will I permit a production on the tube simultaneously with its Broadway appearance? Absolutely not," he sniffs.

Only one play has ever been telecast while it was still running on Broadway. On Feb. 2, 1973, CBS broadcast Shakespeare's "Much Ado About Nothing." The following week, it did nothing at the box office and folded. Television was blamed. "The show was getting ready to close anyway because of the post-Christmas slump," concedes Nancy Heller, director of audience development at Joseph Papp's New York Shakespeare Festival, producer of the play. "Television may have hastened its downfall." "Much Ado About Nothing" had been presented, free, in New York's Central Park the previous summer, which may have diluted its box-office potential before it reached Broadway's paying audiences.

The Shubert Organization understandably did not want anything to dilute its audience for "The Most Happy Fella," with its $25 orchestra seats. Jacobs says that his contract with Goldman not only prohibited the broadcast of the play while it was showing at his theater, but also stipulated that no announcements could be made regarding its televised performance. And so, no air date for the *Great Performances* version was released. But plans were made to broadcast the show during the first week in March, public TV's biggest fund-raising period, when its best programs are showcased. And these plans were reported in New York newspapers before the Broadway opening.

On Sept. 16, a month before it reached New York, the show was videotaped during the last day of its run in Detroit's Music Hall Center. Five television cameras were positioned in the orchestra: two stage right and left; and three, including one with a wide-angle lens, were dead center. "Everything is exactly the same as it will be when it opens on Broadway," director Jack O'Brien reassured the audience just before curtain time. "But I've got to do this one thing for the television people — and it's the most humiliating thing I've ever had to do. Can we have an applause check? Honestly, I feel like I'm with *Let's Make a Deal*."

After the show was taped, the cast, musicians and television crew remained for an additional four-and-a-half hours shooting retakes. "Tozzi's voice troubled him during the performance, so we had to reshoot his five solos," recalls Lindsay Law, who produced "The Most Happy Fella" for television. Other scenes were reshot for television because, according to Law, "We had to tighten the spatial relationship between performers. There had to be less distance between actors for television than on the live stage."

Law, whose specialty is producing televised theater, wanted "The Most Happy Fella" broadcast during its Broadway run to prove that television can help the theater by stimulating the public's interest, a concept contrary to the reasoning of Bernard Jacobs. "I don't want you to think I'm anti-television," says Jacobs. "Some of my best friends are in television." His company has just launched a new venture with ABC Video Enterprises, a newly formed division of the American Broadcasting Company, to develop programs for the mushrooming home-video market.

So maybe there is a moral to this play, after all: "Television and theater should go together hand in hand," says Lindsay Law, "not fist against fist." ■

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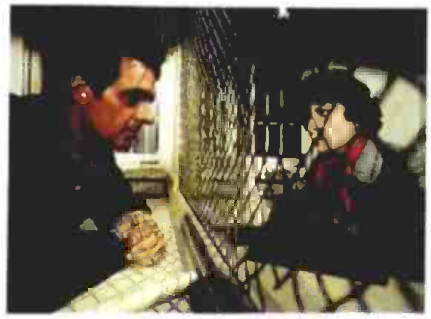
How I Became a Supporter of and Appalled by Docudrama, and a Fan of the Talented, Frustrated, Confused Men and Women Who Would Like to Make Television Better if Only So They Wouldn't Have to Apologize for What They Do—Write and Produce the Stuff America Loves



Top, Alan Alda (as Caryl Chessman) and Talia Shire in NBC's 'Kill Me If You Can'; middle (l.-r.), Richard Thomas, Fay Hauser and Henry Fonda in ABC's Roots II; *bottom, Tommy Lee Jones in CBS's 'The Amazing Howard Hughes.'*

By RICHARD REEVES

I became an expert on "docudrama" by watching one on John F. Kennedy—and making fun of it. The thing was called "Johnny, We Hardly Knew Ye" and the producers hardly did. David Susskind and crew presented Johnny as a starry-eyed kid trying to save the country from politicians. I wrote a critique of the program saying that in TV Guide, then forgot about it and other dramas based on (some) fact.

A year ago, I was reminded. The Academy of Television Arts and Sciences called and wondered whether I would be free for a weekend docudrama conference in Ojai, Cal. They needn't have wondered; the temperature in New York was 12 degrees.

The temperature in Ojai was 75 degrees over the weekend of March 2-4, 1979. The company promised to be great—Gore Vidal, Art Buchwald, Alex Haley, Fawn Brodie, David Wolper, Mark Harris, Brandon Stoddard. The list went on to a couple of dozen of the best-known television producers, writers and critics in the warm country for: "Exploration of the Docudrama."

And me, trying to figure out what I would say if anyone looked my way. That fear was somewhat lessened when Vidal began things with a Friday-night speech in which he said: "I don't suppose I've watched 20 hours of television in the last 20 years or read much of anything that's been written about television until this morning."

Within 24 hours, I had managed to open my mouth. Enough so that Stoddard, the senior vice president of ABC for dramatic programs and television movies, looked across the conference table at the Ojai Valley Inn and said, "The most frightening thing that has been said here is what Richard Reeves just said. If that happens, there will never be another conference of this nature. There will also never be another docudrama."

But that's getting ahead of the story. It's the story of how I became a supporter of and appalled by docudrama, and a fan of the talented, frustrated, confused men and women who would like to make television better if only so they wouldn't have to apologize for what they do—write and produce the stuff America loves. It quickly became apparent that the real agenda of the conference was to try to insulate

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docudrama from controversy and criticism, because if the networks became afraid of the form, a lot of creative people would be forced to create things like *The Love Boat*.

"Television dramas based on real people and actual events," said David Rintels, the writer of "Fear on Trial" (about the McCarthy era), on the morning after Vidal, "have become the subject of an increasingly passionate debate....Writers and producers, or some of them, are accused of distorting history, of advancing their own prejudices and conceptions in reckless disregard of the facts, of inventing or rearranging characters and events and passing them off as truth."

All true, all dangerous, I thought, as Rintels (who has since produced "Gideon's Trumpet," scheduled for this spring on CBS) gave the first real speech of the weekend and framed the debate that, with passion, was to follow. "The whole story is never there," he said. "We are at the mercy of incomplete and biased sources; we are required to condense and telescope to fit the time; we have to guess at what was said in the bedroom...we do the best we can." Then he surprised some of us, at least me, with a few candid examples—much of "The Amazing Howard Hughes" was an educated guess by the writers; the happy ending of a Roy Campanella docudrama ("It's Good To Be Alive") was a fraud; the Southern colonel played by Henry Fonda in *Roots II* was fabricated.

Eric Foner, a professor of history at the City College of the City University of New York, responded to Rintels, speaking, it turned out, for most of the outsiders at Ojai: "Is everybody here aware that you are in fact teaching history? I teach history in the classroom, but the conception of history that my students have now comes from television—to some extent from movies. These interpretations of yours represent political points of view, personal points of view, and I really think the writers should be more aware of that than they seem to be, at least in my conversations with them."

"Wait a minute," said Alan Landsburg, the producer of "Fear on Trial" and "The Triangle Factory Fire Scandal." "We're never going to be able to be fact, fact, fact," he said, "and fill our function as dramatists." Gerald Isenberg, producer of the Campanella film and "The Defection of Simas Kudirka," joined in with: "Docudrama is a creative interpretation of reality. It's not reality itself."

He missed Foner's point, I thought. The historian had just told him that, among students, television *was* reality.

It was a point the television people never conceded. Television, the outsiders kept arguing, was more than a medium, it was the American environment. What went out on the tube had a life and reality of its own—and anything that was broadcast about history and politics changed the history and politics of the Nation.

"I'm tired of being lectured by men of good intention," thundered David Susskind. "They're saying we don't go deep enough, we haven't researched enough, we don't have adequate balance....These are men you can't corrupt. We have enormous personal integrity. We are forsworn [sic] to tell the truth!"

Whose truth, David? That's what I was thinking across the table.

Frank Rich of Time magazine said it better: "The issue of facts is a real straw man....For instance, *Backstairs at the White House*: I'm willing to accept the premise that every fact in it was accurate. But what was the show telling us? What were they doing with those facts? It was telling us that all the Presidents in this century were a bunch of cuddly guys, except for Harding, who drank and screwed around. It wasn't clear how they took us into wars and got us out of wars, etc. The show was a complete disservice to history, even though it was factually accurate."

What was the show telling us? Buzz Kulik, who had produced or directed a half-dozen docudramas, including one on Caryl Chessman, "Kill Me if You Can," answered Rich: "Our intention, indeed, about Chessman's gassing, the point of view of that piece, purely and simply, was anti-capital punishment. It was our intention from the beginning...,what we intended to do with that gassing of Chessman was to show that indeed gassing is not a nice way for the State to put someone to death....We really care. We really are concerned. We really think we can make a little contribution to the consciousness of the people of the world. The Chessman gassing had a specific reason—it was done to show the ugliness of government putting a person to death. It was a point of view we had."

Foner took that on, too mildly, I thought. "If someone writes a book I don't like," the professor said, "it's fairly easy for me to write another book and get it published, even if I have to put up the money myself, to put forward a different point of view. But access to television air time is obviously extremely limited. If I don't like *Roots*' presentation of black history, or if I don't like 'MacArthur and Truman' or something, I just can't get on television and present my alternative point of view."

Whose point of view? Whose truth? The right questions were being raised—and so were voices. Particularly the voices of writers and producers who thought the outsiders were trying to kill historical drama—and, not incidentally, relegate them to doing garbage like *Three's Company*. Or to doing straight documentaries—something Alan Landsburg had done before switching to docudrama. "I was a practitioner of the pure documentary and I found it a frustrating form, finally," he said. "I was delighted to find docudrama occurring as an avenue of being able to communicate more than the existing or shootable film allowed. After all, I could film the bloody White House for so long and I couldn't get into the damn Oval Office where the action was, so I was forced to conclude the action going on in the White House is my guess as to what happened. Now, in the docudrama, at least, I can mount that guess and can properly see it for the audience."

As soon as I heard that people were guessing about what happened inside the White House and showing those guesses to 76 million households, I thought I really knew what I had to about docudrama. Stan Margulies, the co-producer of *Roots*

"I teach history in the classroom, but the conception of history that my students have now comes from television—to some extent from movies," said Eric Foner.

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and the upcoming Indian chronicle, *Hanta Yo*, gave me the chance to express myself when he reported on one of the several workshop groups that the conference broke into each afternoon. "Our group agreed," he said, "that, thanks in large measure to the docudrama, the status and impact of the creators is far different, far better and far more important. The writers, directors and producers are now perceived as contributing more to the Nation than weekly sitcoms."

It was hard not to admire the television people around the conference table at the inn, and impossible not to empathize with their drive toward status and impact—and toward better television. Who was I to tell them that they should grow up? That they should admit to themselves and others that they could conceivably have more historical, political and social power than professors and politicians?

Whoever I was, I was nervous. And when I spoke, some sentences didn't quite parse. "I agree with Stan Margulies when he talks about the increasing status and impact of the people in this room....When Buzz Kulik says that his intention, pure and simple, was to make an anti-capital punishment argument ...well, if I had my old job, which was political editor of The New York Times, I wouldn't consider that a television story. I'd consider that a major political story and would try to get it on the front page of The Times—that two hours of network television would be turned over this week to an argument on one side of a major issue facing the country.

"And then I heard Mr. Landsburg say he was tired out sitting outside the White House and was happy, now, that docudrama allowed him to guess at what was happening inside. I also sit outside the White House a lot wondering what's going on in the Oval Office, and I have guessed what was happening. But usually the public has not been inflicted with my guesses.

"I think you should understand that people like me will view these things—and I will much more after listening to you—as political events. They should be treated as a major input into the dialogue of the country. I would deal with the creator of a documentary that I concluded would have an effect on the political and social thinking of the country in exactly the same way I would deal with a guy running for the Senate in Nebraska. I think that is the way it should be dealt with and I would hope and I will do my best to see it is dealt with that way in the future. I do believe you have status; I believe you have enormous talent; I believe you have impact and that it is the responsibility of people like me to deal with that impact.

"If, for instance, the docudrama planned on Robert Kennedy's life, from the Arthur Schlesinger book, were to run in prime time during 1980, that could be the single most significant political event of the year—particularly if his brother, Teddy, were running for President."

That statement was referred to as "the time bomb" during the rest of the conference. (And that bomb is still ticking—all the more audibly now.) One television person after another rose to say that they should not be judged, that they were entertainers, just show-business folk. Roger Gimbel, the producer of "The Amazing Howard Hughes," began it with: "We must not take ourselves so damn seriously, not to the point that someone believes what we're saying about ourselves."

Do I take Roger Gimbel seriously? Does Hugh Carey, the governor of New York? Gimbel produced the totally fictional "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman." In a speech two years ago, Carey listed black Americans who had contributed the most to their country—Jane Pittman was on his list. To Carey, Pittman was a real person.

Brandon Stoddard took it all seriously and he chilled me by saying that I wanted to chill television creativity, that my standard would force ABC to abandon docudrama altogether. I didn't. I just wanted to discuss the obvious: Television may be the major influence on the way Americans live today. Docudrama may become the dominant influence on what we believe about how we once lived and what kind of people we are. The creators have impact—the impact of "War and Peace," of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," of "The Birth of a Nation," of "The Grapes of Wrath," of *Roots*.

That is a tradition television should be proud to have joined—and proud to take the heat of the controversies that will inevitably be generated by literate programs. At Ojai, some of the best people in television merely seemed afraid. "We're in the entertainment business," said Gerald Isenberg. "That's a cop-out," said historian Fawn Brodie. "You're educators and you know it."

"What is different about scientists, lawyers, historians," said Nathan Huggins, a Columbia University historian, "is that there are rules to the game and they are very clear....I think that one of the things that has come out of this conference, as I see it, is that one is in a never-never land, in which no one knows what the rules really are....I think this conference is such a heartening idea because it is, in fact, a beginning toward that end."

And that was the end—to find some rules to protect television writers and producers from themselves and the demands of entertainment, and to protect viewers from hypercreative television people.

"I'm tired of being lectured by men of good intention," thundered David Susskind. "We have enormous personal integrity. We are forsworn to tell the truth!"

The idea is to find rules that will satisfy both David Wolper, the co-producer of *Roots* and *Hanta Yo* and chairman of the conference, and Gore Vidal, who has written several historical novels, including "1876," and who, it turned out, knew a lot about television without watching it.

"I believe very strongly that television is a *mass* medium," Wolper said adamantly, "and the opportunity to teach and the opportunity to inform is enormous....Yes, I want large audiences. Yes, I do everything I can to get the biggest audiences I can get. I want to reach a lot of people with the information I have. I do give it in the form they want to receive it. I find that I can reach more people with the information through docudrama. I feel that if I have to use stars to do it, I use stars to do it."

"Take a moment," Vidal said judiciously, "to think about the delicate line between the facts, as we call them, and the drama, which you are obliged to invent, because there is no such thing as *cinema verite*. The hand that holds the camera is painting a subjective picture. You cannot avoid it. And don't try."

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Obscenity: *No cable television system operator when engaged in origination cablecasting shall transmit or permit to be transmitted... material that is obscene or indecent.* (FCC Rule 76.215)

HOW BLUE IS CABLE TV?

Our investigation reveals that there is a heavy demand for X-rated material on home television— and some cable operators are filling it

By DAVID CHAGALL

For a few dollars in Allentown, Pa., you can see the X-rated film titled "The Virgin." Playing in Ann Arbor, Mich., is "The Sinful Belle." Another X, "The Cheerleaders," heats up Buffalo. And in Columbus, Ohio, "Captain Lust" cavorts across the screen.

The home TV screen.

All these movies are available in the named locations on cable TV. And one of five American homes is part of a cable-TV system—15 million families, 45 million viewers. Since what goes into people's homes through cable can be controlled by the viewers themselves, these systems have always been regarded as natural vehicles for showing the kinds of controversial material that over-the-air networks and stations have refused to touch or have censored drastically.

So, how blue *is* cable television?

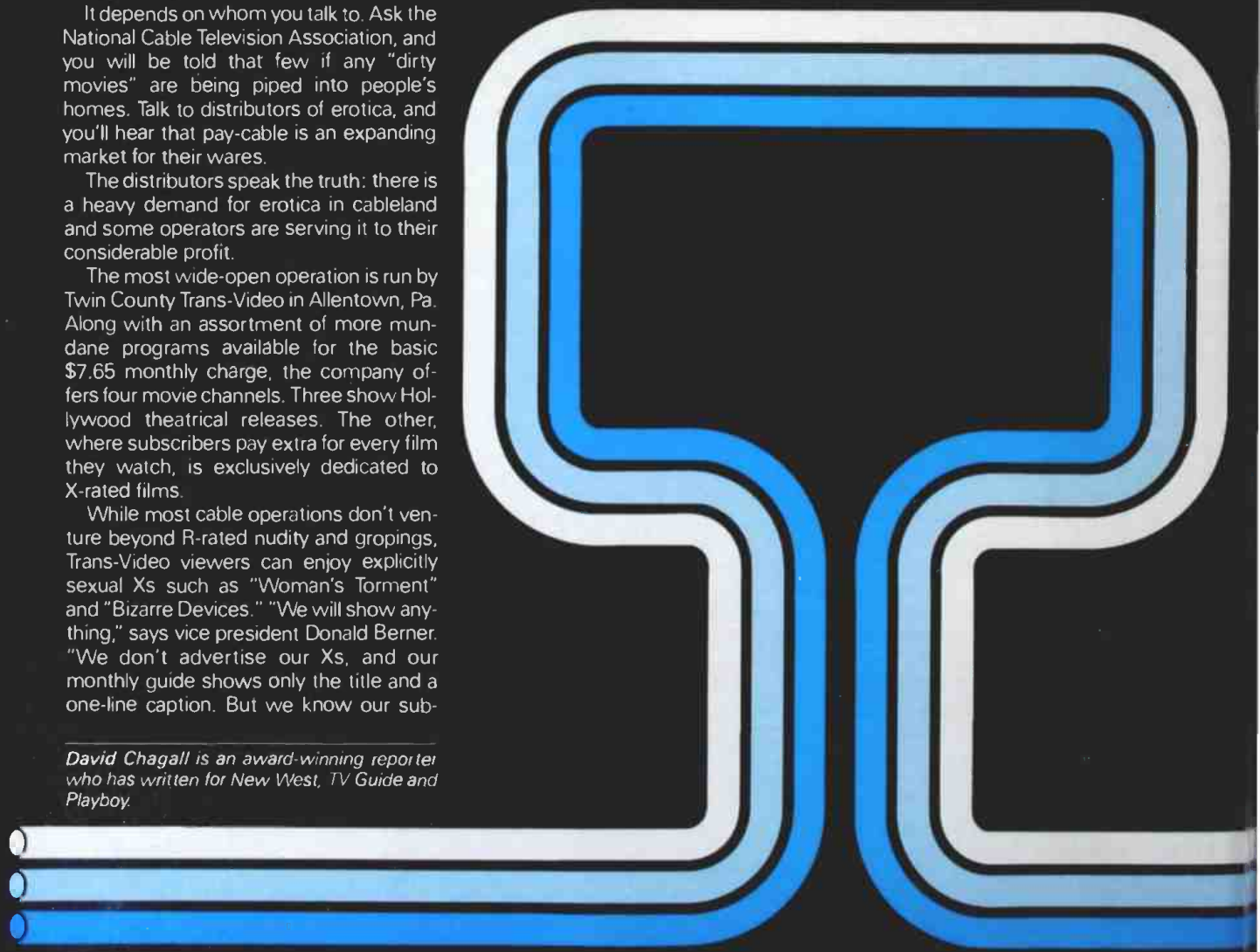
It depends on whom you talk to. Ask the National Cable Television Association, and you will be told that few if any "dirty movies" are being piped into people's homes. Talk to distributors of erotica, and you'll hear that pay-cable is an expanding market for their wares.

The distributors speak the truth: there is a heavy demand for erotica in cableland and some operators are serving it to their considerable profit.

The most wide-open operation is run by Twin County Trans-Video in Allentown, Pa. Along with an assortment of more mundane programs available for the basic $7.65 monthly charge, the company offers four movie channels. Three show Hollywood theatrical releases. The other, where subscribers pay extra for every film they watch, is exclusively dedicated to X-rated films.

While most cable operations don't venture beyond R-rated nudity and gropings, Trans-Video viewers can enjoy explicitly sexual Xs such as "Woman's Torment" and "Bizarre Devices." "We will show anything," says vice president Donald Berner. "We don't advertise our Xs, and our monthly guide shows only the title and a one-line caption. But we know our sub-

David Chagall is an award-winning reporter who has written for New West, TV Guide and Playboy.



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scribers like them because they buy lots of them."

The Xs play three times daily—at 1 P.M., 9 P.M. and 1 A.M.—seven days a week. Subscribers pay from $2 to $3.50 for every sex movie they watch, with most costing $3.50. The adult channel means extra money for Trans-Video—there has been no drop-off in orders for its regular movie offerings, while the X-rated traffic has been heavy from the start.

One year after the pay-cable sex movies began playing in Allentown, a local religious group decided to tackle the issue of "what to do about the porno films in the community." After passionate debate, the organization was persuaded to call off a planned crusade. What finally convinced them was the elaborate security protecting the Twin County cablecasts. Of 55,000 subscribers to the system's basic service, only 3000 have ordered the intricate converter needed to receive the adult channel. Before any one of them can watch an erotic movie, the would-be patron must first telephone Twin County, give the order desk the cable client's coded identification number and the film number shown in the program guide, and specify a one-time showing at a particular hour. Only then does the computer restructure the scrambled signal so the customer's TV set can get the X. In four years of cablecasting Xs, not a single instance of accidental showings has been reported.

As much as 30 percent of Trans-Video's potential audience order and watch the most successful adult-channel offerings. "There is a solid market out there," Berner says. "These are real fans, comparable to pro-football fanatics."

A bit less flamboyant is the programming offered by Cablevision, Inc., in Ann Arbor, Mich. Two subscription channels are available—one for family viewing, the other strictly adult. Families can buy one channel for $6.50 a month or both channels for $9.95. Of 5000 total pay-cable subscribers, more than 4500 have ordered the adult channel.

The adult schedule includes a variety of R-rated films, a regularly programmed X movie each month and a "Midnight Special" several nights that occasionally presents harder Xs, but within self-imposed limits. Hard-core pornography, based on Cablevision's understanding of local standards, is banned for now. "We preview all the flicks ourselves," explained former operations manager Jerry Horsch. "All sex must be strictly simulated. And the story and technical quality have to be good before we will show it."

Titles now stimulating Ann Arbor include "Emmanuelle," "Inserts" and "The Sinful Belle." "We keep them humorous because that's more palatable for our subscribers," Horsch said. "When you open a cable system in a university town, all the old ladies' church groups get up petitions to knock you out of business. When we first started in 1976 we promised the city fathers to maintain dignity with this thing.

"There is a heavy market for sexy films, no doubt about it," Horsch pointed out. "If we increased the severity of those films, we could triple our penetration. But then we'd have every church group in the country marching outside our door."

As do all cablecasters who offer nudity and spice, Cablevision provides a security device to any family that asks for it. The device prevents children from accidentally—or intentionally—tuning in the adult channel. Characteristically, only a handful of homes order it. In Ann Arbor, 150 of the 5000 subscribers have one. In other communities, the rate is even lower.

Visions, Ltd., in Anchorage, Alaska, provides pay-TV service over the air rather than through cable (although it recently was awarded the cable franchise in that city and plans to lay cable this spring). For a flat $26.50 monthly fee, subscribers get family programs from such suppliers as Home Box Office, sports from other suppliers, attractions such as Humphrey Bogart film festivals—and erotica. Using a signal that requires a special antenna on the receiving end, Visions, Ltd., schedules one double-X and three X- or R-rated movies each month; each of them is shown twice. Sex films are usually shown at midnight, and never before 11 P.M.

"When we first began, we wanted to find out how people liked these movies," says Visions program director Irene Wong. "And the reaction was, if you're going to show them at all, show us more hard-core stuff. So we plan to go more hard-core in the future."

B.C. Cable, in the Alaskan capital of Juneau, conducted market research to measure subscriber interest and found enough interest to think about launching a skin-flick channel of its own.

"Our channel would be a first for Alaskan cable systems," says B.C. station manager Dennis Egan. "The programming would go through a scrambler that cuts off both picture and sound, and we'd offer a lock for that channel.

"Adult films can be marketed just like the Christian broadcasting we carry 24 hours a day. Everybody asks, who watches that? But when we have problems on the satellite, you find out quickly who's watching. I think the same will be true for adult movies."

In the Buffalo area, International Cable has a pay channel showing Home Box Office family fare during the workweek. But on weekends—after HBO goes off the air—the company puts on sexploitation comedies such as "The Cheerleaders" and "Naked Stewardesses." (These are weakly plotted excuses for young actresses to shed their clothes and strike poses while panting males chase them—without quite catching them.) Subscribers pay $9 a month for the HBO channel and get four spicy movies at no extra charge.

Marketing vice president Tom Hunt reports that when International Cable first started showing the sex comedies, a few customers complained and demanded to be disconnected. So he pulled the films off the schedule, and then the calls, letters and disconnection demands really poured in. Simple arithmetic persuaded International Cable—the movies were rescheduled at once.

"We put them on later at night and made them softer, and that ended the complaints," says Hunt. "Our adult movies are humorous, nothing pornographic. Most callers say, 'Give us harder stuff,' but we won't do it at this point.

"Spicy films on cable will be around a long time," Hunt predicts. "But the really strong stuff will have to be pay-per-view [rather than part of the regular $9-a-month package]. On that basis, I anticipate it will spread all over the place."

Honolulu TV Systems shows one sex comedy a month, booked through the Telemation subsidiary of HBO. R-rated romps are screened late in the evening several times a month by all five cable operations on the island. Lloyd Char, TV Systems station manager, reports his subscribers complain that the R-rated romps are too mild. "They want something more hard-core," says Char. "But unless we can offer films on a completely separate channel, on a pay-per-view basis, we won't do stronger stuff. We'll have that capacity in a year or so, then we'll look into

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it. There's definitely a market out there, no doubt about it."

The biggest multiple owner of cable systems—Teleprompter—has more than a million viewers nationwide. It now shows some mild sex farces, "soft Rs," according to program director James Van de Velde, with no plans to do any Xs. Only in New York, on its Manhattan franchise, does Teleprompter schedule any films Van de Velde would call borderline. There such "drive-in" titles as "The Van" and "Swinging Coeds" appear alongside regular movies and features.

Theta Cable in Los Angeles runs the same basic fare as Teleprompter's Manhattan franchise, minus the drive-in films. "We've had lots of requests for adult material," reports Theta general manager Tom Kanarian. "But right now there's no scrambling device good enough to make sure no one would get it who didn't want it. Even if they solved that, I still doubt that our board would ever approve it.

"But there is definitely interest out there. In places like Marina del Rey, with lots of young singles, adult material would probably do very well. Even in the Bible belt people would be glad to watch it if it were available. Yet they'd be up in arms publicly when it was first introduced."

Movies are not the only form of sex-oriented programming that is finding its way onto cable TV. Back in 1974, sex crusader Al Goldstein, who publishes an outrageous tabloid called Screw, decided it was time to invade television. After sketching out a format and selecting a name for the show—*Screw Magazine of the Air*—Goldstein took advantage of Manhattan Cable's call for programming to fill its public-access channel.

"When I first went to Manhattan Cable, they were not thrilled over the idea," recalls Goldstein. "But they had no choice; their franchise for New York City said their access channel had to be open to everybody."

And so, *Screw Magazine of the Air* was launched. Running three times a week, it played for four months, until city regulations forced a title change. The newly named *Midnight Blue* played another year and a half without incident, attracting an audience of mostly upper-middle-income Manhattanites.

A typical show featured an interview with a house-of-sadism madam who calmly described how her profession operates. A filmed segment then showed her at work, whipping a customer—"strictly voluntary, with a consenting, turned-on adult," Goldstein asserts. Another show might visit a massage parlor, with interviews and action shots. No anatomical closeups or explicit sex acts are ever shown. *Midnight Blue*'s reputation is far more lurid than its performance. Nevertheless, after a crusade four years ago, spearheaded by Rep. John M. Murphy, Manhattan Cable banned the show.

Fans came out of the woodwork in protest. Broadway composer Marvin Hamlisch called Manhattan Cable to cancel his subscription. So did author Kurt Vonnegut Jr. and other Manhattanites, celebrated and otherwise. Finally, after six weeks of silence, the show reappeared in 1976 and has played ever since without incident.

"It's a chaotic situation," Goldstein explains. "Nobody knows what is permissible. Pressure groups, churches, the networks all use *Midnight Blue* as a club against cable TV. Politicians rant and rave against us. We're in a pioneering period now, and it's fascinating."

It is also profitable. When Goldstein and partner Alex Bennett first launched the show, they estimated that it might take eight years to make a profit. After less than six years, they are now turning the corner. Figures for 1979 show about $600,000 in sales, including income from syndication and from advertisers buying into the show with increasing confidence.

'The Most Obscene Show on Television'

What's the bluest regularly scheduled show on cable television? Probably *The Ugly George Hour of Truth, Sex and Violence*. The star, director and producer is a 37-year-old ex-porno actor named George Urban who, despite the program's title, is not at all ugly. To some viewers, however, his program is. To others, it is an exercise in voyeurism that has no parallel in television.

The program is a video-verite diary of George's very close encounters with attractive women he picks up in midtown Manhattan while roaming the streets in a tattered silver jumpsuit with nearly 90 pounds of video equipment strapped to his slight frame. About one in 10 of his quarries agrees to venture into the nearest dimly lit hallway or alley, where Ugly George literally talks her out of her clothes by explaining that "exposure" on his program will lead to glamorous television or movie contracts. If he's particularly persuasive, the scene shifts to Ugly George's studio in Brooklyn, where he props his camera on a tripod and appears fully nude with the unclad "starlet." No sexual activity takes place on-camera, although George does touch the women while urging them to thrust their chests outward. Incredibly, he has managed to talk some 100 women into being videotaped in this manner.

Do they get paid? "No way," George asserts. "It's like a screen test. I have no guilt about not paying them." He claims that most of the women who disrobe for him are posing nude for the first time and do it because they like and trust him. "They're everyday girls," he says. "Students, secretaries, housewives. That's the great appeal of the show."

The program's critics maintain that Ugly George exploits women who may be temporarily confused by his smooth talking and promises of television careers. "It's the most obscene show on television," charges one woman, a former employee of Manhattan Cable Television who asked not to be identified. "Ugly George hates women and it shows on television. He treats them like animals. His attitude is, 'Women are dumb. Look how easily I can take advantage of them by getting them to take their clothes off before my camera.'"

Manhattan Cable, which has been broadcasting the program three nights a week at 11:30 P.M. since last July, says that so far there have been no organized protests against the show. "I'm trying to respect the right of public access," states one executive of the company, who also did not want her name to be made public in a story about Ugly George. "People have the right to come and use our channels as long as they are not airing pornographic or obscene programs."

Does Ugly George think his program is obscene? "Well, I'm not trying to be obscene," he answers. "I'm showing the girls as people, not sex objects."

—*Howard Polskin*

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The show runs twice a week in New York City, is also carried by the adult channel on Warner Amex's Qube system in Columbus, Ohio, and is or has been shown regularly in Buffalo, Honolulu, Anchorage, Chicago, Houston and Stuart, Fla. (A deal is also being set with Nippon Television in Japan for a weekly slot at 11 P.M. Goldstein's attempts to lease satellite time nationally from RCA and transponder-owning companies have met with no success as yet.)

The most influential force in cable programming is the national pay-cable companies. Of the five top firms, all, with the exception of the leader—Time Inc.'s Home Box Office, which programs for 1600 cable systems—have shown sexploitation films. "Showtime is doing it and that's a terrible mistake," argues HBO vice president of films Arnold Huberman, referring to his chief competition. "They're being insensitive to their audience. You don't run those films on the same service that's doing 'Benji.' If you're going to do it at all, do it on a special channel. And we're just not interested." HBO, however, has seriously been entertaining plans to introduce its own "drive-in" channel, featuring R-rated macho films.

Showtime, which is owned by Viacom and Teleprompter, schedules occasional Rs like "Waiting for Mr. Goodbar" and "Hard Core." It also offers lighter-R sexploitation comedies.

Third-place Telemation, a subsidiary of HBO, does no scheduling, but only fills the orders of its client cable operations. Unlike its parent company, it is into limited sexploitation, with two of its 36 locales now requesting some spice. "Hawaii and Teleprompter Manhattan show the cutie stuff once a week," says Telemation boss Angela Schapiro. "Both places have very late-night viewing patterns. No other operators have shown any interest in them. But calling these films 'adult' is misleading, because there's not even any simulated sex there, just playful nudity."

In fourth place among pay-cable companies is Warner Amex Cable Corporation. Warner's press chief, Leo Murray, was defensive about sex on cable. Why? "I'll tell you why people are reluctant to talk about it. In franchising, your competition will tell community leaders, 'You don't want that company to get the franchise; they show dirty movies.' It's being done every day by these back-stabbers."

Warner's Qube system in Ohio offers one adult channel out of 30 available. Ten films are rotated every month, running nonstop from 9:30 A.M. until 6 the next morning seven days a week.

Each viewing costs $3.50 and subscribers can see such fare as "Captain Lust," "Lonely Wives" and "Country Cousin" as well as *Midnight Blue*. Qube subscribers receive the adult channel only if they sign for it specifically, and they have reportedly been buying the soft porn "regularly and in large numbers." Though Qube's management would not divulge how many of the 30,000 homes take the sexy movies, one employee reported that the channel has been "very successful despite no promotion."

A former Warner executive revealed that the adult channel has been a significant factor in Qube's success story to date. With that sort of solid precedent to go by, Warner, through its nationwide program service began early last year to beam two sexploitation Rs a month by satellite to 60 cable systems.

But after several months of sexy satelliting, murmurs of protest began to filter into Warner's executive suites and the service's subscribers suddenly found themselves without late-night cutie shows. Warner's management issued a policy statement saying that it had decided to "avoid any misunderstanding by removing them from the schedule."

The number five pay-cable company is Hollywood Home Theater, a booking operation similar to Telemation. Two of its cable customers, in Michigan and New Jersey, are now running the spicy Rs. "We've been experimenting with adult films in those locations for about a year now," says president Steve Kutner. "So far, we're doing very well with them. We show all Rs at 9 and 11 P.M. and 1 A.M. The spicy stuff never plays before 11 at night. The Ann Arbor system shows some Xs, which we book for them. It's not the kind of program every community would want, but in liberal, sophisticated locations it definitely has a place." So much so that Kutner is expanding the adult-film program and opening another R-rated channel in Dade County, Fla.

Censorship is minimized by constant talks with local leaders as the cable operators first clear the way before showing nude movies. To date, most of the controversy has been not about special adult channels, but about the regular pay channels, where suppliers such as HBO and Showtime play top Hollywood Rs.

"Things like 'Shampoo' caused problems in very conservative places where they tried to outlaw all R-rated films," Kutner reports. "Smaller towns in the South, Southwest and Midwest are more concerned about that sort of thing. We've found none of that in our two experimental locations. People there want more movies, generally, and more adult movies, period."

At least five major distributors supply the sex comedies and the hard Xs (in addition to family-oriented programming). These include Art Greenfield in Los Angeles; Condor Films, Film Gallery and Jason Allen Releasing in New York; and Trans-World Productions in Las Vegas.

No major distributor would talk for the record. But a representative of Condor Films, who declined to identify herself, says that Condor furnishes its pay-cable operators with mostly soft Rs and unrated movies such as "Naked Stewardesses" and "Naughty Coeds." And she reports an expanding pay-cable market for these films.

"These are not pornographic movies," she stresses. "Outfits like Warner Amex have played this product. Most of our X-rated films could have had an R rating, but the producers did not submit them for an MPAA rating so they would get an automatic X, which they feel makes them seem more exciting."

The National Cable Television Association, representing more than 4000 systems, is not enthusiastic about the spread of erotica in cableland. Association representative Linda Ebner makes her feelings clear. "The NCTA does not condone anything like that. We don't want to be known as pushing porn."

Jeri Baker, who edits The Pay TV Newsletter, explains that the cable industry is super-sensitive about possible political fallout. "There's been lots of discussion about it because sex on cable would be a natural, but industry leaders oppose it. There is no indication they will change their minds."

Maybe so, but her publisher, Paul Kagan, observes that from its start pay-TV has offered material not available on regular commercial television. "All the country's media—commercial TV, theaters, magazines—are becoming more sexually explicit. Pay-TV is only an extension of movie theaters, so if films are growing more explicit, so is pay-TV. It's part of the national fabric."

Is cable television turning blue? Just ask Al Goldstein, and he'll paraphrase Al Jolson: "You ain't seen nothin' yet!" ■

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America's worst prison insurrection is painstakingly—and powerfully—re-created for a television-movie

'Attica'

Before and after: These scenes, shot in Lima, Ohio, for the film 'Attica,' reflect the tension and tragedy of America's worst prison revolt. Above: Inmates, played by extras, shield their identities in makeshift costumes as they await a meeting with officials. Left: Having regained control of the institution, troopers in riot gear stand guard over the inmates, subdued after a brief but bloody battle that claimed 39 lives.

The scene: Attica Correctional Facility in upstate New York, Sept. 13, 1971. In D-Yard, 1200 prisoners hold hostage prison personnel captured when the inmates rebelled four days earlier. Now New York's commissioner of correctional services, Russell G. Oswald, decides that further negotiation is fruitless. At 9:43 A.M., a helicopter drops tear-gas canisters into the yard—and troopers ringing the cell-block roofs open fire. Nine minutes later, 39 inmates and hostages lie dead or dying.

Another institutional yard, eight years later. Here also, 1000 men tensely anticipate a riot. This time, happily, they're extras and the bullets aren't real. The setting is the Lima State Hospital in Lima, Ohio, where ABC is reenacting America's worst prison insurrection for its two-hour made-for-television movie "Attica," scheduled to be telecast March 2. The script by James Henerson is based on the book "A Time to Die" by New York Times columnist Tom Wicker, whom the prisoners asked to be an "observer" during the crisis. In the film, Wicker is portrayed by George Grizzard—who coincidentally is an old friend of Wicker's from his college days at the University of North Carolina. The production also features Anthony Zerbe (as radical lawyer William Kunstler) and Charles Durning (as Commissioner Oswald).

As the pictures on these two and the next two pages show, the movie graphically—sometimes brutally—reprises

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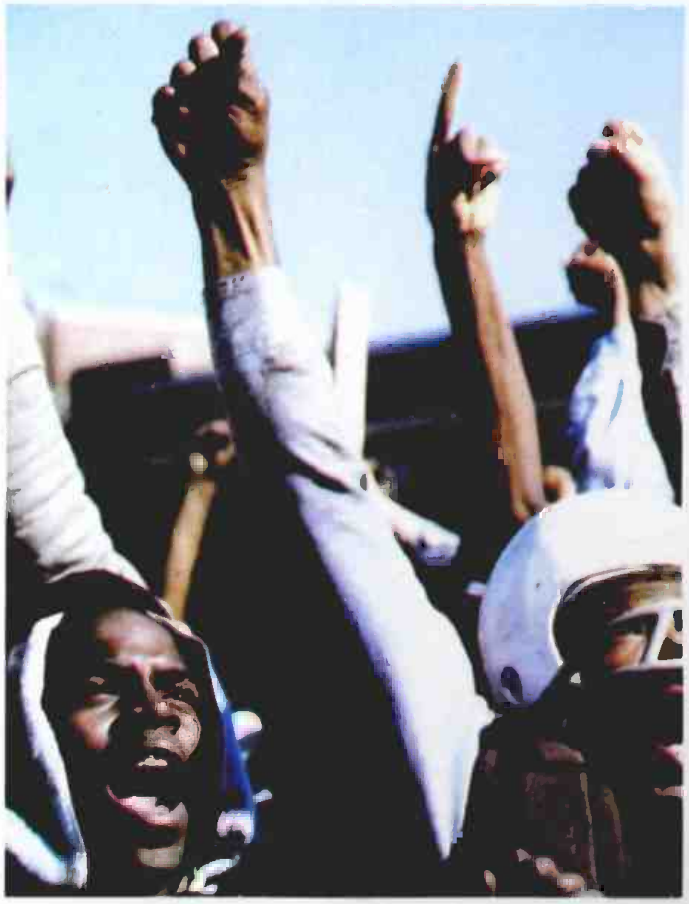
During filming, the troopers' attack almost got out of hand

Wading through a haze of tear gas at the start of their assault, New York state troopers fan out into the prison yard.



Prisoners, portrayed by extras, demonstrate their solidarity as inmate leaders read off their demands for Attica's reform.

the violence and horror of the Attica revolt and its aftermath. The man responsible for the eerie sense of *deja vu* is director Marvin Chomsky, winner of an Emmy for his work on NBC's *Holocaust* and director of six hours of ABC's *Roots*. Barred from filming in Attica's yard, Chomsky and producer Lou Rudolph chose Lima and months before the shooting Chomsky began viewing all existing films, tapes and photos of the outbreak. "I went to Attica myself," he says, "and spoke to prison guards and personnel who were there. And I hired as a technical adviser someone who was an inmate at the time. One day he was looking at a tape and said, 'There I am!' I cast him in a small part."

Ohio's Bureau of Employment Services supplied the bulk of the extras, finding volunteers from the surrounding area, who received $2.90 an hour. Chomsky spent the early part of his four weeks on location marshaling the men and creating a proper dramatic mood.

One extra needed no coaching. Melvin Marshall was an inmate at Attica during the uprising. Released the following March, he was unemployed and living in Buffalo when he heard about the film. After securing a role, he journeyed to Lima and eventually got a few lines of dialogue. On being an extra, he remarks, "After a week of going in there every morning at the same time, staying there...it got to be like a prison routine. I had pushed Attica into the back of my mind. But now I thought about some of the guys who were there and I could visualize them."

When the troopers' attack was staged, the participants' fervor surprised Chomsky. "It *almost* got out of hand," he says dryly. And Melvin Marshall was suddenly transported back eight years. "There were a couple of times," he admits, "that I had adrenalin flowing through my body. It was *exact*." When the filming ended, Marshall went over to Chomsky and gave him the ultimate accolade. "Marvin," he said, "I think *you* were there, too." ■

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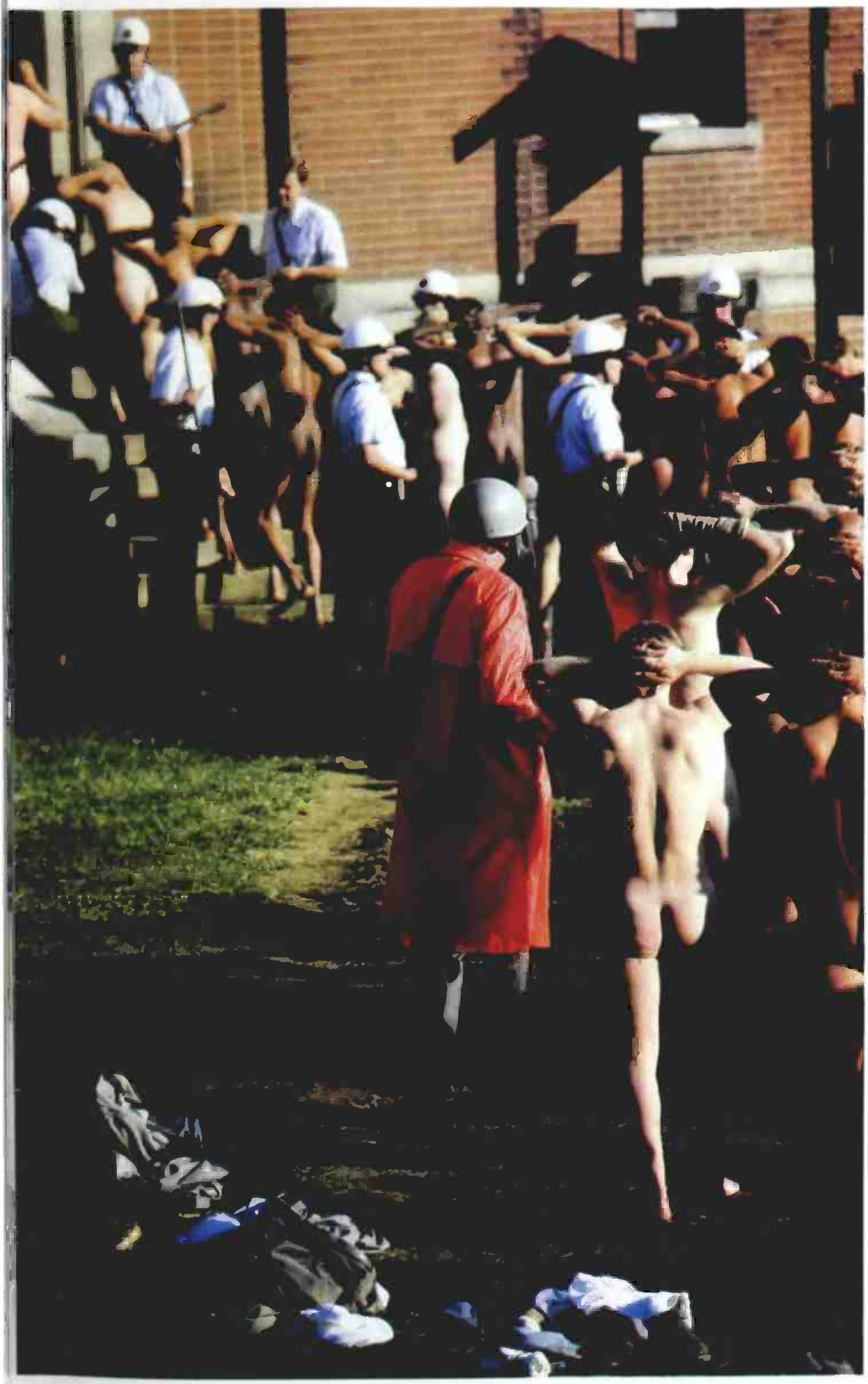

He was there: Melvin Marshall, an Attica inmate during the 1971 outbreak, plays a prisoner in the movie. When the troopers' assault was filmed, he says, 'adrenalin was flowing through my body.'

After a strip search, the inmates are herded back to their cells through a gauntlet of guards.

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© 1979 FP

A Country Path in May

Plates shown smaller than life size. Actual diameter: 9 inches.

IN FINE ENGLISH PORCELAIN...

The Country Year

BY PETER BARRETT

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Wheatfields in August

The Colors of Autumn in October

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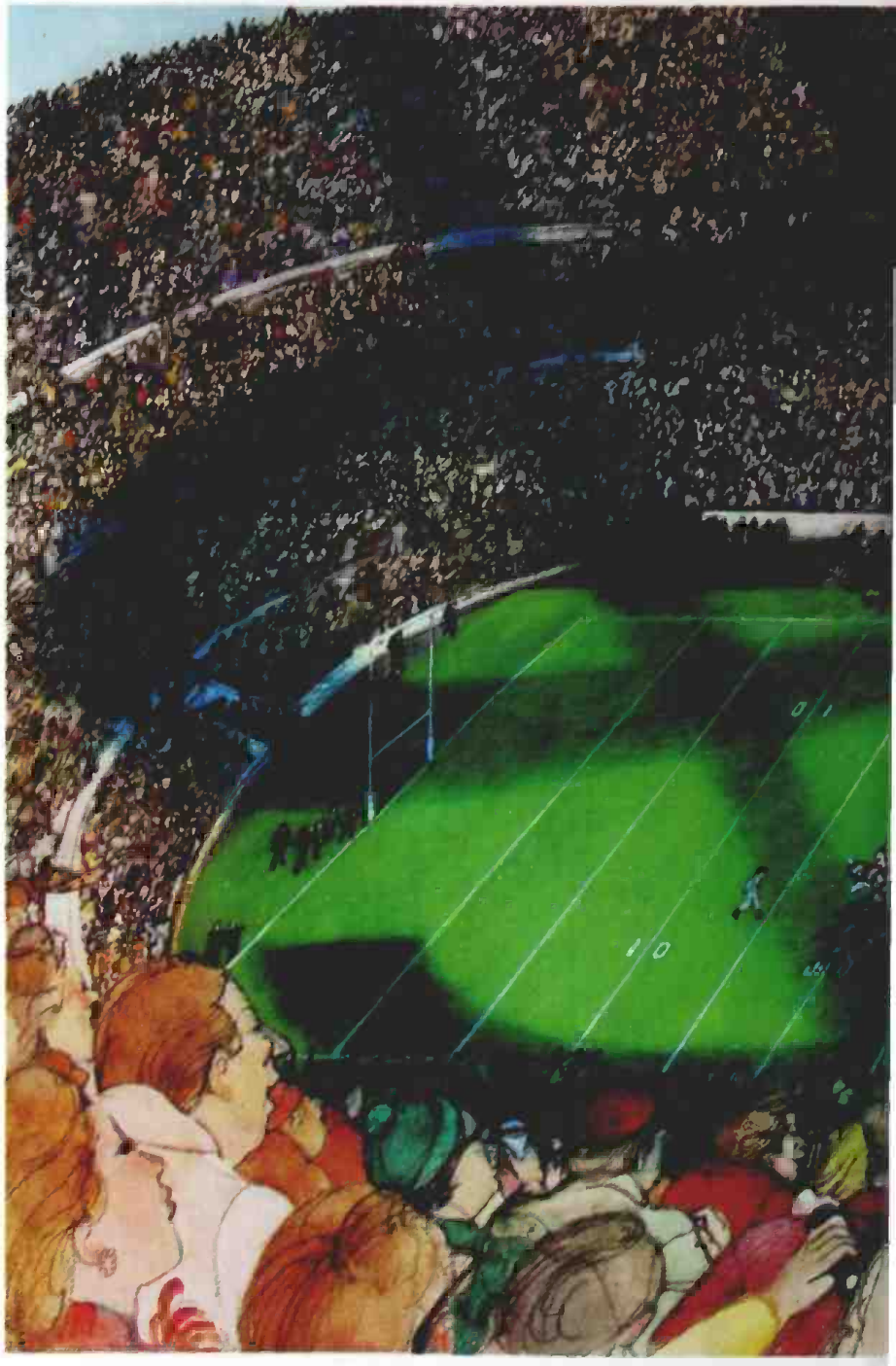

'The Monster Is Lurking Just over the Hill'

Its name is pay-television, and it is stalking pro football

By WILLIAM BARRY FURLONG

The monster is lurking just over the hill," says a member of NBC's sports programming staff. "It's only a matter of time before it comes over the horizon and rushes down on us."

The "monster" is pay-television. It is the gaudiest, slyest and most provocative influence on pro football today. It is, perhaps, the most fundamental, if subtle, dimension of the first "holding period"—a pause in growth, a pause in creativity—that TV and pro football have ever entered. Consider: ratings dipped a bit the past two seasons and the innovative technology long associated with television's coverage of the National Football League has slowed. The explanations are pained and cautious. And the speculation—uneasiness, in some circles—centers on pay-television. Not whether it will come to pro football. But when. And how.

The muted glowering of "the monster just over the hill" is an exaggeration to some, a tantalizing beckoning to others. Both attitudes surface in the same set of perceptions. "If you consider just 400,000 sets"—roughly seven percent of the present national pay-TV market—"tuned in to one team at $1 a game for 20 weeks," says Don Ohlmeyer, the top producer at NBC Sports, "then you're talking about your basic $8 million a year. For one franchise." (Currently, each NFL franchise gets a reported $5.8 million a year from the contract with the commercial TV networks.) Those figures on pay-television are not considered extravagant. "If the game is pegged at $2.50, then you're talking about $20 million. For one franchise." And if the pay-TV price for pro football is pegged at the top ticket-at-the-gate price—as it was in one pay-TV experiment with Ohio State football—then you are talking about $160 million to $200 million a year. For each franchise taking part in pay-television.

The numbers dazzle.

And they deceive.

They mask the problems of moving the NFL into pay-television. The problems are with the Government, with technology, with the marketing of the game, with the pooling of television income, with the ability or readiness of pay-TV to provide the NFL with everything that the commercial TV networks have provided. These are profoundly difficult problems. They give pause even to the near-omnipotent NFL. "If we went for anything like that"—like plunging too obviously and avariciously for the pay-TV money—"Congress would be all over us," says Pete Rozelle, commissioner of the National Football League.

*A former sports columnist for The Washington Post and Chicago Daily News, **William Barry Furlong** has written for many national publications, including The New York Times Magazine, Harper's, The Atlantic Monthly, Life and Look.*

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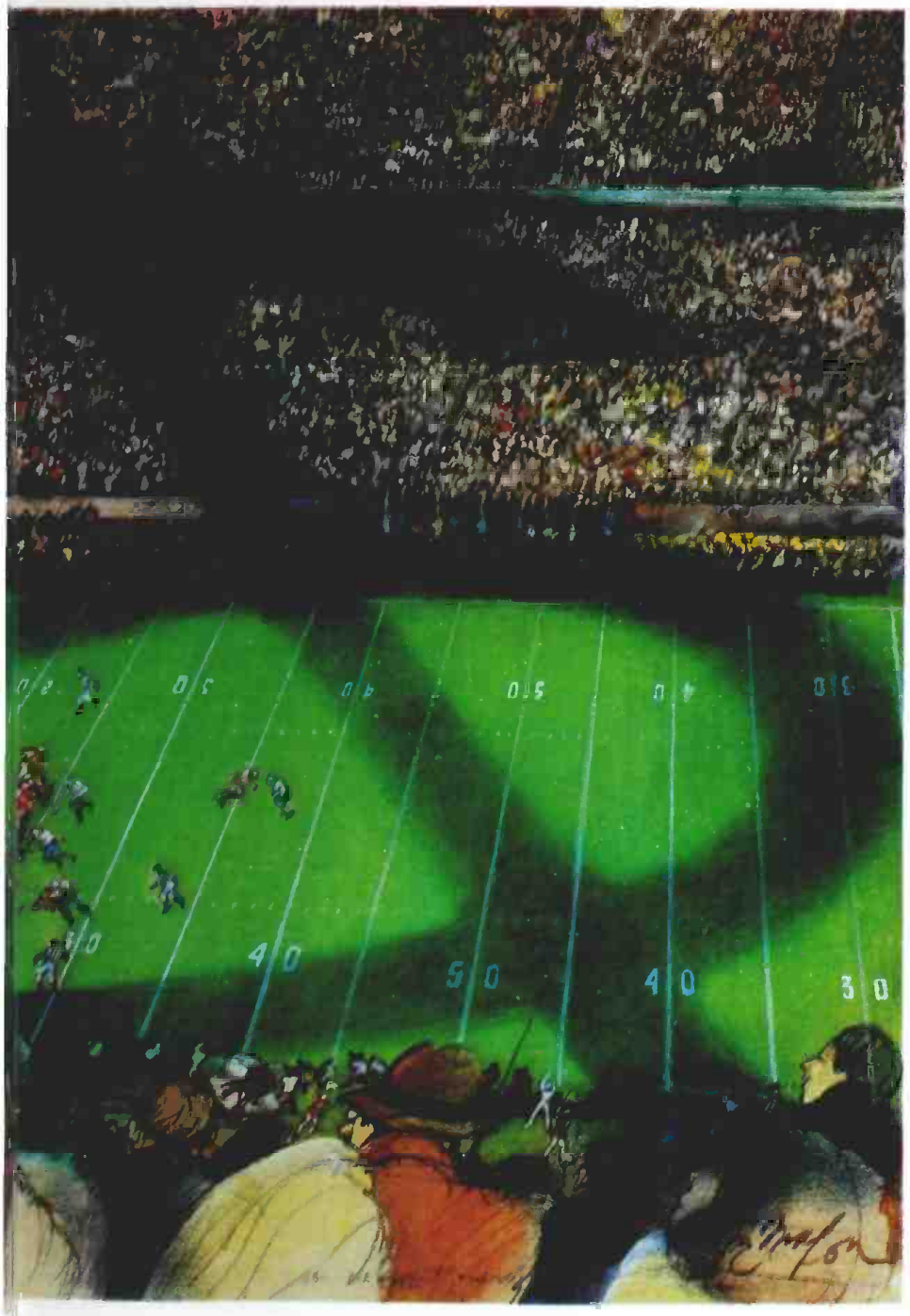

He exaggerates—as we shall shortly see. Val Pinchbeck, the NFL's chief TV strategist, permits a little more reality: "We might someday run a test of pay-TV. Our contracts with the networks allow that," he says softly. "But I hasten to add that we have no definite plans for such a test right now." Chet Simmons, former president of NBC Sports and now president of the Entertainment and Sports Programming Network, introduces total reality: "They'd be crazy not to be thinking about it. Everybody else is."

That thinking about the "monster" explains the pause that characterized TV's coverage of the NFL in the last year or so. It is almost as if the networks and the NFL are hunkering down to plan and save energy for the struggle when the monster comes over the hill.

In the past, of course, the mating of commercial television with pro football had a wonderfully synergistic effect. The league grew as television's coverage of it grew. Attendance has quadrupled in the Rozelle era—the modern TV era—and the number of franchises has more than doubled while their market value has quintupled. Television not only matched the spectacle of the game, but heightened it. It developed or perfected such innovations as slow-motion, instant replays, freeze frames and split screens in its coverage of sports in general and professional football in particular.

Then, in the last two years, the synergy slowed and even stopped. It is not that pro football collapsed in popularity. It's that its *rise* in popularity—at least on TV—stopped. The NFL tried not to get too upset. "We had an overall drop of about four percent in the ratings in 1978," says Val Pinchbeck. Overall, the ratings showed no growth in '79. He attributes the slippage to less-than-apocalyptic events: a longer season that invaded weeks that fans had previously used for non-football-watching purposes, some good baseball races, and disgustingly good weather in some parts of the country early in the season (weather that tempted people to go outside to enjoy themselves). The networks, too, tried not to get upset. ABC, which suffered an 11-percent drop in 1978 in its share of the audience on *Monday Night Football*, promptly raised its advertising rate for the time slot to $190,000 a minute—an increase of $20,000—for 1979. Then, according to an ABC spokesman, the network saw its ratings drop another 10 to 12 percent in the first few weeks of last season. Only two late-season games, Houston's 20-17 win over Pittsburgh and San Diego's 17-7 win over Denver, turned the situation around. The TV audiences for those games ranked second and third in the entire history of the *Monday Night* series (tops was Oct. 2, 1978, when Washington defeated Dallas 9-5) and helped the show recover to the point where its ratings for the season dropped only 2.5 percent below the 1978 drop-off.

But the stagnation in ratings did make everybody stop and think. The NFL had an option with ABC to expand prime-time football from four non-Monday games to six in 1979. The league decided not to exercise that option; ABC still had only four non-Monday prime-time games in '79. They also shifted the majority of those games from Sunday night to Thursday night. The three Sunday-night prime-time games in 1978 did poorly in the ratings; the one Thursday-night prime-time game held the ratings ABC had come to expect—and earn—in prime time. Presto! There were three Thursday-night games and only one Sunday-night game last season. Thus pro-football fans had only one chance to enjoy—or endure—a nine-hour Sunday budget of pro football in '79, a deprivation that may not inspire widespread withdrawal symptoms. ("I'm a pro-football nut," says Chet Forte, director of ABC's *Monday Night Football* telecasts, "but that's a *lot* of football.") The irony for ABC: none of the Thursday-night games in 1979

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did as well as the single game in 1978.

Did all this signal that the public was oversaturated with pro football? The figures, reflecting a broad spectrum of society, are mixed. Though TV audience figures dropped in 1978, average game attendance in the regular season of the NFL reached 57,017, the highest in five years. It rose to 58,848 in 1979. Basic ratings on the 1979 Super Bowl were virtually identical to 1978's, but the number of homes reached by the Super Bowl telecast (35,090,000) was the highest in history.

While regular-season viewer interest stopped rising, so also did another aspect of television's coverage of pro football: innovation. CBS last year held to its historic camera position on the 50-yard line. "We consider the 50-yard line the best seat in the house," says Hal Classon, vice president for production for CBS Sports. ABC and NBC last year held to their classic camera positions on both the 25- and 50-yard lines. "We consider the best seat in the house to be where the ball is," said Chet Simmons when he was still at NBC Sports. Perhaps CBS put down-and-yardage on screen more than in the past ("For the deaf," says Classon. "Because people are turning off the TV audio and turning on the radio broadcast of the game," says a Washington television reporter, implying, as others have, dissatisfaction with television's announcers). Certainly NBC turned to more and more replays in the play-off period. ABC—which once had midair orgasms over any technological stunt—seemed rather frosty, if not frigid, over the enthusiasm of NBC for replays. "I think you can 'replay' yourself to death in some games," says Forte. "The big problem in replays is controlling yourself. You could have 24 cameras out there—isolate on 22 players and on the two coaches."

Thus pro football and TV got through the last two seasons with a certain amount of stagnation—with a drop in viewer interest, with no innovations to give zest to the game. But stagnation is not part of Pete Rozelle's game plan. He has displayed a rare gift for knowing how to use TV to further the NFL's own ends. "Pete understands this medium better than anybody else I've ever met," says Don Ohlmeyer. "And he rates in the top five on my list of knowing how to handle people."

Rozelle's reasoning is seldom as celebrated as the money it commands, but maybe it should be. For instance, insiders say that his decision to deliver prime-time telecasting of the NFL to ABC instead of the Hughes Sports Network in 1969—"Hughes offered him more money," says Ohlmeyer—was based on a particular perspective. By lining up all three networks with the NFL, he made it virtually

> Pete Rozelle is too wise simply to yank all pro football off 'free' television

impossible for any newly formed pro-football league that might come along—as the World Football League did several years later—to form an alliance and get a national television platform through any established network.

Similarly, the insiders say, the networks bent to his will in signing the current contract because they had the feeling that *he* might start a fourth network, that he might televise the NFL on independent stations in precisely those prime-time spots where the major networks were weakest. "He might pick the one night when NBC had the lowest ratings, and destroy those already weak ratings by drawing viewers over to pro football in prime time on the independent station. Then he would pick the night when CBS was weakest and have another prime-time game," hypothesizes one insider. The networks may have thought this over and decided that NFL football was the best attraction they could have at any price. That price for all regular-season and post-season games, including Super Bowls, from 1978 through 1981 was reported to be in excess of $600 million. (The figure of $5.8 million per team every year in the four-year contract comes to a total of almost $650 million.) It was, say sources in the television industry, the largest television package ever negotiated.

There is yet another inner dynamic of the NFL that Rozelle understands. Explains one insider, "It's in the first two years of a television contract that the owners make their big money." In that time, the players—both as individuals and through their association—have often been bound to a pay standard and contracts negotiated in the previous cycle of the NFL television contracts. "But in the last two years of a contract, they begin trying to catch up." The television revenue, of course, stays the same. So, to keep the owners rich and happy, Rozelle virtually *must* get a better and more spectacular contract in every cycle. The next cycle starts in 1982.

All this raises some intriguing questions: In a time of stagnation, of a pause in the growth of pro football on TV, where will Rozelle look in the future? To further programming by the networks (and perhaps further stagnation)? If he wants the first billion-dollar deal in television history, will the networks—perhaps burdened by leveled-off ratings—be able to attract enough advertising income to accommodate him? Or will he turn to pay-television and its virtually limitless potential? Or—and this is the most likely alternative—will he devise a mixture of both pay-TV and commercial broadcasting, and build his television income by taking the top dollar from both?

Pete Rozelle is too wise simply to yank all pro football off "free" television. There are practical reasons. Certain NFL cities have virtually no pay-TV facilities, thus they'd have no "draw" on pay-TV. And there are political reasons. Says Rep. Lionel Van Deerlin, chairman of the influential House Subcommittee on Communications, "My feeling about any of the sports events which we number among our 'national treasures'—the Super Bowl, the World Series, the Rose Bowl, that sort of thing—has been that if there's any move to take them off commercial and put them on pay, there'd be an uproar in Congress. *Something* would happen as a result."

And Pete Rozelle might not like that "something." For it could affect the exemption from the antitrust laws that the NFL now enjoys. The question Rozelle faces is whether Washington will continue in its recent deregulatory mood or stage an about-face or even a right turn. The ultimate answer involves the Congress, the courts and the FCC. They are already bound up in a bewildering array of bills, proposals, lobbies, lawsuits, and regulations. Just tinkering with the sports TV system means solving complex problems that include setting new guidelines for home territorial rights, copyrights, wage guidelines, siphoning distant signals, superstations, satellite transmission, satellite reception, optical fibers, microwave receivers, and antitrust law.

Take just one issue: the NFL has an exemption from the law, stemming from a bill passed in 1961, that gives its members the right to pool their income from TV without being prosecuted for violation of the antitrust laws. Consider just a few of the questions arising out of that fact: Does the 1961 law apply only to income from commercial network TV? Or does it apply to TV in general, including pay-TV?

In particular, does the exemption of 1961 mean that the NFL can pool its income from pay-TV? That is something it would want very much to do in order to prevent NFL franchises in hot-wired (i.e., cable-laid) areas from getting the vast incomes that would allow them to dominate the league. Or, alternatively, does it mean that it *cannot* pool income from pay-TV because such a pool was not the "intent of Congress" when it passed the law?

Where there is room for vast differ-

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ences of legal opinion there is likely to be a lawsuit. Would the NFL run the risk of losing a lawsuit—and perhaps its anti-trust exemption—by trying to pool pay-TV revenues without express clearance from Congress or the courts? Only if the NFL was sure that it would win the lawsuit.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle facing the monster coming over the hill is Washington's differing approaches to handling the quagmire of pay-cable regulation. A bipartisan coalition in the House subcommittee would continue the trend to deregulation; a bill introduced by Sen. Barry Goldwater would return more regulatory powers to the FCC and bar the siphoning from commercial to cable TV of certain games such as "sporting events of national interest, previously shown live and in their entirety on nationwide broadcast television." Congressman Van Deerlin and his allies are not quite so dead-set against siphoning. And some of the individual sports organizations are conjuring up approaches that will test—or embarrass—the politicians.

Right now nobody knows which way the regulatory wind will blow, and the Congress is not working overtime trying to decide. Last year it held hearings on changes in the present Federal Communications Act, then abandoned the effort. It now appears that the various ideas will be taken in pieces rather than as a complete and comprehensive new law—one settling the many outstanding problems of wedding pro sports to pay-television.

How Washington finally resolves these problems may one day open a path for Pete Rozelle. His most logical goal is for NFL games to be telecast through a mixture of commercial TV and pay-TV. He needs both; perhaps he even likes both. Commercial TV, though it might become a loss leader, would serve to excite and entice the fans into wanting to see the games shown "at a price" on pay-TV.

There are a number of ways the mixture could work: having each NFL team provide eight home games for pay-TV and eight road games for commercial TV is just one. An even more sophisticated system is one that would have the four best games in the NFL each week appear on commercial TV and the other 10 games on pay-TV. (The Super Bowl and the play-offs would, of course, remain on commercial TV.)

That way, the fan who doesn't have pay-TV or can't afford it would still be guaranteed the best of NFL football at no cost. The format would be the same as today: a double-header on one network, a single game on the other on Sunday afternoon, and a prime-time game, presumably on Monday night, for the third

> The NFL could develop pay-TV double-headers every weeknight, creating a billion-dollar-a-year package

commercial network. The mixture would have a certain cunning attraction to the networks. They could reduce production costs by covering only one or two games a week instead of as many as seven and yet have the best NFL product to sell in their never-ending race for ratings and the advertising dollar. "But the networks would be against it," says Don Ohlmeyer, "because it would allow that black box"—pay-TV—"into the Nation's living rooms."

All this is oversimplified. The scheduling plans, for example, could be a nightmare, if only because Rozelle probably would want to keep the pay-TV games from being shown in their own best market when there's another NFL game on commercial TV in the same area.

One alternative is to "uncluster" NFL games to lighten the load on Sundays. Out of 14 possible weekly games, the NFL could spread 10 pay-TV games over five weeknights. Taking advantage of time-zone differences, Rozelle could develop pay-TV double-headers every weeknight by simply running a western game live in the East right after an eastern game, and follow a live western game in the West with a tape of the East's game. Such double-headers could provide NFL teams with a financial future beyond their dreams.

The numbers on such a plan are so dazzling as to tempt one to live with the nightmare—and the monster. Say the NFL could swing a deal like that mentioned above—10 pay-TV and four commercial games a week—and sell the regular-season pay package to only 400,000 homes a week for 16 weeks at $13 a game, the average price of a stadium ticket and parking. Then Pete Rozelle would have, with the income from commercial TV thrown in, not just a billion-dollar package but a *billion-dollar-a-year* package.

But it cannot be done—even in a simplified form—without very artful handling of the opportunities and problems now associated with pay-television.

The opportunities are glowing. The pay-TV market is not large compared with the market for commercial TV: almost six million paying subscribers for pay-television early this year, compared with 76 million households with TV sets. But it is growing at a rapid rate. The number of subscribers has doubled in less than a year, has quintupled in the last three years. But the technology for further expansion is only beginning to be exploited, and it will be years before pay-TV will be able to reach a truly national audience.

Still, the growth in the number of systems and subscribers may, by 1982, provide Pete Rozelle with enough pay-TV homes to allow him to think seriously about it.

Another opportunity is in the changing attitude of government toward pay-television in general. The spirit of deregulation is spreading. The regulatory agencies, the courts and the Congress all show indications that they will allow alternative broadcasting forms to grow faster than in the past.

The problems, however, are plentiful. They involve everything from the pricing of the product to its marketing. "How are you going to convince the fans—whom you've spent 25 years telling they could watch their favorite teams for free—suddenly to start paying for the games?" asks one skeptical insider. And how does the league collect the money from pay-TV? Today's payment methods usually involve a monthly charge to the subscriber, for which he gets all the programs on the system. But the greatest potential bonanza—particularly to the NFL—is in charging by the event, not by the month. Few pay-TV systems use this method. Qube, owned by Warner Amex Cable Corp., employs it in Columbus, Ohio. (Estimates on how much it cost to put in facilities for the particular system used by Qube range from $20-30 million for fewer than 30,000 subscribers.) In the over-the-air pay-TV field, SelecTV in Los Angeles has a way of charging by the event simply by using a decoder box that signals a computer when a particular program is tuned in; the computer then totals all such programs watched during the month and the subscriber is billed. But it has been estimated that the cost of putting these decoders into two million homes in a given area would be "up close to $450 million."

So the numbers are dazzling—on both sides of the financial statement. The only thing that can be said about these problems is that they are formidable but not impossible. And that the pay-television industry has solved other, more difficult problems in the last few years. So it is possible, perhaps even probable, that Rozelle will manage to apply his artful touch to the problems and the opportunities of pay-TV by 1982—or, at least, by the end of the NFL's *next* contract with the commercial broadcasting networks beginning that year.

He would then be the one who brings the monster over the hill. So that he can teach it to play tamely in his own little playpen. ■

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'They're all scrappers. They've been down, but they've bounced back. Many of them have suffered the indignity of failing on the big screen, which is very cruel. They're survivors— and television viewers sense that and like them for it'

Portrait of a Survivor: Stefanie Powers

By BILL DAVIDSON

One day last November there was a monumental flap on the set of *Hart to Hart*, the ABC series that devotes an hour a week to the premise that an extremely wealthy jet-set couple indulges in the exotic hobby of solving murders worldwide. Stefanie Powers suddenly refused to work and retired to the privacy of her trailer dressing room to seek consolation from her small menagerie of animals—Bear, a large dog, B.B., a tiny monkeylike African bush baby, and Papuga, a Brazilian parrot.

The reason for the flap? The distaff Hart made it known that she would not reappear before the cameras until Leonard Goldberg (of the series' production company, Spelling-Goldberg) came down to the set to discuss the poor quality of the show's scripts. (Miss Powers' beef—which is shared by costar Robert Wagner—was that the show tends to rely on hoary cliches such as corpses falling out of closets and rattlesnakes inexplicably inhabiting air-conditioning ducts, plus equally hoary dialogue like "You have a lovely face, and if you want it to stay lovely you will finish the job.")

The resolution of the flap? Leonard Goldberg did make an appeasing phone call that returned Stefanie to the sound stage, and the next day he also made a rare visit to the set to thrash out the problem amid the squeaks, barks and screeches of the creatures in her dressing room. Not much was thrashed out—the prevailing network wisdom at ABC being that one does not tamper with a ratings success, no matter how terrible the scripts. But Goldberg did mollify Stefanie by making a concession or two in the direction of the quaint and ancient actors' theory that *they* should be allowed to make up the lines as they go along.

If this incident seems reminiscent of the old movie days when supermoguls like Louis B. Mayer had to pacify superstars like Judy Garland—it *is*.

"Stefanie Powers a *superstar*?" you snicker. In the strange world of television drama, that's exactly what she is—along with such others as David Janssen, Robert Conrad and Angie Dickinson, who mean very little on the big screen but who are pampered and wooed as enormous attractions for the small screen, no matter how many bombs they appear in.

Stefanie, for example, has failed in two previous series—*The Girl from U.N.C.L.E.* in 1966 and *The Feather & Father Gang* in 1977. But she also has done more than 30 TV-movies, some of them dreadful, like "Sweet, Sweet Rachel," some memorable, like "A Death in Canaan." The memorables have left enough of a lasting impression with TV audiences to induce a veteran CBS programming vice president to declare, "I'd use her again in almost anything, if I could get her sprung from ABC. She has developed a following. Audiences *like* her; she is familiar and comforting to them in the privacy of their own living rooms. Give me Stefanie and she's good for an extra rating point or two. I'd rather use her than any less-than-current movie star—'less-than-current' being the polite way of saying 'has-been'."

In the same way, we have—on the male side—the strange case of Mr. Robert Conrad. Conrad has had a long succession of series flops—*A Man Called Sloane; The Duke; Baa, Baa Black Sheep; The D.A.; Assignment: Vienna*. Yet he continues to be in demand. William Self at CBS, for example, can't wait for Conrad to fulfill a commitment to him for another "Wild, Wild West" TV-movie. Says the knowledgeable Ethel Winant, NBC's vice president in charge of talent, "Bob has a loyal corps of fans dating way back to when he did *The Wild, Wild West*. If he has a lousy show, they don't watch it for very long, but they always blame the vehicle, not *him*. And they always tune in, in force, to watch him the *next* time. We figure that he and Richard Chamberlain drew most of the audience for *Centennial*."

According to Winant, there are several qualities that all the strictly-TV superstars have in common. "First," she says, "every one of them has that carry-over fan following from past triumphs, some as distant as David Janssen's *The Fugitive*. Secondly, they're all very talented people who are so accomplished at the specialized tricks of TV acting that producers find them the easiest to deal with and give them a lot of work. This makes them even more familiar to TV audiences, and familiarity keeps building the carry-over fan quotient.

"A third common factor is that—whether true or not—they all radiate niceness. Jim Garner, Alan Alda, Jack Klugman and Ed Asner seem so nice that you would trust them with anything. Elizabeth Montgomery, Angie Dickinson and Lindsay Wagner seem so nice that they even are nonthreatening to women. I look at Stefanie Powers on the small screen and I say, 'She wouldn't steal my husband.' I look at Bo Derek on the *big* screen and I say, 'She *would* steal my husband'."

Producer Melville Shavelson (*Ike*, "The Great Houdini") adds a couple of other insights. "They're all bright," he says. "Not learned, but bright. And they're all scrappers. They've been down, but they've bounced back. Many of them have suffered the indignity of failing on the big screen, which is very cruel, especially to older women's faces. They're survivors—and television viewers sense that and like them for it."

Which brings us back to that scrappy survivor, Stefanie Powers. She seems to have been around forever, but she is only 37 years old and actually has not changed much since she did her first film at the age of 16 more than two decades ago. The wide hazel eyes are still ingenuous; the lean body, though matured, still is sinuously lovely. She continues to be a nonstop talker and nonlistener—which has earned her a reputation with the press as one of the most difficult interviewees in Hollywood. You ask her a question, for example, about her problems finding work after the demise of *The Girl from U.N.C.L.E.* and she responds with a 20-minute polemic about the dangers of waste products in the nuclear-energy industry. "I have my causes," she says, "and I'd rather talk about them than about myself." Her causes also include animal conservation and the proliferation of primitive sculptures from New Guinea—both of which enthusiasms she shares with William Holden, the man in her life since her divorce from Gary Lockwood in 1974. *continued*

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Nonetheless, persistence finally elicits from her the story of her own personal survivorship—and also some honest self-evaluations. "I have made 27 theatrical feature films," she says,"but I am not and never have been a Movie Star. I am a worker bee—one of those people who acts to live and does not live to act. As far as my status in television is concerned, I discovered that by being indiscriminate, I found work all the time—and maybe people feel comfortable with someone in their home whom they've seen so many times before."

Her career as a survivor began in Los Angeles in 1942, where she was born the daughter of first-generation Polish parents who separated when she was quite young. Reared by her mother, a dynamic, beautiful woman to whom she still is very close, young Stephania Zofja Federkiewicz did well in school and had serious ambitions to become an archeologist. Two weeks before her graduation from Hollywood High School, however, the recruiters came looking for teen-age beauties for the film version of "West Side Story."

Stephania could not resist. She applied, was tested—and rejected. Producer-actor Tom Laughlin saw her screen test, however, and was impressed. He signed her for a part in a film he was making, "Among the Thorns." This opus never was released, but it brought Stephania to the attention of Max Arnow, then in charge of casting at Columbia Pictures. She was put under contract by the studio, and, as was the movie industry's custom in those days, the name change to the more Anglo-Saxon-sounding Stefanie Powers was made part of the deal. At 16, she was still a minor, and Stefanie's $250-a-week contract had to be approved by a superior court judge.

Then the ups and downs began. She made one good picture, "Experiment in Terror" with Lee Remick ("To this day I consider it my best movie"), but mostly she did things like "Tammy Tell Me True," "The Interns," "The New Interns" and "Palm Springs Weekend." In 1966, when she was 24, she married actor Gary Lockwood and her main interests drifted off in the direction of world travel and making land deals with her new husband. It was then that she unexpectedly was hired to star in a TV series, *The Girl from U.N.C.L.E.*, because MGM and producer Norman Felton liked her movie work.

"The show was a disaster from the very beginning," Stefanie says. "We did 32 segments that year, and by the ninth month it was like a prolonged pregnancy. I was so exhausted, I'd literally fall asleep in the middle of conversations. Worst of all, we were being creamed in the ratings by that great work of art *Petticoat Junction*, and the network and the studio stopped talking to us. I was treated like a leper, and when the show was canceled, I, of course, was the one who was blamed for the fiasco."

It undoubtedly was a traumatic experience. "I don't like to talk about it," says Stefanie, "but I ran off to Europe and hid for a year. I felt like a victim of shell shock. Then, when I got back, I found I was on the Most Unwanted list. I couldn't get movie or TV work for at least another year. But Gary and I needed money because our land deals had turned sour, so I said the hell with it and I took what other people would consider demeaning stage jobs in little regional theaters."

Continues Stefanie: "But I sharpened my skills as an actress, and casting directors saw me. As a result, I finally began to get a lot of work in *series* TV. Nearly every week, I was raped, strangled or assaulted in one detective show or another. Then, in 1969, the heyday of the movie-for-television came along. Whatever the part was in a TV-movie, I became known as the girl who wouldn't say no to it. I did things no one else wanted—junk like 'Sky Heist' and 'The Astral Factor.' For five years, Darren McGavin and I held the joint record for appearances in movies-for-television.

> "Nearly every week, I was raped, strangled or assaulted in one detective show or another"

"But it paid off. By 1974, I had fought my way back and built a following—and soon I was getting lead roles in the good stuff, like 'A Death in Canaan' and *Washington: Behind Closed Doors.*"

Without realizing it, Stefanie, by her self-imposed constant exposure on the tube, had become one of those specialized TV superstars. She was slowed down briefly by her ill-fated *Feather & Father Gang* series with Harold Gould; but she almost immediately was sought after by Robert Wagner, whose production company was about to share ownership of the new ABC *Hart to Hart* series with Spelling-Goldberg.

Wagner reports that he never had anybody else in mind when it came to casting the role of Jennifer Hart. Wagner says, "Stefanie had guest-starred in my *It Takes a Thief* series during that frenzied period when she was doing everything for everybody, and I knew she had the style and class to help carry a show that depends on personality and extravagant settings rather than story. I also knew she has that rare talent to be able to play comedy and drama equally well."

In one of the most interesting observations of all about the mysterious ingredients that go into the making of a TV superstar, Wagner says, "Our mail indicates that while a lot of people tune in to see Stefanie and me react together in our plush jet-set surroundings, a lot of other viewers are simply interested in spending an hour with Stefanie. She's a longtime familiar friend who has been in their homes many times before, and they want to see what clothes she's wearing, if she's changed her hair style, if she's gained or lost a few pounds.

"As with any old friend, they seem to just want to know how she's getting along. And fortunately for us, it sure does help our ratings."

Although he echoes Stefanie's concerns about the *Hart to Hart* scripts, Wagner—as a co-proprietor of the show—is more sanguine about it *because* of those ratings. "As long as we can pull it off," he says, "we'll try to get by on magnetism."

As for Stefanie, she's still not so sure that she doesn't prefer to dispense her magnetism in smaller doses. "Eighteen hours' work a day, six days a week, sometimes is a little much," she laments.

Also, being back in a series definitely has changed her way of life. She always has jealously guarded her privacy and now continues to do so more than ever. She is rarely seen at industry events or at "in" restaurants and is one of the few Hollywood personalities who does not employ a press agent. Even her unusual relationship with William Holden, 25 years her senior, is infrequently chronicled—except on such occasions when their joint company, W. A. Stefrick Imports, Ltd., markets Papuan primitive sculptures and such through Bloomingdale's in New York or a Beverly Hills art gallery. When they go to Palm Springs for a weekend, they drive his-and-hers jeeps in the desert.

She doesn't have much time for such pursuits any more. Every morning she and her animals leave their home in rugged Benedict Canyon for the studio or the day's location, which may be 50 or 60 miles distant from Los Angeles. Frequently she does not get home until midnight.

In previous years Stefanie spent many of her summers revitalizing her talents on the stage (her last theater stint was in an aborted Broadway-bound version of "Cyrano de Bergerac" with Stacy Keach). This year, she'll probably have to limit herself to a trip to China, New Guinea or such with William Holden.

And then it will be back to work, back to the 18-hour days, the pursuit of ratings and the other peculiar perquisites of television superstardom. ■

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MSN, MPC and OPT

Some unfamiliar sets of initials invade the prime-time combat zone dominated by ABC, CBS and NBC

By TONY CHIU

There's a subtle tremor passing through the weekly Nielsen tabulations of viewing preferences. Suddenly, in the column headed "Network," ABC, CBS and NBC have company. There's something called MSN. And OPT. And MPC.

Far from being typographical errors, the new initials stand for America's three prime-time "ad hoc" networks. These are rather loose confederations of stations—both independents and network affiliates—willing to preempt regularly scheduled offerings. On given nights and during given weeks throughout the year, the stations band together to present new made-for-TV movies, miniseries, dramatic specials and other independently produced programming in head-to-head competition with the major networks' fare.

For instance, in late January MSN, or the Mobil Showcase Network, televised *Edward & Mrs. Simpson* over some 50 stations. The six-episode British-made drama was about King Edward VIII (portrayed by Edward Fox), who in 1936 abdicated his throne to marry the twice-divorced American, Wallis Warfield Simpson (played by Cynthia Harris). Mobil, which pioneered the prime-time ad hoc network with such documentary anthologies as *Ten Who Dared* and *When*

If Edward VII (Edward the King) *did well in the ratings, why not Edward VIII? So reasoning, Mobil Showcase Network imported* Edward & Mrs. Simpson, *about the former's abdication to marry the latter, here pictured in the wedding scene from the British-made drama series.*

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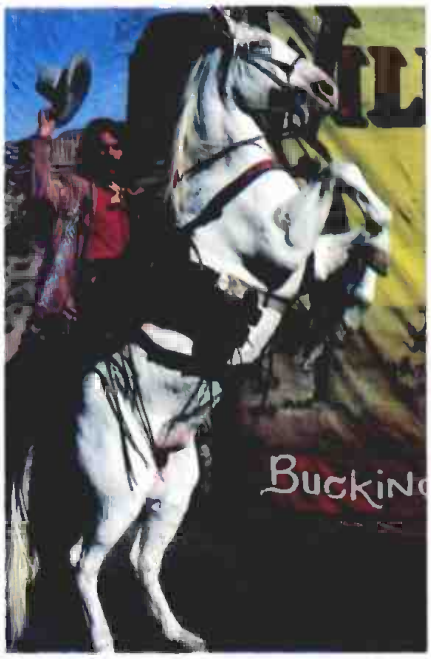

More than 70 stations snapped up 'Wild Times,' The Golden Circle network's premiere offering. The four-hour, two-part Western was based on the Brian Garfield novel and starred Sam Elliott, pictured above.

Havoc Struck, hoped to match the success of its 1979 miniseries about Edward VII of England. Titled *Edward the King*, that show's first episode actually received higher ratings in several major markets than its network competition.

Also in January, OPT, or Operation Prime Time—which has assembled almost 100 stations—sought to capitalize on ABC's imminent Winter Olympics coverage by preceding the Games with the drama "Top of the Hill." Written for television by Irwin Shaw (and subsequently published, with some plot modifications, in book form) and set—surprise!—at the Winter Olympics, this four-hour, two-part movie followed the likes of Wayne Rogers, Adrienne Barbeau, Elke Sommer and Sonny Bono through snow, subterfuge, sex and sitzmarks. OPT's six previous productions, all drawn from best-selling novels, have attracted ratings ranging from healthy (for "Testimony of Two Men," "Evening in Byzantium" and three volumes from John Jakes' Bicentennial "The Kent Family Chronicles") to exceptional (for Howard Fast's "The Immigrants," shown in late 1978).

Finally in January, MPC, or the Metromedia Producers Corporation, inaugurated a network it named The Golden Circle. MPC signed up more than 70 stations to show "Wild Times," a four-hour, two-part Western based on Brian Garfield's novel and starring Sam Elliott, Ben Johnson, Bruce Boxleitner and Penny Peyser.

Why the emergence of any ad hoc group, much less three?

The people at Mobil talk about upgrading the level of prime-time programming. Al Masini of OPT says, "Our intention is not to damage the networks. But they are the only games in town, and we think it necessary to establish a counterbalancing force by providing additional programming." Len Ringquist, head of MPC, says, "I'm a great believer that all television is in essence local. And today more than ever, local stations are searching for viable programming alternatives."

The stated desire to offer more choices, though, is only part of the story. Another important part is, in a word, money.

An individual television station's sole commodity is time. The price it can command depends on its viewership. To attract viewers, it has three sources of programs: its own staff, various syndicators and the networks. The well-heeled networks generally offer the most attractive shows, invaluable promotional help, and a healthy financial package to those stations willing to run network products. Small wonder that most of the country's 1000 stations are affiliated with ABC, CBS or NBC. But there is a drawback to affiliation: the networks keep the lion's share of the fees paid by national advertisers. And prime-time advertising rates now average $114,000 per minute.

For fully half a decade, advertisers who wince at the ever-escalating cost of network time and producers who covet another market for their series have talked wistfully of creating a "fourth network." "That's unlikely," says OPT's Al Masini. "Economically, there can't really be a 'fourth network' until you can get 95-percent coverage of the Nation." To attain that, network affiliates in large numbers would have to defect. And for *that* to happen, a fourth network would have to provide a minimum of 22 hours per week of network-quality prime-time programming that can run up to $325,000 per half-hour to produce. Currently, only ABC, NBC and CBS have the resources to supply such material continuously.

But there exists a loophole: an affiliate may run anybody's show at any time; the network's only recourse against preemption is "jawboning"—also known as making vague threats. The significance of this loophole is that when an affiliate is offered an attractive non-network program, for which it generally pays a flat fee, the station has an incentive to preempt because the show's entire advertising revenues go to the affiliate. (The arrangement is usually different, but still lucrative, for the station when it joins MSN: Mobil, acting as sole sponsor, actually purchases time from the station in order to broadcast its programming commercial-free.)

For example, last November's OPT presentation was "The Seekers." Detroit's WJBK-TV, a CBS station, was one of 74 network affiliates choosing to air the two-part, four-hour ad hoc show. WJBK's program manager, David Bieber, decided to preempt a pair of TV-movies, "11th Victim" and "The Suicide's Wife."

At stake was about half an hour of prime-time advertising minutes available during the four hours of programming. By staying with CBS, WJBK would have been able to keep the revenue from only several of those precious minutes—the number CBS permitted the station to sell for itself—plus its network affiliate's fee. By going with OPT, all of the minutes were sold by the station—and time in Detroit might fetch from $7000 to $11,000 per minute for network-quality programming. Says Bieber, "When you consider the cost of purchasing the ad hoc program, the

Tony Chiu is the author of a novel, "Port Arthur Chicken," and is working on a second novel, "300 Chases."

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personnel and local advertising costs associated with airing it, the revenue you lose by preempting the network, and then compare those costs with the income the show produced—yes, it was a *very* successful venture."

The types of programs offered and which stations are sought after reflect the three ad hoc groups' individual needs. Mobil, as sponsor of its presentations, is as concerned with buffing its corporate image as with getting motorists into its filling stations. Therefore it keeps its network small, concentrating on penetrating the top 50 markets. In addition, Mobil frankly gears its shows toward the "upscale" segment of the audience, usually selecting well-crafted British productions (which can be bought for substantially less money than it would take to create original shows). For instance, its recent *Edward & Mrs. Simpson*, which won awards when it was shown on British television in 1978, was passed over by the American networks and by at least one other ad hoc group because it was thought to lack the broad national appeal necessary for high Nielsens.

On the other hand, OPT and MPC are very much concerned with reaching a full-spectrum audience, because the advertising rates their member stations can charge sponsors are governed by ratings. That's why they've copied the successful network formula for multipart movies: a promotable, brand-name author; a promotable, large-scale melodrama liberally seasoned with seething passions; and a sprinkling of promotable stars (such as Rogers, Sommer and Elliott in the January presentations), with secondary roles filled according to the immortal dictum laid down by Claude Rains in "Casablanca"—"Round up the usual suspects."

To date, in their statements for public consumption, the three full-time networks seem to regard the ad hocs as a stallion might a fly. A spokesman for CBS says, "Our competition is ABC and NBC. We don't see the ad hocs as a factor in terms of regularity of programming or quality of programming."

The man has a point. If it is the intent of the ad hoc networks to provide a choice, not an echo, their batting average is low. *Edward & Mrs. Simpson*—high production values notwithstanding—seems by its pedigree and the accents of its performers to be a refugee from *Masterpiece Theatre,* the PBS series that Mobil underwrites. And though Al Masini of OPT notes that "if you get seven guys in a room to talk about quality you'll have 12 opinions," he readily concedes that so far his group's programs have set few critical benchmarks.

But in many ways, the year 1980 is a perfect greenhouse for the prime-time ad hoc networks: the Winter and Summer Olympics, the political conventions and the Presidential election will disrupt the major networks' regular programming and create a relative dearth of dramatic shows, thus making the networks somewhat vulnerable to the ad hocs. And though Masini worries that the ad hoc groups may have too much product—"How many times will an affiliate preempt the network? One of us is going to be short some stations"—Operation Prime Time and Metromedia Producers Corporation have scheduled a total of five additional four-hour presentations this year.

In May, OPT will telecast its version of "The Dream Merchants," Harold Robbins' steamy look at Hollywood's founding fathers and mistresses, while MPC is scheduling "Roughnecks," described as "a contemporary melodrama set against the oil fields of Texas."

In August or September, MPC will present "Bluegrass," which Ringquist describes as "very geopolitical. It's set in Kentucky, so it's got politics, gambling, big business, horse racing—I call it '"Giant" Sideways' or '*Dallas* Midwest'." OPT stations, meanwhile, will present reruns of previous OPT offerings.

And in November, OPT has scheduled John D. MacDonald's "Condominium," in which the greedy and the lustful of Florida (played by, among others, Barbara Eden, Dan Haggerty, Steve Forrest and Linda Cristal) get their just deserts in the winds of a killer hurricane. That same month, MPC will present "Sitka," a tale of Alaska in the 1860s that is based on a novel by Louis L'Amour, the best-selling author of Westerns.

In addition, Operation Prime Time last month unveiled a new twist. Under the rubric "dual form," it will offer six monthly specials this year. February's presentation, "Solid Gold '79," highlighted last year's top 50 record hits. This month's special is a TV-movie called "The Gossip Columnist" featuring Robert Vaughn and Bobby Vinton. Each dual-form show may be telecast as a two-hour show (presumably by independents) or chopped up into half-hour segments (presumably by affiliates looking to shore up their prime-time-access slots in the early evening).

From this lineup, it would appear that ad hoc networks are establishing a firm beachhead in the prime-time combat zone—but that their weapons do not include especially innovative programming. For now, MSN, OPT and MPC are giving viewers more of the same—and three new sets of initials to memorize. ■

Operation Prime Time has drawn heavily on dramatizations of best-selling novels, including 'The Kent Family Chronicles' series, which starred Andrew Stevens in 'The Rebels' (above); its first original drama, 'Top of the Hill,' featured Elke Sommer and Wayne Rogers (below).

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How big can TV screens get? How do these sets work? What are the differences between brands? Are prices going up or coming down? How big a room do you need? What should you look for in the stores?

Your Complete Guide to Giant-Screen Sets

By DAVID LACHENBRUCH

If you've never watched televison on a life-size screen, you owe yourself the experience. While it's easy to ignore or be diverted from the puppets prancing across a 19-inch television screen, viewing television projected onto a big screen is more akin to watching a movie in your own home theater. The program simply can't be ignored, and you're as unlikely to do something else at the same time as you are to read Kissinger's memoirs in the balcony during "Jaws III."

Somehow, the performance seems to be going on in your room, whether it's a movie, a basketball game or *Live from Lincoln Center*. You're no longer peeping through a porthole at something happening far away, but participating in the drama of life as it unfolds in your own home. That holds true of commercials as well: each one comes as a blatant personal affront, as you bleed with every "gotcha" and get a king-size headache from one too many pain-reliever pitches.

With a good giant screen beaming out a feature film from pay-cable, subscription TV, videocassette or disc, you're watching the movies as they were intended to be seen. You become a movie mogul with your own private screening room.

That's life with a *good* projection TV, properly installed. You also can stare listlessly at a faint outline with washed-out colors seen as through Venetian blinds, with multiple ghosts, distorted images and uneven brightness. You may also subject your guests to group astigmatism and eventually turn the damn thing off by popular request. Just as a good projector amplifies what's good about television, a poor one can exaggerate everything that exasperates you. When you discover yourself creeping back for a nostalgic squint at your 19-incher, it's time to begin measuring closets for a giant dust-gatherer.

But no matter how (or whether) you look at it, giant-screen TV is here, apparently to stay, and improving all the time. As the available video program sources continue to increase, billboard-size screens will proliferate in homes as they have in taverns and other public places. You could call projection TV a new idea whose time has come, but you'd be more accurate if you called it an old idea whose time has passed and come back.

The first projection-TV sets appeared in American homes more than 30 years ago. In fact, TV's archives indicate that more than 40,000 were sold in the dim, dead, black-and-white days of 1945 through 1947, and they served exactly the same purpose as they do today—overcoming the size limitations of the direct-view picture tube. In television's infancy, picture-tube screens were very small—generally 7 to 12 inches—and glass technology precluded the economical manufacture of larger sizes. The answer to the demand for larger pictures was to use lens and mirror assemblies to project the image onto an external screen or magnifying mirror. Then, as now, a home projection TV was simply a projector, working on optical principles similar to those used in a movie or slide projector—only instead of an incandescent bulb, the light source was one or more cathode-ray tubes. When larger direct-view tubes became practical, home projection sets moved on to the science and technology museums—or the town dump.

Projection television didn't die, however, but moved into the color era as an instrument for theaters and other large assembly halls. For many years the major manufacturer was RCA, and special installations sold for $25,000 and up—way up. Among their principal uses was closed-circuit presentation of championship prizefights in theaters when home television was blacked out.

The credit for the revival of home projection TV—this time in living color—goes to Henry Kloss (pronounced "close"). A pioneer in developing and bringing to the public popularly priced, quality, high-fidelity audio equipment, Kloss founded Advent Corporation with the idea of developing high fidelity for the eye as well as the ear. Kloss's eye-fi breakthrough came in 1973 with the introduction of the VideoBeam, which provided a quality 7-foot picture at the amazing price of $2500—about 10 percent of the cost of the lowest priced color projection systems then in existence.

VideoBeam used no revolutionary principles (and thus involved no new basic patents), but instead was the result of carefully scaling down every component in theater TV in both size and price. With a picture more than 10 times the area of a 25-inch direct-view television, Kloss's VideoBeam from the start captured the public imagination and founded a new mini-industry based on maxi-TV. When the $2500 price turned out to be somewhat too mini to turn a profit, Kloss eventually was forced out of the company he founded—and promptly went out and founded a new company. Kloss Video Corp.'s first product is the 6½-foot Novabeam, priced at $2495. Without him, Advent continues as a leader in projection television, and now offers four models, including the direct descendant of Kloss's original, whose price has now drifted up to a more nearly profitable $4495.

The original VideoBeam was relatively cumbersome for a home product, with a floor-stand projector that had to be permanently mounted exactly 8 feet from the large self-supporting screen. It projected its image from three special 5-inch tubes, one for each of the primary colors, and required a space at least 12 feet square, although it could be viewed from as far back as 40 feet.

Next to enter the projection-TV scene was Earl "Madman" Muntz, the flamboyant Southern California marketer who made and lost fortunes as a used-car dealer, sports-car manufacturer, builder of low-cost black-and-white televisions and originator of car stereo in the United States (often using the slogan "I want to give 'em away, but my wife won't let me—she's crazy"). Immediately spotting Advent's huge appeal, he set out to develop a poor man's giant screen that would overcome VideoBeam's problems of cost and bulk. Using a war-surplus aerial-photography lens system, highly polished mirrors and a small-screen Sony color set, he and his associates put together a projector and screen mounted in

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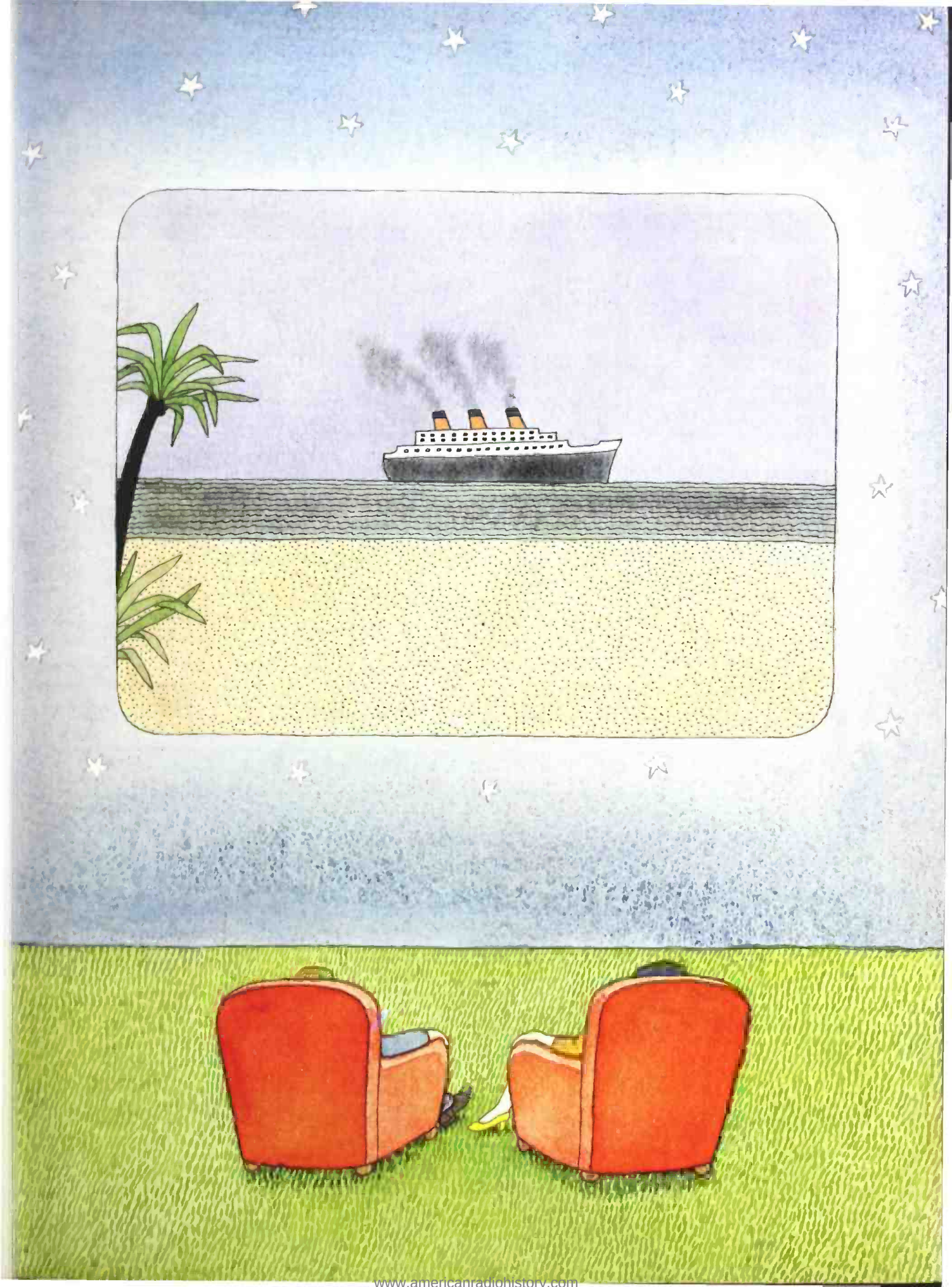

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COMPARATIVE TABLE OF PROJECTION-TV SYSTEMS

All available three-tube systems are listed, along with typical single-tube systems. Single-tube systems are available under many different brand names, some of them sold only regionally or locally. Specifications (except floor space) are as supplied by manufacturers.

THREE-TUBE SYSTEMS

BRAND	MODEL	NO. OF PIECES	SCREEN SIZE (Diagonal)	DIMENSIONS * H x W x D (inches)	APPROXIMATE FLOOR SPACE REQUIRED	REMOTE CONTROL	SUGGESTED LIST PRICE
ADVENT	VideoBeam 710	2	6 ft.	26½ x 16½ x 31⅛	4 x 10 ft.	None	$2495
	VideoBeam 761	2	6 ft.	17½ x 32 13/16 x 22½	4 x 9¼ ft.	Included	$3595
	VideoBeam 1000A	2	7 ft.	33 x 21 x 22½	4½ x 10½ ft.	Included	$4495
	VideoBeam 125	1	5 ft.	64 x 41 x 31½	41 x 55½ in.	Included	$4000
HEATHKIT	Screen Star GR-4000	2	6 ft.	28 x 16¼ x 32	4 x 11 ft.	Optional	$2195 (unassembled)
KLOSS	Novabeam 1	2	6½ ft.	18½ x 27½ x 22	4 x 9½ ft.	Included	$2495
MITSUBISHI	Video Scan VS505	1	50 in.	55¼ x 46½ x 26¾	46½ x 44¾ in.	Included	$3700
	Video Scan VS510	1	50 in.	62½ x 49¼ x 25¼	49¼ x 46½ in.	Included	$4000
	Video Scan VS707	2	6 ft.	26¾ x 22⅞ x 34⅞	4 x 10 ft.	Included	$3500
PANASONIC	CV-6000V	1	5 ft.	66⅘ x 51⅘ x 26¼	51⅘ x 47 in.	Included	$3999
PSI	Wideview CV450	1	50 in.	52 x 46 x 24 (rear projection)	46 x 24 in.	Included	$3100
	CV3	2	10 ft.	11⅔ x 33⅓ x 28 7/12	6 x 15 ft.	Included; wired	$4295
QUASAR	Great Show Machine PR6800	1	5 ft.	66⅙ x 51½ x 27	51½ x 49 in.	Included	$4500
SONY	KP-5000	1	50 in.	68¾ x 41½ x 26¼	41½ x 50 in.	Included	$3700
	KP-7200	1	72 in.	90½ x 59½ x 48	59½ x 57 in.	Included	$4200

*Dimensions of two-piece systems exclude screen; dimensions of single-piece systems are with cabinet in closed position.

a single furniture-styled cabinet, which could be opened up for viewing and folded into a wardrobe-shaped box when not being watched.

Muntz's "Home TV Theatre" met with such immediate success that his company was purchased lock, stock and Sony by a subsidiary of the big conglomerate Gulf & Western Industries, parent of Paramount Pictures. Muntz then discovered he was a man without a name—G&W claimed it had bought all rights to "Muntz" as well as to his Home TV Theatre. After a legal battle, Muntz won his name back and, like Henry Kloss, went back into the projection-TV business (he now claims to be a strong number one in sales). Gulf & Western, meanwhile, found itself with a product it didn't know how to sell and quietly gave up on the Muntzless Home TV Theatre.

Advent and Muntz represent the high- and low-price approaches to projection television, and all sets today use either one or the other. The Advent approach—similar to the old theater-TV projectors—calls for three separate cathode-ray tubes, each one projecting the red, green or blue element in the picture. These are driven by a specially made television receiver. The Muntz-type projector uses a standard small-screen color-television set, usually with minor modifications, as a light source.

You often can't tell three-tube from single-tube projection without looking into the business end of the set. This is perfectly safe, even with the power on, since the only thing coming out of the tubes is light. A peek inside will show you immediately how a projection TV works: if you look into a single-tube unit, you'll see a conventional small television screen; in the other type, you'll find three round tubes, 3 to 5 inches in diameter, each projecting a different color.

Either the three-tube (Advent-type) or the single-tube (Muntz-type) approach can be applied to one-piece or two-piece projection systems. The one-piece system usually is mounted in a single fold-out cabinet, using a mirror assembly to direct the picture to its built-in, or built-on-top, screen. (A variation on the one-piece system is the rear-view projector, currently offered by General Electric and Projection Systems, Inc., which uses either one or three tubes to throw the picture from the inside of the cabinet onto the back of a translucent screen; the set is viewed from the front in the same manner as standard direct-view television.) A two-piece system generally uses a free-standing or wall-mounted screen and a separate receiver-projector unit, which often doubles as a cocktail table.

Although the screen itself isn't electronic, it's an integral part of the projection-television system. Because of the limited amount of light emitted by cathode-ray tubes, brightness is a precious commodity in projected TV. Except for rear-projection models, screens supplied with home television projectors are concave in shape to focus the re-

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TYPICAL SINGLE-TUBE SYSTEMS

BRAND	MODEL	NO. OF PIECES	SCREEN SIZE (Diagonal)	DIMENSIONS* H x W x D (inches)	TYPE OF TV SET USED	APPROXIMATE FLOOR SPACE REQUIRED	REMOTE CONTROL	SUGGESTED LIST PRICE
CINEMAVISION		2	50 in.	27 x 20 x 31	13-in. RCA	3½ x 8 ft.	$100 extra	$795
		2	60 in.	27 x 20 x 31	13-in. RCA	4½ x 9 ft.	$100 extra	$995
		2	84 in.	27 x 20 x 31	13-in. RCA	6 x 10½ ft.	$100 extra	$1395
		1	4 ft.	62 x 28⅛ x 31	13-in. RCA	28⅛ x 44 in.	$100 extra	$1195
		1	5 ft.	68 x 28⅛ x 31	13-in. RCA	28⅛ x 51 in.	$100 extra	$1695
GENERAL ELECTRIC	Widescreen 1000 45YP9000	1	45.7 in.	49½ x 69⅔ x 24⅓ (rear projection)	Special	69⅔ x 24⅓ in.	Included	$2800
MUNTZ	Giant Screen 2352	1	52 in.	67 x 44 x 24	12-in. Sony	44 x 41⅓ in.	Included	$1395
	Giant Screen 2367	1	67 in.	72 x 55 x 24	12-in. Sony	55 x 41⅓ in.	Included	$1595
SCHUDEL	Video Telekaster 3240	2	52 in.	12 x 14 x 20 (without TV)	Any 12-13 in.	3 x 7 ft.	Optional	$495 (excl. TV)
	Video Telekaster 4052	2	67 in.	12 x 14 x 20 (without TV)	Any 12-13 in.	3½ x 8 ft.	Optional	$595 (excl. TV)
TRANSVISION	VidiMax 750	1	50 in.	23 x 23 x 33	12-in. Quasar	23 x 45 in.	$150 extra	$1595
	VidiMax 760	1	60 in.	23 x 23 x 33	12-in. Quasar	23 x 45 in.	$150 extra	$1695
	VidiMax 650	2	50 in.	25 x 21 x 30	12-in. Quasar	3 x 7½ ft.	$150 extra	$1395
	VidiMax 660	2	60 in.	25 x 21 x 30	12-in. Quasar	3 x 8 ft.	$150 extra	$1495
	VidiMax 670	2	72 in.	25 x 21 x 30	12-in. Quasar	4 x 9½ ft.	$150 extra	$1595
VIDEO CONCEPTS	1040	1	4 ft.	52 x 42 x 22	13-in. Magnavox	42 x 32 in.	$200 extra	$1995

flected light from the tubes to the prime viewing area directly in front of the viewer (at the expense of anyone who might be watching off to the side). This same characteristic helps to eliminate unwanted reflections of lights that are placed above or to the side of the viewing area. Some screens are more "directional" than others—as a rule of thumb, the more directional the screen, the brighter the picture in front of the screen and the more rapid the falloff in brightness as the viewer moves to the side.

The choice of one- or two-piece system usually depends on the amount of space available. Most single-piece units occupy little more floor space when not opened for use than a 25-inch console, although the screen mounted at the top of the cabinet makes them considerably higher. The fold-out part of the cabinet usually contains a mirror to reflect the image from the tube or tubes to the screen. (Opened up, this part somewhat resembles the rumble seat of a 1931 La Salle coupe.)

Given similar tube, lens and screen systems, the two-piece systems tend to be somewhat brighter than the all-in-one units, because of the light loss involved in the mirror system of the one-piece units. But as a result of new lens and tube designs, most high-quality single-piece units have at least adequate brightness for viewing under controlled home conditions. They generally have smaller screens than two-piece models (this isn't a strict rule—Sony, for example, has a one-piece system with a six-foot screen) and are usually cheaper. Single-tube units always have less brightness than three-tube outfits but are more foolproof—only one tube to blow out—and they eliminate the "convergence" procedure required by three-tube systems to get the three colors in proper register on the screen.

While projection TV has liberated the picture from the confines of the box, it has imposed certain other strict limitations not present in direct-view television. The major one, of course, is in the viewing angle: if you're outside the viewing area—either horizontally or vertically—you see a blank screen even though others in the room may be enjoying a near-perfect picture. The other limitation is room lighting. With the increasing brightness and contrast of direct-view television sets, we've become accustomed to watching them in brightly lighted rooms, even with sun streaming through the window. Most high-quality projection systems may be viewed in fairly bright light, but any source of illumination must be placed outside the viewing area—either above it or to the side—to avoid reflecting in the screen and washing out the picture. For daytime viewing, all windows facing the screen must be well shaded.

The manufacturers of conventional TV sets snickered a lot when Henry Kloss introduced his monster, and they chortled when Madman Muntz cut it down to size. But the success of projection in the marketplace has inspired most of them to join

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TYPICAL PROJECTION-TV SCREEN SIZES

Diagonal Measurement	Height x Width	Picture Area	Compared with 25-inch Screen
19-inch (conventional) *	12 x 16 in.	185 sq. in.	0.6
25-inch (conventional) *	15 x 21 in.	315 sq. in.	1
45.7-inch (3.8 feet)	27.4 x 36.6 in. (2.3 x 3 ft.)	1003 sq. in.	3.2
52-inch (4.3 feet)	32 x 40 in. (2.7 x 3.3 ft.)	1280 sq. in.	4
60-inch (5 feet)	36 x 48 in. (3 x 4 ft.)	1728 sq. in.	5.5
67-inch (5.6 feet)	40 x 52 in. (3.3 x 4.3 ft.)	2080 sq. in.	6.6
72-inch (6 feet)	46 x 61 in. (3.8 x 5.1 ft.)	2806 sq. in.	8.9
78-inch (6.5 feet)	48 x 66 in. (4 x 5.5 ft.)	3168 sq. in.	10
86-inch (7 feet)	52 x 69 in. (4.3 x 5.7 ft.)	3258 sq. in.	11.2

* For comparison. (All dimensions approximate.)

the trend with their own models. With one major exception, all American and Japanese TV-set makers are now marketing giant-screen sets or have definite plans to introduce them. The exception, ironically, is RCA, for years the largest maker of theater projection sets. That company answers all questions about its attitude toward the home projection TV business by referring to a 1978 statement, which said it would enter the field only if it could market for under $2000 a system of substantially higher quality than any then available. "We still see nothing that would meet this goal in 1978 dollars," a company official now says.

Three-tube projection systems generally carry the brand names of manufacturers of conventional television sets or such specialist companies as Advent, Kloss and Projection Systems, Inc., but single-tube types come under dozens of different names, many of them unfamiliar. The reason is that designing and manufacturing a three-tube unit requires considerable engineering and advanced electronic production facilities, while the single-tube set can be a simple assembly job: a standard 12- to 15-inch color set with only minor modification, a lens or lens-and-mirror system, cabinet and screen—all of which can be bought ready-made. The one-tube projectors vary widely in quality. Some are assembled and sold regionally, or put together by local television dealers. You can even assemble your own. Schudel, Inc., which claims to be the largest manufacturer of projection-TV screens, offers a complete ensemble lacking only the set: buy your own 12- or 13-inch color set, slip it into a special stand, and it casts a giant picture on an external screen.

Projection sets aren't cheap and don't hold much promise for price reduction in the near future. Three-tube units suitable for the home are list-priced from just under $2500 to nearly $5000, while complete single-tube models (including the small-screen TV set) may start somewhat below $1000 and go up from there to more than $2500. (A major part of the cost of one-piece models is in their relatively large amount of cabinetry.) Substantial discounts often are available, particularly on older models.

The basic principles of projection TV have never changed, but each new generation shows substantial improvement in brightness, sharpness, contrast and permissible viewing angle, as each component of the system is gradually improved. New plastic and glass lenses have resulted in sharper pictures and substantially greater light output, as have improved screen designs. The screen was the weakest link of the first home projection systems; touching it was an absolute no-no—finger marks destroyed the reflectivity and couldn't be removed. Almost all of today's screens are washable, or at least wipeable. Brightness has been stepped up in projection tubes for three-tube sets, and the single-barrel units have taken advantage of improvement in the small-screen color sets that represent their only active component.

Most projection television sets are available with remote control as either a standard or extra-cost feature. All of them are designed for use with home videocassettes, videodiscs and video games, as well as for standard broadcasts or cable-TV feeds. Some have excellent sound systems, capable of reproducing better audio than is normally received from television broadcasts. Many have audio-output jacks to connect to home hi-fi equipment.

Once you've decided you want a projection set and have a place to put it, selecting one can be a fairly trying process. Not all stores are equipped to demonstrate them under conditions even remotely resembling the home, certainly not *your* home. Most dealers sell only one or two brands, so it's difficult to make direct comparisons. Before shopping, it's a good idea to measure the space you have in your home for the set—the floor-space requirements in the accompanying tables (on pages 62 and 63) are absolute minimums—to help you eliminate at least those that won't fit. In the store, if you can, observe the picture under various lighting conditions. Don't be satisfied with a demonstration in darkness, unless that's the way you plan to watch television.

In fairly bright but subdued light that isn't spilling directly onto the screen, check whether objects in the picture are sharply and clearly outlined, particularly toward the edge of the screen. Colors should be rich and saturated, not watery and pale. Walk around to see how rapidly the picture fades out as you move to the side of the viewing area—viewing angles differ from set to set. As you walk, examine the picture carefully for "hot spots" in the screen—splotchy areas that are brighter than others.

If you can possibly arrange a home trial or money-back guarantee with no questions asked, it's probably worth spending a few extra dollars, because until you try the set in your home it's difficult to judge exactly how it's going to perform for you.

Since a projection set magnifies the bad along with the good, a good antenna system (or good cable-TV reception) is even more important than with a smaller set. You may find that you need to rehabilitate your television feed-in system to get the best out of the projector.

Projection TV is so big and impressive—and obtrusive—that it has created far more talk and excitement than its sales figures would appear to justify. It remains, simply, a product that isn't for everyone, that is fairly costly, that can't fit everywhere. Last year's sales are estimated at somewhere between 25,000 and 60,000 units. Even the higher number is the equivalent of two slow days' sales of conventional direct-view television sets.

Is it possible that projection television will be made obsolete by some new electronic breakthrough? Almost since the start of TV, scientists have been working to free the picture from the cathode-ray tube, to develop a giant wall-size screen that would display an electronically generated picture at the command of a tiny chairside unit. That task has been incredibly complex, and there are still many hurdles to be overcome to achieve the size, brightness, detail, price and life expectancy needed for a consumer product. For the next 10 years, at least, optical projection probably will be the only way to bring life-size television pictures into the home. ■

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Norman Lear (left) and Alex Haley: 'We found ourselves reminiscing.'

Chasing Rainbows... Memories of a Southern Boyhood

The author of 'Roots' describes how a chance meeting with Norman Lear led to a TV series rooted in their nostalgia

By ALEX HALEY

We all grew up somewhere, and most of us remember and treasure our home-town childhood experiences much more than we recall many later events of our lives. My own boyhood years were spent in Henning, Tenn., whose population of about 550 people, farming families predominating, made it fairly typical of the Southern small towns of the 1930s. Fifty miles north of Memphis, along the asphalted Jeff Davis Highway, Henning was one of the regular stops for the trains of the Illinois Central line, which ran between Chicago and New Orleans.

I'm sure that most of the travelers glancing about as they passed through Henning would think that our town was Dullsville compounded, but the fact was that we, the citizenry, felt quite the opposite. Just for starters, everyone living for any period of time in our town not only knew everyone else, but also knew some plausible merger of fact and gossip about their lives. And rarely a day would pass without some of the townsfolk, both white and black, acting out one of our local dramas, which ranged from the somber to the titillating. And whoever might have missed any of the details knew exactly whom to visit, since certain individuals fulfilled a function in our town rather like that of the Associated Press.

Well, one evening about a year ago, I attended a social affair in Beverly Hills where someone introduced me to Norman Lear. Almost immediately, we found ourselves reminiscing about our boyhoods; his had been spent in New Haven, Conn. We agreed we'd had such fun that, upon occasion now as adults, we wished we hadn't had to grow on up. And before long we had decided that we ought to collaborate in producing a television dramatic series featuring the growing-up years of two boys—one white, one black—just like ourselves.

But a dramatic series would need to depict human conflicts that generated tension and built to a climax. Moreover, it would require a basic long-range premise, and though our episodes' stories would be fictional, we wanted them to have the strength of atmospheric authenticity.

I told Norman of an experience I'd had in Henning as a boy that, in its way, interwove all of these criteria. From earliest remembrance, I'd run and romped about town with a close buddy, a little white boy slightly older than I, whose family lived just a diagonal stone's throw across the dirt road from us. We played in each other's yards and homes, our mothers fed us together, made us take naps together, spanked us for having done whatever mischief together, and so on. And it went along like that for some years, until one day my buddy and I were talking about his upcoming 12th birthday and he said quite casually, "Before you know it, I'll be old enough you'll have to call me 'Mister'." It's a remark I will never forget.

I *knew* my buddy wouldn't deliberately hurt me. Yet, in some deep and inexplicable way, he had. Neither of us could have realized at that time that the statement was not so much *his* as it was an articulation of the traditional Southern code under which we were all living—he, I and everyone else in Henning. I just re-

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member that, right after that day, I avoided playing with him or even seeing him any more than I had to, with only a street between our homes; and whenever we did have any kind of contact, he seemed as confused and perplexed as I was confused and hurt. Within a matter of a few months, my former buddy and I had slid into our respective worlds of white and black. When I go to visit Henning now, some 40 years later, my inquiries about his family produce only the bare fact that they moved not long after he enlisted as a soldier in World War II, and no one seems to have heard from them since.

Norman and I agreed that that poignant experience contained the basic long-range premise we needed: a black/white close boyhood friendship that the surrounding adult world's social mores eventually would corrode and destroy when the boys approached puberty. It is an experience that hundreds of thousands of youngsters of different races have known.

I wrote a pilot presentation, on the basis of which CBS agreed to underwrite an initial two-hour television movie, followed by six one-hour episodes, after which the viewers' rating-response would determine whether or not we would have a continuing series. Titled *Kings of the Hill*, the series would be built around the two boys, their families, and the townspeople of both races in the imaginary Palmerstown, Tenn. (My middle name is Palmer, and that's what I was called as a boy.) Our presentation to the network promised that each episode would portray a dramatic slice of 1930s Southern life, which was dominated by the code of segregation. Human dramas did indeed proliferate there, some ugly, others beautiful. The episodes would show how segregation gave rise to countless contradictions, complexities and ironies in an environment where white people and black people were in fact totally interdependent.

Our casting search began with the boys. We wanted them to be about 9 years old, which would enable us to show the friendship at its best—before the erosion that was to come. More than 4000 Southern schoolboys, black and white, were auditioned for the two parts. Finally selected were fourth-grader Brian Wilson, 11, of Mobile, Ala., to play the white David Hall; and a third-grader, Jermain Johnson, 9, of Houston, Texas, to play the black Booker T. Freeman. Then their families were cast. Grocer W. D. Hall is played by Beeson Carroll, with Janice St. John as his wife Coralee, and Michael Fox as David's brother Willy-Joe, 15. Luther Freeman, the blacksmith in Palmerstown, is played by Bill Duke, his wife Bessie by Jonelle Allen, and their 14-year-old daughter Diana, Booker T.'s older sister, is played by Star-

'A close boyhood friendship that the adult world's social mores eventually would corrode.' Far right: Booker T. Freeman (Jermain Johnson, left) and David Hall (Brian Wilson). Above, top: Booker T. with his father (Bill Duke). Bottom: David with his dad (Beeson Carroll) and brother Willie-Joe (Michael J. Fox).

Shemah Bobatoon.

It is the mischievous escapades of the two boys that draw them into the lives of the local townspeople. Norman Lear and I, and others who sit in on our story-creation sessions, have pulled most of these tales out of our own childhood memories. There is one particular story that I will sit before my television set and watch with keen personal nostalgia—"The Lesson," it is titled, and I was about 10 when an old lady in Henning told it to me. She said that her widowed, sharecropping mother was so poor that all she owned was a few chickens, among which one hen was hatching a clutch of eggs. Her mother gave her one of the hatching eggs, marked with an "X," as a birthday present. After 40-odd years, I still remember tingling with excitement as the old lady shared her memories of that gift. The baby chick that hatched from the egg was the first thing she had ever owned, the first thing she had cared for. From it she learned a great lesson about life and about loving. That story, with dramatic embellishments worked into it, is the focal point of one of our early episodes.

There is another story that originated with the memory of a Henning elder. Shortly before World War I, the town was

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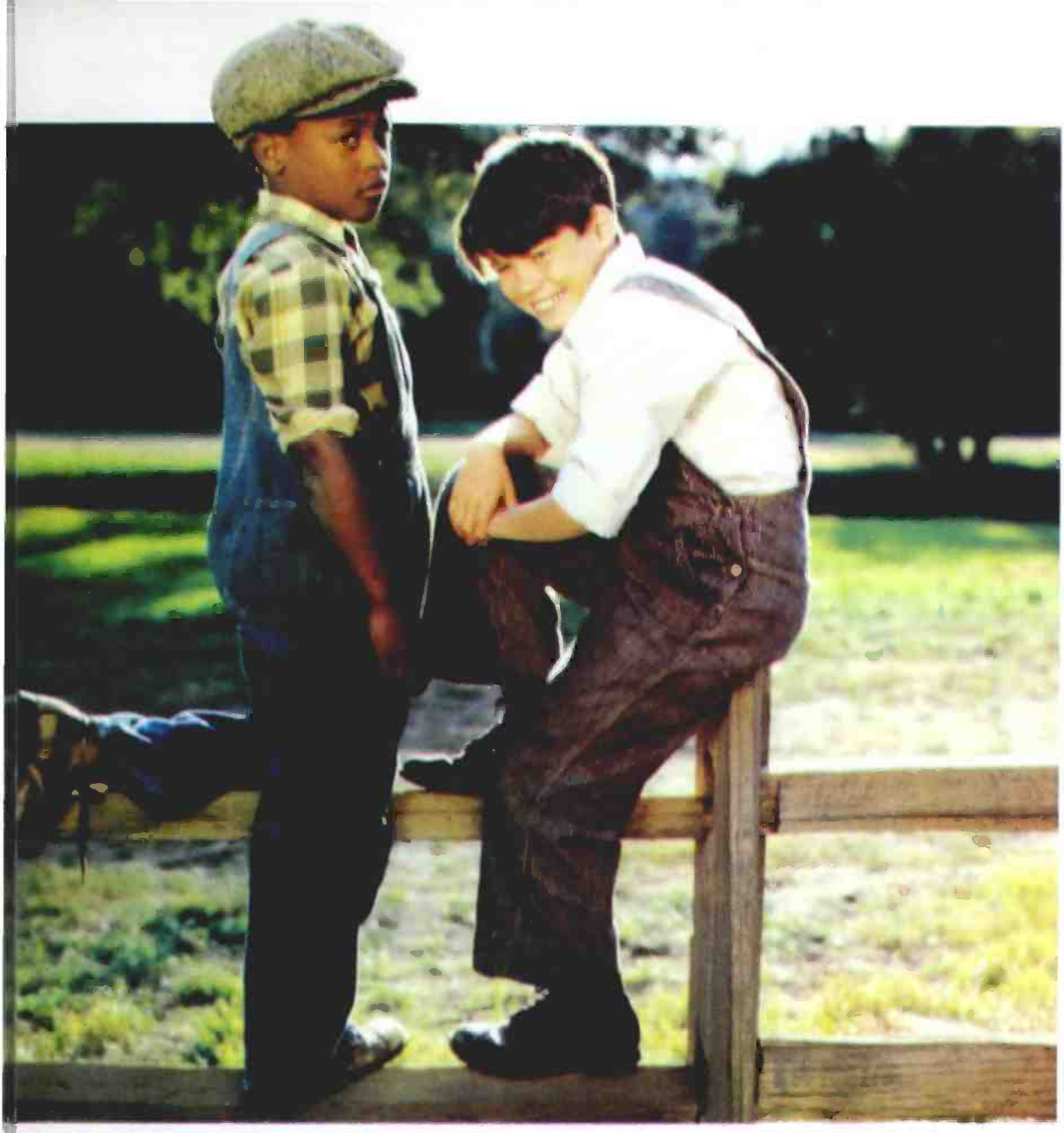

baseball crazy and had two teams, one white, one black, which segregation decreed would never play each other. But somehow the white team's manager agreed to a game with a traveling black team, with a sizable bet involved. Then he discovered that the blacks actually were semi-pros. Fearful of losing the large bet, the manager prevailed on local civic leaders to suspend the rules of segregation and to urge the town's best black players to join a mixed team that could face the challengers. This story, which we are calling "The Black Travelers," is told in two episodes.

In the Bible-belt South where our series is based, the segregated churches played a central role in their respective racial communities. We have an episode that is drawn from one of the most emotionally moving church ceremonies that I ever witnessed as a boy. Surrounded by an atmosphere that is charged with suspense and tension, a church in Palmerstown will raise an aged woman to the locally exalted title of "Old Sister," in recognition of her lifetime of extraordinary community service—an honor that in my home town was accorded to but a very few women within a decade.

Kings of the Hill will have a lot of the outdoors. David and Booker T. romp through fields together, get soaking wet in the rain, flatten out on their bellies to drink from the natural springs, hide in the weeds, find delightful patches of ripening cantaloupes and watermelons, and pick wild berries and cherries and sell them—along with empty whiskey bottles—to earn spending money. They study their lessons, build crystal sets, go to Sunday school, and in their respective churches witness baptisms, weddings and funerals, with only the viewers realizing that the boys in their little town are being taught the rites of passage.

Along with predictions that we may anticipate a successful series, there are also warnings from some quarters that viewers may find our episodes "too soft." Obviously we are gambling, as is CBS, that today's television contains enough "hard shows" and "formula shows"—that out there are a great many people who will enjoy a human drama that evokes the days when they too romped and ran and chased the rainbows. ■

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The Parable of the Ring Around the Collar

And other irreverent observations on the religious nature of commercials

By NEIL POSTMAN

Television commercials are a form of religious literature. Thus, to comment on them in a serious vein is to practice hermeneutics, which is the branch of theology concerned with interpreting and explaining the Scriptures. This is what I propose to do here. The heathens, heretics and unbelievers may move on to something else.

I do not claim, for a start, that every television commercial has religious content. Just as in church the pastor will sometimes call the congregation's attention to nonecclesiastical matters, so there are TV commercials that are entirely secular in nature. Someone has something to sell; you are told what it is, where it can be obtained, and what it costs. Though these may be shrill and offensive, no doctrine is advanced and no theology invoked.

But the majority of important TV commercials—those worthy of the name literature—take the form of religious parables organized around a coherent theology. Like all religious parables, they put forward a concept of sin, intimations of the way to redemption, and a vision of Heaven. They also suggest what are the roots of evil and what are the obligations of the holy.

Consider, for example, The Parable of the Ring Around the Collar. This is to TV scripture what The Parable of the Prodigal Son is to the Bible, which is to say it is an archetype containing most of the elements of form and content that recur in its own genre. To begin with, The Parable of the Ring Around the Collar is short, occupying only about 30 seconds of one's time and attention. There are three reasons for this, all obvious. First, it is expensive to preach on television. Second, the attention span of the congregation is not long and is easily susceptible to distraction. And third, a parable does not need to be long; tradition dictates that its narrative structure be tight, its symbols unambiguous, its explication terse.

The narrative structure of The Parable of the Ring Around the Collar is, indeed, comfortably traditional. The story has a beginning, a middle and an end. For those unfamiliar with it, a brief description is in order.

A married couple is depicted in some relaxed setting—say, a restaurant—in which they are enjoying each other's company and generally having a wonderful time. A waitress approaches their table, notices that the man has a dirty ring around his collar, stares at it boldly, sneers with cold contempt and announces to all within hearing the nature of his transgression. The man is humiliated and glares at his wife with scorn (for she is the instant source of his shame). She, in turn, assumes an expression of self-loathing mixed with a touch of self-pity. This is the parable's beginning: the emergence of a problem.

The parable continues by showing the wife at home using a detergent that never fails to eliminate dirt around the collars of men's shirts. She proudly shows her husband what she is doing, and he forgives her with an adoring smile. This is the parable's middle: the solution of the problem. Finally, we are shown the couple in a restaurant once again, but this time they are free of the waitress's probing eyes and bitter social chastisement. This is the parable's end: the moral, the explication, the exegesis. From this, we shall draw the proper conclusion.

As in all parables, behind the apparent simplicity there are some profound ideas to ponder. Among the most subtle and important is the notion of where and how problems originate. Embedded in every belief system there is an assumption about the root cause of evil from which the varieties of sinning take form. In science, for example, evil is represented in superstition. In psychoanalysis, we find it in early, neurotic transactions with our parents. In Christianity, it is located in the concept of Original Sin.

In TV-commercial parables, the root cause of evil is Technological Innocence, a failure to know the particulars of the beneficent accomplishments of industrial progress. This is the primary source of unhappiness, humiliation and discord in life. And, as forcefully depicted in The Parable of the Ring, the consequences of technological innocence may strike at any time, without warning, and with the full force of their disintegrating action.

The sudden striking power of technological innocence is a particularly important feature of TV-commercial theology, for it is a constant reminder of the congregation's vulnerability. One must never be complacent or, worse, self-congratulatory. To attempt to live without technological sophistication is at all times dangerous, since the evidence of one's naivete is painfully visible to the vigilant. The vigilant may be a waitress, a friend, a neighbor or even a spectral figure—a holy ghost, as it were—who materializes in your kitchen, from nowhere, to give witness to your sluggish ignorance.

It must be understood, of course, that technological innocence is to be interpreted broadly, referring not only to ignorance of detergents, drugs, sanitary napkins, cars, salves and foodstuffs, but also to ignorance of technical machinery such as savings banks and transportation systems. One may, for example, come upon one's neighbors while on vacation (in TV-commercial parables, this is always a sign of danger) and discover that they have invested their money in a certain bank of whose special interest rates you have been unaware. This is, of course, a moral disaster, and both you and your vacation are doomed.

But, as demonstrated in The Ring Parable, there is a road to redemption. The road, however, has two obstacles. The first requires that you be open to advice or social criticism from those who are more enlightened. In The Ring Parable, the waitress serves the function of counselor, although she is, to be sure, exacting and very close to unforgiving. In some parables, the adviser is rather more sarcastic than severe. But in most parables, as for example in all sanitary-napkin, mouthwash, shampoo and aspirin commercials, the advisers are amiable and sympathetic, perhaps all too aware of their own vulnerability on other matters.

The Innocent are only required to accept instruction in the spirit in which it is offered. The importance of this cannot be stressed enough, for it instructs the congregation in two lessons simultaneously: not only must one be eager to accept advice, but one must be just as eager to give it. Giving advice is, so to speak, the principal obligation of the holy. In fact, the ideal religious community may be de-

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picted in images of dozens of people, each in his or her turn, giving and taking advice on technological advances.

The second obstacle on the road to redemption involves one's willingness to act on the advice that is given. As in traditional Christian theology, it is not sufficient to hear the gospel or even preach it. One's understanding must be expressed in good works; i.e., action. In The Ring Parable, the once-pitiable wife acts almost immediately, and the parable concludes by showing the congregation the effects of her action.

In The Parable of the Person with Rotten Breath, of which there are several versions, we are shown a woman who, ignorant of the technological solution to her unattractiveness, is enlightened by a supportive roommate. The woman takes the advice without delay, with results we are shown in the last 5 seconds: a honeymoon in Hawaii. In The Parable of the Stupid Investor, we are shown a man who knows not how to make his money make money. Upon enlightenment, he acts swiftly and, at the parable's end, he is rewarded with a car, or a trip to Hawaii, or something approximating peace of mind.

Because of the compactness of commercial parables, the ending—that is, the last 5 seconds—must serve a dual purpose. It is, of course, the moral of the story: if one will act in such a way, this will be the reward. But in being shown the result, we are also shown an image of Heaven. Occasionally, as in The Parable of the Lost Traveler's Cheques, we are given a glimpse of Hell: Technical Innocents lost and condemned to eternal wandering far from their native land. But mostly we are given images of a Heaven both accessible and delicious: that is, a Heaven that is here, now, on Earth, in America, and quite often in Hawaii.

But Hawaii is only a convenient recurring symbol. Heaven can, in fact, materialize and envelop you anywhere. In The Parable of the Man Who Runs Through Airports, Heaven is found at a car-rental counter to which the confounded Runner is shepherded by an angelic messenger. The expression of ecstasy on the Runner's face tells clearly that this moment is as close to a sense of transcendence as he can ever hope for.

"Ecstasy" is the key idea here, for commercial parables depict the varieties of ecstasy in as much detail as you will find in any body of religious literature. At the conclusion of The Parable of the Spotted Glassware, a husband and wife assume such ecstatic countenances as can only be described by the word "beatification." Even in The Ring Parable, which at first glance would not seem to pose as serious a moral crisis as spotted glassware, we are shown ecstasy, pure and serene. And where ecstasy is, so is Heaven. Heaven, in brief, is any place where you have joined your soul with the Deity—the Deity, of course, being Technology.

Just when, as a religious people, we replaced our faith in traditional ideas of God with a belief in the ennobling force of Technology is not easy to say. While it should be stressed that TV commercials played no role in bringing about this transformation, it is clear that they reflect the change, document it, amplify it. They constitute the most abundant literature we possess of our new spiritual commitment: American youth, for example, will see approximately 400,000 commercials in the first 20 years of their lives. For this reason alone, we have a solemn obligation to keep TV commercials under the continuous scrutiny of hermeneutics. ■

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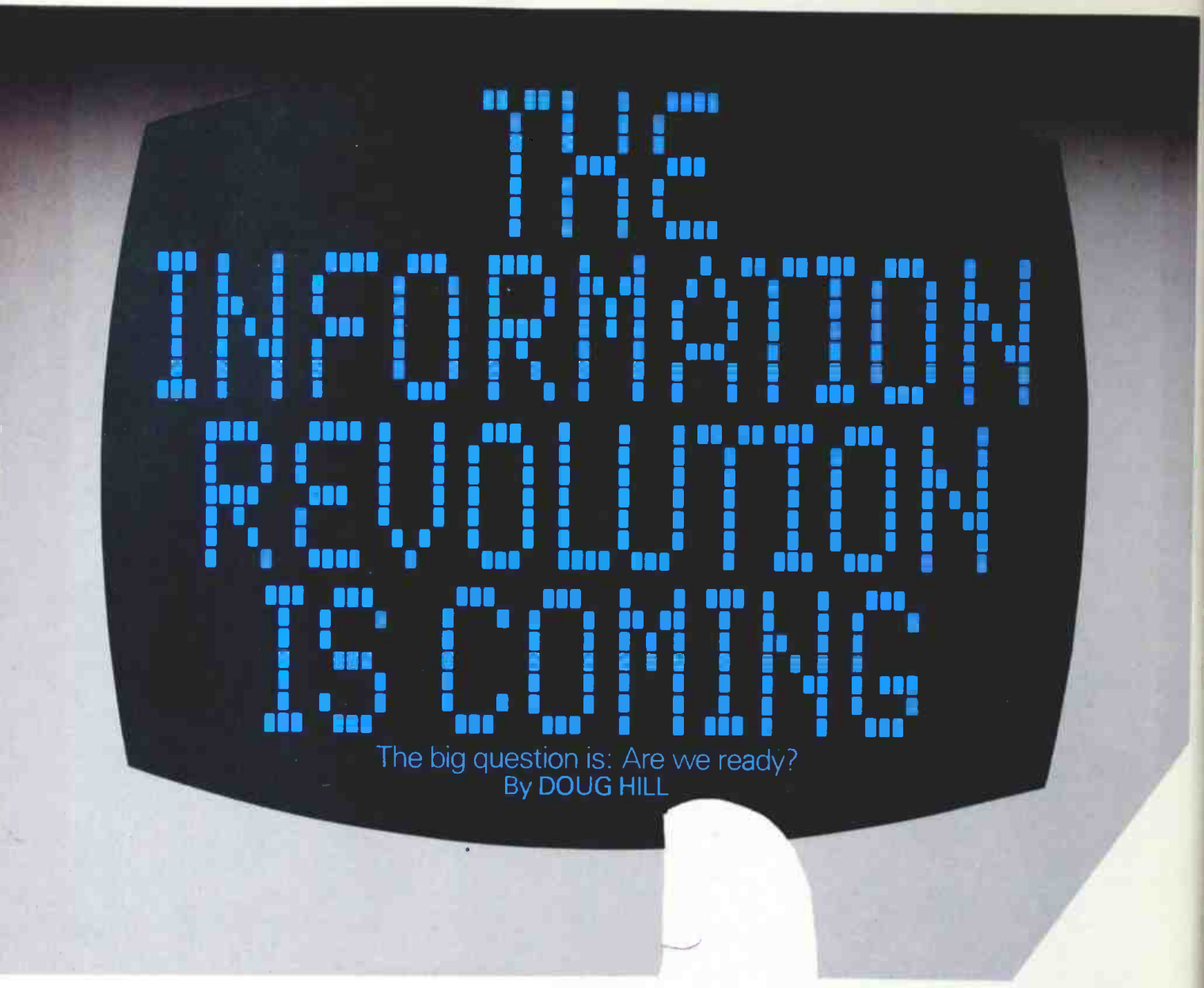

THE INFORMATION REVOLUTION IS COMING

The big question is: Are we ready?

By DOUG HILL

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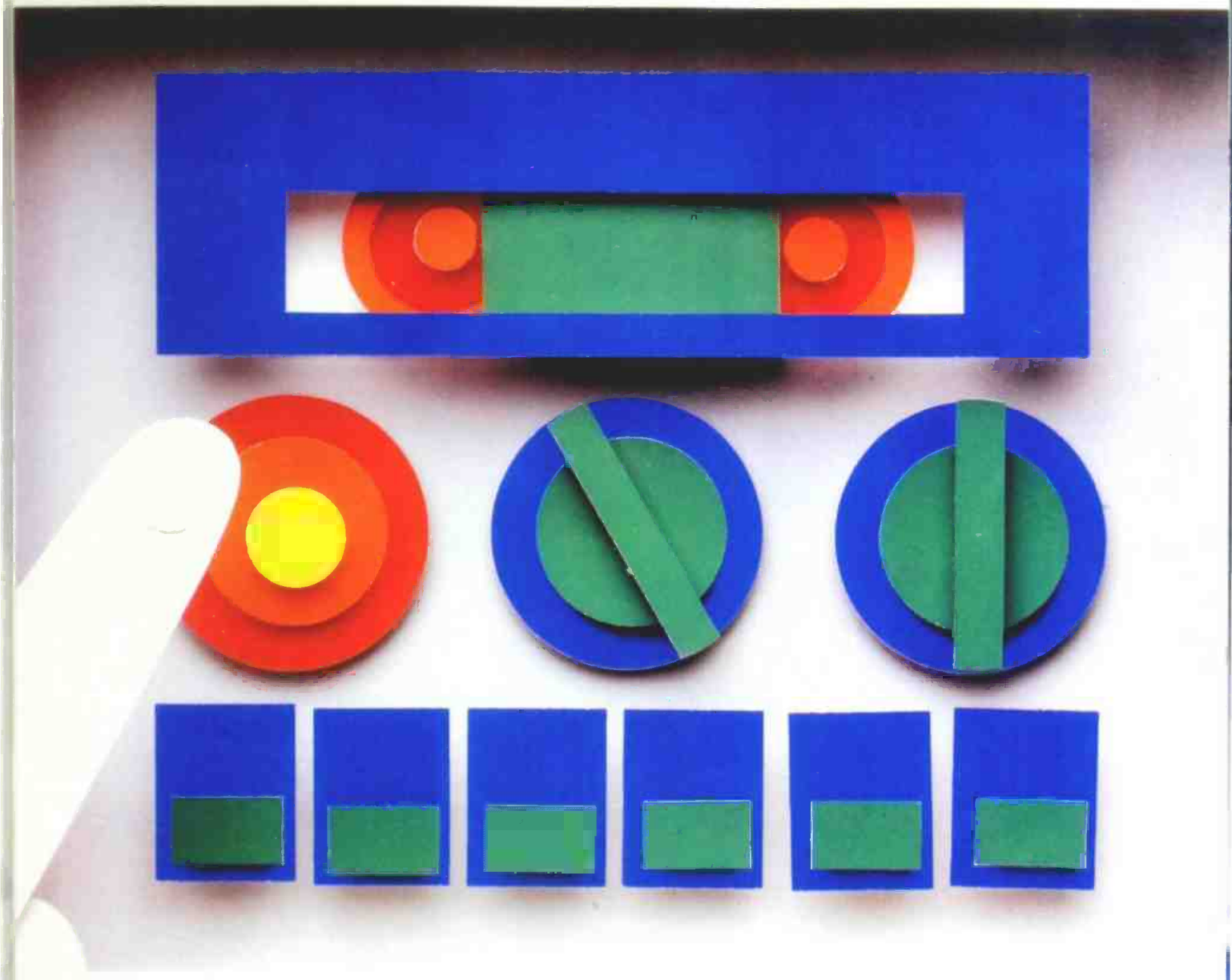

It takes several forms and has been given a number of different names, although the generic title "videotext" sums it up best. It was born in Britain, is proliferating in France, Canada, Japan and at least half a dozen other countries. It can combine every television set with the computers of the world to bring forth information—infinite information fed by any government, business or individual wanting to send it. It is bringing an information revolution to America's doorstep.

And it raises a very practical and very difficult question: Are we ready?

Videotext is essentially a generic name for two systems. One, called *teletext*, puts data (words, numbers and simple illustrations) in an unused and unseen part of the normal TV broadcast signal. By punching a hand-held keypad attached to the set, viewers can retrieve hidden information for display on the screen. The second method, called *viewdata*, uses either telephone wire or cable TV as the pipeline to the set, which again is controlled by a hand-held keypad. But whereas the available space on the broadcast signal limits the amount of teletext data that can be carried there, the wired route allows *direct* access, via the keypad, to any number of data banks hooked into the system. Simply stated, viewers query the computer and the computer answers by printing the desired page on the home screen. It is this "interactive" capability that opens the way to potentially unlimited information, and also to electronic shopping, banking, mail and other services—in other words, to the wired society.

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The notion of electronic publishing is nothing new. RCA was using radio signals to transmit a newspaper to 10 cities in an experiment in 1937 and was one of several companies that later developed home facsimile systems, generating pages printed on paper by means of FM broadcast signals. The difference now is the same sophistication in microcircuitry that put the power of room-size computers into pocket-size calculators, while at the same time bringing the price of those calculators down from $900 to $9 or less.

Broadcasters can equip themselves to transmit teletext for less than they pay for a color camera; sets could be built to receive it for an extra $35. The French telephone company believes it will be cheaper in the long run to give every subscriber a tiny viewdata monitor—in effect, a low-resolution black-and-white TV set—than to give them new phone books each year, and plans to embark on a 10-year program to do just that. AT&T, which annually spends more than $40 million on directory distribution here, is testing a similar system. Says Walter Ciciora of Zenith Radio Corp., "[Videotext] was always a good idea, but the idea wasn't worth the money. Now we're seeing the time when finally the idea and the cost are coming together."

Still, it all seems to have come upon us rather suddenly. The British Broadcasting Corporation began experiments with an over-the-air videotext system in 1972. This is a much more sophisticated version of the American system that is scheduled to offer captioned network programs to the deaf starting this month. By 1976, the BBC and its commercial counterpart, the Independent Broadcasting Authority, had introduced the free service on their three channels, and it is roughly estimated that by now at least 25,000 people have either bought or rented sets equipped to receive it.

A staff of about 20 editors for each network prepares, indexes and updates the total of 800 "pages"—one page is one screenful—of information available. For example, viewers punching in the number 100 on their keypads see the TV picture replaced by the contents page for the BBC program journal. Other three-digit numbers call up such pages as news headlines, sports results, news background, people in the news, weather maps, road travel advisories, airline schedules, financial news, exchange rates, sports results, consumer news, shopping guides, recipes, gardening tips, farming bulletins, TV listings, movie schedules and top-20 records. The material is available throughout the broadcast day and updated constantly.

While the broadcasters were getting their system off the ground, the British Post Office developed a videotext system using the telephone lines, which the Post Office owns. Prestel, as this system is called, was introduced on a trial basis in 1978 and began full service last summer. Approximately 2000 homes and offices now have access not to a mere 800 pages, but to *250,000* pages, all stored on the Post Office's computer by more than 100 "information providers." Here's a random selection of listings from a Prestel directory, one for each letter of the alphabet: adult education, baby care, calories, dogs, encyclopedia, for sale, government services, horoscope, income tax, jobs, keep fit, legal aid, mail order, New York Times, Open University, package tours, quizzes, restaurants, sports data, TV games, utilities, vegetable growing, weather and yellow pages (sorry, no Xs or Zs—yet).

A listing may read for a few pages or for hundreds, and any page may refer the viewer to other pages containing related information. Customers pay for the local telephone call and about six cents for every minute they're connected to the computer. Most important, they are charged from a penny to about 30 cents per page viewed, at rates listed on the index pages. Some pages are supplied free by advertisers. The computer records each selection and a bill is sent at the end of the month.

Many countries have now licensed one or both of the British systems. But France is testing and selling a more elaborate system of its own, and Canada has developed another that is fancier still, particularly in its graphics capabilities. Japan took some time designing a videotext system that would handle the 4000 characters most commonly used in publishing, and early rumors suggest that soon *it* may be known as the Cadillac of videotext. The steep upward direction of that learning curve is just one of the elements to be considered as several of those countries proceed to woo the biggest videotext market of them all, the United States.

For reasons we will explore, the videotext challenge has not exactly provoked the pioneering spirit of American companies. "There are some fields where it pays to be first, but this isn't one of them,"

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

As with any birth, the proud parents of various videotext systems around the world have taken special care in the naming of their progeny. The result has been confusion about which system is which and what to name the breed as a whole.

No generic name is accepted by all concerned. One body that tried to decide the matter, the International Telegraph and Telephone Consultative Committee, settled on the name *videotex* to embrace both the telephone-based and broadcast-based systems. Many prefer the more solid *videotext* as the umbrella term. There is more of a consensus that,under the basic heading, *teletext* serves as the familial name of the over-the-air broadcast systems and *viewdata* of the telephone and cable systems, although some prefer *cabletext* for the latter.

Enough brand names for specific systems have been coined to fill a supermarket. The British Post Office settled on *Prestel* after it found its first choice, Viewdata, too common to register as a trademark. Britain's Independent Broadcasting Authority, to distinguish its identical system from the BBC's *Ceefax*, came up with *ORACLE*, standing for "optional reception of announcements by coded line electronics."

Acronyms are ever-popular among the inventors. The Japanese call their system *CAPTAIN*, standing for "character and pattern telephone access information network." The French have three names—*Titan*, *Didon* and *Antiope*—referring to different parts of their system, but use the last to refer to the whole as well. Translated, Antiope is an acronym for "numerical analysis of text and information organized in written pages"; it also is the name of a queen of the legendary Amazons.

The Canadians have taken perhaps the most imaginative route, combining two Greek words to make *Telidon*, meaning "I see at a distance." For sheer lyricism, however, it would be hard to top the West German word for "screen newspaper": *Bildschirmzeitung*.

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says Paul Storfer, videotext consultant with Link Resources Corp. of New York. "You just wind up with all the arrows in your back." A few early advocates have risked experiments. Micro TV Inc., a Philadelphia-based pay-TV company, began videotext broadcasting in December of 1975. KSL-TV, the Mormon Church's station in Salt Lake City, entered the field in 1978. The Department of Agriculture and the University of Kentucky have prepared a pilot test of a phone-based system to bring news of crops, weather and commodities markets to 200 Kentucky farmers this spring. These and a few others have had the field pretty much to themselves, but no more.

"A year ago there was nothing going on in this country," says Andrew Gaspar, RCA's videotext expert. "I'm exaggerating, but not by much. Within the past year there has been a commitment of well over $25 million here and in Canada for development efforts of various types, and there will be much more as time goes on."

Of the companies sticking their backs out, CBS must be credited with suffering the most puncture wounds so far. It alone of the networks refused to participate in the U.S. captioning-for-the-deaf project on grounds that the videotext technique can provide not only captioning, but dozens of other services as well (as the British broadcast system does). CBS began technical tests of the English and French systems at its TV station in St. Louis a year ago, and later over its national network lines. ABC, PBS, the Federal Communications Commission and other captioning proponents (NBC went along with some reluctance) argued that the deaf should not have to wait the five years or longer they expect videotext will take while struggling to its feet here.

But that debate took place before the development pace quickened in the past year, and not a few who then called CBS heartless have since had a change of heart. Said one FCC official, "The Commission pushed this [captioning] solution, CBS thumbed its nose at it and everybody thought CBS was so bad. Well, there may be some error there. The deaf people could end up with their own segregated system, out of the mainstream. They'll have bought their decoders for 250 bucks and they'll be stuck." Ironically, CBS is now less sure than it was originally that videotext could be a reality here as early as next year, while ABC, NBC and PBS have all quietly begun

With a medium that just might be as revolutionary as the printing press, nobody has to be told what's at stake

looking into videotext.

Probably the most ambitious videotext test announced for the United States is that planned for later this year by the Knight-Ridder newspaper chain. About 30 sets equipped for an interactive telephone-based system will be rotated among 160 families in the Miami area. They will have access—free during the test—to more than 10,000 pages of information provided by 22 companies, including J.C. Penney, Consumers Union, Associated Press, Universal Press Syndicate, Congressional Quarterly, Macmillan Publishing, Eastern Airlines, Shell Oil, Southeast Banking Corp. and the American Cancer Society. The keypads and terminals will be made by American Telephone and Telegraph.

Another promising contender is General Telephone and Electronics Corp. GTE licensed the British Prestel system for U.S. development last year and has been conducting in-house tests since. Besides being the Nation's second largest phone company, GTE makes Sylvania TV sets and operates one of the most sophisticated private data networks for business—Telenet—making GTE a natural force in videotext.

The interest displayed publicly by these and several smaller corporations could be—and has been—described as speculative, but there is a far more pervasive activity stirring behind the scenes. The mood is one of limbering up for the race, taking a few preliminary turns around the track to prepare for when the time comes to break out of the blocks in earnest. "I've been around the communications industry for nine years, and I've made a lot of contacts," says Bob Luff, who has worked with both the FCC and the National Cable Television Association. "I decided I would sharpen my pencil and put on my Dick Tracy hat and scope out every possible entity to determine what was needed and not needed [for videotext development]. Almost every contact I made, somebody was there ahead of me. There is a *lot* of undertow."

With a medium that just might be as revolutionary as the printing press, nobody has to be told what's at stake. "The numbers you come to are mind-boggling," said an executive of one of the more active companies. "Suppose you're talking about an annual hardware [equipment] business of, say, $700 million a year, and a software [programming] market that will run, say, $3 to $5 billion—*annually*? Those numbers could be wrong, but even if they are, what it says to you is that this is *big*."

So, *are* we ready? One fact at least is axiomatic: the problems are matched, indeed, created by the potential. It is a maxim of futurologists that the institutions of yesterday will be ill-prepared to manage the world of tomorrow, and we should have a ringside seat as that theory is put to the test in the coming years. Technologies and institutions are "converging" in videotext, and the likelihood that none will emerge the same is in many respects intimidating. "Historical distinctions between electronic media, like the telephone and television, and print media, like newspapers and magazines, are breaking down and fading away," says FCC chairman Charles Ferris. "Events are quickly making these classifications unwieldly, if not sometimes incoherent. Traditional concepts are being blitzed by a revolution in the technology by which we communicate."

About the only thing known for certain about launching videotext in the United States is that almost nothing is known. Similarities with the economic and political environments where systems are underway are few, and the differences are crucial. Most fundamental is that governments elsewhere, which usually own both the telephone and television networks, have made videotext literally a national priority. As a Canadian Minister of Communications put it, "Our challenge is to ensure that the Canadian system is developed, manufactured and introduced by Canadian industry.... It may be our last opportunity to innovate and refine a Canadian technology that will ensure a strong domestic electronics industry and contribute to the strengthening and enrichment of our cultural sovereignty."

The obvious advantage to such an approach is that explanations do not have to be made to stockholders when the corner isn't turned quite as quickly as expected. The English Prestel system, which was introduced originally to encourage use of the phone system there, has been plagued with problems and delays since its inception. Nonetheless, the Post Office

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has committed a minimum of $50 million (some say the investment will eventually reach $200 million) to push the system to mass acceptance, and is going ahead with plans to install regional viewdata computers in Birmingham, Manchester and Edinburgh this year. The phrase that has become popular among English businessmen to describe the Prestel experience is "a leap in the dark"—an approach seldom proposed, one assumes, in the corporate board rooms of America.

So it is that the videotext buzzword in the U.S. today, and the goal of most of work in progress here, is Marketability. For commercial broadcasters, the problem is a rather straightforward one of competing with their own commercials, assuming they would offer teletext as a free, advertiser-supported service. Julius Barnathan, head of engineering operations for ABC, asks, "How would an advertiser like it if in the middle of a Super Bowl—commercial price: $468,000—some guy switches away to punch up the weather in Kankakee?" This conflict probably explains why broadcasters here have as yet remained generally inactive in videotext development, and why the commercial broadcasters in Britain are accused of being less than enthusiastic in promoting their system. But teletext could turn out to be a significant source of extra advertising revenue, particularly in opening up the classified market, and ABC is looking for printers that would bring discount coupons or sales literature into the home with any commercial.

It gets more complicated with the interactive viewdata systems. Nobody really knows whether people—enough people—*want* more information, or what kind of information they want, or if and how much they'd be willing to pay for it. Though market research on Britain's Prestel is considered skimpy to begin with and not applicable here overall, it is known that the most popular pages thus far have related in one way or another to entertainment—games, puzzles, horoscopes, TV listings, sports results and the like. Skeptics take that to mean that "television is for entertainment, Prestel is not, and the two shouldn't be combined," as one put it; optimists argue it will take time for people to get over the novelty of the system. Researchers here simply aren't sure. "In any consumer service, there's always an element of doubt," said one of them. "If you can derive the right package, OK. Whether or not the right package *can* be derived is the question."

Nobody really knows whether people—enough people—*want* more information, or what kind of information, or how much they'd be willing to pay for it

Not least of the difficulties in that pursuit is designing what data processors call a "user friendly" system—one with which the desired information can be gotten to with a minimum of time and trouble. The 250,000 pages on Prestel are structured on a "tree" model: one starts with a trunk page (say, restaurants) and gradually works out to a specific branch (Chinese in Piccadilly). But viewers have been known to get lost in a maze of index and referral pages. One large information provider reportedly has 40 routing pages for 70 pages of information.

Data-processing professionals have dealt with similar problems for a decade, trying to introduce computerized information systems to businesses, and they are among the more wary when it comes to videotext. James Bauer spent 10 years with The New York Times Information Bank before joining the CBS Publishing Group, where he is now in charge of videotext development. "We found that the businessman isn't interested in refining his question, "Bauer says. "He just wants the answer." It is assumed that nonprofessionals accustomed to haphazardly browsing through their daily newspaper will be even less patient. John Carey of the Alternate Media Center at NYU, who is preparing a teletext pilot-testing service for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, says as many as 15 percent of TV repair calls are prompted by unplugged sets. "That means that if you're going to design a system like this for consumers, you'd better make it *simple*."

Dozens of other issues need to be resolved. Expertise must be gained in designing the pages, for example, which Carey suggests might be more accurately called "index cards." Technical solutions are in the works to increase the flexibility of the broadcast system, and to overcome errors that appear in its data whenever ghosts are present in the picture. Still, many believe that the best way to work the bugs out is simply to start getting those keypads in the hands of the public. "When you get 200 million customers at the end of the tunnel, you get an awful lot of technology drive," said an executive in the semiconductor industry.

The point he's making is that manufacturers of TV sets and keyboards want to be sure a goodly number of those 200 million potential customers—i.e., a mass market—are indeed at the end of the tunnel before they start retooling their production lines. That raises the second theoretical advantage of government sponsorship: it assures a single "standard" set of technical specifications for videotext, just as there are standard technical specifications common to all American TV sets. Manufacturers here fear having dozens of different videotext systems competing with one another, and thus fragmenting the market, so they are pushing hard to adopt an American standard that will allow them the economies of scale that make low-cost equipment possible. This is the famous chicken-and-egg dilemma: videotext sets are not going to be cheap unless enough people are willing to buy them, and enough people won't be willing to buy them unless they're cheap.

In quantities of hundreds of thousands or millions, manufacturers can add the necessary electronics for videotext to TV sets and make keypads for less than $50 each. Whether they would then be sold at comparatively low premiums would depend, as always, on what the sales divisions decide the market will bear, but most people in the industry seem to believe that buyers ought to be able to spend $100 extra or less. When, in Britain, fingers of blame are pointed for the slow start of Prestel, they're usually aimed at the set manufacturers, who until recently have not been confident enough in the system to begin mass production. Thus Prestel sets have been selling for as much as $2000, a condition that alone might have crippled the effort were it not for the fact that 60 percent of the sets in England are rented, allowing customers to pay just a few pounds extra each month to enjoy the service. The British Post Office is determined to persevere until the chicken-and-egg dilemma is overcome, a strategy described by Prestel's director as "fast but safe." "Like an aircraft taking off on a runway of limited length," he wrote in the British magazine InterMedia, "we must achieve flying speed before we run out of tarmac."

Unfortunately, from the manufacturers' point of view, the United States Government has for the moment taken a different position: slow but safe. The conviction that the marketplace, not the Government, will best determine what new ser-

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vices are most desirable is, as Chairman Ferris has put it, "the religion" in Washington these days. It's a canon especially comfortable to the regulators as they contemplate a technology as fast-moving as videotext. "At this point it's safe to say our posture is one of wanting to encourage the new service," said Frank Washington of the FCC Broadcast Bureau. "But at the same time we want to avoid setting any standard that would fix the service at a level below what it might have developed to if it hadn't been constrained. The marketplace is going to define it probably much better than the Commission can, so we ought to stand out of the way, and if it flies, it flies. If you go through the Commission, it's going to take time, and then concern about the Commission being an obstruction begins to loom very large."

Yet there is an underlying conviction that, sooner or later, the Government will have a profound influence on the shape of videotext, whether it likes it or not. Many regulators agree that, unless a de facto standard emerges from early competition, a standard will have to be set eventually if a unified national service is to evolve. Another wild card is AT&T, which could be the ultimate videotext company. Movement is afoot in Congress as well as in the FCC to loosen, again in the name of the free marketplace, the antitrust apron strings that since 1956 have kept Ma Bell out of such ancillary businesses as data processing. "That really is up in the air," said CBS's Bauer. "It's likely to be the big battle of the early Eighties, I would think."

Less up in the air is the likelihood that the Government will someday be required to define its role on the larger issues videotext will undoubtedly raise—those of access, privacy and freedom of speech. The questions are innumerable: Who determines what information is allowed on videotext? Will the Communist Party and the Ku Klux Klan have the same access as the Republicans and Democrats? How about pornographers? Cigarettes can be advertised in print but not on TV—so which is videotext? How are copyrights protected when information can be scattered around the world in seconds? Who makes sure the computer records of viewdata calls aren't sold to market-research firms, or to credit bureaus, or to government agencies, or to blackmailers? What happens if the Howard Jarvis of 1990 proposes an instant national referendum on abolishing income taxes? Will everyone be able to use videotext, or will it widen the gap between the "information rich" and "information poor"?

It will be easier and cheaper in the long run to punch up a list of open gas stations on your TV set than to drive around looking for them

These are the issues that already concern Chairman Ferris, who acknowledges, "The marketplace is not going to provide all the answers, because it doesn't give proper attention to some of these questions." The British Post Office has taken a hands-off policy toward the information on Prestel, defining itself as a simple common carrier accepting whatever information freight is submitted. Some rules have emerged within the community of information providers, as have many problems, but what happens if Prestel becomes a truly mass medium is unknown. Bitter battles between broadcasters and the press over videotext have already started in West Germany. President Carter's principal advisory group in these matters, the National Telecommunications and Information Agency, has commissioned a study to define some of these questions, but FCC chairman Ferris, for one, admits, "I wonder about these things. I don't have any answers."

In the face of so many unknowns, an understandable air of caution surrounds this most expensive of undertakings, building a new medium. Those contemplating the task consider 1980 a benchmark year: England's systems will grow—or fail to grow—to maturity, and ambitious tests will begin in other countries. All will be closely watched as domestic development projects continue. In the meantime, the relentless evolution of technology will proceed, bringing new temptations to put it to use. It seems only a matter of time before cable TV, with its dozens of channels to fill, joins and perhaps dominates the information fray.

Chairman Ferris says we're heading for a "brave new information empire"; academicians call it the "postindustrial, information society." They are talking about a shifting of national energies away from the manufacturing of goods and toward the manipulation of facts and figures, a process many believe has long been underway and is now growing exponentially. A nine-volume study of the subject for the Department of Commerce suggests that as much as 56 percent of the American work force is already involved in dealing with information in one form or another. (The author of that study, Dr. Marc Porat, is currently preparing a PBS special about the information society.) A recent Xerox advertisement, headlined "The Information Crisis," cites other figures typical of the argument: 72 billion new pieces of information are created each year; 75 percent of all information in existence was created in the last 20 years; the amount of existing information is doubling each decade. "How," asks Xerox, "do we cope with it all?"

The obvious answer is with computerized information systems, the elements of which, like videotext, are already at our disposal. Japan has been preparing for this transition for more than a decade, a campaign the press there has reportedly labeled "Japan's Apollo Project." The French recently earmarked a reported $550 million for the same purposes. The subject is one of increasing discussion in Washington, and it seems likely that "the information society" will become one of the operative cliches of the 1980s.

At the very least, then, videotext has become part of a wave of information-processing technologies rising all around us, from private data banks and word-processing systems in the office to computerized cash registers, electronic bank tellers and the price-code bars on the cover of this magazine. On the edges are home computers, programmable video games and, soon, videodiscs, which can store volumes of information as easily as movies or cooking lessons.

The energy crisis is expected to expedite the assimilation of these techniques, as economic incentives for automated transactions grow and psychological resistance declines. It will be easier and cheaper in the long run to punch up a list of open gas stations on your TV set rather than drive around looking for them, to find out where the bargains are and even order them before you leave home rather than after, to receive and pay bills in your living room rather than through the mail, perhaps to work from your den rather than from an office. Banks are already sagging under the burden of processing billions of checks each year; credit-card companies are facing similar strains. Libraries can't afford to maintain their widespread branches; the cost of mail delivery spirals, as does the cost of paper for publishing.

It is just such incentives that in time overcome the barriers of inertia and spark social revolutions.

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Once More unto the Breach

Henry IV and Henry V live again in 'The Shakespeare Plays'

'Nor can one England brook a double reign/Of Harry Percy and the Prince of Wales.' Hotspur (Tim Piggot-Smith, left) and Prince Hal (David Gwillim) meet in their decisive combat. Above, Henry IV (Jon Finch), following the Battle of Shrewsbury ('Henry IV, Part I').

The BBC's mammoth cycle of *The Shakespeare Plays*, which opened last season on PBS and will continue into the mid-Eighties, arrives this month at the history of Prince Hal, related in the two parts of "Henry IV" and in "Henry V."

"Henry IV, Part I" (scheduled for March 26, with the others following in April) is a feast for three actors: those playing the 16-year-old crown prince, Hal; his unlikely companion, the degenerate old buffoon Sir John Falstaff; and the noble Harry Percy, nicknamed "Hotspur," whose valor and chivalry are constantly held up to Hal as models of the virtues he lacks. The

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'Instead of trying so hard to wheeze and grunt, I took it far more easily'

'I know thee not, old man.' Above, Falstaff (Anthony Quayle) is surrounded by his cronies as he is witheringly repudiated by the new king, Henry V. Second from left, Bardolph (Gordon Gostelow); center, Pistol (Bryan Pringle); right, Justice Shallow (Robert Eddison), in 'Henry IV, Part II.' Right, Hotspur at Shrewsbury ('Henry IV, Part I').

prince's true heroic mettle is only revealed when civil strife and, later, the demise of Henry IV beckon him toward his kingly role as Henry V.

David Giles, who directed all three plays, admits he had some trepidation about tackling them, particularly "Henry V," which became almost the personal fiefdom of Laurence Olivier after his celebrated 1944 movie version. "I was very frightened of 'Henry V'," says Giles, "but when I got down to it, I realized that the film is something quite different. It isn't 'Henry V,' it's the Battle of Agincourt. There *is* no Battle of Agincourt in the play as Shakespeare wrote it."

David Gwillim, the 30-year-old actor who plays Hal/Henry V, was spotted by Giles in the miniseries *Lillie*. "He's got a very quiet strength, and also a certain vein of secretiveness that's right for Hal," says the director. Tim Piggot-Smith (Hotspur)

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The Henry plays are fundamentally about leadership and how it works

was cast as Gwillim's opposite pole. "They are two people who should really be the greatest friends, and yet one must kill the other," says Giles. "The terrible thing about Hal growing into Henry is that he has to kill various sides of himself. He kills Hotspur, and then he kills Falstaff—not physically, but he does murder him in a way. It's as if he has to murder his private self to become such a good king."

As for Falstaff, Anthony Quayle is playing the role for the second time in his life; the first was in 1951 at Stratford-upon-Avon. Aging, he says, has helped him flesh out his characterization. "When I was in my 30s, I thought 'How can I look old enough and fat enough?' Now that I'm in my 60s, it didn't worry me. I thought, 'Well, screw it. This is how I look, and that's it.' Instead of trying so hard to wheeze and grunt, I took it far more easily."

continued

'How came I by the crown, O God forgive; And grant it may with thee in true peace live!' Above, the scene of reconciliation between Prince Hal (David Gwillim) and Henry IV (Jon Finch) as the old king approaches death. Moments before, the young prince had seen his father motionless and presumed that the crown was already his (left). His patent remorse at his error softened the dying king's heart ('Henry IV, Part II').

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'I was very frightened of "Henry V",' says director David Giles

'See you, my princes and my noble peers, These English monsters!' Above, Henry V (David Gwillim) denounces three members of his court as traitors: Sir Thomas Grey (David Rowlands, second from right), Lord Scroop (Ian Price, right) and the Earl of Cambridge (not pictured). The king's uncle, the Duke of Exeter (Clifford Parrish), stands on the left ('Henry V').

The Henry plays, says Gwillim, are fundamentally about leadership and how it works—"what happens to people when they don't have the right qualities for it, when they have flaws, when they have some of the qualities but not all, and what happens to someone who has got enough of all of them. I tried to get across that, humanly, you have to sacrifice an awful lot even if you've got all the right qualities. Inside Hal there is someone desperately trying to enjoy himself, to get some life before the curtain comes down and he has to assume his responsibilities. By the time we get to 'Henry V' all those responsibilities are assumed and he won't let anybody down, but inside those great public speeches—'Once more unto the breach,' 'Crispin's day'—there is a lost, lonely, isolated boy who has to carry the conscience of everyone."

'Come, I know thou lovest me; and at night when you come into your closet, you'll question this gentlewoman about me.' Right, King Henry V of England woos Princess Katherine of France (Jocelyne Boisseau) in the final scene of 'Henry V.' Behind Katherine stands Alice, her lady-in-waiting (Anna Quayle).

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They've Got It Down to a Science

'3-2-1 Contact,' the new educational series from the 'Sesame Street' producers, can boast that it has been laboratory tested

By DAVID BLACK

Well, I don't know about you guys, but this has been a really big thrill for me," Leon W. Grant is saying for the third time. His voice is dead. No thrill. He is standing in a production studio on 11th Avenue in New York City. Outside, the drizzly day is as colorless as a picture on a black-and-white television. Inside, the set where Leon is saying his lines is almost supernaturally vivid, awash with bright oranges, blues, greens. The crew members, who are taking apart a colorful prop, look as though they were dismantling a rainbow. While waiting for a technical problem to be resolved, Leon does an improvised dance step to some imaginary music.

Leon plays Marc in the new daily science series, *3-2-1 Contact*, which is being produced by Children's Television Workshop at a cost of $11.7 million and which made its debut on public-television stations in January. Like *Sesame Street* and *The Electric Company*, CTW's most successful projects, *3-2-1 Contact* educates through entertainment. It is aimed at children between the ages of 8 and 12.

"We are trying very hard," says the show's publicist, Fran Kaufman, "to make science appealing to the segment of the population who are usually disenfranchised from science by the time they are 12—girls and minority kids. Of course, the show is for boys, too; but we want to work hard to get the others, to break down the stereotypes."

To give the audience nonstereotyped role models, the show's producers chose two actresses, one white (Liz Moses) and one Latin (Maria Norman, later replaced by Ginny Ortiz), and one actor, a black (Leon), to appear on each show. The three—who are all in their 20s but costumed and made up to look like teen-agers—tie together the various other segments: animation, films, and a continuing cliffhanger mystery called "The Bloodhound Gang," which is intended to teach children deductive reasoning.

On the set, Leon is repeating his line: "Well, I don't know about you guys, but this has been a really big thrill for me."

"Don't force. It sounds like you're ad-libbing desperately because you will be executed if you don't." The voice of Sheldon Larry, the show's director, comes over their loudspeaker system with the disembodied authority of a local god.

Leon nods and prepares to say the line again.

CTW started working on the show in the late summer of 1977. The research staff went to camps and, later in the year, to schools and asked children what kinds of television shows they liked, who their favorite heroes were and what specific programs they watched. Throughout 1977 and 1978, they tested various science films on children to find out what kinds of shows held their interest. This study, among the most extensive ever done on children's viewing habits in the United States, was completed in the fall of 1978 and proved the expected. Though *Charlie's Angels* was the all-around favorite, the study concluded that boys like action programs with strong male leads and themes of competition, girls like family comedies with strong female leads and black children are drawn to black situation comedies. And these preferences tend to get stronger as the children get older.

"We also were asking kids whether they perceived a difference between science fiction and science fact," says research director Milton Chen. "Because of the influence of 'Star Wars,' which is really just a cowboy movie set in space, and similar shows, many kids thought science fiction *was* science fact, so we decided to emphasize the difference in our series and to play down the science fiction element. We think so much is going on in the world, we can stretch kids' imaginations just by showing them the things that are real and awesome. Not make-believe Death Stars, but real supertankers."

The program, with its desire to teach wonder, parading the extraordinary across the screen, owes more to "The Guinness Book of World Records" than to Mr. Wizard. Or, more precisely, it seems like a descendant of old Disney nature movies like "The Living Desert" and the old *Bell System Science Series* shows like "Hemo the Magnificent." *3-2-1 Contact*, only 20 percent of which is shot in the studio, is a visual encyclopedia of what makes up the perceivable world, of how things work, and of relationships (for example, how a chair can be big compared to an ant and small compared to a whale). Instead of experiments, the show concentrates on general concepts. Watching it is an experience more akin to visiting a museum than taking a tour of a laboratory.

"Well, I don't know about you guys," Leon is saying again, "but this has been a really big thrill for me."

"Compared to what, Marc?" asks Maria.

"You said big," says Liz.

"How big," asks Maria. "Was it as big a thrill as running the marathon?"

The director stops them.

"Once more," he says. "I'm losing the line: 'Was it as big a thrill...'"

One of the crew members is sitting in the Ames Room, a special set created for one sequence, which is taller at one end than it is at the other. It is designed so that, when it is photographed from a certain angle, it looks perfectly normal. As a result, an illusion is created—a man standing at the shorter end will look like a giant, and a man standing at the taller end will look like a midget.

David Black, who has written for Playboy, The Atlantic Monthly, Harper's and Cosmopolitan, among other magazines, is the author of the novel "Like Father."

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The crew man, stretched out across the room, looks like a mutant with huge feet and a tiny head and chest.

"We've tried to make the set demonstrate the concepts being explained," says Ronald Baldwin, the set designer. "Make the set dynamic, so it's almost another character. Everything should add to the action."

"It's a Hi-Tech set," says Nat Monjioi, the set decorator, "the factory look. Bare beams. Like the Eiffel Tower, the Crystal Palace, the Pompidou Museum. All the blue pipes are supposed to be air-conditioning ducts; all the green pipes, electrical conduits."

The set itself is one more lesson, a demonstration of how things work.

"Everything is color-coded," Monjioi adds.

Even the actors' clothes—bright greens, pinks and whites—which were chosen with the same care that is behind every other element in the show.

"I tried to assemble a wardrobe so interchangeable that everything would complement everything else," says former costume designer John Boxer. "Harmonious color combinations in themselves became a lesson in color relationships. I wanted each piece of clothing to pick up accents of every other piece of clothing, so the three [actors] would form a kind of color circle. And all this had to be within the limitations imposed by the height of the studio, which is so low it precludes the use of overhead mikes. All the performers have to wear body mikes, so clothes have to be big enough to hide them, and not rustling, because body mikes will pick up sounds. Lots of don'ts create particular do's."

continued

3-2-1 Contact is aimed at 'the segment of the population who are usually disenfranchised from science—girls and minority kids.' Here, Liz Moses, chosen as a female role model for audiences, conducts an experiment on-camera.

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Just as the show's preliminary research was among the most extensive done on children's viewing habits, CTW's mid-production research on subject- and cast-appeal and comprehensibility was also unusual for its depth. Milton Chen and his associates have taken sample shows to Los Angeles; Knoxville, Tenn.; Jackson, Miss.; and Denver for small group studies; to Columbus, Ohio, for a widespread test over that area's Qube (interactive cable television) system; and to Malvern, Ohio; and Chicago, for their most intensive—and extraordinary—study.

The experiments in Malvern and Chicago used a portable microcomputer called Apple, whose most useful feature is an almost instantaneous feedback of viewer response. "It used to take us three weeks to do a study," says Chen, "to gather data, bring it back to the office, organize and interpret it. Now we can do it in minutes out in the field."

In Chicago, at the Louis Nettelhorst School, Chen—assisted by Charles Sooley, a computer expert, and Dana Zoran and Carol Hantman, both CTW content researchers—tried *3-2-1 Contact* out on eight classes of 3rd-through-6th-graders. One group of children watched the show in a casual way, while Carol took notes on their reactions. A second group was given calculator-like boxes about the size of a paperback book. Half of the children in this group were asked to press a particular button whenever the show bored them, and the other half pressed a button whenever the show interested them. This information was stored in the boxes along with answers to specific questions about *3-2-1 Contact*'s content and appeal, which were asked after the show ended. Once the children left, the data were instantly fed into Apple, which within minutes organized the responses and produced a graph of the children's likes and dislikes during program intervals of five seconds.

As a result, Chen and his associates could, on the very day of the test, call the show's producer and say, not just which segments seemed to be successful, but even which moments in a specific segment seemed to work. The information also could be broken down in any number of other ways: responses according to sex, age, ethnic background, etc.

On the whole, the results of several such tests correlated well with the feelings of the show's creators. The studio segments tended to be less interesting than the other parts of the program, and "The Bloodhound Gang" mystery rated as the most popular element of all. But although most of the adults seemed to agree that a cartoon about size and volume was entertaining and effective, it was rated very low by the children. Yet a rather grim film about the consequences of a massive oil spill on marine and beach life rated surprisingly high.

It's not all done with mirrors. The Ames Room, a special set, is designed to demonstrate the tricks the eye can play on the brain. The room, which actually is shorter at one end than the other (bottom photograph), appears normal when viewed from a certain angle (top)—but not so the people in it. The person at the short end of the room (former show regular Maria Norman) appears giant-size, while the person standing at the taller end (guest magician Ricky Jay) comes across as a midget.

"Well, I don't know about you guys," Leon is still repeating in the New York City studio, "but this has been a really big thrill for me."

"Compared to what, Marc?" asks Maria.

"You said big," says Liz.

"How big?" says Maria. "Was it as big a thrill as running the marathon?"

They ad-lib their way up a spiral metal staircase, laughing.

"That's it," says the director.

"We did it," says Liz.

"We did it," says Maria.

"Playback, playback," the three of them chorus.

They scramble down the spiral staircase and crowd around the monitor, Liz and Maria in front, Leon leaning forward, staring intently at the screen over their shoulders. When the sequence ends, Maria and Liz drift off to opposite corners of the studio; but Leon continues to stare at the monitor and say, almost inaudibly:

"...A really big thrill...a big thrill...a thrill..." ■

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WHAT'S HAPPENING

continued from page 12

great food chain of entertainment."

Bird of prey? Commercial TV companies, still recuperating from the loss of over $200 million worth of advertising revenue in last year's 11-week technicians' strike, were not overjoyed to hear that a new competitor for advertisers' cash will face them in the mid-Eighties.

France has announced plans to beam television programs to Britain via satellite, with unlimited time available for commercials. Viewers will have to pay about $300 for a special antenna capable of receiving the satellite signal, and this cost might act as a brake on the expansion of the French channel. Should the French imports prove popular despite the cost, British companies might have to dig in for a siege. Of course, satellites work in more than one direction....

TOKYO

John Fujii reporting

Un-Japanese activity. Cable TV has been slow to get off—or under—the ground in Japan. There are still only two commercial cable systems, and they serve not the native population, but a minute audience of English-speaking tourists, diplomats and temporary residents. Japan Cable Television has wired the major Tokyo hotels and high-class apartment houses, and after seven years of operation has a total of 16,000 viewers. It offers three hours of English-language programs in the morning and six in the evening, ranging from news through sightseeing information to movies. Many programs come direct from the U.S. by satellite, including ABC's *World News Tonight* and American college football.

Though customers pay no fee for the service itself, there is a hefty bill to be met when your home or hotel is initially wired: $8000 for installation plus $145 per mile for the cable itself. Japan Cable sells commercial time to advertisers and is now earning $2.6 million annually from that source, which has enabled it to declare a profit for the first time.

Meanwhile, the other commercial cable system, JCTV's sister station in Osaka-Kyoto, is still hobbling along with an audience of 8000 hotel guests.

Great leap forward. With the help of three Japanese manufacturing giants, the People's Republic of China is catapulting itself into the age of color television. Matsushita, JVC and Hitachi have recently contracted with the Chinese government to build color assembly plants in Peking, Tientsin and Shanghai. Hitachi alone is earning $12.5 million from the deal, which will boost Chinese production of color TV sets by half a million units per year—an increase that is 10 times the current output.

This is only the beginning of the Chinese advance into color. Though the new assembly plants will initially be supplied with Japanese components, they will later get their printed circuits, tubes and other hardware from Chinese factories, which also will be built by the Japanese. Hitachi is to build tube-manufacturing facilities that will turn out nearly a million units per year.

The three TV channels in Peking already broadcast all their programs in color, as do stations in the other major cities. But most viewers still watch in black-and-white. The Japanese are about to revolutionize all that.

Carry-out camera. Back home, Japanese companies are pursuing their dream of a lightweight video camera. The video cameras currently on the market all make use of conventional pickup tubes that add substantially to weight; most models weigh between 4 and 6 pounds. New solid-state cameras expected to be unveiled by Sony, Matsushita and others later this year will weigh only 2.5 pounds. Japanese industrial consumers are likely to be the first beneficiaries of this development, and American video buffs will have to wait a while before they can put cameras in their backpacks.

VIDEOCASSETTES

NEW RELEASES

MOVIES

The Bermuda Triangle (1979)—A documentary featuring re-creations of unexplained incidents alleged to have taken place in that part of the Atlantic Ocean dubbed "the sea of fear." (VidAmerica; $48.95, $12.95 rental) (G)

Bloodline (1979)—Based on Sidney Sheldon's novel about an heiress's takeover of a pharmaceutical conglomerate. Audrey Hepburn, Ben Gazzara. (Paramount Pictures; $59.95, $9.95 rental) (R)

Bye Bye Birdie (1963)—Dick Van Dyke and Janet Leigh star in the film version of the Broadway musical about the drafting of a rock-and-roll star and the resulting pandemonium. With Maureen Stapleton and Paul Lynde. (Time Life Video Club; $39.95)

Coming Home (1978)—Jane Fonda and John Voight won Oscars for their roles as the wife of a Marine officer and the paraplegic Vietnam veteran with whom she becomes involved. With Bruce Dern. (VidAmerica; $18.95 rental) (R)

Dunderklumpen (1974)—Swedish-made fantasy (with English sound track), in which the animated title character leads cartoon animals and two live-action children through a series of magical adventures, with plenty of singing and dancing along the way. (Video Gems; $46.15) (G)

Foul Play (1978)—Comedy thriller set in San Francisco, with Chevy Chase as a detective and Goldie Hawn as a near-victim of a plot to assassinate the Pope. (Paramount Pictures; $59.95, $9.95 rental) (PG)

Grease (1978)—John Travolta and Olivia Newton-John in the

film version of the long-running musical. (Paramount Pictures; $59.95, $13.95 rental) (PG)

Hardcore (1979)—George C. Scott as a strait-laced Midwesterner seeking his runaway

daughter among the porno parlors of California; an explicit adult film. With Peter Boyle. (Columbia Pictures Home Entertainment; $59.95) (R)

Heaven Can Wait (1978)—Comedy about a professional quarterback (Warren Beatty) who is accidentally summoned to Heaven before his time. With

continued

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MOVIES

continued

Julie Christie, James Mason and Dyan Cannon. (Paramount Pictures; $59.95, $9.95 rental) (PG)

Hurricane (1979)—Remake of a John Ford movie about a young American woman's affair with a South Seas native. Mia Farrow, Jason Robards. (Paramount Pictures; $59.95, $9.95 rental) (PG)

The Innocent (1979)—Lush romantic drama set in turn-of-the-century Italy, with Giancarlo Giannini, Jennifer O'Neill and Laura Antonelli. (Time Life Video Club; $34.95)

King of the Gypsies (1978)—From Peter Maas's book about three generations of East Coast gypsies. Sterling Hayden, Susan Sarandon. (Paramount Pictures; $59.95, $9.95 rental) (R)

The Magic Pony (1977)—Animated version of a Russian folk tale about a young boy and the horse that helps him win the hand of a fair princess. Voices by Jim Backus and Hans Conried. (Video Gems; $46.15) (G)

The Man Who Fell to Earth (1976)—David Bowie stars as an alien in human form who amasses a fortune in electronics inventions, including a one-man spaceship, but who is finally overcome by modern technology, capitalism and earthly love. With Rip Torn, Candy Clark and Buck Henry. (Time Life Video Club; $34.95) (R)

Midnight Express (1978)—Strong violence, nudity and profanity punctuate this true-life account of an American student's ordeal in a Turkish prison, starring Brad Davis. With John Hurt and Randy Quaid. (Columbia Pictures Home Entertainment; $59.95) (R)

Oliver's Story (1978)—Sequel to 1970's "Love Story," with Ryan O'Neal and Candice Bergen. (Paramount Pictures; $59.95, $9.95 rental) (PG)

Once upon a Time (1976)—A collection of animated fairy tales, produced in Europe. (Video Gems; $46.15) (G)

Pinocchio (1978)—Animated version of the children's classic. (Video Gems; $38.75) (G)

The Punk Rock Movie (1979)—Amateurishly produced documentary of New Wave/Punk Rock music and life style, including interviews, backstage antics and concert performances of numerous groups. With Sid Vicious, Johnny Rotten and the Sex Pistols. (Video Gems; $54.95) (R)

Shinbone Alley (1971)—Animated version of Don Marquis's "archy and mehitabel" stories about a philosophical cockroach and his alley-cat friend; featuring the voices of Eddie Bracken and Carol Channing. (Video Gems; $38.75) (G)

Summerdog (1977)—A city family vacations in New England and finds itself adopted by the title canine. Filmed in the Berkshires, with James Congdon, Elizabeth Eisenman. (Video Gems; $46.15) (G)

Taxi Driver (1976)—An adult portrayal of a psychotic Manhattan cabby (Robert De Niro), struggling with his private hell. Cybill Shepherd, Jodie Foster, Harvey Keitel; directed by Martin Scorsese. (Columbia Pictures Home Entertainment; $59.95) (R)

The War Between the Tates (1977)—TV-movie based on Alison Lurie's best seller about a suburban housewife (Elizabeth Ashley), her professor husband (Richard Crenna) and the coed (Annette O'Toole) he falls in love with. (Time Life Video Club; $27.50)

Some movie descriptions courtesy of TV Guide magazine. Ratings (G, PG, R and X) are those assigned by the Motion Picture Association of America for theatrical showings.

SPECIALS

All Star Jazz Show—A brief history of the jazz movement, featuring performances by such musicians as Dizzy Gillespie, Stan Getz and Herbie Hancock. (Time Life Video Club; $27.50)

Baseball: Fun and Games—One hour of baseball bloopers, plus a trivia quiz. (VidAmerica; $49.95, $12.95 rental)

Boxing's Greatest Champions—Profiles of the greatest professional middleweights, lightweights and welterweights. (VidAmerica; $48.95, $11.95 rental)

CPR for Citizens—Orson Welles narrates a one-hour instructional program on the life-saving technique of cardiopulmonary resuscitation. (VidAmerica; $48.75, $9.95 rental)

Devo: The Men Who Make the Music—The popular new-wave rockers star in this one-hour tape featuring concert footage and film made by group members. (Time Life Video Club; $32.95)

Flavors of China—A two-hour lesson in Chinese cooking, from basic techniques to preparation of dishes such as lemon chicken and beef with oyster sauce. (WCI Home Video; $50)

Hocus Pocus, It's Magic—Dick Cavett plays host to a variety of magic acts. (Time Life Video Club; $27.50)

Scared Straight—Peter Falk narrates this powerful documentary (with strong language) about a controversial crime-deterrent program aimed at troubled teenagers and run by inmates at Rahway (N.J.) State Prison. (VidAmerica; $49.95, $10.95 rental)

A Spectacular Evening in New York—A potpourri of entertainment videotaped live at three Manhattan nightclubs. Performers include Eartha Kitt, Kenny Rankin and Sally Kellerman. (VidAmerica; $48.95, $12.95 rental)

A Video Storybook—A collection of animated fairy-tale classics, including "Puss in Boots," "Peter and the Magic Goose" and "The Golden Blackbird." (VidAmerica; $48.95, $9.95 rental)

Who Are the DeBolts?—Award-winning documentary about a couple with six children of their own who adopt 13 severely handicapped youngsters; Henry Winkler narrates. (VidAmerica; $48.95, $10.95 rental)

The Whole World's Dancin' Disco—Sixty-minute "how to" disco program. (Video Tape Network; $49.95)

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PASSAGES

SIGNED

Marie Osmond, former costar of the hit TV series *Donny and Marie*, to an exclusive, long-term contract with NBC; the network plans for Osmond to star in her own series in 1981.

Joe Garagiola, former catcher in the National League and winner of the George Foster Peabody Award, as host for NBC Sports' coverage of the 1980 Olympic Games. Garagiola joins previously announced hosts Dick Enberg, Bryant Gumbel, Donna de Varona, Bruce Jenner and O.J. Simpson.

Dan Dorfman, syndicated newspaper columnist, to do a financial column for the Turner Broadcasting System's Cable News Network, a 24-hour, all-news service scheduled to start June 1.

Former Boston Celtics center *Bill Russell*, as a commentator on CBS telecasts of National Basketball Association games. Russell previously handled NBA commentary for ABC.

George Watson, former vice president and Washington bureau chief for ABC News, as vice president and Washington bureau chief for the Cable News Network.

Henry (The Fonz) Winkler, by Casablanca Records and Filmworks, to star in "Pursuit," a movie based on the true story of D.B. Cooper, the airplane hijacker who parachuted from a commercial jet seven years ago and disappeared with several hundred thousand dollars.

ASSIGNED

Jane Pauley, correspondent on NBC's *Today* show, to the additional job of anchor on the Saturday edition of *NBC Nightly News*. Jessica Savitch, who previously anchored the weekend *Nightly News*, will continue to appear on the Sunday edition.

RE-SIGNED

Comedian *Steve Martin*, to an exclusive, long-term contract with NBC, under which he will star in a series of variety specials over the next three years.

ELECTED

John F. Gault, as president of Manhattan Cable, succeeding *Thayer Bigelow Jr.*, who has been elected a vice president of Time-Life Films.

ENGAGED

Bonnie Franklin, star of CBS's *One Day at a Time*, and Marvin Minoff, executive producer of the just-completed TV-movie

continued

BEST SELLERS

This list of the Top 20 prerecorded videocassettes is based on sales figures from a survey of retail outlets around the country.

1. **The Godfather** (1972)—Francis Ford Coppola's gangster epic about the rise and near-fall of the Corleones, a Sicilian family in America. (Paramount Pictures; $79.95)

2. **Saturday Night Fever** (1977)—John Travolta stars as a hip-wiggling dancing champ in a Brooklyn disco. (Paramount Pictures; $59.95)
3. **The Godfather, Part II** (1974)—More tales of the Corleone family. (Paramount Pictures; $79.95)
4. **M*A*S*H** (1970)—Robert Altman's antiwar farce that was turned into a TV series. (Magnetic Video; $54.95)
5. **Patton** (1970)—George C. Scott's Oscar-winning performance as Gen. George Patton. (Magnetic Video; $74.95)
6. **Deep Throat** (1972)—Rated X. (Arrow Film & Video; $99.50)
7. **Barbarella** (1968)—Sexy science fiction with Jane Fonda. (Paramount Pictures; $59.95)
8. **Debbie Does Dallas** (1978)—Rated X. (VCX; $99.50)
9. **The Towering Inferno** (1974)—Flames engulf the world's tallest building. (Magnetic Video; $74.95)
10. **Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid** (1969)—Paul Newman-Robert Redford Western about two bank robbers on the run. (Magnetic Video; $54.95)
11. **Flesh Gordon** (1974)—Rated X. (Media Home Entertainment; $54.95)
12. **The Sound of Music** (1965)—Julie Andrews in one of the most popular musicals of all time. (Magnetic Video; $74.95)
13. **The War of the Worlds** (1953)—The Martians invade Earth and almost nothing can stop them. (Paramount Pictures; $59.95)
14. **Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger** (1977)—Tales of the super sailor and his battles with strange creatures. (Columbia Pictures Home Entertainment; $59.95)
15. **The Story of O** (1975)—Rated X. (Allied Artists; $79.95)
16. **Harold and Maude** (1971)—Comedy about a young man and an old woman in love. (Paramount Pictures; $59.95)
17. **Sex World** (1978)—Rated X. (TVX; $79.00)
18. **Blue Hawaii** (1962)—Elvis Presley musical. (Magnetic Video; $44.95)
19. **Star Trek Bloopers** (1966-69)—Offbeat outtakes from the popular science fiction TV series. (Video Dimensions; $39.95)
20. **Looking for Mr. Goodbar** (1977)—Diane Keaton as a woman caught in New York's singles' bar subculture. (Paramount Pictures; $79.95)

Retail outlets participating in our survey include: *Associated Video, Houston; Audio Center, Honolulu; Beta Home Entertainment Club, Las Vegas; Brenda's Movie House, Philadelphia; Concord Video Center, Stamford, Conn.; Conlon Service, Litchfield, Ill.; Enchantment Video, Albuquerque, N.M.; Entertainment Horizons, Portland, Maine; Giffen Video, Staten Island, N.Y.; Godwin Radio, Inc./Godwin Video Centers, Birmingham, Ala.; Golden Videocassette Library, Bethesda, Md.; Home Entertainment Emporium, Manhattan Beach, Cal.; Integrity Entertainment, Gardena, Cal.; Jantzen Beach Magnavox Home Entertainment Center, Portland, Ore.; Kaleidoscope Video Shops, Oklahoma City, Okla.; Media Associates, Mountain View, Cal.; Media Concepts, Inc., St. Petersburg, Fla.; Barney Miller's Inc., Lexington, Ky.; Modern Communications, St. Louis; Newbury TV & Appliances, New Bedford, Mass.; Precision TV and Video, Bellwood, Ill.; Record Rendezvous, Cleveland; Red Fox, Elizabethville, Pa.; Select Film Library, New York; The Sheik Video Corp., Metairie, La.; Southwest Video, San Antonio, Texas; Stansbury Stereo, Baltimore; Televideo Systems, Richmond, Va.; Thomas Film Video, Royal Oak, Mich.; Video Audio Electronics, Williamsport, Pa.; Video Cassette, Phoenix, Ariz.; Video Cassettes, Etc., Lubbock, Texas; The Video Center, Beverly Hills; The Video Connection, Toledo, Ohio; Video Corp. of America, Edison, N.J.; Video Dimensions, New York; Video Home Center, Oklahoma City; Video Industries of America, Council Bluffs, Iowa; Video Library, Bala Cynwyd, Pa.; Video Library, Torrance, Cal.; Video Mart, San Bernardino, Cal.; Video Services, Towson, Md.; Video Shack, New York; Videospace, Bellevue, Wash.; Video Specialties, Houston; The Video Store, Gretna, La.; Video 2000, San Diego, Cal.; Wizard of Vid, Beverly Hills.*

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PASSAGES
continued

"Portrait of a Rebel," in which Franklin plays birth-control pioneer Margaret Sanger.

WED

Michael Learned, three-time Emmy winner for her portrayal

of the mother on *The Waltons*, and scriptwriter William Parker. Actor *Michael Moriarty* ("Bang the Drum Slowly," *Holocaust*) and Anne Hamilton Martin.

NBC correspondent *Jessica Savitch* and Mel Korn, president and chairman of the board of J. M. Korn and Son, Inc., advertising agency.

Actor *Desi Arnaz Jr.* ("Having Babies," "To Kill a Cop") and actress *Linda Purl* ("Little Ladies of the Night," "The Young Pioneers," *Beacon Hill*).

SEPARATED

Carl Bernstein, former Washington Post reporter, now Washington bureau chief for ABC News, and author Nora Ephron ("Crazy Salad").

Vidal Sassoon, of beauty-salon and TV-commercial fame, and his wife of 13 years, Beverly.

Actress *Mary Tyler Moore* and producer *Grant Tinker*; the couple, who have been married for 17 years, will continue to be business partners in MTM Enterprises, which Tinker heads.

DIVORCED

Actress *Candy Clark* ("American Graffiti") and evangelist-turned-actor *Marjoe Gortner* ("The Marcus-Nelson Murders," "Mayday at 40,000 Feet").

KNIGHTED

Director *Alfred Hitchcock*, master of the macabre in more than 50 suspense films, for which he received five Oscar nomina-

tions, as well as the Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award (1967). Sir Alfred also chilled viewers of the small screen with his own TV anthology series from 1955 to 1965.

APPOINTED

Emmy-winning producer *Lewis Freedman* (*Hollywood Television Theatre*), as director of the newly created Program Fund of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Brandon Tartikoff, former West Coast program executive for NBC, as president of NBC Entertainment. Tartikoff succeeds *Mike Weinblatt*, who becomes president of NBC Enterprises, a new division of the network concerned with communications technologies.

Composer/conductor *John Williams*, who scored the movies "Jaws," "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" and "Star Wars," as conductor of the Boston Pops orchestra, succeeding the late Arthur Fiedler. Williams is currently completing the score for "The Empire Strikes Back," a sequel to "Star Wars."

John T. Reynolds, as president and chief operating officer of the TV/radio production company Golden West Broadcasters.

LINKED

Writer, director and producer *Robert Altman* ("M*A*S*H," "Nashville") and his production company, Lion's Gate Films, with the Shubert Organization, Inc. and ABC to produce, develop and market videocassettes of important theatrical productions for the home screen.

CBS Inc. and the *RCA Corporation*, in a surprising videodisc alliance that unites two longtime archrivals. RCA has licensed CBS to manufacture and distribute discs for RCA's SelectaVision players, which are to make their national debut early in 1981. The new arrangement does not affect the competition between the two companies' audio-record divisions and their TV and radio networks, NBC and CBS. In earlier years, they battled over whose color-TV standard would prevail (RCA won) and which form of long-playing record would be dominant (CBS won).

DROPPED

Veteran actress *Margaret Hamilton*, as Cora, from Maxwell House coffee commercials.

Bert Parks, from the Miss America Pageant, after 25 years as the show's emcee; Parks then was hired as host of the "People's Choice Awards."

Mike Douglas, from his syndicated talk show, following a dispute over money. Singer *John Davidson* has been signed to replace Douglas, who had been with the show for 18 years.

RESIGNED

Producer *Samuel Z. Arkoff* ("The House of Usher," "Wild in the Streets"), a pioneer of independent moviemaking, as chairman, president and chief executive officer of American International Pictures, Inc., which he co-founded 25 years ago. AI was acquired by Filmways Inc. last July.

Ashley A. Boone Jr., one of the highest-ranking black executives in the movie industry, from the position of president of the distribution and marketing unit of 20th Century-Fox, to establish his own international marketing and distribution company.

DIED

Cyril Bliss, 59, who was CBS's first overseas news cameraman.

Joan Blondell, 70, who appeared in more than 50 movies, as well as TV's *Here Come the Brides*.

Composer *Richard Rodgers*, 77, who wrote the music for 40 Broadway musicals, as well as the score for *Victory at Sea*, a landmark television documentary series.

Actor *Lee Bowman*, 69, who starred in an early Fifties TV version of *Ellery Queen*. Bowman also emceed a 1954 game show, *What's Going On?*

Barbara Britton, 59, who co-starred in *Mr. and Mrs. North* in the Fifties; she also appeared in Revlon commercials for 12 years and, until a few months ago, was in the cast of the soap opera *One Life to Live*.

Dimitri Tiomkin, 80, composer of more than 125 film scores, including three Oscar winners ("High Noon," "The High and the Mighty" and "The Old Man and the Sea").

Producer *Darryl Zanuck*, 77, head of 20th Century-Fox over the course of 32 years and 1000 films, including the first talkie ("The Jazz Singer") and Oscar winners "The Grapes of Wrath" and "All About Eve."

Joy Adamson, 69, author of the books "Born Free" and "Living Free," on which the short-lived NBC series *Born Free* was based.

Air Force *Lt. Col. John A. ("Shorty") Powers*, 57, known as the "eighth astronaut" in NASA's Mercury program, for which he was the official spokesman. Powers was the "Voice of Mission Control" on broadcasts of the first six U.S. manned space flights; he later made television commercials.

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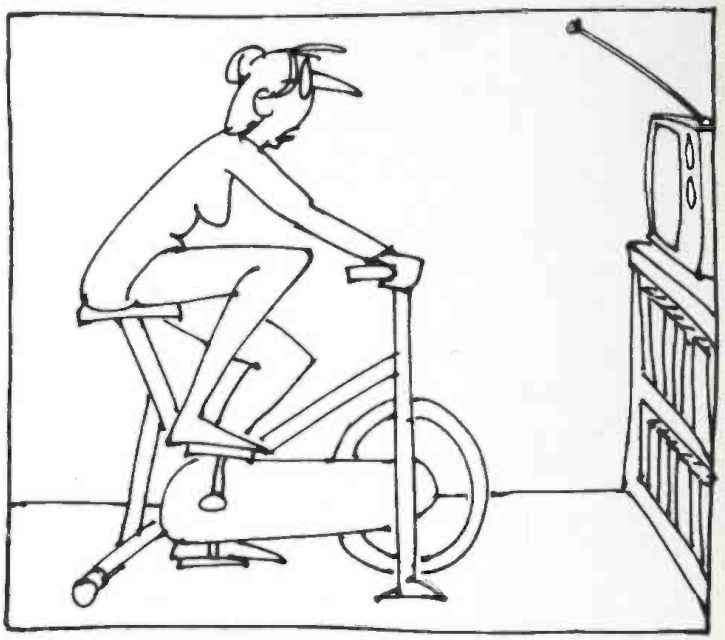
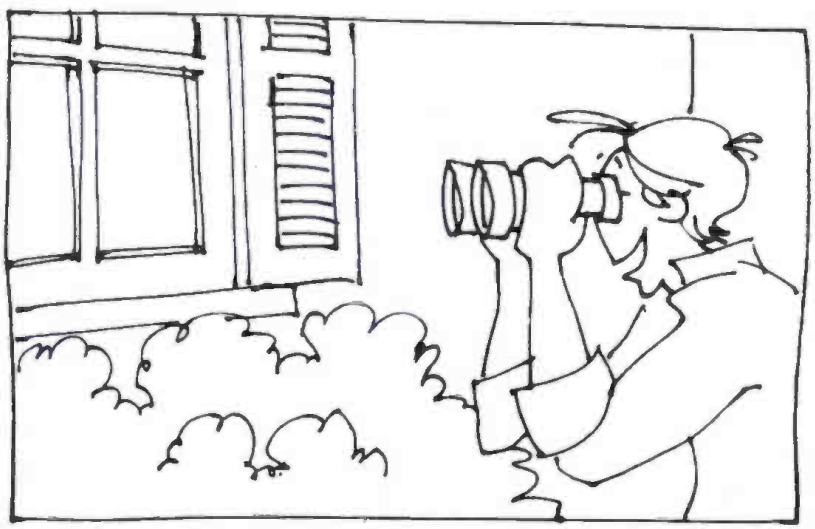
THE WATCHERS

By WILLIAM HAEFELI

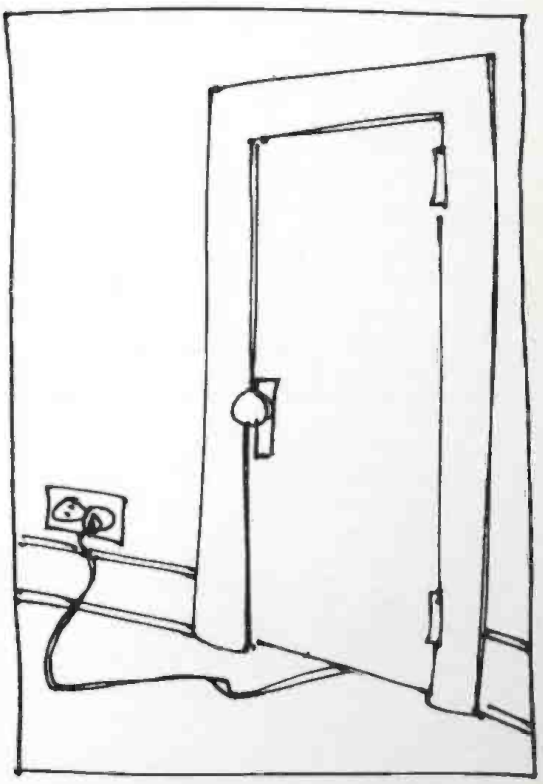
'I love television,' says Betty Murdock. 'I watch it 24 hours a day.' Betty Murdock has not slept since Dec. 9, 1963.



Gloria Hogan tries to watch at least seven miles a day.



Even though Denny Sharpe doesn't own a TV set, he still manages to watch about 12 hours a week, 'depending on the weather.'



Max Altmeyer considers himself a closet television watcher. 'I don't know. For some reason the reception is better in there.'

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The TV Census

By DICK FRIEDMAN

Since 1980 is a Census year, it's only appropriate that communications researchers are engaged in a census of their own—a demographic analysis of the "television population." Like the U.S. Census takers who knock on your door, these researchers are amassing raw data—age, sex, race, occupation, marital status—on their subjects: the characters who appear on prime-time and weekend-daytime programs. Their goal is twofold: first, to point up any under- or over-representation on TV of various facets of American life; and, second, to ask how much television affects our views.

Some of the most important recent studies have analyzed sample weeks during the period stretching from 1969 through the 1978-79 television season. Among the reports are: a study on aging on television by a team headed by Dr. George Gerbner at the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania; a study by Gerbner and Dr. Nancy Signorielli on women and minorities in television drama; a study by Signorielli on occupations portrayed on television; a study by a team headed by Michigan State's Dr. Bradley Greenberg, to appear in an upcoming issue of the Journal of Broadcasting, summarizing the results of a three-season demographic count of TV characters; and a study by Greenberg and Pilar Baptista-Fernandez on the portrayal (or lack of it) of Hispanics on television.

To arrive at their results, the researchers do a content analysis. Quite simply, they watch videotapes of programs and, when a character appears on-screen, they mark down his or her characteristics. (Often, of course, they must infer a characteristic such as age by appearance and actions, ignoring the actor's or actress's real-life attributes.)

All the researchers are quick to concede that the population characteristics in the television world need not match those of the real world, that the requirements of drama and entertainment almost inherently dictate differences. But in these reports, the comparisons between the TV population and its real-life counterpart are decidedly invidious. And there are no data yet available from this season that, when tabulated, might alter the census. The following is a summary of some of the most general conclusions.

Sex. Though in the real world women slightly outnumber men, on TV there are almost three times as many males as females. And the women on TV, writes Greenberg, "are primarily young and pretty and are overrepresented in lower social economic status [sic] and jobs."

Marital Status and Family Life. Seventy-six percent of adult Americans are married. But on TV, notes Signorielli, only about one third of the adult major characters are presented as married. Family life is represented as important for 59 percent of the women, but for only 38 percent of the men.

Age. Here, TV truly deviates from the real world. As Gerbner and Signorielli report, "Only 27 percent of the real population, but more than half of the prime-time population, is between 25 and 45. Characters under 19 number one third of the real population, but make up only one tenth of the fictional population. Characters over 65 comprise 11 percent of the real population, but make up 2.2 percent of the fictional population." Mature and aging women, the studies agree, are infrequent on television. And to break that glamorous 25-to-45 segment down even further: a third of all women you see on TV are in the 25-to-35 age bracket, and almost a third of all the men are in the 35-to-44 age bracket (Gerbner calls this "the age of TV authority" for males). Finally, says Gerbner, there is "a relative abundance of younger women for older men, but no such abundance of younger men for older women."

Race. Minorities are generally underrepresented, glaringly so in the case of Hispanics. Greenberg and Baptista-Fernandez' study says that in three seasons only 1.5 percent of the characters could be identified as Hispanic—compared to 9 percent of the U.S. population.

What about blacks? By the mid-Seventies, according to Greenberg, the proportion of blacks on TV seemed to have reached a plateau equal to their population share of 10 percent. However, he adds, more than one third of the under-20 age group is likely to be black.

Occupations. As even the most casual TV-watcher knows, work on television differs from real life. Especially overrepresented on TV, says Signorielli, are private detectives, police and judges, followed by doctors and lawyers. Especially underrepresented are blue-collar jobs, particularly labor and craft workers. If you're counting, in an average week of prime time you see 10 doctors, four nurses, five lawyers, two judges, 37 policemen, two scientists and three teachers, with the latter two occupations underrepresented relative to U.S. professionals.

What does it all mean? Is the message of TV, extrapolated from this census, "sexism and ageism," as Gerbner and Signorielli assert? Possibly. For instance, it may be, as Gerbner says, that "heavy viewers are more likely [than light viewers] to believe that the elderly are disappearing" because relatively few old people are shown on TV (and those portrayed usually are depicted unfavorably). But he also reports in his study on women and minorities a somewhat curious result: analysis indicates that "for those groups who are generally less sexist . . . television viewing cultivates a more sexist view of the world. For the groups who are initially more sexist, television viewing may be a somewhat enlightening experience." So at least one message of the TV census, then, seems to be that the orientations of the characters watching the screen are as important as those of the characters on it. ■

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1980: The Year of the Scramble

By DAVID LACHENBRUCH

The Great Television Time-Shifting Machine has become the Great American Movie Projector.

The home videocassette recorder, or VCR, is marketed primarily as a gadget to liberate the American family from the tyranny of television program schedules. It lets you tape shows when you're away from home, when it's otherwise inconvenient to watch them, or while you're looking at another program, for viewing later on your own schedule.

But a funny thing happened on the way to the time shift. VCR owners, it turns out, have hearty appetites for feature films prerecorded on videocassettes—old films, new films, family films, filthy films, films that have been shown on commercial television and films that haven't. Back in 1977, most other moviemakers chuckled when 20th Century-Fox licensed a batch of features for cassette release—at $50 to $70 a throw—to Magnetic Video Corporation, a little tape-duplicating company located in a Detroit suburb. Magnetic Video is now a big tape-duplicating company—and a wholly owned subsidiary of Fox.

Fox's success with movies for the VCR market flashed the green light for other movie producers and distributors. Allied Artists, Columbia Pictures, Paramount, Warner Bros., Avco-Embassy, EMI and others joined the cassette set—with Universal and Disney now ready to move. The last two are particularly significant recruits: they're the studios that brought suit to have Sony's Betamax—and, by implication, others of its ilk—declared illegal as devices sold to encourage copyright violation. They lost the suit, but if they should win on appeal, they'll be in an awkward position. (In fact, neither company is waiting for the appeal to release several movies; among them, reportedly, are Universal's "The Wiz," "The Jerk" and its raucous WWII comedy, "1941.")

Sale and rental of movie cassettes quite unexpectedly has become a big business, which will retail well over a million units this year. Cassette-duplicating houses are working around the clock to keep up with the demand by 1.1 million-plus VCR owners for feature films selling at $39.95 to $80 and renting for up to $14 per five-day rental period. In addition, an unfathomable number of "bootleg" cassettes of very recent movies is being duplicated illegally. Then there's a large volume of pornographic cassettes.

But despite a growing market, all is not well in the VCR world. As unexpectedly large as the prerecorded cassette business has become, the generally accepted tenet is that it's just a dress rehearsal for something far bigger—the videodisc. VCRs are relatively costly (list prices for most are $1000 and up), tape is an inherently expensive medium and videotape duplication is a slow and expensive process. The quality of the picture on tape can be uneven, and the sound in some tapes hovers around the barely intelligible level. The videodisc player, on the other hand, has only a single function: playback of recorded discs, which are inexpensive to press, easier to play than tapes—and have inherently better picture and sound quality. So goes the conventional wisdom.

The first videodisc player on the American market, Magnavox's Magnavision, sells for $775 (in the areas where it's available), and most discs supplied by MCA (Universal Pictures' parent) retail at $16 and $25. RCA plans to have its own videodisc player in nationwide distribution early next year at $500, with feature film discs at $15 to $20. Simple arithmetic shows that a VCR owner could save enough by purchasing 20 movies on discs instead of cassettes to pay for a disc player. The VCR goes back to being a time-shifter—and the disc player becomes the mass medium for recorded programs. Right?

Well, maybe.

Only "maybe" because VCR manufacturers and tape duplicators, having tasted the feast of Hollywood's money, are understandably reluctant to quit show biz. And they know they have just one year to block that disc.

So 1980 is the year of the scramble for the VCR industry. The videocassette duplicators are working hard and hurriedly to reduce costs despite rising prices for raw tape and cassette housings, both petroleum-derived products. They're rushing to develop methods to put movies on longer-playing, slower-moving tapes, which would immediately cut raw tape costs in half, and working on new and less expensive duplicating systems. The goal is clear: $15 or $20 movie cassettes by next New Year's Day.

Meanwhile, in Japan, where all "American" VCRs are made, a companion drive is in progress: to develop a stripped-down VCR that can be sold at close to the projected $500 price of RCA's disc player. Japanese companies have developed their own videodisc systems and taken out patent licenses to produce disc systems developed in America and Europe, but these are transparently defensive maneuvers. It really boils down to this: the VCR is Japanese, the videodisc is not. Video recorders have already displaced color TV as Japan's biggest electronics cash crop for export. Japanese VCR production capacity is now being expanded to at least three million recorders a year, and worldwide blank-videocassette output is pushing 25 million annually, led by the Japanese. Japan won't willingly turn over any of this fast-growing video business to Americans and other foreigners.

Now get out your pencils—here comes a quiz: For $500, would you buy (a) a videodisc player, whose only function is to show $20 programs with excellent audio and video quality? Or, (b) a VCR, which can time-shift your TV, make home movies with a video camera *and* play $20 movie cassettes with fair-to-good picture quality and understandable sound?

There's a lot of industry money riding on your answer. ■

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TV GAMES

Pay for Play

By BOB BREWIN

Soon several thousand cable subscribers in Idaho, Mississippi, Illinois, Minnesota and Ontario may be able to choose from 30 television games and programs when they switch on their sets. If this experiment succeeds, a new service called PlayCable may eventually become as widespread as pay-cable.

PlayCable is a joint venture of General Instrument, an electronics corporation, and Mattel, the toy company that brought the world the Barbie doll. The resulting game network is currently the hottest technological development in the fast-growing video-game industry.

Video games have come a long way in a short time from their crude beginning. Pong from Atari and Odyssey from Magnavox were simple—electronic paddles, controlled by a box wired into the set, swatted an electronic ball back and forth. Simple, yes; but because it was the first inkling that the viewer could do something with his set besides watch it, these games and their competitors sold millions of copies.

Novel as the idea was, playing the same game over and over soon became boring. Today's much more sophisticated video games fight that boredom by using brain-on-a-chip circuitry coupled with cartridges that are as easy to change as audio-tape cassettes. Want to play NFL football, or chess, or match wits with invaders from outer space? Whatever your sport or gaming instinct, there is bound to be a programmable game cartridge to match it.

Programmable games offer more than just variety on the playing field of the home screen—they come equipped with sound and graphic effects (crowd noise, scoreboards, etc.) that make the action more lifelike.

The price of this variety and realism is not cheap. The control units range from $179.95 for Odyssey² —today's version plays 48 games rather than Odyssey's original 12—to $999.99 for the Atari 800 Personal Computer System. (Devices marketed as home-computer systems are sophisticated game-playing machines as well as computers.) Game cartridges range in price from a low of $10 to $39.95 for Video Chess from Atari. If these costs are too steep for your budget, there are several simpler, nonprogrammable, Pong-like games on the market that sell for as little as $9.95, though some are priced as high as $50.

The PlayCable experiment adds a new dimension to the competition between game suppliers. Mattel Electronics president Jeff Rochlis says, "You can play any number of games on PlayCable, 24 hours a day, for eight to 10 dollars a month, or roughly half the cost of buying all the new cartridges every year."

However, to use PlayCable you must first spend $250 to buy a Mattel Intellivision controller and attach it to your TV set. Then the cable system provides a box made by General Instrument that is placed in the controller where the cartridges would normally go. The user selects the game he wants from the program guide displayed on his set, pushes a button, and the game is electronically "dumped" into the General Instrument box. When he tires of that game, the user pushes an erase button, selects another game... and so on.

Rochlis, needless to say, prophesies that the real future of the game industry is with cable delivery. Don Kingsborough, former vice president of sales and marketing at Atari, predictably disagrees. He contends that cartridges—with their ease of handling and convenience—are still the wave of the future. Whichever of them proves to be right, video games have come a long way in the seven short years since Odyssey. They are not toys, but family-entertainment centers that allow the user to direct and be part of the action on the screen he used to just sit and watch. ■

Bob Brewin is video editor of New York City's Soho Weekly News and of High Fidelity Trade News.

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A mind is a terrible thing to waste.

PHOTOGRAPHER: RON DE MILT

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YESTERDAYS

Mary Martin

25 Years Ago: March 1955

With Mary Martin suspended from wires in an NBC studio in Brooklyn, "Peter Pan" soars into television history, attracting a record-breaking audience of 65 million viewers.... Mrs. Peepers (Patricia Benoit) tells Mr. Peepers (Wally Cox) that she is expecting.... On the *Today* show, Dave Garroway and his chimpanzee sidekick, J. Fred Muggs, inspect 1955's new toys.... The month's Wednesday- and Friday-night fight cards include such viewer favorites as Chico Vejar, Kid Gavilan, Joey Giardello and Willie Pep.... Howdy Doody plans a new election after Dilly Dally resigns as mayor of Doodyville.... *G.E. Theater* stars Ronald Reagan in "War and Peace on the Range," a filmed Hollywood drama about a movie producer.... Familiar names also abound in the month's live dramas from New York—Andy Griffith has the lead in "No Time for Sergeants" on *The U.S. Steel Hour;* on *The Elgin Hour* Robert Preston, Glenda Farrell and John Cassavetes star in "Crime in the Streets," written by Reginald Rose and directed by Sidney Lumet; Eli Wallach, Lee Grant and Jack Warden are in Robert Alan Aurthur's "Shadow of the Champ" on *Philco-Goodyear Playhouse;* and Walter Matthau heads the cast of "A Stone for His Son" on *Robert Montgomery Presents*.... Julius La Rosa, on the rebound from his expulsion from *Arthur Godfrey and His Friends,* is substituting while Perry Como takes a vacation from his 15-minute Monday-Wednesday-Friday song show.... Milton Berle is competing with Bishop Fulton Sheen on Tuesdays; Sid Caesar's Monday-night cohorts include Nanette Fabray, Carl Reiner and Howard Morris; Jack Paar's daily *Morning Show* has two new singers—Charlie Applewhite and Edith Adams; and *I Love Lucy* loses its cigarette sponsor even though it's number one in the Nielsens.... The 1955 Oscar ceremonies are telecast, with Bob Hope as the host. "On the Waterfront" is the big winner.... NBC dedicates its fancy new color studios in Burbank, Cal., with a 90-minute "spectacular" starring Fred Allen, Helen Hayes, Dinah Shore, Leontyne Price, Buddy Hackett and Judy Holliday.

10 Years Ago: March 1970

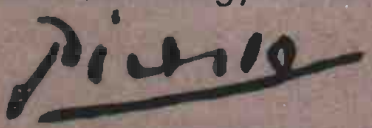
60 Minutes is telecast irregularly, on Tuesday nights.... Meanwhile, *Bonanza* is riding high on Sunday nights.... Red Skelton is dropped by CBS after 16 years and immediately hired by NBC.... Gamal Abdel Nasser, president of the United Arab Republic, answers American newsmen's questions about the Arab-Israeli conflict.... Harry Belafonte and Lena Horne get together for a relaxed musical hour, "Harry and Lena".... "The City and County of Denver vs. Lauren R. Watson" runs on four consecutive nights. It is *NET Journal*'s account, filmed in a Denver courtroom, of the trial of a Black Panther.... The networks announce next season's schedules, which include a couple of promising new situation comedies—*The Mary Tyler Moore Show* and *The Odd Couple*.... Burt Reynolds, formerly of *Hawk,* plans to return to TV in another police series, *Dan August*.... On educational TV's *The Advocates*, they are debating whether the United States should eliminate tariffs and import quotas on foreign oil.

5 Years Ago: March 1975

The month's filmed and taped dramas range from *ABC Theatre*'s romantic comedy "Love Among the Ruins" (with Laurence Olivier and Katharine Hepburn) to *Hollywood Television Theatre*'s steamy comedy-drama "Steambath" (with Bill Bixby, Jose Perez and Valerie Perrine).... Mike and Gloria are ready to move out of the Bunker household on *All in the Family,* while Rhoda and Joe's marriage is getting shaky on *Rhoda*.... On *Monty Python's Flying Circus* a dissatisfied customer returns a dead parrot to a pet shop.... Network documentaries deal with handguns, the IRS and civil strife in Ireland.... Jacob Bronowski is tracing *The Ascent of Man* on public TV.... CBS is hit with a barrage of criticism after paying Watergate conspirator H. R. Haldeman a reported $50,000 for submitting to a televised interview conducted by Mike Wallace. ■

COMING UP IN PANORAMA

How New Television Developments Can Help Solve the Energy Crisis



Picasso: A Television Portrait of the Artist

Cable News Network: Ted Turner's New Baby Gets Ready for Its Debut

'The Women's Room': A Controversial Book Becomes a TV-Movie

35 Prominent Americans Prescribe for Public TV

Videodisc Players: What You Need To Know About the Coming Battle

Garbo, Monroe and Vivien Leigh Return to the Screen in *Moviola*

And Coverage of Henry Fonda, Lynn Redgrave, Paul Newman, Bette Davis, Ed Asner, Loni Anderson and Gary Coleman

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REAR VIEW

By HARRY STEIN

Dinner with a Game-Show Host

All right, I'll come right out with it: Bob Eubanks, the host of *The Newlywed Game*, is my idol.

I am very aware that, as heroes go, this is an unorthodox choice. I know that as well as anyone. Who else has spent years being laughed at for affecting the Bob Eubanks hair style? Who else has sat in silence at a hundred dinner parties listening to people praise no-talents like Picasso and Casals, only to be derided for injecting Bob's name into the conversation?

"Bob Eubanks?" they invariably sneer. "What's *he* done for mankind lately?"

I respond to that kind of ignorance with hauteur. "What are you talking about? Bob Eubanks happens to be a genius."

At which point the conversation generally moves on, leaving me in the dust, roundly dismissed as a fool. The sad truth appears to be that Bob is destined to die misunderstood by his plodding contemporaries, as Rembrandt went unappreciated in his time, and Galileo in his. People tune in to *The Newlywed Game* and they see nothing more than a square-jawed man with vacant eyes, oily manner and a penchant for gratuitous mischief. I look at the same program and find a man who has redefined English as a spoken language, a man who has so mastered the art of the nuance, the leer, the lascivious grin, the euphemism and the double-entendre that he would leave Joyce and, yes, even Shakespeare, agog.

I spend hours imitating Bob's mode of speech, but I can never even approach his masterful style. There is something sublime in the way Bob is able to gaze earnestly at a quartet of young women and ask, "Ladies, if your body were a car, would your husband say you need an overhaul, a paint job or a tuneup?"; in the arch of his eyebrow as he elicits tales of "whoopee"—his favorite euphemism—performed in odd places; in his little-boy innocence as he nudges some insecure young couple down the road to marital ruin. "Say, Paul, how much bigger *were* your old girl friend's than Sharon's?"

I wonder sometimes what it would be like to know Bob personally, to go bowling with him, and discuss Presidential politics, and spend quiet evenings at home with his family. I imagine Bob meeting me at the door, pipe in hand, and graciously leading me into an attractive split-level home, furnished entirely in imitation-wood dining-room sets turned down by winners of *The Newlywed Game*.

"Honey," he calls out, "company's here." As my fictitious scenario continues, he turns and grins at me mischievously. "Within 24 hours, when was the last time you made whoopee?"

"Pardon?"

Abruptly Mrs. Eubanks appears from a back room and greets me warmly. "Dinner's almost ready. We're having steak. What vegetable would you like?"

"Or to put it another way," says Bob, his eyebrows rising, "what dish would you say best describes your amorous life: zucchini, peas or mashed potatoes?"

"Oh, anything's fine with me." I look at them, standing there together, a contented couple. "I sure do envy you two. Married life looks just wonderful."

Bob puffs on his pipe. "Oh, it has its compensations." He winks. "Honey, which movie title would you say best describes our honeymoon night: 'The World's Greatest Lover,' 'Time After Time' or '10'?"

"I would say," she replies thoughtfully, "'Midnight Express'."

Later, toward the end of a dinner that includes the two Eubanks children, their mother asks, "Well, kids, how was school today?"

The 7-year-old boy brightens. "Mrs. Walker really liked what I brought for show and tell."

"What was that?"

"Well," says the boy, "it was something I'd describe as being bigger than a breadbox and uglier than Frankenstein."

"Can I go to the bathroom?" cuts in the little girl.

Bob slams a fist down on the table. "Young lady, I will not tolerate such language in my house. The term is 'the little girls' room.' Can I go to the little girls' room?" He pauses. "Or, if you must, in sophisticated company, 'the powder room'."

"I'm sorry," she says softly. "Can I?"

"Well, Laurie," he relents, "maybe." He pauses, consults with her brother and jots something down on a napkin. "Which of the following songs would you say best describes how you feel at this moment: 'I Can't Get No Satisfaction,' 'Don't Think Twice, It's All Right' or 'I Will Survive'?"

"The first one?" says Laurie tentatively.

"Sorry, dear," he says, flipping the napkin over, "your brother guessed you'd say 'I Will Survive.' You'll just have to stay here at the table."

"Bob," interrupts his wife, "I think it's time for the children to go to bed."

He frowns and glances at his watch. "All right, all right. But first, the big bonus question." The children turn toward him expectantly. "The one who answers correctly will get a bedtime story. The other will get nothing. Are you ready?"

They nod.

"OK, here it is: according to your father, which member of the family has the highest IQ? What do you say, Jimmy?"

The boy hesitates. "I say Mom. She's real smart."

"All right. And how about you, Laurie?"

"I guess," she says reluctantly, "I'd have to say Jimmy."

Bob laughs. "Oh, that's too bad. Your father predicted you'd say your father." He dashes over to the stereo and puts on a record of *The Newlywed Game* theme music. "So there are no winners tonight." Impulsively, I jump to my feet and start to applaud. As the music swells toward its conclusion, the children rise from the table and slink toward their bedrooms. "Good night, everybody," he calls after them, grinning and waving. "See you tomorrow." ■

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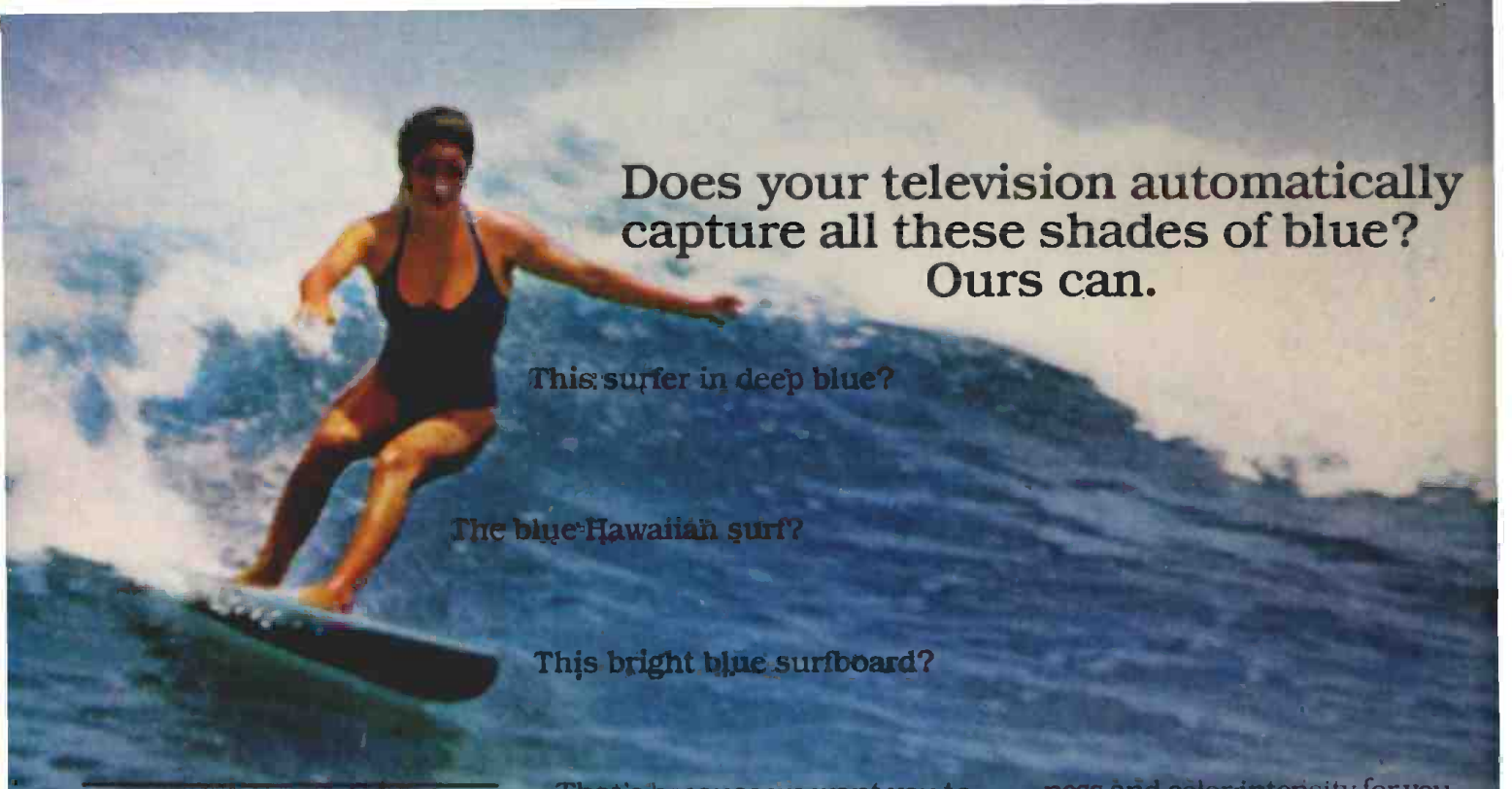

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