

Programming's Conventional Wisdom
The AIDS Reporting Crisis

CHANNELS

DECEMBER 17, 1990

THE BUSINESS OF COMMUNICATIONS

\$5.00

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SHARON STROVER PROFESSOR
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UCY

A MODERN CLASSIC

Who would have thought a cable network showing old black-and-white movies would become the industry buzz? Kate McEnroe and company have used local marketing to give American Movie Classics its gloss.

Kate McEnroe, AMC's vice president and general manager, in front of a still from *Wuthering Heights*.

AMERICAN
MOVIE CLASSICS

If you're looking for the blockbuster animation franchise of the future, the writing is on the wall. In its ninth week, THE DISNEY AFTERNOON's four-show average climbed to an all-time high of 4.2, with THE GUMMI BEARS (25), DUCKTALES (4.2), CHIP 'N DALE'S RESCUE RANGERS (4.9), and TALE SPIN (5.0) all reaching season-high ratings.

Equally impressive, TALE SPIN and CHIP 'N DALE continue as the #1 and #2 ranked animation strips, respectively.

With top ratings and more great shows on the way, we're painting a bright future for DISNEY AFTERNOON stations everywhere.

SOURCE: NTI 9/17-11/9/90.

©The Walt Disney Company



The
DISNEY
Afternoon
**ALL-TIME
SEASON
HIGH**

TALE SPIN #1
CHIP 'N DALE #2



The Signs of
Our Success
Are Everywhere!



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THE BUSINESS OF COMMUNICATIONS

VOLUME 10, NUMBER 19

DECEMBER 17, 1990

FEATURES

CABLE

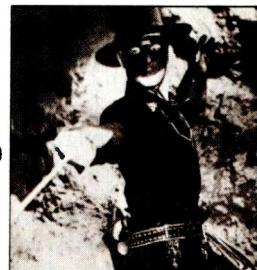
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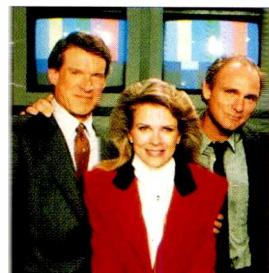
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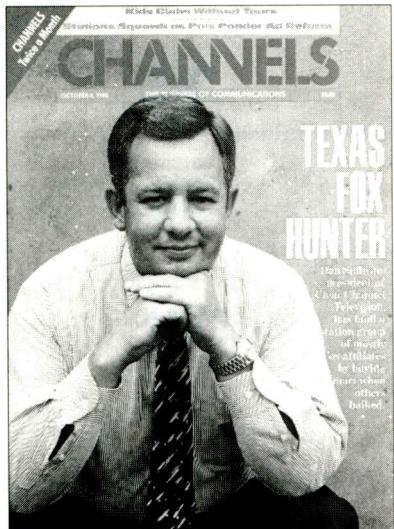
We Were First

I read with interest your October 1990 article concerning Blair's training program ("New, Improved Boot Camp"). In an industry where firsts are hard to come by, the simple fact is that Petry Television, "The Original Station Representative," started its sales training program in 1973.

As a result of our tremendous growth, the Petry Sales Training Program has graduated 115 of the industry's toughest and most knowledgeable salespeople since 1984 alone.

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, but unless you're the lead dog, your view never changes.

George A. Dennis
Vice President,
Director of Manpower Development
Petry Inc.
New York, N.Y.



No, We Were First

Y our issue of October 8 has an article about rep training programs ("New, Improved Boot Camp"). The opening paragraph states, "Blair TV started the first one back in 1977."

With all due respect, Metro TV Sales was in fact the first rep training program, dating back to February 1964.

From the Metro training program came a very distinguished group of current industry leaders—Bill Frank,

Randy Reiss, Rick Feldman, Phil Sweeney, Steve Goldman, Cave Plager, Ed Goldman, Bob Leider, Rudy Taylor, Andy Feinstein, Fred Weiner, and many more.

The executive who initiated the program was John Sias, who had the foresight, brilliance and sense of humor to hire me as their first trainee. All this letter does is date John and me, but setting the record straight was worth it.

Martin Ozer
President
Katz Independent Television
New York, N.Y.

What the Other Hand Is Doing

E njoyed your well-written article in the September 24 issue of *Channels* regarding discounting movies for pay-per-view ("Look Who's Discounting").

However, I wanted to remind you that the B-Q Cable multiplex experiment, which begins in January 1991, is being supervised by Time Warner Cable and not Warner Bros. We are merely working in conjunction with B-Q Cable and supplying them with any information we have learned from the 900 different cable systems we do business with every month.

Eric Frankel
Vice President, Marketing
*Warner Bros. Domestic Pay-TV,
Animation & Network Features*
New York, N.Y.

You Can Fight, City Hall

I found your article ("No Piece of Cake," October 8, 1990) very interesting and factual. It made me realize how lucky we were to beat the system—for the time being.

Susan Tolchin
Town Clerk
*Town of Greenburgh
Elmsford, N.Y.*

Channels welcomes readers' comments. Address letters to the editor to Channels, 401 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10016. Letters may be edited for purposes of clarity or space.

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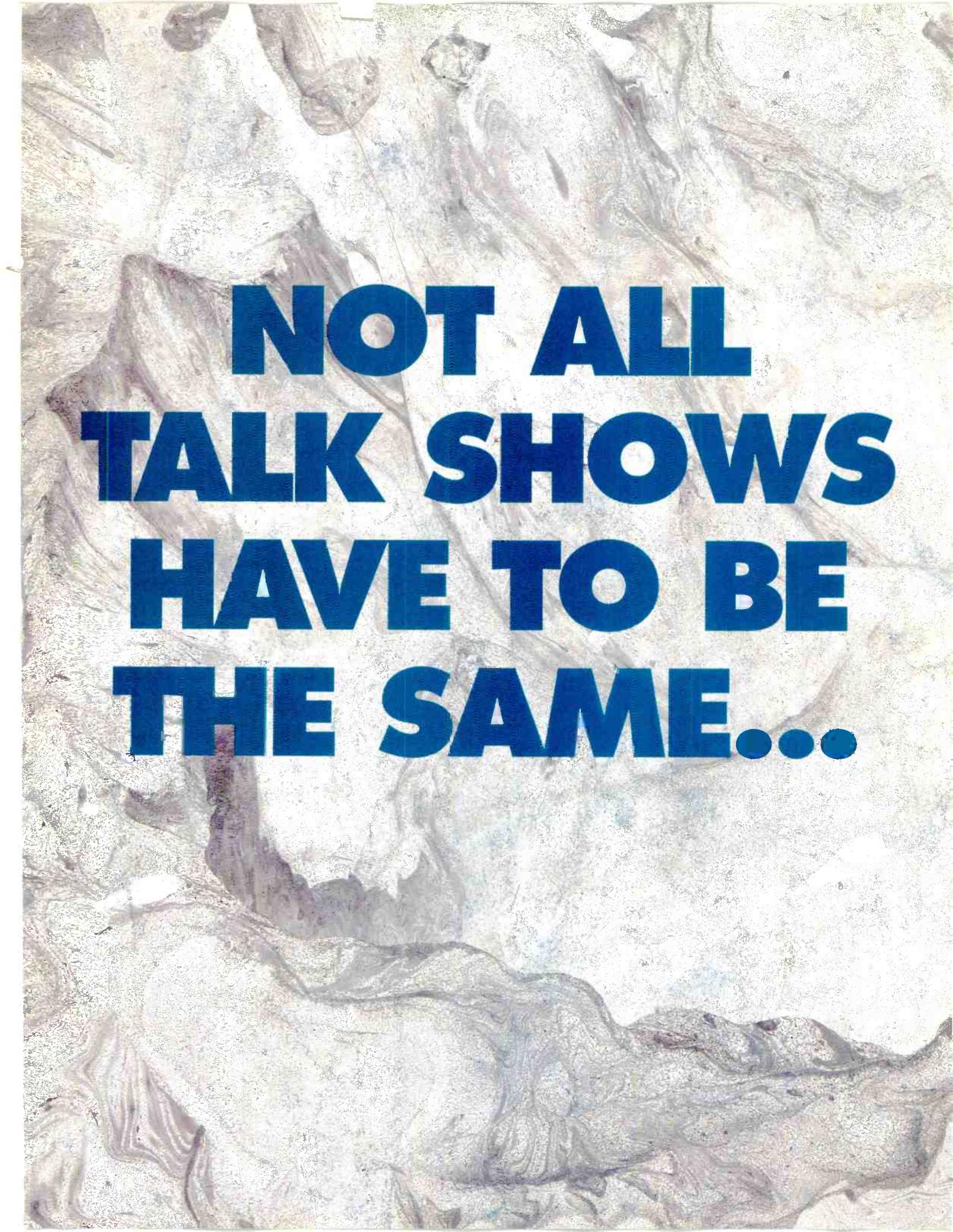
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**NOT ALL
TALK SHOWS
HAVE TO BE
THE SAME...**



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PREMIER
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A Paramount/MCA Company

**PRE-SOLD TO THE
FOX OWNED STATIONS
NEW YORK • LOS ANGELES
CHICAGO • WASHINGTON D.C.
DALLAS • HOUSTON • SALT LAKE CITY**

UPDATE

with Ron Reagan

**A one-hour latenight strip available September '81, on
an advertiser-supported basis.**

A co-venture of



and

MCA TV

Take A Number, Por Favor

Nielsen keeps Spanish-language TV waiting.

Owners and top executives at industry leader Univision Holdings and its chief rival Telemundo Group say they're in the Spanish-language TV business for the long haul. It's a good thing: Dreams of becoming a billion-dollar industry have been pushed back once again, this time by Nielsen Media Research's problems setting up a pilot study of Hispanic households.

Nielsen now projects that its national Hispanic audience measurement service will be in place in early '92, three or more months later than originally planned. But the ratings service is quick to detail the hurdles already surmounted.



Nielsen may be behind schedule, but *Cara a Cara* scores for Telemundo.

Using bilingual interviewers, Nielsen installed 200 people meters after visiting some 673 homes where many residents

had never heard of TV ratings. With large, sometimes multi-family households, Nielsen representatives had to supply half the sample with 16-button people-meter units rather than the usual 8-button system.

Telemundo and Univision,

delay. Spanish-language TV execs have long said that researchers mismeasure Hispanic viewership. "Sure, we'd like it to be up and running and generating the numbers," says Peter Housman II, Telemundo's CFO, "but this has shown us that nobody's done this properly before." While Nielsen is behind schedule for its full national rollout into 800 households by the end of '91, the early returns in the one-month Los Angeles pilot study do give reason for optimism.

Hispanic households are larger—63.5 percent have four or more persons, versus 27.3 percent for L.A. overall—and they watch more TV. Sixty-one percent have their sets on during prime time versus 54 percent overall. And the best news for Telemundo and Univision: Shares to Spanish-language stations are about 30 percent higher than those cited in Nielsen's standard index ratings for the L.A. market. STEVEN BESCHLOSS

A Matter of Live Coverage and Death

TV news coverage can endanger hostages.

After a police marksman's bullet ended the life of a hostage-taker outside a Berkeley, Calif., hotel bar on September 27th, adrenalin still ran high in area newsrooms, which had been covering the incident live.

KRON news director Al Goldstein was proud of his troops for what he considered stellar coverage of a harrowing story: One man was shot to death, a cop and several college students were wounded, and about 30 students were held captive, some of them sexually molested.

But the feeling of satisfaction died as KRON and other stations came under heavy fire from the hostages, police and press for covering the incident in a way that compounded the danger to the victims.

The hostage-taker was watching KPIX as he held his captives. From KPIX, he learned there was a SWAT team ready to close in across the street. He also heard himself described as "strange, irrational and drunk," and learned that one of his hostages had died—information that "frustrated and angered" the captor, according to a bitter letter written to KPIX by an ex-hostage.

It's the kind of well-intentioned but dangerous reporting that frustrates police. Other stations, however, have earned high marks from law enforcement officials in such situations. Outlets in the Charlestown, Ind., area did a "fantastic job" in October with extensive live coverage of an incident involving an armed

high-school student, according to Indiana State Police Sgt. Marvin Jenkins. The reportage came after months of briefings that prepared news staffs for just such a situation.

Capt. Steven Davis of the New York (City) Police Depart-

- Never reveal the condition of the wounded unless authorized by police.

San Francisco stations say they've learned some unforgettable lessons from the Berkeley incident. "If you examine all the [live] informa-



Local TV news coverage of a Berkeley, Calif., hostage situation brought a flurry of criticism.

ment offers guidelines for live coverage of hostage situations:

- Always assume the hostage taker is watching.
- Never broadcast tactical details, such as the movement of SWAT teams.
- Avoid describing the captor as deranged.

tion we put out," says KRON's Goldstein, "there was probably nothing there the public needed to know [while] the situation was in progress." And KPIX news chief Harry Fuller has offered to produce a situational training video with the Berkeley police. JEFF KAMEN

America's
Hottest
Travelling
Talk Show Is
Coming To
Television!

Now America's Hottest
Selling Talk Show!
Sold In 34 Markets!



Jenny Jones

Fall, 1991

For years Jenny Jones has been travelling across the country presenting her unique style of audience-participation talk/comedy to standing room only crowds. Now, come Fall '91, she'll be bringing her warm, spontaneous and entertaining experience to television in a fresh, new one-hour strip.

Television is a personality driven business. And Jenny Jones is a personality who will drive viewers to your daytime and early-fringe line-up. She develops an instant rapport with her audience. Understanding how they think. And what they feel. Resulting in a program with frank, provocative and, at times, hilarious revelations.

"Jenny Jones." A talk show strip unlike any other. Because, simply stated, Jenny Jones is unlike any other talk show host. One hour of compelling television available for stripping Fall '91.

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A Celebration Of Excellence in TV

The seventh annual *Channels* salute to excellence in television, featured in the magazine's October 22 issue, culminated in an evening reception for the honorees and invited guests at New York's Yale Club. The 1990 honorees cited by the *Channels* editors were: WCVB-TV Boston, a Hearst Broadcasting station; Headwaters Television, a division of Kentucky-based Appalshop; "From the Killing Fields" and the *Peter Jennings Reporting* unit of ABC News; Maclean Hunter Cable TV and its U.S. systems in New Jersey, Florida and Michigan; the investigative reporting team of Brian Ross and Ira Silverman at NBC News; Bob Fishman, a CBS Sports director; producer James L. Brooks; and Children's Television Workshop, creators of *Sesame Street*.



▲ Appalshop's Robert Gipe (l.), Elizabeth Barret and Dee Davis.



▲ Ira Silverman (l.), *Channels*' John Flinn (c.), Brian Ross.



▼ CBS Sports director Bob Fishman.



▲ Maclean Hunter's Merle Zoerb (l.) with *Channels*' Michael Burgi.



▲ WCVB's James Coppersmith (l.), Emily Rooney and Paul La Camera.



▲ Peter Jennings Reporting executive producer Tom Yellin.



▲ David Britt and Fran Kaufman of Children's Television Workshop.



► *Channels*' Janet Stilson and NBC's Ira Silverman.

UNBEATABLE RATINGS.

A CURRENT
AFFAIR
8.7

INSIDE
EDITION
6.1



Still The Original. Still The Best.

HARD
COPY
4.8

Source: NSS Ranking Report & Week ending Nov. 11, 1990 (GAA Rating)
© 1990 Twentieth Century Fox Film Corp.

Playing A Zone Offense

By breaking the market into eight zones, Bay Cable Advertising doubles its ad billing.

BY MICHAEL BURGI

In no market does a cable interconnect yet draw more ad dollars than any station. A few interconnects, however, have established themselves as viable local advertising alternatives. Of the most successful, three are on the West Coast: Bay Cable Advertising, serving the San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose market, Ad Link of Los Angeles and Seattle-based Northwest Cable Interconnect are first, third and fourth respectively on Paul Kagan Associates' *Cable TV Advertising* ranking of interconnects by 1990 gross ad billings.

In 1990, Bay Cable Advertising (BCA)—a partnership between Viacom Cable, Lenfest Communications and Heritage Communications then called Bay Area Interconnect—billed \$12 million, doubling its '89 total of \$6 million. BCA racks up those numbers by using versatility as a sales tool. Local advertisers are drawn to the fact that the interconnect can offer them spots on some of its member systems without forcing them to buy the whole hyphenated market it covers.

Those dollars, had BCA not lured them onto the 24 systems for which it sells time, would otherwise have landed in the pockets of local stations. "Would we have grown our ad dollars more if BCA weren't here?" asks Hal Capron, general sales manager for KOFY, one of five independents—not including Fox affiliate KTVU—in the ADI. "Of course we would have."

Kennen Williams, g.s.m. at Group W-owned CBS affiliate KPIX, agrees with Capron that the money BCA makes selling ad time comes straight from budgets set aside for stations, but notes that indies suffer more than affiliates.

that indies suffer more than affiliates. "The two stations impacted most by BCA's growing business are KOFY and KICU," Williams warns. "They're going to get pecked to death."

Williams cites the impressive ratings that cable nets sometimes pull in, often matching or outperforming the indies. For example, ESPN—one of seven networks BCA sells time on, the others being TNT, USA, MTV, Lifetime, CNN and Discovery—recently scored a 10 rating in all households in the market when it aired a San Francisco 49ers football game. "That's what'll really hurt indies that just don't pull in those kinds of numbers," Williams says. The interconnect also competes with indies for smaller advertisers who can't afford affiliates with higher ad rates.

BCA doesn't really sell ratings, however. With a potential audience reach between 900,000 and 1.1 million subscribers, BCA can only offer advertisers about 50 percent of the entire market. So BCA takes two different approaches: It sells "concept," and it sells zones of the market.

Selling concept means promoting the niche appeal of cable networks: MTV's music format ostensibly appeals to advertisers looking for younger viewers; sports on ESPN attracts a larger male

audience, etc. BCA general sales manager Bill Gilreath's experience in radio is well-suited to this approach. Gilreath worked as g.s.m. at KCBS-FM and g.m. of KIOI-FM, both in the San Francisco market. "In radio, we usually sold more concept, less numbers," the 45-year-old Gilreath explains, having taken the helm at BCA last year. "I liken the niches offered by the cable networks to the different radio formats we worked with."

With BCA divvied up into eight geographic zones, Gilreath makes up for lack of reach by offering advertisers the ability to target portions of the market via the interconnect's 24 different systems. BCA—and other interconnects—use this advantage to gain ground over other electronic media. "We're able to talk to retailers about buying cable only in their local trading area. And retailers, wherever they are, will buy more than one zone," says Gilreath. "Marketing ourselves this way has driven in some first-time TV advertisers. [An appliance chain] and Marin Auto Stereo are both first-timers who bought football on ESPN."

Many auto dealers also figure as new advertisers, attracted by BCA's ability to undercut the affiliates. Gilreath explains that a full 50 percent of BCA's \$6 million in '89 came from auto advertisers. This year, Gilreath saw auto dollars rise to \$4.2 million.

Even the Fox affiliate in town concedes that BCA is selling well locally.

"Their business has been to smaller advertisers and we've lost business to them on that front," says Jeff Block, g.s.m. for Cox Enterprises-owned KTVU. Block also predicts, however, that the interconnect will eventually have to switch from selling a concept to selling numbers. "When that happens, I suspect you'll see their sales drop a little."

For the present, however, Gilreath has no intention of changing sales techniques, since the existing technique works well for him. Gilreath predicts that BCA will see a 50 percent jump in total ad billings for 1991 to about \$18 million. Again, others in the market aren't so sure. "I project their growth for next year as more like 20 percent," says KPIX's Williams. "They have to keep in mind they're coming off a political year." •



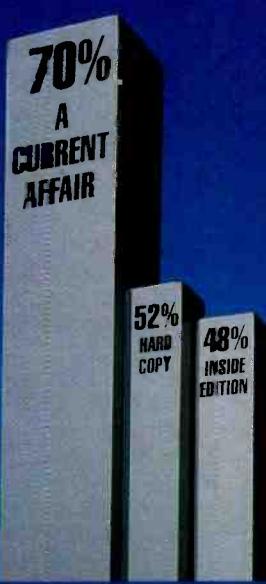
BCA's general sales manager Bill Gilreath.

UNSURPASSED DEMOS.

WOMEN 18-49



WOMEN 25-54



MEN 18-49



MEN 25-54



A
Current
Affair™

Still The Original. Still The Best.

% STATIONS IMPROVING/MAINTAINING OVER LEAD-IN.

MEDIA DEALS

Banks Just Say No

by Cheryl Heuton

The cold-turkey way to break an easy-money habit.

Many of the banks that have chosen to reduce their media lending profile are quick to deny they doubt the vitality of the industry. It's a question, however, of whether actions speak louder than words. "There are still broadcast and cable deals worth our time, of course there are," says one banker. "We just want to be very careful, because our business is in a very delicate position right now. We need to pick our deals to reflect the overall goals of the institution."

This banker says he still has confidence in the broadcast and cable industries, but asked not to have his name or his institution's name used because "to be seen as garnering attention as a media lender is not consistent with our goals at this time." That's confidence for you.

That attitude prevails, however. Fewer banks are willing to be seen as ready media lenders. The 1991 *Broadcast Services Guide* lists 49 institutions that consider themselves active in the industry. Since Broadcast Investment Analysts published the 1990 guide, 13 institutions have dropped off the list, while only seven have been added. Those opting out were, with one exception, all banks, two based in Canada. Only two domestic banks entered the list, the rest being finance and foreign institutions. In other words, fewer American banks want to finance media loans, and institutional and foreign lenders have only partially filled the gap.

Banks that remain willing to make media loans are restricting both the amounts they will lend and the conditions under which they will approve loans. Subordinated debt deals get a big thumbs down. In the BIA guide, most banks cite management expertise and quality, and adequate cash flow coverage of debt service, as crucial to their approval of a loan package. These might, of course, seem obvious factors that lenders would want to see before offering to finance transactions. During the height of the market, however, loans were being made to limited partner-



ships with little or no media background, and funding was commonly offered at rates that bore little relation to the cash actually being generated by the station or cable operator. The crackdown is here.

David H. Cole, vice president for tax appraisal at BIA, says, "We've seen banks no longer lending on projected cash flow, as they have in the past. Banks are lending on histories now, rather than on projection. Conservatism is the key."

Gone are the high multiples, too. "They're loaning on 5 to 5.5 times historical [cash flow], as opposed to 6 to 6.5 times projected," Cole says. "Banks are looking more closely at the deal; they've been burned too much in the past."

Though some banks have gotten out of the media business, Cole says other lenders have stepped in, including com-

mercial credit corporations, venture capitalists and insurance companies. That's all true—but most of these lenders either ask higher, thus riskier, rates than the banks, or they seek an equity position in the deal.

Among the media lenders who have quietly left the scene is the Bank of New England. In February, it stated in a press release that it believed "the prospects for communication and media industry remain good . . ." That same release announced the selling of its \$1 billion media portfolio to Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce. A few months later most of the staff of Bank of New England's media department followed the portfolio to Canadian Imperial. "We intend to continue working together with Canadian Imperial to develop transactions," stated Bank of New England in February. That's entirely possible, but this is one institution you won't find listed among media lenders in the 1991 *Broadcast Services Guide*.

The shortage of lenders is not a problem exclusive to the media industry. This is, after all, a recession, and banks are facing rough times because of bad loans made to real estate and energy companies, as well as to foreign governments. Compared to those industries, media is practically vibrant.

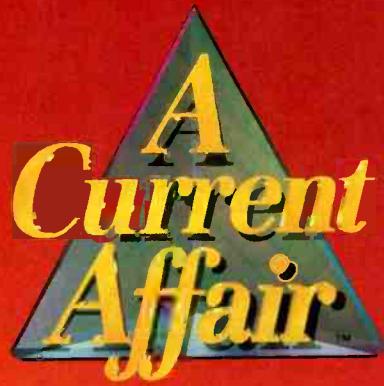
However, the banks are being forced to respond to regulatory and stock market pressures that come to bear when their portfolios are heavy in loans not strictly based on assets. That's always been the media industry's bad habit, and now it's being forced to quit cold turkey. Under pressure from the combination of a bank scare and a recession, banks are cutting off the supply of hooch.

Lender	Minimum Loan (\$MIL)	Current Portfolio (Television) (\$MIL)	Staff	Years in Industry
Chemical Bank Media Group	20	Not listed	7	15
NCNB Texas	5	93	12	9
Bank of Boston	5	242	28	40
Bank of America	10	Not listed	8	25
Chrysler Capital Corp.	2	80	12	4
AT&T Commercial	1	10	14	3
GE Capital Corp. Finance Group	25	403*	10	8
Society National Bank	3	25	5	54

Source: BIA Broadcast Services Guide. *Television and radio combined.

UNLIMITED ACCESS.

A CURRENT
AFFAIR
103



Still The Original. Still The Best.

NUMBER OF ACCESS CLEARANCES

INSIDE
EDITION
34

HARD
COPY
33

TWENTIETH
TELEVISION

Source: Cassandra Ranking Report July 90
©1990 Twentieth Century Fox Film Corp.



Roy Rogers and Trigger



The Big Sombrero



Sands of Iwo Jima



Zorro



Radar Men from the Moon



Captain Marvel

Reaching Classic Heights

***Building on
grass-roots
marketing and the
gray demographic,
AMC has quietly
become the second-
fastest-growing
cable network.***

By Richard Katz



The room, painted black and white and decorated with balloons floating along the ceiling, is quiet except for the normal buzz of conversation. Then Gordy Kilgore's big band rips into a Glenn Miller standard and 200 couples leave their drinks and hors d'oeuvres sitting on their tables to hit the dance floor.

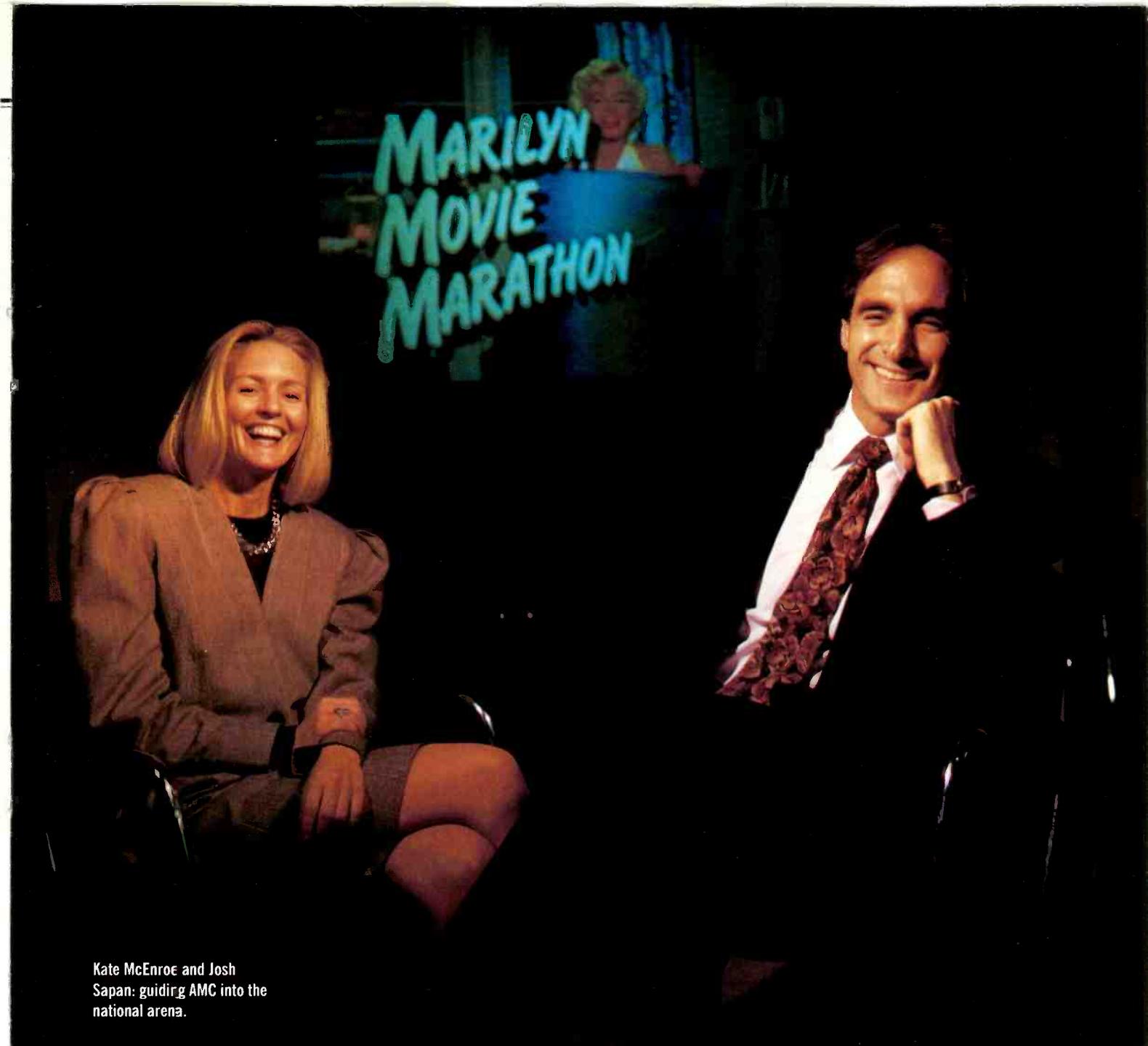
The scene isn't from the 1940s—most of the couples dancing up a storm are in their 50s or 60s or older. It's a slice of nostalgia cosponsored by the local cable system, Vista Cablevision, and American Movie Classics for the residents of Wichita Falls, Texas. Jerry Fisher, marketing director for the ATC-owned system, says the idea was to launch AMC on his system with a bang, and it was especially important to get the message to the older demographic, which is historically the hardest group for cable to penetrate.

AMC's *raison d'être* is to bring viewers the films and mood of Hollywood's Golden Age. The case of Wichita Falls could be linked thematically to *The Grapes of Wrath*, starring Henry Fonda as a depression-victimized farmer.

"It's hard to relate to now," says Fisher, referring to the recent local oil boom sparked by the Gulf crisis, "but with the flat economy [last year], a lot of the younger people had moved out of town." Fisher notes that a year ago the town had 5,000 vacant homes. "If we were going to grow or even maintain our [subscriber] levels, we were going to have to replace those younger people leaving with somebody that was staying—the people who were living on retirement incomes."

AMC's appeal to non-cable subscribers—senior citizens are classic cable resisters—has helped the service achieve dramatic growth in recent years. In a marketplace of scarce channel capacity and money-conscious, highly leveraged cable

Left: Films to be included in AMC's *The Republic Pictures Story*, airing in March.



Kate McEnroe and Josh Sapan: guiding AMC into the national arena.

operators, AMC has added 6 million subs this year and 5 million in 1989, bringing its total to 29 million. Unlike TNT, AMC's growth has come without much fanfare, largely due to AMC's marketing decision to concentrate on local markets, like Wichita Falls, and not the national arena.

But with 2 million new subs already committed for '91, AMC, half-owned by Cablevision Systems' Rainbow Programming Holdings Inc. and half-owned by Tele-Communications Inc., is poised to take the steps to become a national presence. In a recent survey of cable operators conducted by Myers Marketing & Research in conjunction with *Channels*, AMC was named one of three networks most likely to expand rapidly. "AMC is becoming a national service based on local marketing efforts," says Kate McEnroe, AMC's vice president and general manager.

The local marketing effort in Wichita Falls was a big hit. Fisher says that since the dance, a much higher proportion of

his new subscribers have come from the 55-plus age group, which now makes up over 40 percent of his sub base.

AMC's Wichita Falls promotion is typical for the commercial-free service. Since converting from a bonus-to-pay service to basic in 1986 (it launched in '84), AMC's marketing plan has been to position itself to the local operator as a value-added channel, saying that AMC will deliver more than good programming. In 1986, AMC's strategy centered on helping operators adjust to deregulation. "Many of the cable operators were beginning to take significant basic rate increases," says Noreen O'Loughlin, AMC's vice president of marketing. "The strategy was that at the time they took rate increases, they would also launch AMC and give the consumer a valued service as part of their basic package."

Being one of the most expensive basic services—operators say it rivals ESPN, TNT and regional sports nets such as MSG—AMC had to first prove to operators that the channel



was highly regarded. AMC commissioned a survey on its perceived value among both non-subs and subs. AMC came in number one and two, respectively, indicating that the channel can attract people to cable and satisfy current cable viewers.

More compelling evidence comes from cable operators' research independent of AMC. Before deciding what channels to add to basic, Warner Cable of Cincinnati did several research projects. In a mall survey, shoppers were paid \$5 to watch samples of cable programming and rate each service. "By far in every project we did, AMC was the most popular and requested by both subscribers and non-subscribers," says Steve Rohan, Warner's vice president of marketing, echoing many operators around the country.

Operators have indeed looked to AMC as a deflector of complaints over price hikes. "In trying to lessen the negative effect, we added several channels during rate increases," says Andrew Tow, vice president of the 870,000-sub MSO Century Cable, indicating that AMC was the most successful neutralizer. "People were calling up complaining about the rate and were saying that they at least appreciated that we were putting on such a high-quality channel." The Century system in suburban Milwaukee raised its rate \$2 and moved AMC from pay to basic. "It gave the image that you are paying more but you're getting more," says general manager Jeff Hough. "AMC is great



because it's a non-commercial service."

Showing uncut, classic Hollywood movies with no commercials has always been a strong selling point for the channel on basic. But earlier this year, AMC considered adding commercials. The plan was to create an additional revenue stream to coincide with an increase in programming from 18 to 24 hours a day. In the end, AMC decided to stay commercial-free but go ahead with the 24-hour plan, which began December 1.

McEnroe says the decision to stay ad-free was partly political and partly to keep AMC's image perception high. "AMC had been used as powerful tool over the past three years to secure rate increases and as a strong community relations tool," says McEnroe, cousin of tennis star John. "We felt that with everything going on in Congress, it was better not to upset the cities and continue to use AMC to have a premium service on basic." Adds Josh Sapan, president and COO of Bravo and AMC, "We need to tread very delicately with regard to doing anything that changes the perception of value while the industry is in motion."

Sapan says a main motivation for expanding the number of programming hours was to develop around-the-clock brand loyalty. Steve Rohan of Warner in Cincinnati agrees. "We had considered adding AMC but it was a part-time channel, and I'm reluctant to occupy a channel and wrap something around it because you just don't get the loyalty in an audience like that," he says. "Once they made the announcement to go 24 hours, that [locked] up our decision to launch it."



Sharon Patrick, president of Rainbow Programming Holdings.

AMC'S BUMP AND GRIND

When American Movie Classics expanded its programming to 24 hours December 1, Kate McEnroe, vice president and general manager of the service, expected about 90 percent of her affiliates to expand with AMC on or soon after that date. Over 90 percent of the operators contacted for this story said they would go up to the 24 hours.

McEnroe also expected about 2 million subs that piggybacked part-time on AMC's feed to be moved or dropped altogether, with E! likely to be the most victimized. Operators also cited The Travel Channel as particularly vulnerable.

Andrew Tow, vice president of MSO Century Cable, says his systems often paired The Travel Channel with AMC, and to a lesser extent E!. "We are trying to find homes [for the piggybacked channels] wherever capacity is available," says Tow. "But frankly, if there are no homes for the time being it will disappear. I have every intention of rolling out AMC 24 hours and finding homes [for the other services] or suffering the potential consequences."

Executives at both The Travel Channel, currently at 16 million subs, and E!, 15.7 million subs, say AMC's move caused anxiety, but they expect little fallout.

"We've kept in touch with the [30] systems that have us wrapped with AMC," says Al Goldstein, director of affiliate sales for The Travel Channel, "and right now the indications we have are that there is going to be little or no impact."

Bill Zaccheo, senior vice president of affiliate sales for E!, echoes Goldstein, saying he's been in contact with the systems that wrap E! with AMC, representing 400,000 subs, and he's heard about no definite drops. "There is some truth that our carriage is shifting to allow for AMC's expansion," says Zaccheo, adding that AMC's claim of 90 percent rollout is exaggerated.

Zaccheo also says that none of E!'s contracts with MSOs contain a clause enabling systems to drop the service.

R.K.

Most systems report they

have already or will go 24 hours with AMC within months (see box). Ellen Jackson, director of marketing for Buckeye Cablevision, the Blade system in Toledo, Ohio, says her biggest concern about AMC was that its lack of morning programming didn't fit her market. "A lot of our industry is still tied to the auto industry, which means you have some second-shifters, and we felt AMC went off the air too early for them," she says.

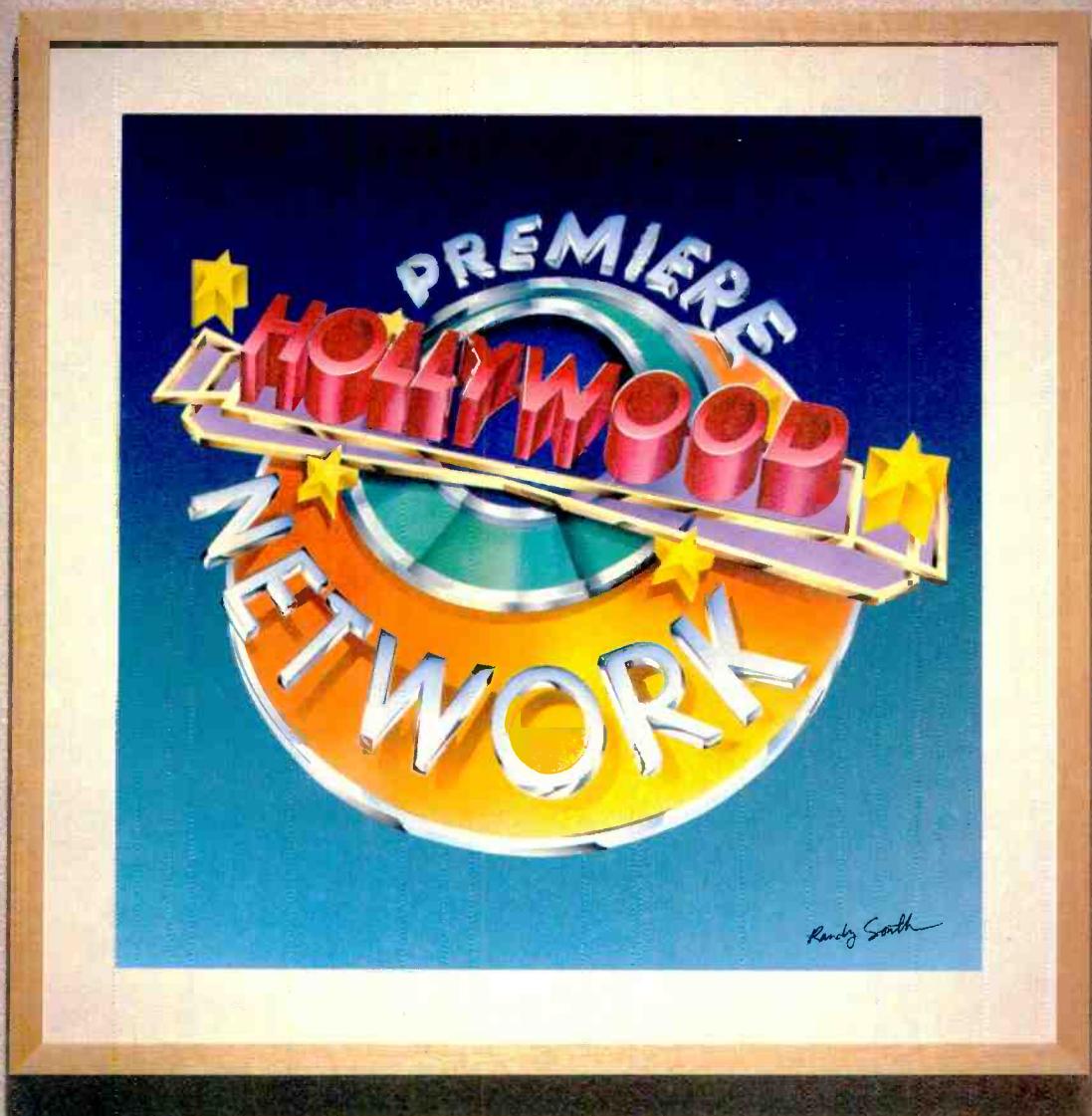
Jackson says the system's decision to add AMC was also influenced by direct consumer requests. Buckeye has a good amount of "snow birds," seasonal customers who spend their winters in Florida. Many of these were receiving AMC in Florida, but not in Toledo. "We were being compared to [other systems]. They were calling up and asking for AMC by name, not by concept."

Sapan believes that establishing the AMC brand name is the key to national growth. "We want to own the notion 'the world of classic movies' in the way that MTV owns the world of rock 'n' roll," he says.

McEnroe also uses MTV as a model for growth. "MTV has a national presence and a local presence," she says. "With marketing programs, MTV has their road show with their traveling museum, and that's similar to the types of things AMC does."

To bring its classic Hollywood concept to life, AMC runs over 200 local promotions a year, many featuring Douglas Fairbanks Jr. or Debbie Reynolds. A typical promotion will bring the 81-year-old Fairbanks to an AMC affiliate city to introduce free screenings, usually attended by senior citizens, of *Wuthering Heights*, which stars Fairbanks' old pal, Laurence Olivier. Fairbanks coming to town is usually such an event that the system gets local press coverage. The former swashbuckler also attends a VIP cocktail party to schmooze with local politicians and businessmen. Fairbanks makes so many appearances nationwide

OWN AN ORIGINAL.

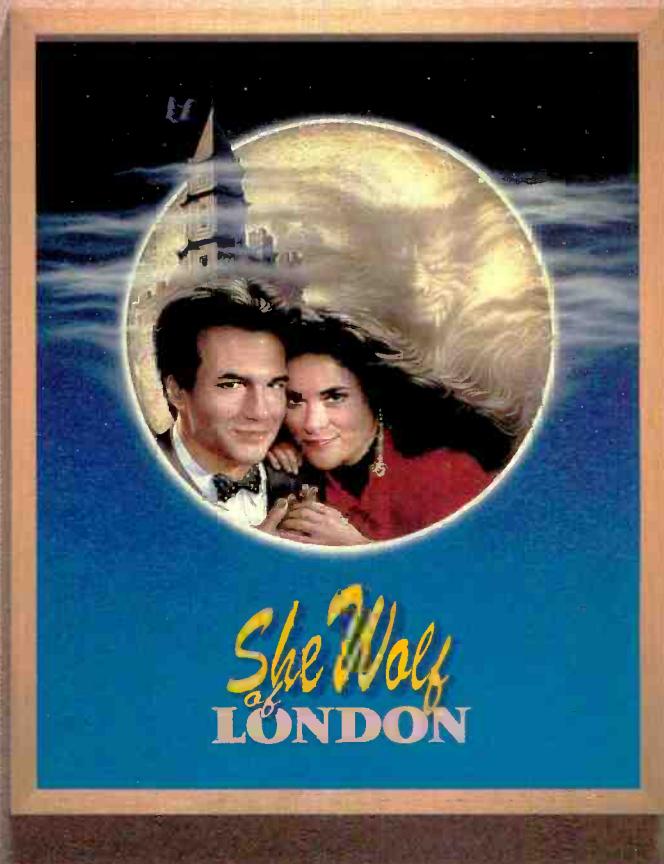


ORIGINAL PRIME-TIME HOURS. THE



Nothing appreciates more in value than an original. Now with the Hollywood Premiere Network you can get three original, network quality, one-hour series shot on film.

Not since Operation Primetime (OPT) has a commitment of this magnitude been made for independent television. Three one-hour series, 20 episodes each. And they are available now.

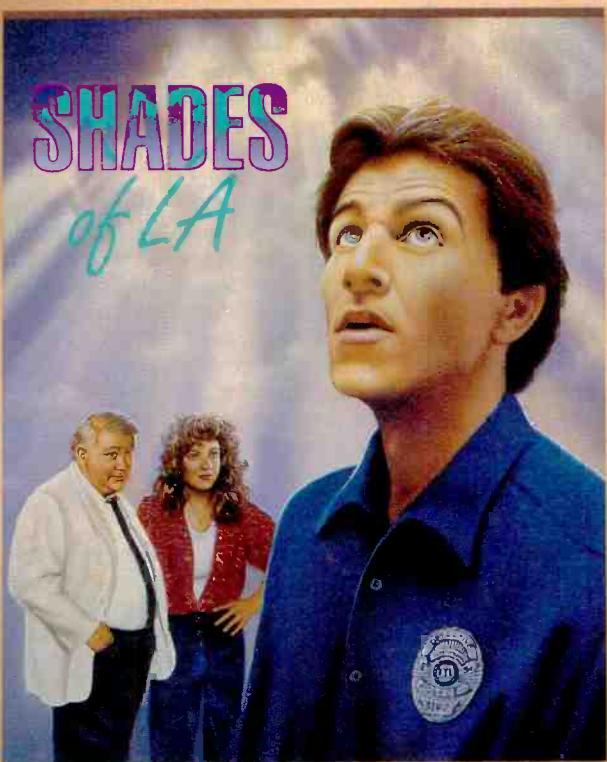


**She Wolf
of London**

Randi's graduate studies in the world of the paranormal become a chilling nightmare for this curious college co-ed and her hunk-of-a-professor. Billing satire at its most suspenseful.

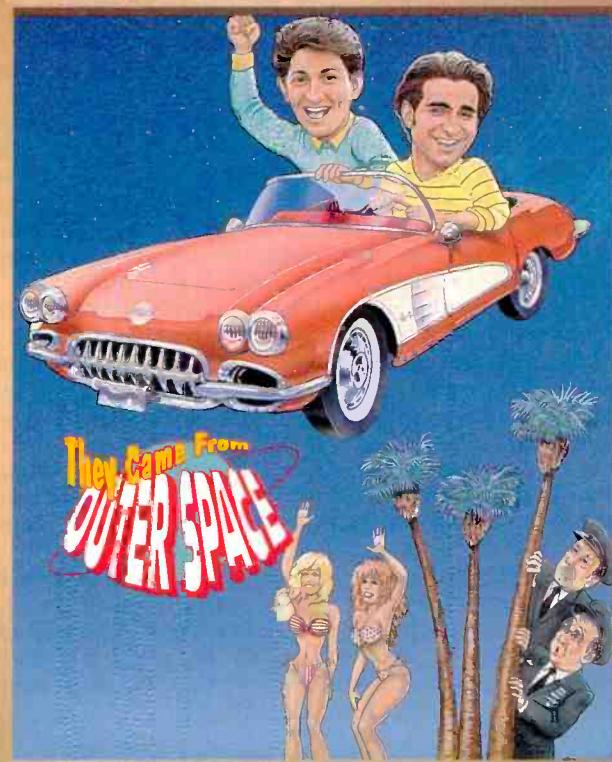
HOLLYWOOD PREMIERE NETWORK.

SHADES of LA



Shades of L.A.

Dead men don't tell tales. They hire Detective Sergeant Burton. He's a detective for the dead and he'll work days, nights...even the graveyard shift in his quest to clear the innocent.



They Came From
Outer Space

Abe and Bo are typical teenagers... rowdy, ready to party and on the run...from their parents who live light years away...and the Feds who watched their spaceship crash-land in Los Angeles. "Going abroad" was never this funny.



for AMC that Elizabeth Christman, affiliate marketing manager, central region, remarks, "We're going to wear the poor guy out."

The celebrity promotions are highly successful, especially in establishing community ties with senior citizens. One example: Dimension Cable's Phoenix system had bought out a neighboring system that included the entirely 50-plus Sun City, which has only 32 percent cable penetration and strict rules about how Dimension could approach the community. When Dimension launched AMC in Sun City, Paul Gregg, the system's vice president of sales and marketing, worked out a co-op deal to rent out the 5,000-seat Sun Dome for a celebrity screening. A mailing to the entire senior population drew 4,200 people to the dome for the free screening and Fairbanks Q&A.

Gregg says the screening did soften the market. The system saved every invitation, which had to be handed over at the dome's door, and followed up with a sales call. "We were able to go to 21 Jones Street, knock on the door and say, 'Hi, did you have a good time the other night? We'd like to talk to you more about cable.' " This produced 500 new subs, over five times better than previous marketing attempts in Sun City.

AMC has also positioned itself as community-relations help for systems faced with last year's syndicated-exclusivity headache. (Systems must black out certain shows on distant signals if they're carried by a local broadcast station that requests exclusivity.) "We didn't just say, 'Switch out this signal and put in us,' " says Sapan, who estimates AMC netted over 2 million syndex subs. "We created a comprehensive marketing program that explained specifically to the consumer that these were federally mandated rules and pointed out the product improvements the operator was going to deliver."

Most systems didn't just drop a superstation and replace it with AMC. A typical example is Warner Cable in Altoona, Pa., which was more conscious of programming costs than syndex and also added TNT and regional sports net KBL when it dropped Chicago's WGN. Sam Nalbone, the system's general

manager, says he was faced with a 10.8 percent copyright fee for his fourth distant signal, so he traded three for one to head off public outcry. "[Overall] it's about break-even but we got more programming out of it," says Nalbone.



As for AMC's internal finances, the channel broke even in mid-1988. Andrew Rosengard, Rainbow's senior vice president, finance and administration, says AMC has been "marginally profitable" since and reinvests 80 cents of every dollar of profit into buying better programming. Rainbow doesn't break out figures, but a source close to the company says AMC brought in 1990 revenues of \$45 million to \$50 million. Paul Kagan Associates estimates \$145 million for the SportsChannel Networks and \$18 million for Bravo. The source also confirmed that the channel plows its funds back into the budget, reflecting Cablevision chairman and CEO Chuck Dolan's future-oriented "longer view of the bottom line."

Sharon Patrick, president of Rainbow Programming Holdings Inc., says AMC is right on track to reach the upper strata of cable networks in the next few years as systems set up different-priced tiers to charge for the more expensive basic channels. "As you approach mature market conditions and move to more packaging and unbundling, it's quality and value that will [count to the cable operators]," says Patrick.

One word of criticism comes from a media analyst who argues AMC is not marketing the tiering angle hard enough. "They've yet to define whether they want to be on basic or on a tier," he says. "They're too expensive for a stripped-down basic and they haven't effectively marketed that they're a good service in a tiered environment."

The service last month unveiled a trade ad campaign to address the issue: Patrick believes now is the time for AMC to make its play for national penetration. One important facet is to use programming as a marketing device. "There's not much of a story you can constantly be telling every time you license a new classic movie; these movies have been on before," says Brad Siegel, AMC's vice president of programming and production, noting that AMC does have exclusive rights to over 70 percent of its movies. "We needed to do more things to elevate AMC's identity in the market and make it the definitive movie channel."

Enter original programming to put a new spin on classic movies and make them more palatable to a wider audience. In early '90, AMC aired its original production of *Knockout: Hollywood's Love Affair with Boxing*, a special that analyzed why boxing has attracted over 400 Hollywood features to the subject. "It appealed to a wider audience than AMC usually does," says Siegel. "It appealed to older men, younger men, sports fans—people who liked boxing but who maybe never watched AMC." A coup for AMC was getting the exclusive rights to shoot a documentary in Greta Garbo's apartment/hideout, showing her multimillion-dollar art collection. It aired in November to coincide with the Garbo Sotheby's auction and cashed in on the national publicity. Future special topics include Republic Pictures, the most populist and prolific studio in the heyday of Hollywood, and the Thalians, the 35-year-old Hollywood charitable organization whose membership includes Debbie Reynolds and Jimmy Stewart.

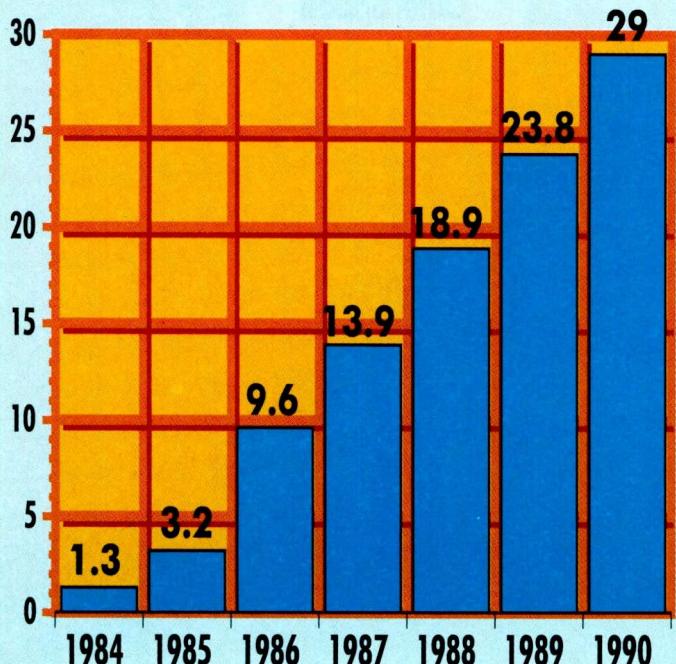
Even with the growth of its original programming, 95 percent of AMC's schedule will remain classic American movies. McEnroe says she's signing contracts for new product that will fortify AMC's lineup—80 percent of the current films rate two stars or higher with Leonard Maltin—past the year 2000.

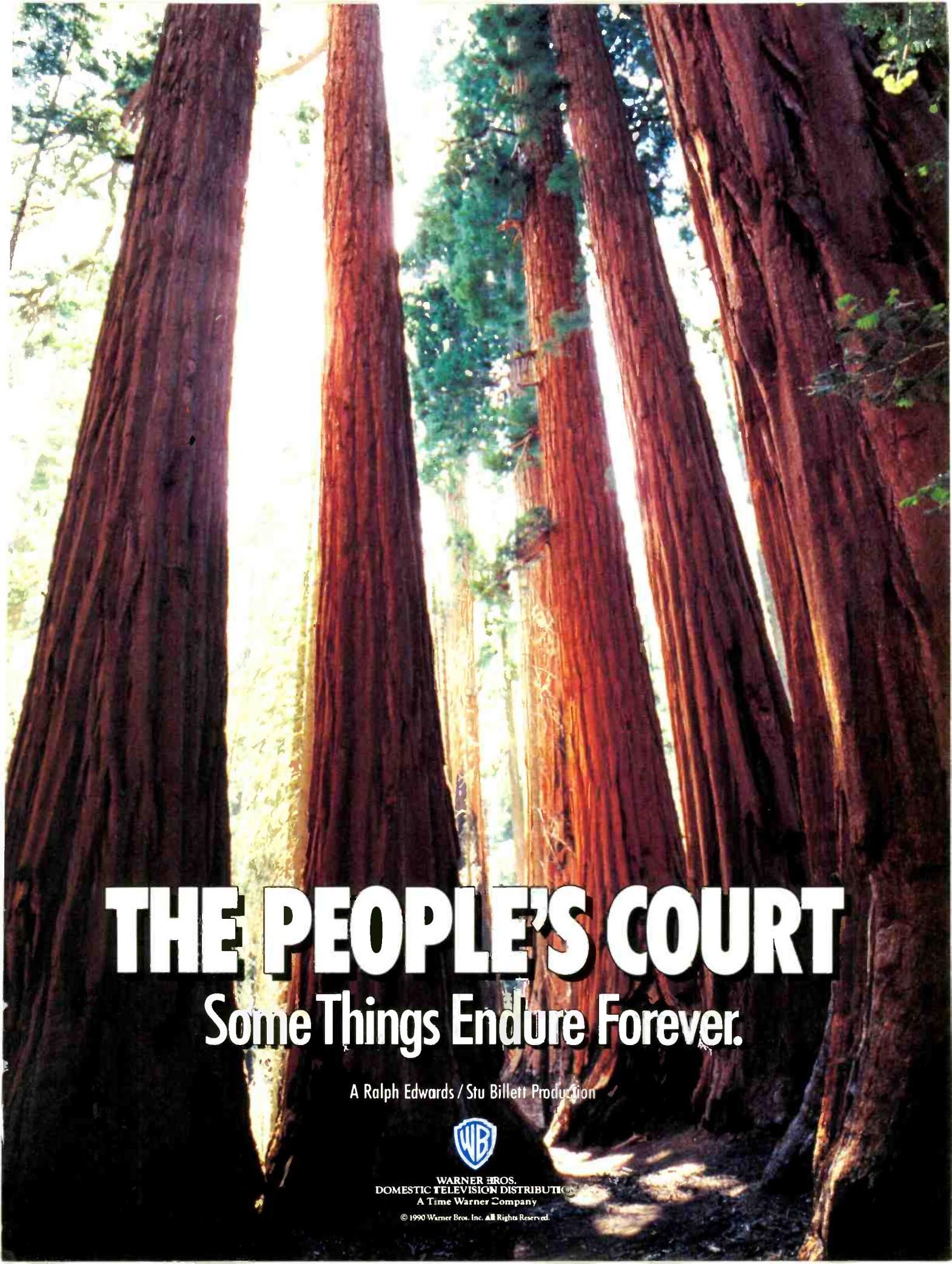
"We're really set for the '90s," says McEnroe, appealing to both the pockets and smarts of operators. "It's very difficult for systems to raise prices unless they are offering a tremendous amount of value. AMC is one of the few products out there that can be launched with a value as high as CNN and TNT." And, unlike TNT, AMC doesn't add commercials or colorization.

AMERICAN MOVIE CLASSICS

Basic Subscriber Growth

Subscribers (Millions)





THE PEOPLE'S COURT

Some Things Endure Forever.

A Ralph Edwards / Stu Billett Production



WARNER BROS.
DOMESTIC TELEVISION DISTRIBUTION
A Time Warner Company

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INVESTMENT BANKERS TO THE COMMUNICATIONS, MEDIA, PUBLISHING, BROADCASTING, ADVERTISING AND INFORMATION INDUSTRIES

VERONIS, SUHLER & ASSOCIATES INC.

350 PARK AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10022
(212) 935-4990

New Orleans Publishing Group, Inc.

a new entity formed by

William M. Metcalf, Jr.

has acquired through a management buyout all of the assets of

New Orleans CityBusiness,

New Orleans Magazine,

Jefferson Parish Times and

Related Publications

from

MCP, Inc.

We acted as financial advisor to
and assisted in the negotiations as

the representative of

New Orleans Publishing Group, Inc.

August 1990

VERONIS, SUHLER & ASSOCIATES INC.

Financial Services Week

a bi-weekly newspaper of

Fairchild Publications,

a subsidiary of

Capital Cities/ABC, Inc.

has been sold to

Investment Dealers' Digest, Inc.

a subsidiary of

United Newspapers plc

We acted as financial advisor to,
and assisted in the negotiations as
the representative of Capital Cities/ABC, Inc.

July 1990

VERONIS, SUHLER & ASSOCIATES INC.

Capital Cities/ABC, Inc.

has sold

McCall's Needlework & Crafts

Magazine

to

PJS Publications, Inc.

We initiated the transaction, acted as financial
advisor to, and assisted in the negotiations
as the representative of Capital Cities/ABC, Inc.

June 1990

VERONIS, SUHLER & ASSOCIATES INC.

Travel Agent

a publication of

Fairchild Publications

a subsidiary of

Capital Cities/ABC, Inc.

has been sold to
a partnership headed by

Richard Friese

We acted as financial advisor to
and assisted in the negotiations as
the representative of Capital Cities/ABC.

August 1990

VERONIS, SUHLER & ASSOCIATES INC.

VS&A Communications Partners, L.P.

an affiliate of Veronis, Suhler & Associates Inc.

has acquired
Convertible Redeemable Preference Shares
of

Cable Management (Ireland) Limited

a company engaged in the construction and operation of
cable television and MMDS systems in the
Republic of Ireland and has formed

Galway Partners, L.P.

for the purpose of acquiring and
constructing cable television systems in Europe.

We acted as financial advisor to
VS&A Communications Partners, L.P.

July 1990

VERONIS, SUHLER & ASSOCIATES INC.

MWT, Ltd.

a Utah limited partnership

has sold

KSTU (TV)

Salt Lake City, Utah

to

Fox Television Stations, Inc.

a Delaware corporation

for

\$41,000,000

We initiated the transaction, acted as financial
advisor to, and assisted in the negotiations
as the representative of MWT, Ltd.

April 1990

VERONIS, SUHLER & ASSOCIATES INC.

Rotor & Wing

a publication of

PJS Publications, Inc.

has been sold to

Phillips Publishing, Inc.

We initiated the transaction,
acted as financial advisor to,
and assisted in the negotiations as
the representative of PJS Publications, Inc.

August 1990

VERONIS, SUHLER & ASSOCIATES INC.

Meredith Corporation

has sold

Sail Magazine

to

Reed Publishing (USA) Inc.

We acted as financial advisor to
and assisted in the negotiations
as the representative of
Meredith Corporation.

July 1990

VERONIS, SUHLER & ASSOCIATES INC.

Lane Publishing Co.

Publishers of

Sunset Magazine and Sunset Books

has been sold to

Time Warner Inc.

for

\$225,000,000

We initiated the transaction, acted as financial
advisor to, and conducted the negotiations as the
representative of Lane Publishing Co.

May 1990

VERONIS, SUHLER & ASSOCIATES INC.

From Hysteria To Boredom

With few exceptions, local news hasn't done its job when it comes to reporting on AIDS.

By Betsy Bates

A young woman in Florida is diagnosed with AIDS two years after having several teeth pulled by an AIDS-infected dentist. She had never been sexually involved with a drug user or bisexual, was not an IV drug user and had received no blood transfusions. By all accounts, the dentist who extracted her molars followed all of the National Centers for Disease Control's safety guidelines for health professionals, and yet, frighteningly and inexplicably, he apparently infects her. Tragic for the victim, troubling and mysterious for scientists, alarming in its implications for the general public.

Officials at the CDC in Atlanta released details of the bizarre case in July 1990, and the story led local newscasts nationwide within days. Just when news directors were yawning at the thought of another AIDS story, here was a fresh angle. It was puzzling, but simple to tell. Good visuals. And shockingly pertinent to that tough twilight-to-bedtime news

audience, a crowd largely made up of people who are neither gay nor IV drug-users, but who do visit the dentist.

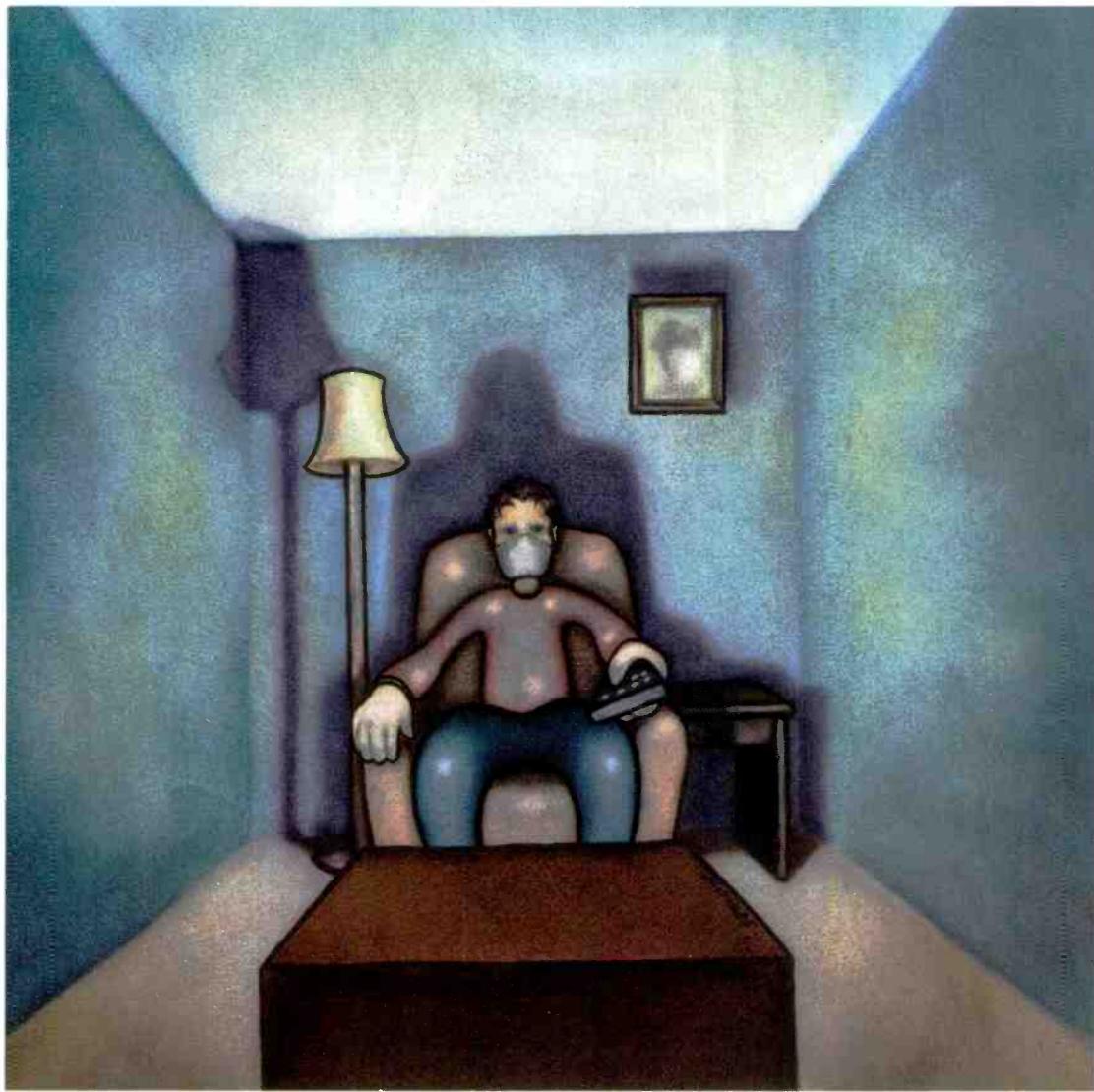
Seeing the obvious hook, stations covered the case with sledgehammer subtlety. Dentists digging into gaping mouths, their sharp tools sparkling, made for menacing B-roll. Teasers suggested that a trip to the dentist, never a favorite American pastime, was an easy way to get AIDS.

Mistakes made covering the story are emblematic of the problems local TV news has had covering the AIDS epidemic from its earliest days. Most stations failed to put the Florida story in perspective, to emphasize how truly unusual it is. AIDS is a highly charged emotional issue and a complex disease: Ten years and nearly 95,000 American deaths into the epidemic, the scorecard for local news is a mixture of high emotional marks and low scores for science and vision.

The biggest problem, however, is not the complexity of the science, or the fact that the disease has struck hardest at unpopular groups in the population. It is

boredom. "In the absence of a breakthrough, people become bored or confused or complacent with hearing about some new drug to fight AIDS," says Dr. Howard Torman, full-time medical reporter for KCBS Los Angeles. "So when we report on a new development, we elevate it to breakthrough status, and that, I fear, is just going to blunt the audience to really important messages about AIDS."

TV news consultant Joseph Barnes of Concord, Calif., agrees that news directors, producers and reporters seem tired of AIDS. He believes the apathy stems from the fact that local news has largely covered the epidemic in repetitive sound bites: this demonstration, that new drug. Compelling, original investigative stories are yet to be done on the cost of AIDS, the impact of AIDS on communities and industries, and, most of all, the kind of treatment and care patients receive. "We seem to have forgotten the hundreds and hundreds of patients across the country who are getting no help or too little help," Barnes says. "That is not a story



you're going to pull off the wire."

"Medical and science reporters for local stations in New York City have largely moved on to liposuction and face lifts," says Doug Ireland, the acerbic *Village Voice* writer. When local TV does focus on AIDS, Ireland says, "The only thing they cover extensively are the most manipulating stories, the real tear-jerkers." AIDS on TV has not included many significant stories about the politics, economics or medical research, Ireland and other critics say.

Coverage of the epidemic began appallingly late. Prior to the mid-1980s, when 12,000 cases of AIDS had been reported in the U.S., it had received far less attention in the media than Legionnaire's Disease, which infected 221 people and killed 34 before its cause was identified. *The New York Times*, in 1983, gave more attention to a virus infecting Austria's Lipizzaner stallions than AIDS.

The principal researcher for a study of the media and AIDS conducted by the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California,

USC professor Everett M. Rogers, says an analysis of news stories in major markets throughout the 1980s showed that AIDS was covered in fits and starts.

According to Rogers, three watershed events in the epidemic riveted the media's attention and defined overall coverage of the disease and its ravaging impact on its victims. The first, in 1983, occurred when a medical journal editorial suggested AIDS could be spread by routine household contact, a theory that was later debunked.

The second, and most pivotal, was the death of Rock Hudson from causes related to his infection with the AIDS virus in late 1985—the same time period that the nation watched an Indiana school district bar 13-year-old Ryan White from school because he had the disease.

The third media peak focused on the availability of a test to screen for the presence of AIDS antibodies, and ethical issues about who should be tested and how results should be used. All three news peaks shared a common theme: AIDS, they implied, is a disease that

should concern and frighten the masses, because it's going to touch everyone, from an all-American boy like Ryan White to a movie idol like Rock Hudson.

Today, the public no longer believes that message. Unless a story linking AIDS to trips to the dentist flashes onto the screen, Middle America has dismissed AIDS as a bygone concern, the Skylab of the 1980s.

"The people it's affecting are those people TV news traditionally does not cover: blacks, the poor, drug users and gays," says James Kinsella, author of *Covering the Plague: AIDS and the American Media*. "They hardly ever hear about it anymore, so people think it's disappearing. They don't think much about it, even though thousands of people are dying. It's not really a problem for them."

Of 146,746 diagnosed cases of AIDS in the United States through August 1990, 60 percent of adult cases were in male homosexuals or bisexuals, 22 percent in IV drug users, and 7 percent in men who were homosexual or bisexual IV drug users. Another 5 percent of cases were in



1959 Les Paul Sunburst
Current Value: \$30,000

Never underestimate the value of a classic.

Nothing else looked like it or sounded like it. The world's first solid body electric guitar changed the shape of modern music. But who would have guessed it would become such a valuable classic today?

And who would have guessed American Movie Classics would become a cable operator's most valuable channel. In a recent Value Rating Index survey, subscribers placed a higher value on AMC than other basic cable services.

Maybe it's because no one brings back the feeling quite like AMC. We make it possible to relive the most memorable movies from the Golden Years of Hollywood. Where heroes were born and legends created; where romance thrived and adventures were never ending. AMC rekindles America's love affair with the silver screen by showing the best loved movies of all time the way they were meant to be seen—*uncut*, *uncolorized* and *commercial-free*. With all this going for it, it's no wonder American Movie Classics is the most valuable channel in a cable operator's basic lineup.

With the cable industry's ever changing environment, who knows how much more AMC will be worth. That's why there's no time like the present to reacquaint yourself with the classics. AMC can do more than retain your subscribers. AMC can help you attract new ones. And that's why the value of American Movie Classics is, well, priceless.



Fighting Fear in the Newsroom

There's a story often told at science writers' conferences about a New York City television reporter who tried to do a story about AIDS in 1985.

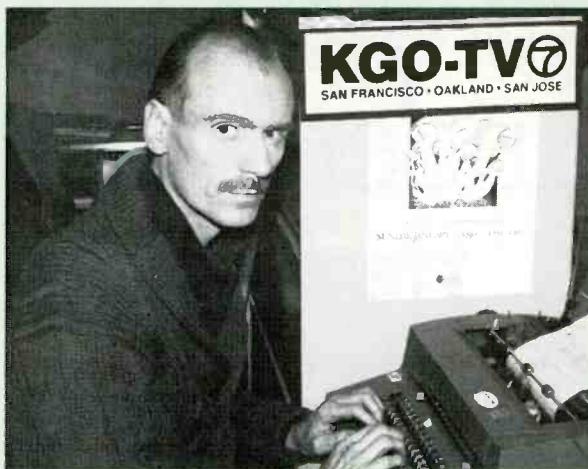
The setting was Plainfield, N.J., at the home of a woman whose 4-year-old foster child with AIDS was being denied entry to public school. WABC reporter Gloria Rojas thought the story would illustrate perfectly the widespread hysteria about a disease that can only be transmitted by an exchange of body fluids. Unlike a child with tuberculosis or polio or even chicken pox, a child with AIDS should pose little threat in a classroom. Little did she know that her fellow workers would be as baselessly fearful of the disease as parents and administrators of the school district.

The camera crew assigned to the story refused to go inside the home for fear of catching AIDS from the child. Rojas tried to do some streetside AIDS education to convince the crew they couldn't catch the disease through the air, but they remained unconvinced. They ultimately agreed to shoot the story—from across the street, using a long lens. And when they finished, they disconnected the cord to the microphone in Rojas's hand and drove away, refusing to touch anything that had been in close proximity to the little boy or his foster mother.

The story was recapped in a book published in 1989, *Covering the Plague: AIDS and the American Media* by James Kinsella, as an example of problems encountered in the early days of AIDS coverage on television. Kinsella has since learned, to his amazement, that in late 1990, more than half the crews at another New York City television station still refuse to go on AIDS stories.

News director Paul Sagan of WCBS-TV says with sad irony that at his station, which ran a 20-part series in 1987 called *AIDS Fears and Facts*, more than half of the field crews still will not go on assignments dealing with AIDS. "It's truly regrettable," Sagan says, adding that individual and group conferences have failed to allay the fears of technicians. While there are also crews at nearly every station who won't, say, fly on helicopters, the analogy doesn't hold. Camera crews have died in helicopter crashes, but no one has ever died of AIDS just because they filmed someone with the disease.

Conversations with news directors and reporters from San Francisco, Los



Paul Wynne's journal entries personalized AIDS for coworkers and viewers alike at San Francisco's KGO.

Angeles, Miami and New York, four cities hard hit by AIDS, suggest that there are essentially two ways to quiet AIDS fears among staff members at television stations: scientific seminars, and, tragically, daily contact with an infected coworker.

In many cities, organizations exist that promote AIDS awareness, and provide such education free of charge. Hospitals and medical centers often will schedule a physician to speak, free of charge, about risky and risk-free behaviors with relation to the disease. County health departments will provide brochures, AIDS hotlines will answer questions. The U.S. Surgeon General's office in Washington, D.C., will send information about the latest scientific knowledge about AIDS.

Journalists can also educate their own. Ex-reporter Terry Beirn of the American Foundation for AIDS Research helped to coordinate an educational AIDS seminar for WNBC-TV in 1985, bringing along an infectious disease specialist from St. Luke's Hospital in New York. Former news director Joseph Barnes says an AIDS seminar for the KPIX newsroom in San Francisco worked wonders in educating the staff about how AIDS is transmitted.

The other way AIDS fears have been reduced in newsrooms is through the presence of a staff member who has the disease. Jeff Wald, formerly the news director at KTLA in Los Angeles, says no amount of briefing could equal the experience of working with a person with AIDS. A well-liked, "very studious" engineer for the station was diagnosed with AIDS while Wald worked there, and eventually died. "It brought it home to all of us," Wald says. "We all liked him so much." Concern immediately took the place of fear when

station employees encountered AIDS in someone they knew and respected.

Perhaps the most renowned local television news employee with AIDS was the late Paul Wynne of San Francisco. Ironically, the Emmy-award winning journalist had been unable to get a job at any of his former stations for a decade before he was diagnosed. That situation quickly turned around, however, when he mentioned to a videographer friend, Lorne Morrison, that he had an idea of producing a journal chronicling his experiences as he fought the disease. Then-news director Harry Fuller of KGO, the San Francisco ABC O&O, gave the go-ahead for *Paul Wynne's Journal*, a thought-provoking, bittersweet, intensely personal look at AIDS through the eyes of a television journalist who was reporting his own life, and eventual death.

Wynne's Journal talked about his medications and his experiences with prejudice, his mood swings and his last will and testament. During one segment, he quoted a poll that showed 87 percent of Californians would fear working beside someone with AIDS. He looked square at the camera and muttered, "Dummies!" Viewers were entranced; they sent him notes, advice and a hand-sewn quilt.

An initially reluctant sales department acquiesced to the popularity of the weekly segments, and staff members who initially questioned the notion of a former staff member airing an intimate diary came to respect Wynne's journalistic talent and personal courage. When, on July 5, death came for Paul Wynne, KGO president and general manager Jim Toppings said, "He was a professional. He gave us the joy of his spirit and his friendship. We will all miss his presence."

B.B.

the heterosexual partners of the above. Three percent were hemophiliacs or people who received contaminated blood products. Fewer than four percent were people with other risk factors, or undetermined modes of transmission.

"Unless the American media's core constituency of middle-class individuals is perceived to be at risk, a rampant disease like AIDS does not constitute a news story with high news value," declared the Annenberg study.

When local TV newscasts brought Americans the emotional story of AIDS and made them care, they often did so by presenting "innocent" victims. A 1987 study by the Washington, D.C.-based Center for Media and Public Affairs revealed that people with AIDS shown on TV were eight times more likely to be heterosexuals than homosexuals. Similarly, women with AIDS were more likely to be shown than men, and middle class whites were far, far more likely to be shown than poor minorities, despite the epidemic's disproportionate impact on minorities.

In 1990, AIDS is often ignored until a sensational story breaks. Then, too often, according to Kinsella, a reporter is assigned who has neither background knowledge nor sources to rely on, and the result is a story that is either incomplete or just plain wrong. The result: confusion and hysteria.

The American Foundation for AIDS Research's Terry Beirn, a longtime newsman turned AIDS activist, says he has been disappointed to see that major-market stations that should have known better couldn't resist "pumping up a little hysteria" with stories about children with AIDS attending school, or fringe propositions for quarantining victims of a disease that isn't transmitted by casual contact.

"I don't think anyone sits around and says, 'O.K., let's scare the audience,'" says Torman of KCBS. "But science usually gives way to sensationalism because stations don't qualify their stories. They don't say, 'How do we put this in perspective?' It's omission, rather than commission, that's the problem."

Covering AIDS reactively means stations cannot give stories the complexity the disease demands. "None of the stations here have looked at the consequences of AIDS, the real impact it has had on the city's fashion industry, theater, or political community," says TV writer Jeremy Gerard of *The New York Times*. The quality and the extent of coverage have varied wildly, he says, from sensationalism to insightful stories that include emotional angst without exploiting it.

What the public does know about AIDS, however, it has largely learned from TV.

From TV, many Americans learned how the disease was spread, especially from stations that used forthright language. In many locales, viewers also met, via TV news, real people with AIDS in award-winning, often heartbreaking stories. We saw babies with AIDS, actors with AIDS, and families decimated by the disease when blood transfusions intended to save lives also delivered death.

But when media messengers scramble scientific terminology and concepts, it is easy to see why, even in 1989, more than half the Americans polled believed that AIDS is transmitted during anal intercourse even if neither partner has AIDS. "No one in the general public understands what the term 'retrovirus' means. No one's explained it, and it's important in understanding what makes

AMFAR's Beirn says it is not possible to paint the entire broadcast industry with a brush of one color. And he is right. Examples of fine, often award-winning portrayals of AIDS can be found, even from the very perspectives critics say TV has missed. Network science reporters using high-tech graphics have simplified highly sophisticated scientific developments so that they could be understood by the public.

In Los Angeles, *Fox Entertainment News*, which airs nightly as a segment of KTTV's local news, ran a memorable series in 1989 that took a somber look at the impact of AIDS on the entire entertainment industry. Stations such as WPLG Miami have patiently worked with sources in reluctant minority communities to build trust, the net result being series like WPLG's acclaimed *AIDS En La Familia*, which ran during the February 1990 sweeps.

Sometimes, powerful local stories make their way to TV via unlikely routes. A prime example is a documentary about the Rotary club in Los Altos, Calif., where one member's acknowledgement that his son had AIDS triggered a prominent businessman's announcement that he too was infected. Viewers saw the story through the eyes of an independent producer on cable's Financial News Network, the only TV outlet willing to run the story in its entirety.

The local reporter most noted for not simply rehashing wire stories is Jim Bunn, who shared the Peabody Award given KPIX San Francisco for AIDS coverage in 1986. From early in the epidemic, in one of the nation's front-line cities, Bunn made AIDS a virtual full-time beat. This allowed him to deliver not only heart-rending human interest stories, but also investigative pieces. Although he had left the station by then, such a background would have allowed a reporter like Bunn to lend perspective to the story of the Florida dentist.

Kinsella's book quotes CDC scientist Dr. Donald Francis as saying that when it comes to AIDS, local television stations represent "the weakest link" in the media chain. Marshall Goldberg, who in 1987 praised TV as "doing more to help contain the AIDS epidemic than any other single factor," today despairs over TV's loss of interest. "The panic phase seems to have faded, which is scary in a way," Goldberg says. "We seem to be accepting the fact that 100,000 people a year are going to die." Unless stations take care to produce AIDS stories with special attention to detail and perspective, they may add to the ennui. •

Betsy Bates is a medical writer based in Los Angeles.

P eople with AIDS on TV were eight times more likely to be heterosexuals than homosexuals, and middle class whites were more likely to be shown than poor minorities.

AIDS different from other viruses," says Dr. Marshall Goldberg, who recently wrote a book with prominent AIDS researcher Dr. Robert Gallo about the place AIDS fills in the history of epidemics. Stations without the resources to hire a medical/science reporter could nonetheless give one reporter on the staff a few uncommitted hours a week to become educated about the disease and familiar with credible scientific sources in the community.

It has also been difficult for stations to cover sensitive sexual issues in hard-hit minority communities, where taboos may be powerful and on-camera interview subjects hard to come by. *Minneapolis Star Tribune* TV columnist Noel Holston says KSTP has done a responsible, admirable job of covering AIDS, and even produced a first-rate public service campaign on the risks that expose people to the disease. The only problem: "All the people KSTP featured were sort of like Ken and Barbie: married, upper-class white folks who are probably at the least risk of anyone."

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Inside IN FOCUS

By 1992, estimates Paul Kagan Associates, hardly notorious for pessimism, there will be 31,000 hours of weekly airtime available to syndicators nationally, down 3,000 hours from '87. For first-run syndicators, tougher times have already begun.

The plight of this fall's crop of game shows has limited the number of games NATPE attendees will be picking over in New Orleans, as Peter Caranicas points out in our first story. What is working for stations, as the second piece details, is the tried-and-true off-net sitcom. We close, accordingly, by listing a sampling of first-run and off-net entries expected at NATPE.

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THE ANSWER WAS NO

And 1991 won't be The Year of the Game either.

By Peter Caranicas

Answer: A perennial first-run favorite that disappointed stations and syndicators alike with its miserable performance this season.

Question: What is a game show?

The follow-up question is: What does this drop in the popularity of new game shows mean? The failure of 1990's class of game shows, most of them Q&A clones, has thinned the ranks of this year's class. While the 1991 shows are clones too, they represent a wider variety of recycled concepts. Syndicators were chastened by this fall's sorry performance, and are more cautious than ever.

As recently as the beginning of September, there was optimism. Five new game shows were poised to enter the first-run fray: Buena Vista's *The Challengers*, Orbis Communications' *The Joker's Wild*, Guber-Peters Television's *The Quiz Kids Challenge*, ITC's *Tic Tac Dough* and Warner Bros.' *Trump Card*. The five, all cash-plus-barter strips, had clearances ranging from 80 to 130 stations, according to the distributors, with coverages ranging from 78 percent to as high as 87 percent. They all appeared to be well-produced, well-researched Q&A-format shows.

But as the season began, the shows were slow out of the starting gate. When no improvement occurred by the end of September, stations got the jitters. When the October books started

coming in, a wave of disappointment swept the industry. All five shows were performing far below expectations (see chart). In fact, all had performed worse than the four returning game strips, King World's *Wheel of Fortune* and *Jeopardy!*, Warner's *Love Connection* and LBS's *Family Feud*.

Stations began to react in late September, and continue to make adjustments to this day. *Quiz Kids* was an early casualty, exiled to late night or axed entirely by such stations as WXIA Atlanta and KMOV St. Louis. In Los Angeles, KCOP quickly yanked *Quiz Kids* from its early-fringe game block. Other shows fared little better. In St. Louis, KMOV shifted the dismal *Trump* from access to late night. *Challengers* was replaced at 3 P.M. by WLS in Chicago and at 7:30 P.M. by WCAU Philadelphia. In Boston, WBZ moved *Joker* to Siberia—2:30 A.M.. *Trump* and *Tic Tac* were similarly treated by KTEN in Las Vegas and KGGM in Albuquerque. The list goes on.

What went wrong? Executives cite a variety of factors, which, taken together, define the new, more complex world in which broadcasters and distributors must operate—a world in which success is more elusive and failure more probable than ever before.

The most obvious factor is placement. So often were the new games placed in dayparts with low HUT levels—daytime, late night—that they had little chance of logging high national viewer-



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ships. "Had they been placed in early fringe or access the numbers would have been higher," says John von Soosten, senior v.p. and director of programming at Katz Communications.

With already successful shows clogging affiliates' access slots, syndicators might have turned to indies. The more desirable dayparts, however, were seldom available. Ron Martzolf, director of programming at Petry Television, notes that seven off-net sitcoms began airing at the same time as the five games. These sitcoms—including *Golden Girls*, *Head of the Class*, *227* and *ALF*—are all expensive programs that indies placed in visible time periods. "They ate up all the good time periods in a number of markets," says Martzolf.

Early fringe and access slots were already crowded with successful first-run incumbents, including the games *Wheel* and *Jeopardy!*. "It's like an election," says von Soosten. "It's difficult to unseat existing successful shows. With *Wheel* and *Jeopardy!* still going strong, with *Love Connection* still playing well, and with *Family Feud* experiencing a renewal of interest, the new shows have less of a chance." Petry's Martzolf agrees: "Shows that have been around

show in any daypart deemed appropriate—daytime, early fringe, access, late fringe, or late night—and paying accordingly. Some deals involve as many as five tiers. "The stations have a take-it-or-leave-it attitude. It's a buyer's market," says Martzolf.

Daypart unavailability, incumbency problems and tier deals tell only part of the story, however. Game shows were also undermined by the misguided programming strategy from which they sprang. All five were Q & A formats, comparable in many ways to *Jeopardy!*. "Unfortunately for them," says Martzolf, "*Jeopardy!* already had a loyal following and huge name recognition."

Jim Curtin, v.p. and director of programming at rep Harrington, Righter & Parsons, puts it more bluntly: "We programmers miscalculated the market." According to Curtin, many in the industry hoped that *Wheel*'s increasingly older demographics would present an opening for a new show. "We observed that *Wheel* was showing weakness when placed up against *Family Feud*," he recalls. "We observed the success of *Jeopardy!* and thought viewers would want an updated Q&A program with a play-along-at-home element. Add this to the fact that games are the dominant force in access programming, plus the fact that *Wheel*'s reign can't last forever. Ergo, we were hoping a new game would knock off *Wheel*. We were wrong."

Distributors freely admit the error. "These games were derivative," says Scott Carlin, senior vice president, Warner Bros. Domestic Television. "*Trump* and the others are all hard Q&A shows, like *Jeopardy!*. The audience said, 'We've already got that.' Nevertheless, Carlin says he plans to "continue to produce *Trump Card* throughout the year and to stand behind it."

To understand the games' lack of success, it's also important to consider the enormous ratings pressure that stations face today. "Often shows are not

given enough time," says Seltel's Janeen Bjork, v.p., director of programming. "People take few risks in access now. And yet most shows don't hit in the first book. *Jeopardy!* took two books to build. *Feud* and *Current Affair* were second- and third-book performers. With *Entertainment Tonight* there was little to write home about at first. Shows like *Sally Jessy Raphael* and *Regis and Kathie Lee* actually took two or three years to perform well."

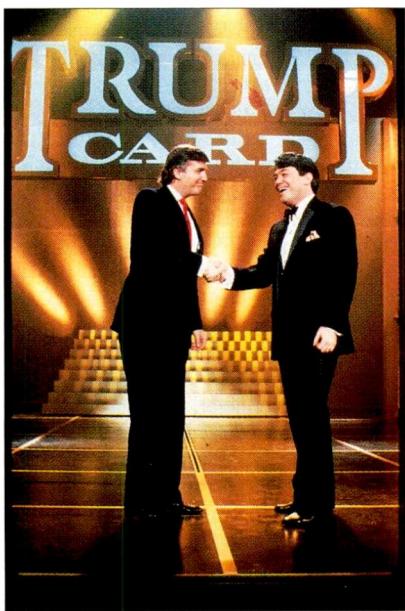
This intense pressure has been caused by the increase in the number of metered markets, a handful only a decade ago. Today Nielsen provides instant ratings for 25 markets, measuring about half the country's viewers on an overnight

basis. "Years ago, shows had more time to build in access because most markets weren't metered and results weren't available as fast," says Bjork.

To this accumulation of factors—bad dayparts, incumbency problems, tier deals, flawed strategy, metered-market proliferation—add the growing trend toward a seasonless TV year. "Companies are introducing shows all the time," Katz's von Soosten observes. "They're confusing the viewers. If viewers knew more, they'd sample more." The problem is exacerbated by the networks, which now tend to premiere shows all around the calendar, further eroding the concept of a season.

Which raises the most serious problem of all: a lack of sampling by viewers. Von Soosten notes that, by and large, the numbers the shows posted in their first weeks are similar to their numbers a month later. Had the numbers started high and then fallen, one could conclude that the viewers didn't like the shows. But the fact is, viewers didn't even bother to tune in.

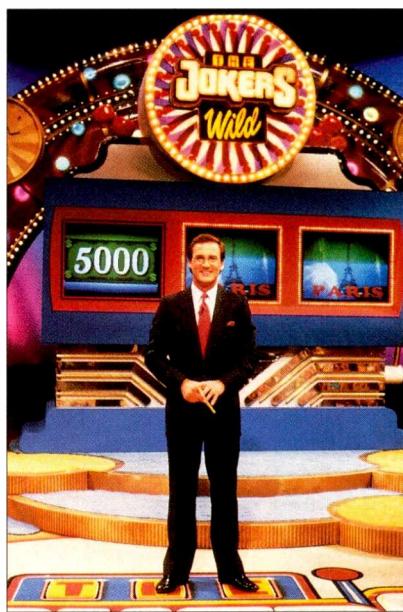
"It's been a disappointing season," admits Bob Turner, president of *Joker* distributor Orbis Communications. "With the usual amount of promotion,



Trump Card fared little better than its namesake.

keep on performing well. Not just the older games, but shows like *Entertainment Tonight*, *Inside Edition*, *Geraldo* and *Donahue*."

What this means for game show distributors is a proliferation of tier deals, agreements whereby the licensing station reserves the option of placing a



WBZ Boston exiled *The Joker's Wild* to 2:30 A.M.

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audiences will sample a show by the second or third episode. This year, our show never got a decent sampling. For some mysterious reason, viewers simply did not tune in in enough numbers to build momentum. We didn't get them into the tent. Nobody did."

And why not? To many, the fault lies not within the syndication and broadcast industries but rather with television's increasingly fragmented environment. As Warner Bros.'s Carlin puts it: "We have to come to grips with the reality of programming in a 30-to-50-channel environment."

"Sure, viewership is disappointing for the new game shows," agrees a spokesperson for Buena Vista Television, distributor of *Challengers*. "But viewership is down in all of television. People have so many more options. You really have to measure performance according to a new scale these days."

Industry players agree that the recent first-run game disaster will have what Seltel's Bjork calls "a chilling effect" on the mood at the upcoming NATPE convention in New Orleans. "There will be a lot of soul searching," says Katz's von Soosten. "A sense of caution," predicts Orbis's Turner. "Last time, it was a strong buyers' market, with competitive pressures forcing many syndicators to accept tiered deals from stations. Millions were spent foolishly buying time periods, promoting heavily," Turner continues, alluding to heavy, controversial investments by syndicators spending promotional dollars to secure favorable dayparts. This time around, "new shows will be rolled out much more slowly because syndicators are less willing to deficit-finance," says HRP's Curtin. "It's becoming a leaner, meaner syndication marketplace."

As for product, it's a safe bet that game shows won't dominate this upcoming convention. "Every season colors the season that comes after it," notes Lou Dennig, associate director of

programming at MMT Sales. "The recent bad performance of games will have a significant impact," says Warner Bros.'s Carlin. "This year won't be the year of the game." Instead, most observers expect the talk of NATPE this time around to be just that: talk, with some reality thrown in for good measure. HRP's Curtin agrees: "We're returning to talk and reality."

And yet, new games continue to be announced. Despite the debacle, most industry players agree with Katz's von Soosten that "game shows are alive and

healthy. The genre is healthy. The difficulty is to establish one's place within it." Says Seltel's Bjork, "The problem is not with the genre. Look at *Feud*. It's having a resurgence. *Wheel* and *Jeopardy!* are doing fine." HRP's Curtin finds the strength of *Feud* and *Love Connection* intriguing: "They both have an element of comedy," he notes. "Comedy should be further explored in the development of games."

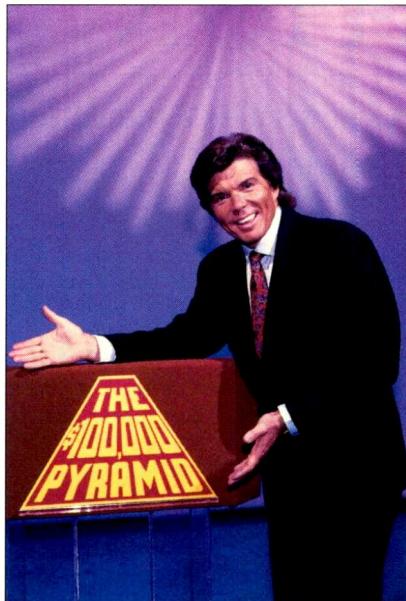
Ironically, the very weakness of today's games allows syndicators of other games a crack at the marketplace. Early next month Orbis's \$100,000 *Pyramid* starts to air in what Orbis president Bob Turner expects will be "28 out of the top 30 markets," with Procter & Gamble having already fully bought all bartered time on the program. While it seems paradoxical for Orbis to be launching a game show in such a soft market, Turner actually perceives a window of opportunity, taking advantage of stations' disillusionment with the present crop. Originally scheduled to launch in Sep-

tember '91, *Pyramid* was moved to January. Turner says Orbis made that decision "around October 10. After observing the first four weeks of the season, we knew there would be a void in January." Turner now intends to push *Joker* and *Pyramid* simultaneously at NATPE, keeping his fingers crossed that one does not cannibalize the other. "Our plan is for *Pyramid* to support, not replace, *Joker*."

The Q&A format, so popular at NATPE last year, is definitely out. Most new games will have to be different: Group W Productions is rolling out *Scrabble*, the former NBC game, for fall '91. Other games are being positioned as midseason replacements and will be ready this January to replace bad performers: In addition to *Pyramid*, stations will be offered *Puzzle Game* from Tribune, a new version of *Name That Tune* from Frank-Firestone and *Critical Decisions* from Innoventures Television Distribution. The latter two are "interactive" shows, allowing home viewers to play along via "900" numbers. Tolls collected from the use of those numbers will accrue partly to stations, giving them an added incentive to license the program.

Interactivity is probably the next element to watch for in games. King World, while hardly strapped for cash, is also experimenting with it. If interactive shows break through next year, watch for an onslaught of participatory programming in 1992. Everyone agrees that game shows are here to stay. In a TV environment where even sampling is no longer a given, enabling viewers to play along may well be the ticket that will rejuvenate game shows as the first-run favorite.

Peter Caranicas is the former editor of BME's Television Engineering.



\$100,000 *Pyramid* begins airing in January.

HOW THEY PLAYED THE GAME

SHOW	DISTRIBUTOR	RATING/SUPPORT
Wheel of Fortune	King World	13.7/24
Jeopardy!	King World	12.1/24
Love Connection	Warner Bros.	3.8/12
Family Feud	LBS	3.4/14
The Challengers	Buena Vista	3.3/10
Trump Card	Warner Bros.	2.4/9
The Joker's Wild	Orbis	2.3/8
Tic Tac Dough	ITC	2.1/9
The Quiz Kids Challenge	Guber-Peters	1.2/8

Source: Katz Communications research using Nielsen metered market ratings for game show strips, October 1990.

AN ENVIALE SITUATION

The format once declared dead now rules syndication.

By Cheryl Heuton

The syndication market depends on sitcoms. It has to. More than any other form of programming, sitcoms offer the flexibility, broad audience appeal and durability that stations, particularly independent stations, look for when building a schedule. Despite recurring attempts to base successful schedules on other formats, stations are returning to a genre that is among the oldest and best-loved in broadcasting.

The performance of sitcoms during the fall season has done much to strengthen this move: While first-run syndicated shows flopped and game shows sprang slow leaks, many sitcoms trounced their competition and won the young, upscale audiences advertisers demand. With more than 60 off-net sitcoms on the schedule responsible for grabbing about 25 percent of the audience for syndication, they are the most popular, pervasive form in distribution. Game shows, which can claim the top two ratings slots, capture only 14 percent of the overall audience for syndicated programming. There are strong indications that off-net sitcoms will become even more entrenched as the top form of programming during 1991.

Sitcoms work so well in syndication because they can be run all over the schedule: late morning, afternoon, early and late fringe. They come in neat little packages that can be mixed or matched, doubled up or used to bookend each other. They are designed with specific demographics in mind, so that a station chasing a certain group of viewers can take sharper aim at the target.

You want males? Give 'em *Night Court*. Women? Buy *Who's the Boss?*. Family viewership? Try *Full House* or *ALF*. Something for everybody? There's always *M*A*S*H*, *Cheers* and, starting last fall, *Golden Girls*.

As for durability, few competing formats come close. Dramas, action and mystery shows all lose a large chunk of their appeal once the viewer has seen the conflict resolved or the mystery unraveled. Thus some shows that were strong as network prime-time offerings are hampered in syndication because many viewers have already been exposed to the story. The other powerful genre, game shows, has slipped sharply in past years, and now only *Jeopardy!* and *Wheel of Fortune* can demand the best slots and highest rates. They, too, have been slipping year by year. Game shows as a genre lose their draw as audiences become bored by the format, and besides, they

can't be used to target audiences with the precision of a sitcom; they tend to skew too old and too downscale, and their viewership is often weak in urban areas, according to rep firms.

In the current market, programmers feel rather smug because they are presented with a glut of sitcoms. The number that hit the syndication scene in the fall, at nine, was more than twice the norm, and the coming two seasons will bring on more strong shows. In 1991-92, the new entries will include *Married . . . With Children*, *Designing Women*, *A Different World* and *Full House*. The 1992-93 season will present *The Wonder Years*, *Roseanne*, *Murphy Brown*, *My Two Dads* and *Dear John*.

With all this product seeking favorable time slots, the stations, especially the independents, know they are more in control at the bargaining table than they've been in years. The reasons are well-known: Fox is stealing away ever



Viacom is selling *Roseanne* to a market far different from the one that bought *Cosby* at record rates.

more time from once-independent stations that have become affiliates of the emerging fourth network. No new stations are hitting the air during the slowdown in the broadcasting market. Moreover, the effort to build cable channels that act like broadcast independents is working, but only at a very slow pace, and the effects may not be felt for years. According to the analyst firm of Paul Kagan Assoc. Inc., demand for syndicated programming will fall about 2 percent per year for several years before leveling out. In 1992, there will be nearly 31,000 hours per week nationally available to be filled with syndicated shows, compared to more than 34,000 in 1987.

While those numbers do sound a warning for sellers of syndicated programming in general, for those concerned with the marketing of sitcoms the message is less dire. Some distributors of off-net programming find that the Fox effect actually works in their favor. "One of the things you hear is that Fox has caused the market to contract," says Keith Samples, vice president of the off-net division of Warner Bros. Domestic Television Distribution. "In sitcoms, however, the opposite is true. Fox doesn't program from 5 to 8 [P.M.], which is one of the biggest times for sitcoms." Fox programming has made some indies healthier, and they can afford to buy sitcoms that would have been out of their price range pre-Fox. "What Fox has really shrunk is the market for movies," Samples says. "But for sitcoms, there are more stations in a better position to buy."

Adding this year to the interest in sitcoms is the failure of the fall crop of first-run syndicated shows. The newcomers did not generate the kind of numbers most stations can afford to live with. Of course, in the top 50 markets regulations forbid affiliates from running off-net shows in access, but that still leaves plenty of action in the remaining regions. And even in large markets, competition among independents is tough and sitcoms are a favored weapon. "Many stations that turned their noses up at off-net product and told us they were going with first-run have changed their minds abruptly," says a station rep. "Now their programmers are after us for the [demographic] numbers on the sitcoms. They need those young viewers, and the game shows didn't deliver them worth a

damn." Robert Jacquemin, president of Buena Vista Television, cites the success of *Golden Girls*, introduced by his company into the off-net market this season, as "adding to the credence of off-net as an important product category."

Still, no matter how wonderful a sitcom a distributor is bringing to the market, most know they cannot expect to get the type of deals that were made in the past. Even programs such as *The Wonder Years*, *Murphy Brown* and *Roseanne* will not repeat the accomplishments of *The Cosby Show* and *Who's the Boss?*—at least not at the bargaining table. The fact that many programmers expect *Murphy Brown* to outperform *Cosby* in syndication is beside the point.

Station managers and programmers are, understandably, more emphatic

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than distributors when they insist that *Cosby*-style pricing has come and gone. "We went through very tough negotiations for *Married . . . With Children*, says Rick Lowe, general manager of Fox station KOKI in Tulsa, Okla. "Both sides were looking for a deal, and the distributor [Columbia] wanted a price better than *Who's the Boss?*. But that had been the most expensive program we'd ever purchased, and we didn't want to pay more because we got into a lot of trouble . . . with prices like that."

The situation was different in 1986, when Viacom brought *Cosby* into syndication. There were no other powerful sitcoms to compete, and stations wanted a program with a chance to stand up to *Wheel* and *Jeopardy!*. Viacom drove for the best deals it could under those favorable circumstances, and the result was record prices. The show is among the highest-rated off-net sitcoms, but it didn't sweep the field in the way that its purchasers hoped. Many competitors have managed to

beat it now and then with lower-cost quality shows, such as *Cheers* and *M*A*S*H*. And while *Cosby* had been the highest-rated sitcom in history at its 8 P.M. Thursday network slot, it didn't show proportionate strength when run in late fringe and other slots that demand adult and male appeal.

"People were so intent on believing that *Cosby* was a supershow, that it couldn't fail," says analyst Mark Miller of Miller Associates, a consulting firm based in Studio City, Calif. "They forgot that it was a family-based show that depended on kids for its audience. When you put a show like that up against the 11 o'clock news on the affiliates, it won't perform. You can beat a *Cosby* episode that's only been seen twice on the network with a *M*A*S*H* that's been around for years because *M*A*S*H* will pull the all-important adult males—the crucial late-fringe group."

In the end, the *Cosby* deal didn't work to raise off-net prices; if anything, it created downward pressure because the market generally viewed it as excessive. "*Cosby* taught us how to say 'no,'" says Lowe. That, and the softer sellers' market, have resulted in a much different deal from Viacom in its efforts to pitch *Roseanne*. Viacom is asking for only one 30-second barter spot for episodes that will be stripped, compared with two 30-second spots in *Cosby*, and it is willing to be flexible on scheduling. "If the buyer sees value in running the show in access, that's O.K. and our spot is more valuable," says Dennis Gillespie, Viacom's president of cash sales. "If they want to run it elsewhere, it's less valuable to us, but that option is there. I hate to call it a concession, but it's flexible. And there are other distributors who aren't flexible."

The lessons of the *Cosby* era will shape sitcom decisions for some years to come, and they have forced programmers to study the format more closely. Instead of taking network hits and running them willy-nilly, stations have worked to develop a much more sophisticated understanding of what works at what times, and with specific viewers. They track current network shows more closely to gauge followings that develop, and they are willing to experiment with counterprogramming. There are two elements, however, that most insist are absolutely necessary in a sitcom: fairly broad appeal, and strong writing.

"Of course characters are important, but it's really the writing," says Janeen Bjork, vice president and director of programming for the rep firm of Seltel Inc.

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"The ones that work are those with the fleshed-out characters and strong writing, because you can watch again and again." Says Warner's Samples: "Quality writing is what really drives the wheel for a sitcom. Funny is funny, whether it's adult, family, whatever. Look at *Cheers*, *Night Court*, *Murphy Brown*—you can go through the list. The shows that last are the shows that are well-written. That's why they call it a situation comedy. It's funny. If it's not, it won't work no matter what else it has."

In addition to the writing, most agree that a successful off-net sitcom must have broad appeal: "The demo profile of a show is crucial," says Samples. "It can't be too dependent on any one demo, it must not have too narrow a profile." If it does, the show's effectiveness will be limited and it will not have the versatility that ensures sales across the country. "You hear a lot of people saying that adult appeal is the thing," Samples says, "and the reason you hear that is because of shows like *Cheers* going strong in its fourth season [in syndication], and *Night Court* in its third. People look at those two and say they have great legs, adult shows will last. But if *Growing Pains* and *Cosby* stay strong, and *Full House* does well, then people will say family is the way to go."

The presence of a charismatic star is clearly important, but can't make a show's success independent of strong writing. And when a show is dependent on a single actor's popularity, that can create its own set of problems, as with Roseanne Barr, whose behavior has caused concern among stations, particularly those in smaller, Middle American markets. "She keeps shooting herself in the foot," says Lowe. "Of course you may ask, how can he buy *Married . . . With Children* and then be concerned about *Roseanne*, but *Married* is an ensemble. Roseanne [Barr] is the center of that show, and she could conceivably cause other problems." Viacom's sales presentation is structured to address stations' concerns about Barr's famed volatility, and includes a tape in which she speaks of her commitment to the show. As Gillespie points out, such comments by station management might be attempts at "shaping the market view to benefit themselves."

The old belief that a controversial woman won't work with general audiences is obviously thrown by the way-side. Both producers and programmers

like to point out that the sitcom is a form that seems to belie generalizations and break any rules that are made for it. "Of course, for years people said you couldn't have a top-rated show that featured an all-black cast," says analyst Miller. "That's gone the way of the flat-earth theory."

"Generalizations are dangerous with sitcoms," says Bjork. "I love finding the exceptions to the rules." Bjork remembers when people said *Kate and Allie* wouldn't work because no sitcom with a female star had ever worked. Bjork reminded her colleagues of that famous "flop," *I Love Lucy*. "And now you can add *Designing Women* to that list," she



Adult appeal boosts *Murphy Brown*.

says. And *Golden Girls*.

Another common sitcom error is cloning, observers say. Yet it's one producers and networks seem unable to resist. After the success of *Roseanne*, *The Simpsons* and *Married*, there has been a rush to sitcoms based on blue-collar families, sitcoms that are animated, and sitcoms with outrageously off-color humor. Some have already failed. Early attempts to copy *Roseanne* came in the form of *Lenny* and, to some extent, *The Fanelli Boys*. Several animated sitcoms are now in production, but you don't have to be a programming genius to guess that without Matt Groening and James L. Brooks, most cartoons will die quick deaths in prime time. And as for shocking, wacky humor, it's cropping up everywhere, from *Uncle*

Buck to Good Grief, to mixed critical and rating response.

Norman Steinberg is executive producer of CBS's *Doctor Doctor*, a wacky comedy in its second season that has managed to garner support from critics, even though ratings have been weak. In late November, Steinberg was unsure whether the show would survive, but he was convinced that sharper wit and wilder humor will be required of future sitcoms. "Now shows have to have a little more zing," Steinberg says. "Everybody is scrambling for audience, especially with Fox pushing shows that are edgy, off-the-wall."

The syndication market will demand those shows, too, but perhaps in a lighter concentration than network prime-time. KOKI's Lowe, who has already purchased *Married*, says he isn't sure his schedule could handle both that and *Roseanne*, along with the shows he runs as a Fox affiliate. "It just might be too much of that over-the-edge type," he says.

In coming seasons, programmers will be looking for the basics, most say. That means writing and broad appeal. And with the broadcast buying market shrinking, slowly, and the product line expanding, it should be a buyers' market for sometime to come. Cable, notably Lifetime and USA, is buying more sitcoms. "They definitely have a place in our schedule," says Neil Hoffman, vice president for programming at USA, which runs *My Two Dads* and *Just the Ten of Us*. So far, however, cable isn't a big market, and while distributors expect it to become a major buyer in the future, they're concentrating their efforts on broadcasters for now.

This January could mark a big surge for sitcoms as those stations that can dump the non-performing first-run programs and go for a familiar, successful format. It's hard to believe that just seven years ago, people were saying sitcoms were dead. "The top ten was full of shows like *Dynasty*," says Bjork. "And then came *Cosby* rising like King Tut from the tomb. But it's much more the show itself, not the genre, that creates such success." With a strong bunch of sitcoms on-air now and an equally strong line-up in the wings, it's hard to remember, especially in a short-memory business like broadcasting, the simple and memorable lesson of the difference between programming for quality and programming for genre. But should programmers and distributors forget, the market will always be there to remind them, the hard way. •

NEXT YEAR'S BETTER LUCK

Forget this fall's failures. Below is an early sampling of new first-run and off-net offerings expected at NATPE.

THE CHUCK WOOLERY SHOW



The host of *Love Connection* tries a talk/entertainment format featuring celebrity guests.

AVAILABLE:
Fall 1991

DISTRIBUTOR: Orion

LENGTH/
FREQUENCY:
60 min./strip

PRODUCER: Eric Lieber

NO. OF
EPISODES: 39
weeks original,
13 weeks repeat

TERMS: Barter 7/7 split

DAYPART:
early
fringe/daytime

CRITICAL DECISION



Interactive game show based on public opinion polls with topics ranging from world events to dating.

AVAILABLE:
January 1991

DISTRIBUTOR: Innoventures

LENGTH/
FREQUENCY:
30 min./strip

PRODUCERS: Harry Friedman and David Greenfield

NO. OF
EPISODES: 260

TERMS: TBA

DAYPART:
fringe

CANDID CAMERA



The series, popular in the '50s, '60s and '70s, returns with Dom DeLuise as host.

AVAILABLE:
Fall 1991

DISTRIBUTOR: King World

LENGTH/
FREQUENCY:
30 min./strip

PRODUCER: Vin DiBona

NO. OF
EPISODES:
130 original,
130 repeat

TERMS: Cash + barter
(1 minute)

DAYPART:
access

THE GOSSIP AND FAME SHOW



New tabloid show with exclusive access to the vaults of the *National Enquirer*.

AVAILABLE:
Fall 1991

DISTRIBUTOR: Zodiac Ent.

LENGTH/
FREQUENCY:
30 min./strip

PRODUCER: Zodiac Ent.

NO. OF
EPISODES: 195

TERMS: Cash + barter (1 minute)

DAYPART:
fringe

JENNY JONES



Talk show starring comedianne Jenny Jones exploring subjects relevant to daytime viewers.

AVAILABLE:
Fall 1991

DISTRIBUTOR: Warner Bros.
Domestic Television Distribution

LENGTH/
FREQUENCY:
60 min./strip

PRODUCER: David Salzman

NO. OF
EPISODES: 170

TERMS: Barter 7/7 split

DAYPART:
daytime/
early fringe

LIGHTNING FORCE



Follows the daredevil exploits of a top-secret special projects team drawn from all four branches of the armed forces.

AVAILABLE:
Fall 1991

DISTRIBUTOR: Viacom

LENGTH/
FREQUENCY:
30 min./weekly

PRODUCERS: Mace Neufeld and Bob Rehme

NO. OF
EPISODES: 26

TERMS: Barter 3/3.5 split

DAYPART:
weekend early
fringe/access

THE MAURY POVICH SHOW



The former *Current Affair* host takes on the hour talk format.

AVAILABLE:
Fall 1991

DISTRIBUTOR: Paramount

LENGTH/
FREQUENCY:
60 min./strip

PRODUCER: Maury Povich

NO. OF
EPISODES: 200

TERMS: Cash + barter (2 minutes)

DAYPART:
Fringe

IN FOCUS

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

NOW IT CAN BE TOLD

	Investigative news magazine hosted by Geraldo Rivera and featuring a team of reporters.
AVAILABLE: Fall 1991	DISTRIBUTOR: Tribune Entertainment
LENGTH/ FREQUENCY: 30 min./strip	PRODUCERS: Marty Berman and Geraldo Rivera
NO. OF EPISODES: 39 weeks original/11 weeks updated repeats	TERMS: Cash + barter (1 minute)
DAYPART: access	

ON THE EDGE WITH RON REAGAN (WORKING TITLE)

	New late-night talk show starring Ron Reagan Jr.
AVAILABLE: Fall 1991	DISTRIBUTOR: MCA TV (50 percent owned by Fox TV Stations)
LENGTH/ FREQUENCY: 60 min./strip	PRODUCER: Kevin Bright
NO. OF EPISODES: 150-195	TERMS: 6.5/6.5
DAYPART: late fringe	

\$100,000 PYRAMID

	John Davidson hosts this incarnation of the familiar game show.
AVAILABLE: January 1991	DISTRIBUTOR: Orbis
LENGTH/ FREQUENCY: 30 min./strip	PRODUCER: Stewart Television
NO. OF EPISODES: 22 weeks original, 12 weeks repeat	TERMS: Cash + barter (1 minute)
DAYPART: early fringe	

REALITIES

	A magazine program with David Hartman, telling real stories from the point of view of the subject and shot on location.
AVAILABLE: Fall 1991	DISTRIBUTOR: Viacom
LENGTH/ FREQUENCY: 60 mins./strip	PRODUCER: Greystone Comm. Production in association with Viacom Ent.
NO. OF EPISODES: 39 weeks original, 13 weeks repeat	TERMS: Cash + barter (2 minutes)
DAYPART: early fringe	

SCRABBLE

	Hosted by Steve Edwards, Scrabble reprises the NBC show ('84-'89).
AVAILABLE: Fall 1991	DISTRIBUTOR: Group W
LENGTH/ FREQUENCY: 30 min./strip	PRODUCER: Reg Grundy
NO. OF EPISODES: 39 weeks original, 13 weeks repeat	TERMS: Cash + barter (1 minute)
DAYPART: early fringe/access	

TARZAN

	Exciting action-adventure show with stories focusing on his efforts to protect his fellow creatures and preserve his environment.
AVAILABLE: Fall 1991	DISTRIBUTOR: Worldvision
LENGTH/ FREQUENCY: 30 min./weekly	PRODUCER: Balenciaga/William F. Cook Production in association with Producciones Telemay
NO. OF EPISODES: 25	TERMS: 3.5/3
DAYPART: weekend afternoon	

WKRP IN CINCINNATI

	New first-run episodes of the CBS show ('78-'82), with some returning cast members.
AVAILABLE: Fall 1991	DISTRIBUTOR: MTM
LENGTH/ FREQUENCY: 30 min./weekly	PRODUCER: Hugh Wilson
NO. OF EPISODES: Varies according to plan; no less than 22	TERMS: Three plans, two including off-net episodes; barter (3.5/3) for first-run
DAYPART: access	

ROSEANNE

	Popular sitcom starring the inimitable Roseanne Barr.
AVAILABLE: Fall 1992	DISTRIBUTOR: Viacom
LENGTH/ FREQUENCY: 30 min./strip or weekly	PRODUCER: Carsey-Werner
NO. OF EPISODES: minimum of five seasons	TERMS: cash + barter
DAYPART: variable	

THE WONDER YEARS

	An ABC sitcom starring Fred Savage as a suburban junior high school student in the late '60s. With voiceovers by Daniel Stern.
AVAILABLE: October 1992	DISTRIBUTOR: Turner
LENGTH/ FREQUENCY: 30 min./strip	PRODUCER: New World Ent.
NO. OF EPISODES: 100-144	TERMS: Cash + barter (1 minute)
DAYPART: early fringe/access	

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Satellite ITU Regions

Region Name		Region Name	
Asia		JC Sat: JC Sat 1/JC Sat 2	
Company Name	Japan Communications Satellite Co.	Target	Japan
Address	Ministerial Office, Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, Tokyo, Japan	Transponder capacity	Mid-band capacity of 40 channels
Telephone	03-3500-1234	Number of Channels	36 + upgraders issued
Fax	03-3500-1235	Legacy Date	Per January 1st, 1991
E-mail	jc@jcsat.or.jp	Comments	
Page	N/A	Comments	
Page	N/A	Comments	
Comments		Comments	
Region Name		Region Name	
Asia		SCC: Superbird 1 & 2	
Company Name	Space Communication Corp.	Target	Japan
Address	Ministerial Office, Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, Tokyo, Japan	Transponder capacity	30
Telephone	03-3500-1234	Number of Channels	30 + upgraders issued
Fax	03-3500-1235	Legacy Date	Starts & Nov. 91
E-mail	sc@space.com	Comments	
Page	N/A	Comments	
Page	N/A	Comments	
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