

MLP

# PANORAMA

THE TELEVISION MAGAZINE

APRIL 1981

\$2.00



## TEMPER! TEMPER!

Behind Hollywood's Creative Disputes

### BOXING AND TV

*Why Viewers Are Taking It on the Chin*

*How to Beat Those Video Games*

*A Complete Guide to Cable's Basic Services*

*Home Video—Where We're Going from Here*

### ALASKA DISCOVERS TV

Now It's Hunting, Fishing and 'The Six Million Dollar Man' *By Joe McGinniss*



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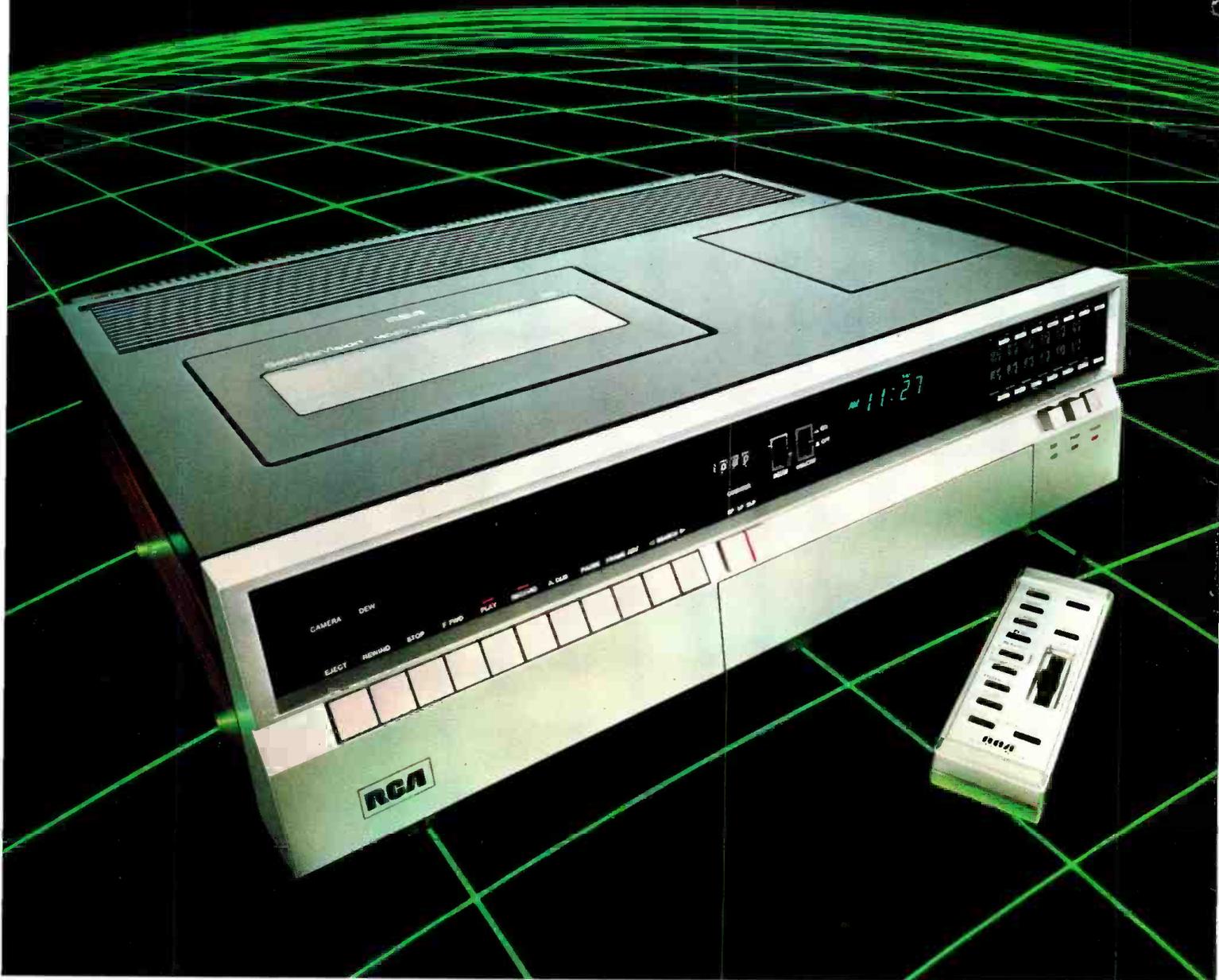
# The Day TV News Brought Us Together

*By Edwin Diamond*



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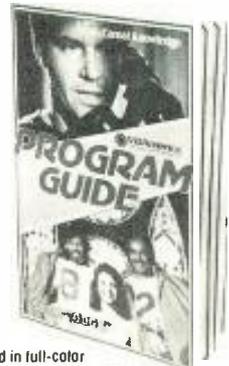
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# PANORAMA

THE TELEVISION MAGAZINE

APRIL 1981

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 4

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2 APRIL 1981

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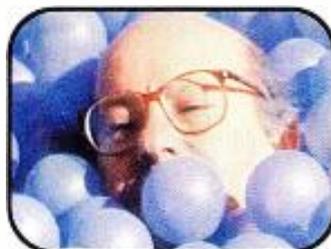
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# Exclusive Rental Offer from Your Authorized Walt Disney Home Video Dealer!



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VCBDG

# “Reality Programming”

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## Truth Doesn't Matter Any More

By RICHARD REEVES

**Room 318 of the CBS building** on West 52nd Street in New York is where you end up if you take a blue ticket from one of the young men who stand on street corners in midtown Manhattan calling out: “Free preview of a new TV show!” I did take one on a cold January afternoon and soon found myself in a comfortable chair with push buttons under each arm.

“We are going to see a magazine-type show,” said a pleasant young man who told us—there were 21 of us gathered off the street—to press the right button, the green one, when we liked something we saw and to press the left button, the red one, when we thought something was “poor.”

The show they screened for us was called *That's My Line*—a magazine show of sorts, an imitation of the “reality programming” of *Real People* and *That's Incredible!* Bob Barker was the host; my throat tightened and I pressed hard on the red button whenever he was on-screen, which was a lot. The gimmick—or the format—was that Barker ran the thing like a quiz show, going into the audience and doing his best to help people make fools of themselves between filmed segments about a blind carpenter, a lunatic dentist who tries to make kids laugh by dressing as a rabbit while he drills teeth, male dancers who strip to sell clothes to women in Topeka, Kan., and a man who tells other men how to pick up women. Barker was helped by two women named Suzanne and Tiiu, who were described as “reporters.”

The testing procedure I participated in, according to Jay Eliasberg, CBS's vice

president of research, is used for most CBS series. The network simply pulls from 100 to 500 people, in small groups, off the streets of New York and Los Angeles and asks them to watch, push buttons, fill out a questionnaire and chat for a few minutes with someone from the Program Analysis Unit. That unit, part of Eliasberg's department, then prepares a 10- to 20-page report on the viewing sessions. Included is a long graph showing the minute-by-minute approval and

disapproval rates—a chart displaying the red- and green-button percentage for each and every scene.

The results for *That's My Line* were somewhat distorted by the fact that I occasionally took my finger off the red button—just so that no one would think I had died in Chair 15. The show, as it happened, was about the worst I had ever seen. I thought it was significantly terrible because it was such a faithful synthesis of what makes most network programming so distasteful. It was almost a parody, a seamless web of “news” and “entertainment,” presenting sex and exploitation—the humor of laughing at, not with, other people—as life, as a quiz show. Then, at the end, there was a brief disclaimer about “prepared dialogue,” which I took to mean that the words in segments featuring “real” people were made up by writers somewhere.

**I said some of that** in the questionnaire, 12 pages of straightforward ques-



tions like: Did you like Bob Barker? Did you like the reporter with the straight blonde hair? Would you watch this show if it played at the same time as *That's Incredible?*

No. No. No, I would weep.

The man in 318 glanced over the questionnaires and began to ask us questions. "I liked this show very much," said the man in Chair 21, speaking very slowly, carefully. "Why?" asked the host. "I don't know," Number 21 said. "I don't speak much English."

The rest of us, however, did speak English. We understood what we had just seen. And—statistically—we liked it. Most of the people who were asked questions answered with a variation of the line from the middle-aged man in Chair 9: "It's all right."

Of Bob Barker, who really is unspeakable, someone else said: "He's OK. He does what he's supposed to do." These people off the street talked like professionals. No one got excited one way or the other. The show did what it was supposed to do—it filled the time. None of us expected more than that. We were part of our own seamless web—of acceptance, of mediocrity, of anesthesia.

I hadn't been called on by our host—it makes you wonder where you went wrong—so I spoke up, asking about "prepared dialogue." He looked kind of blank about that, but my fellow panelists gave me this look of "So what else is new?" They, it became apparent, knew exactly what was going on, that "reality programming" is not real at all. It is programmed reality, a fraud. "I liked Tiiu," the man across from me said. "But you could figure out in five seconds that she wouldn't know what to say if they didn't hold cards up in front of her."

"The people at these sessions are usually quite articulate," Eliasberg told me. "They understand what they are seeing and they know what they want. What you want—or what I might want—is not important. . . . There is no question of knowing what people want. They want *this*. The argument that they want something better or that we don't know what we are doing is just bull."

**He was, I thought**, at least partly right. The networks *do* know what they are doing. They have created a context for prime-time programming and have forced, or persuaded, viewers to accept that context. People, including the people who wander through Room 318 each day, are conditioned to accept familiar programming—things they are used to. *That's My Line* was a familiar product historically connected to every quiz show, to *The Gong Show*, to *60 Minutes* and to every nightly news program.

Whatever else audience testing produces, it will favor programs that are like old programs. In fact, Eliasberg, who had said earlier that the process was generally predictive of ratings success, conceded that it had often failed to predict the success of programming that was in any way innovative. *All in the Family*, he said, was disliked by preview audiences. Why? Because it wasn't familiar—it wasn't part of the seamless web.

*That's My Line* was part of it—and so were all of us in Room 318. My colleagues were unnervingly sophisticated about television practices; they sometimes sounded like network programmers. We talked about "reality" and "reporters" and "dialogue." We all knew that "reality" did not mean truth, "reporters" did not have to report, and real "dialogue" did not have to be the spontaneous words of real people.

"Reality programming," I thought, really did have a history, at least a television history, and perhaps that was why it did well in previews. *That's My Line*, with its enhanced dialogue, was a modern version of the rigged quiz shows of 20 years ago. The difference now was that people were cynical enough—or conditioned enough—to accept the deception. Or perhaps it really isn't deception any more—it's just the enhanced reality of television, where one day very soon news will be entertainment, entertainment will be news, and it will all be real—as long as it's on television and as long as a few people on the streets of New York and Los Angeles don't get so upset that they lean on the red buttons in the preview room. ■

# PANORAMA

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# LETTERS



## MORE MONKEY BUSINESS

I agreed with the majority of your nominations for the J. Fred Muggs Awards (January). However, CBS and Lorimar Productions should share a Chimpy, divided at the waist, with the lower portion going to CBS, for the suspenseless, "butler-did-it" ending that they attached to the saga of "Who shot J.R.?" Had the supremely gifted Agatha Christie still been living, the hype over what became the dullest whodunit in history would have surely killed her.

*Jimmy Kirk  
Reynoldsburg, Ohio*

## CRONKITE COMMENTARY

As the unnamed "Marine" on page 57 of the January issue ("Is Walter Cronkite as Good as His Ratings?"), I'd like to observe that it is fortunate for all of us who now compete with Walter that he is better than his ratings.

*Jeff Gralnick  
Executive Producer, Special Events  
ABC World News Tonight  
New York City*

I note that my comment [about Walter Cronkite] was printed with the following note attached: "A spokesperson for Cronkite claims that Reed Irvine's quote 'seriously misrepresents what Walter Cronkite said and what he believes'."

Had I been asked, I would have been happy to supply PANORAMA with the complete text of Cronkite's interview with Vitali Kobysh in which he agreed that the Soviet threat was probably a myth. I would also have been happy to supply a copy of the letter in which Cronkite explained that he was thinking of a Soviet threat in terms of "an unprovoked nuclear attack on the United

States." These documents would demonstrate that I did not misrepresent what Cronkite said.

*Reed Irvine  
Chairman, Accuracy in Media, Inc.  
Washington, D.C.*

## OFF TARGET

The January article "Beware of TV's Scoops" couldn't have missed the mark more widely. Instead of taking the networks to task for amazing and undeniable bloopers, PANORAMA should have dealt with the real problem that afflicts television and print news—that is, pack journalism. Banker alludes to the problem when he says three reporters from three different networks told him producers had waited to run their scoops until AP moved the story.

Clearly, pack journalism is a grave threat to diversity in news delivery. Articles such as yours will have a chilling effect on the reporters and producers who must make the decision to run with a scoop or to run with the pack. Sameness in the evening-news format and content is a greater sin than are the screw-ups cited by Banker.

*Thomas Prentice  
Austin, Texas*

## GEOGRAPHY 101

Unfortunately, David Handler, writing on public-access cable in February ("Where the Odd Man's In") doesn't look outside New York City. Nor does he look beyond his humorous but shallow review of the contents of that city's morass of vanity programs.

While he finds much of the programming cute, he denies the fundamental principles of freedom of (electronic) speech. His tunnel vision is unfair to the

thousands of community cable programmers across the country who fight to defend free access to electronic speech and are providing invaluable community services.

Just a reminder that the world does extend beyond New York.

*Tom Borrup  
Editor, Community Television Review  
Minneapolis*

## RIGHT ON THE MONEY

As a member of what you call "the upper crust," I must take issue with one point Mr. Stephen Birmingham raises in his otherwise enjoyable article "TV and the Very Rich: Why Dog-Food Commercials Are—If You Please—*De Rigueur*" (February). While I do plead guilty to many of the peculiar habits he points out (such as failing to turn down the volume when guests arrive—after all, TV is a good deal more lively than most people here on the Main Line), I was greatly incensed at having my cat referred to as a "middle-class pet." I should like to point out that cats are among the noblest of animals, simple, elegant and by no means characteristic of the bourgeoisie. But, aside from this one slip, Mr. Birmingham really did a superb job. Do continue to make articles such as these—if you please—*de rigueur*.

*Mrs. J. Edgar Hart  
Philadelphia*

## ANOTHER COUNTY HEARD FROM

I know that your January article "The Top Local Cable Systems in America" was a mammoth undertaking, but there are a very limited number of cable companies doing local-origination programming, and there are very few who do it with the professionalism and dedication we do. I'm sorry you missed us.

*Marcia Henning  
Program Director, Cross Country Cable  
Somerville, N.J.*

Correspondence for this column should be addressed to: Letters Department, PANORAMA, P.O. Box 950, Wayne, Pa. 19087. No anonymous correspondence will be published. Letters may be abridged because of space limitations. We regret that it will not be possible for us to reply individually to letter writers.



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"We thought the Magnavox picture quality and resolution were superb, and that off-the-air sensitivity was also extremely good.

"Major VHF channels were received with uniformly accurate color fidelity. This receiver produced superior color pictures

even when using its own indoor VHF and UHF antennas."

**"The special tuning features and remote control capabilities of the Magnavox receiver are awesome."**

"The tuning system is purely electronic and totally digital," they continue. "There is a fine tune switch and a memory lock button. If any channel is received mistuned, the user simply fine tunes up or down in frequency by holding the button, and when perfect tuning has been achieved, the button is released and the memory lock button is depressed once.

"Nearby is Magnavox's Video-matic feature. Depressing this button activates the electronic eye for automatic brightness adjustment, color adjustment circuits and automatic fine tune."

**"...unusually good for any receiver."**

Overall, Video Review rated the Magnavox 9.5 or better (out of a

possible 10.0) on Video Quality, Reception Sensitivity, Color Fidelity, and Video Resolution and Fidelity. As they put it, "...unusually good for any receiver."

We can only add that once you see a Magnavox color TV at your Magnavox dealer, we think you'll agree.

For Magnavox color TV specifications, write Magnavox Consumer Electronics Company, Dept. 700, P.O. Box 6950, Knoxville, Tennessee 37914.

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**The brightest ideas in the world are here to play.**

# “Hill Street Blues”: Grit, Humor and High-Voltage Drama

By CYRA McFADDEN

**Police work is a futile** pursuit enlivened by moments of terror. Or so it is depicted in *Hill Street Blues*, NBC's brilliant new series, which resembles no other TV cop show and sets a new high standard for the form.

*HSB* is a mixture of grittiness and humor, a sometimes confusing blur of action, sound and image. Hand-held cameras give it a live, jumpy look. As it does in life, dialogue overlaps; characters don't always finish sentences, and sometimes they are unintelligible against the background clatter of a police radio. The series fields as many as 13 major characters in a single episode. It takes one a while to sort them out and place them in relation to one another. And like *M\*A\*S\*H*, the only show that lends itself to comparison, *HSB* is blackly funny one minute, throat-catching the next. I can't remember a police drama with the same power to deliver a jolt.

In the pilot, two cops stumble into some junkies shooting up in a hallway. Before the “Blues” can even register what they see, they are shot and go down in a slow-motion tangle of arms and legs. Said a policeman with whom I discussed the scene, “That’s the way it is, exactly. You stop somebody on a traffic warrant, or walk into a burglary in progress or you’re just looking for a phone, like those two guys, and BLAM. They blow you away.”

Senseless—but Hill Street precinct is set in an unidentified urban no man's land similar to the South Bronx, and reasoned behavior has no more practical application here than Charlotte Ford's *Book of Modern Manners*. The street gangs are crazy, bizarre manifestations of the territorial imperative.

The laws are crazy. When a rapist is caught, after weeks of terrorizing women, he “walks” because he is 17 and legally a juvenile. The cops themselves are crazy to one degree or another, burnouts from waging the perpetual guerrilla war they can't win.

Among their number, at Hill Street, is a Serpico-like scourge of God with a penchant for biting criminals. Belker (Bruce Weitz) barks back at stray dogs and must himself be kept on a short leash. Accused of biting the rapist, he blows up and screams, “I didn't lay a tooth on the kid!”

**In charge of the precinct** is Capt. Frank Furillo (Daniel Travanti), a tired-looking man with one of the world's great deadpans. He has a nagging ex-wife, a fragile détente with the street gangs and an affair going with a public defender. Played by Veronica Hamel, she is as tough-minded, smart and capable as he is and a welcome departure from the wet T-shirt school of accomplished women seen on *Charlie's Angels*.

Michael Conrad plays Sgt. Phil Esterhaus, who mediates between Furillo and the rank and file. In another bit of inspired casting, Conrad has a beat-up, wise, veteran cop's face, a broken marriage and a girlfriend who's still in high school.

The show demonstrates a nice ear for buzzwords. A police sociologist talks in the squishy jargon of his profession: “You've got a dangerous number of environmentally handicapped types out there.” A commando-type wants Furillo to let him and his team “neutralize” a liquor store in which young hoods are holding hostages, because “Our



**Sgt. Phil Esterhaus (Michael Conrad, second from left) breaks up a Hill Street skirmish.**

group needs the validation.” A caller wants the captain to let a bunch of kids tour the station so they can “interface with the police experience.” Replies Furillo, “I doubt there's a kid in this district who hasn't interfaced with the police experience.”

**So quotable is the show**, as written by its executive producers, Steven Bochco and Michael Kozoll, it is hard to know when to stop. I would be remiss, however, not to cite a line as mordantly funny as “Let's drive off that bridge when we come to it.”

Watching *Hill Street Blues*, I kept wondering how it would fare in the ratings. Critics love it. But will audiences, conditioned by the softer-edged comedy of *Barney Miller*, the high style of *Kojak* and the B-movie macho of *Starsky & Hutch* and *The Streets of San Francisco*? As I write, a few weeks into the midseason series, NBC is not being much help. The show was being broadcast on Thursday and Saturday nights, then only on Saturday—erratic scheduling that means if one wants to watch the series, the first problem will be finding it.

Go to the trouble, and thereby confound the network executive who is trying to tie a rock around *HSB*'s neck. *Hill Street Blues* is the first fresh, intelligent show of this surpassingly dumb and dreary season. I just hope it hasn't been killed by the time you read this. ■

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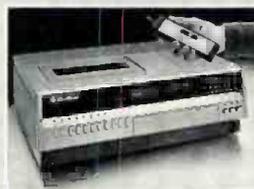
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# Musicals, from *Oz to Jazz*

By GENE SHALIT

**The Wizard of Oz:** (1939) B&W and color; 101 minutes; CBS Video Enterprises\*; \$59.95.

**All That Jazz:** (1979) color; 123 minutes; Magnetic Video Corp.\*; \$69.95.

*The Wizard of Oz* and *All That Jazz*, two of my favorite films, epitomize the two extremes of American musical movies. *Oz* is a fairy-tale fantasy. *Jazz* is fantasy-reality. (Mystics will note the *Z* in each title, a letter that occurs in many musicals: for example, *Zingin' in the Rain*, *The Sound of Music* and *The Muzak Man*.) Videocassettes of *Oz* and *Jazz* are, by all accounts, having soaring sales.

These two movies—one a classic, one destined to be—are nearly half a century and a world apart. *Oz* is innocent 1930s; *Jazz* is a classy flash of '80.

*The Wizard of Oz* was the work of so many people that to this day nobody knows *who* made it. It took two years, four directors and 10 screenwriters. It made Judy Garland a star. It also made her a wreck. MGM pumped her so full of pills that the poor girl didn't know if she was going or coming (going to sleep or coming to work). The 17-year-old confided to Margaret Hamilton (the Wicked Witch of the West and perhaps Judy's only friend in the hostile cast) that she was being given "a lot of pills to sleep and a lot of pills to stay awake." Her ego was dented because she knew she was second choice: MGM couldn't get Shirley Temple to play Dorothy (thank goodness). How odd: In *Oz* (fantasy), the *real* girl is force-fed drugs to keep her going. In *Jazz* (reality), the on-screen hero (brilliantly played by Roy Scheider) constantly gulps pills to keep going.

Many may deserve credit for *Oz*, but



one man did the singular job of creating *All That Jazz*: Bob Fosse (pronounced FAH-see), the incomparable choreographer and director who also made *Cabaret*. *Jazz* is his story, based largely on his own career: the rise of a relentlessly creative, chain-smoking man possessed. He was simultaneously making a major movie, directing and choreographing a big Broadway musical, surviving a broken marriage, having an affair with a gifted and spirited dancer, and blanketing his nights with come-and-go lovers. The pace was perilous. So while his dances made our hearts skip merrily, Fosse's heart suddenly *did* skip—not so merrily. Only remarkable heart surgery (and the doctors who got him to quit jumping around his room) saved him. He's lucky to be alive.

And so are we that he is. He had so many friends infesting his hospital room that intensive care was turned into extensive flair. And keeping Fosse

away from cigarettes was like trying to take away Dorothy's ruby slippers.

**On the set,** Judy Garland was virtually friendless because the four male stars were afraid she would steal the picture and they resented her. Watching Jack Haley (the Tin Man), Ray Bolger (the Scarecrow), Bert Lahr (the Cowardly Lion) and Frank Morgan (the Wizard himself) on-screen with Judy, who would dream that they could resist clutching that sweet-faced girl to their hearts? Alas, her life on that set was misery.

Even her big number was almost cut. Did you know that *Over the Rainbow* was taken out of the picture after the first screening? Too sentimental, they said. Luckily, it was spliced back in, and it became the anthem of Judy Garland's tortured life. She won a special Academy Award for her performance. But Scheider was schneidered out of *his* Oscar for *All That Jazz*. Instead it went to Dustin Hoffman, whose performance in *Kramer vs. Kramer* was certainly workmanlike, but whose role was untaxing compared with Scheider's complicated and electrifying performance.

*Jazz* soars with a dazzle of daring and a hundred unforgettable moments. And yet it does not play as well on cassette as does *Oz*. *Jazz*'s opening scene needs scope and sweep: At a dancers' audition, the camera pulls back to reveal *hundreds* of hopefuls (and one hilarious hopeless, turning wrong and a step behind). That needs a large screen, and TV does it an injustice because its theatricality is lost. *Oz* does well on TV. It's a fairy tale to cup in your hands and cherish. *Oz* radiates innocence. *Jazz* is guilt-edged. There is room for both.

How wonderful each is, yet how dissimilar. One is for children and adults, the other for adults. That's important. For, were Dorothy to find herself in *All That Jazz*, she would surely say, "Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas any more." ■

\*CBS Video Enterprises, 51 West 52nd St., New York, N.Y. 10019. Magnetic Video Corp., 23434 Industrial Park Court, Farmington Hills, Mich. 48624.

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# April 1981

*New Pilots Set for Takeoff . . . Networks and Cable Do Battle over Films . . .  
A Union Lists Its TV Grievances . . . License Shake-up in Britain*

## What's Happening

**HOLLYWOOD**  
DON SHIRLEY REPORTING

### It's Spring- Training Time for Fall Pilots

Notes on the spring crop of pilots, a few of which may grow into new series next fall:

Last year's rash of comedy pilots set in Vietnam didn't make it, but ABC is considering an hour-long Vietnam drama, *Fly Away Home*, for a spot on this year's schedule. Vietnamese-born Tiana Alexandra is a star of the show. She also happens to be the wife of its producer-writer Stirling Silliphant.

Mary Tyler Moore will not be back, but her company has returned to the setting of a local TV station in a CBS half-hour sitcom pilot starring Stephanie Faracy (of *The Last Resort*) as an anchorwoman, with Betty White finally promoted to boss. CBS also has commissioned an hour-long dramatic pilot about a local TV newswoman. She's to be played by Helen Shaver, who starred with Beau Bridges in the short-lived series *United States*.

Waltons' creator Earl

Hamner Jr. will try to replace his Virginia farmers with a family of California wine-makers in CBS's *The Vintage Years*. Orson Welles will not play the grandpappy.

Lucille Ball has produced and directed a gang comedy for NBC. It's about a monastery and stars her old nemesis Gale Gordon. The title



**Lucille Ball: Starts a monastery with one of her old gang.**

has been changed from *Oh, Brother!* to *Bungle Abbey*.

In NBC's *Judgement Day*, lawyers Victor Buono and Roddy McDowall try to send the deceased to heaven and hell, respectively. Barry Sullivan presides over the court.

Feature films that may become series include *Fame*, *Norma Rae* (starring Cassie Yates for TV), *The Goodbye*

*Girl* and CBS's *Private Benjamin*, which may be aped by another series about women in the service, NBC's *36 Charley*.

ABC may continue this year's obsession with the tra-vaits of the wealthy in *Golden Gate*—starring Jean Simmons, Richard Kiley and Mary Crosby (Kristin Shepard of *Dallas*)—and in *Scruples*, a series taken from the CBS mini-series.

In the CBS pilot *Money*, a dead man whose body was cryogenically frozen keeps communicating with his family via videocassettes recorded prior to his death. And who says the networks ignore the home video market? (Ed. note: For an overview of next fall's programming trends, see Doug Hill's second column item on page 14.)

### Hostages Pose Docudrama Dilemma

How do you prepare a TV movie about an international crisis when you don't know how it will end?

The networks faced precisely this predicament last year. The Iran hostage crisis was in full gear, and the networks' TV-movie moguls felt competitive pressure to do something about the Iran proposals that crossed their desks. But no one knew the tale's denouement—or whether it would in fact

be a happy one.

CBS decided to grab the story of the six Americans who escaped from Iran via the Canadian Embassy. Their experiences offered derring-do and a happy ending, and their story was so marginal to the hostages that it could be told regardless of the hostages' fate. CBS is expected to broadcast *The Canadian Connection* in May.

ABC's movie department chose to develop a script about the seizure of the American Embassy, based on the recollections of two black hostages who were released early in the crisis. There was even talk of letting the two ex-hostages discuss the accuracy of the film, on-screen, at breaks during the dramatization.

However, the ABC brass got cold feet. They worried that such a film might endanger the remaining hostages, unless it were withheld until they were free—and then it might have lost its topicality. They declined to sink big bucks into a project with such a tenuous future. At press time, ABC still hadn't decided whether to make an Iran movie. "You cannot fly fast with this," said ABC TV-movies boss Stu Samuels. "There are eight million aspects to consider."

NBC spent the long months of the crisis looking at the forest instead of the trees. Peacock Central commissioned Stanley R. Greenberg (*The Missiles of October*) to devel-



**The Shah: His story ends ere Day 444.**

op a film that might cover as much as a half-century of Iranian history. While doing his research, Greenberg narrowed the subject down to the late Shah of Iran. His film would end with the Shah's death, thereby avoiding the question of the hostages' fate.

According to Greenberg, NBC did not request a rush job—which was fortunate: "I'm not quick. One of the potential advantages of the 'long form' is that you don't have to reach a deadline today. If you do have to meet that kind of deadline, you might as well do a straight documentary."

But Stanley Rubin—co-executive producer of the CBS film—said yes, he definitely wanted and planned to beat any rivals to the airwaves. At press' time, it appeared that he would succeed.

#### NEW YORK DOUG HILL REPORTING

## The Networks Try to Beat Cable to the Movies

Lately, network executives have been complaining that the films they buy are getting lower ratings than they should. The reason, they say, is that people first see these theatrical motion pictures on

pay-cable. (For some other possible explanations, see "The Ratings Race," page 16.) Now, there's increasing talk in network circles of a new weapon in the war to win movie rights—and audiences—away from pay-cable.

That new weapon is the "preemptive buy"; meaning, pay the movie studios a premium to show a film *before* it plays on cable. "This is what I would label an important trend, a coming phenomenon," predicts one network film buyer. "It has arisen in conversations with suppliers of all sizes; it has become a topic of conversation in all negotiations."

The prototype for this approach was NBC's purchase of the film *Breaking Away* last year. By paying \$5 million for one network showing, NBC got the popular movie directly from its run in the theaters, significantly sooner than it would have had the usual pay-cable run come between. Since then, NBC has bought *The Kidnapping of the President* and *Prom Night* for broadcast before they played on cable.

Many observers don't believe the preemptive buy will become standard practice because, they say, a network just can't afford to shell out a premium big enough to make up what the studios would get from pay-cable—especially now, when the networks are in financial straits. "It makes no sense; it's so dis-economic," says Michael Fuchs, senior vice president of programming for the pay-TV giant, Home Box Office. "I think you're just hearing a little frustration out there."

But network and studio executives agree that, on certain films, deals might be worked out that would benefit both of them. The networks still pay millions more to license a film than cable does, and they've been threatening to pay a lot less if cable continues to eat into

their ratings. Thus it seems likely that the network exclusivity ploy will at least become an important chip in the negotiating process. As one studio executive put it, "Money always talks—that's the definition of a market."

## Outlook for 1981-82: More of the Same

As the deadline nears for setting next fall's prime-time schedules, the word on the street is that ABC, CBS and NBC will once again be making their decisions with a nervous eye on the bottom line. This season's cautious lineups reflected sagging profit margins at all three networks—which in turn reflected the woes of the economy in general—and many experts predict more of the same, literally, for next year. That means, these observers believe, fewer cancellations of marginal shows, fewer risks on unusual new shows, fewer specials and miniseries, more imitations of successful shows and more reruns—all of which spells disappointment for those viewers weary of what they're seeing now.

"There will be plenty to gripe about," predicts Anthony Hoffman, broadcast analyst with the investment firm A.G. Becker Incorporated. "The major thing that will be lacking is a willingness to try innovative programming." A New York-based producer agrees, saying the networks are becoming "much, much tougher" in price negotiations (so shows that can be produced cheaply have a better chance of getting bought) and that they're ordering significantly fewer pilots than in the past (so there will be less to choose from).

Network programmers confirm that the number of pilot orders has declined by a third or more, but they say it

doesn't necessarily follow that their choices will be conservative. "We're making some bold decisions this year," says Alan Wagner, New York vice president of programs for ratings leader CBS. "Some of our pilots are quite daring. Risk-taking is our business." Asked for examples of daredevil programming, Wagner cited *Fog*, a comedy about the captain of a ragtag ocean steamer with a crew so "baroque" the show was once titled *Strange Cargo*; and *Baker's Dozen*, a police comedy that attempts to do for cops what *M\*A\*S\*H* does for wartime surgeons.

Other dissenters from the conventional wisdom point out that the prime-time picture may be so grim at ABC and NBC that they'll be forced to make wholesale changes, despite the money squeeze. If that happens, look for more layoffs at both companies. "Obviously, they have to cut back somewhere," says Hoffman.

#### WASHINGTON STEVE WEINBERG REPORTING

## Blue-Collar Blues

Union workers are clumsy, uneducated louts who possess few leadership traits. The unions they belong to are degrading, violent, obstructive and primarily concerned with fomenting strikes.

These are the conclusions a TV viewer might reach from watching network news and entertainment shows, according to a year-old ongoing project conducted by a major union based in Washington, D.C.—the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers. During the month of February, 1980, 1500 union members in 43 states monitored prime-time television. Robert Kalaski, di-

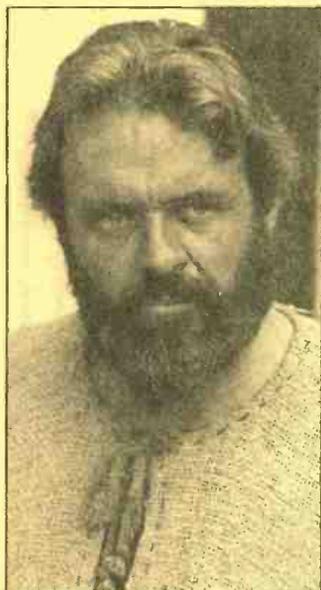
*continued on page 81*

# What's On

SOME OF THE NOTEWORTHY PROGRAMS AND EVENTS THAT ARE SCHEDULED FOR TELEVISION THIS MONTH. (CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS FOR DATES AND TIMES IN YOUR AREA.)

## DRAMA AND MOVIES

**Masada.** Peter O'Toole and Peter Strauss star in an eight-hour miniseries about the Jewish rebellion against the Romans in the 1st century A.D. ABC.



**Anthony Hopkins: Paul plus 11.**

**Peter and Paul.** Four-hour, two-part account of the lives of the Apostles, starring Anthony Hopkins, Jose Ferrer and Raymond Burr. CBS.

**The Seven Dials Mystery.** Cheryl Campbell stars in the Agatha Christie thriller. Mobil Showcase Network (syndicated).

**Thérèse Raquin.** The Émile Zola story, with Kate Nelligan in the title role, is a three-part *Masterpiece Theatre* beginning this month. PBS.

**Dressed to Kill.** Michael Caine and Angie Dickinson star in this 1980 theatrical release about a brutal murder and the hunt for the killer. The Movie Channel, Showtime (cable).

**Dear Liar.** The letters of George Bernard Shaw and Mrs. Patrick Campbell are dramatized by Edward Herrmann and Jane Alexander in this *Hall of Fame* production. PBS.

**The Gin Game.** Hume Cronyn and Jessica Tandy in a taped performance of D.L. Coburn's award-winning play set in an old folks' home. Showtime (cable).

**The Big Red One.** A tough sergeant (Lee Marvin) leads his rawboned squad through WWII in this 1980 film. Home Box Office (cable).

**The Best Little Girl in the World.** Made-for-TV movie about anorexia nervosa, with Eva Marie Saint, Jason Miller, Charles Durning and Jennifer Jason Leigh. ABC.

**Hopscotch.** Glenda Jackson and Walter Matthau join forces to outwit the CIA in this 1980 film comedy. Showtime (cable).

**The Shakespeare Plays.** This month, it's *Antony and Cleopatra*, with Colin Blakely and Jane Lapotaire in the title roles. PBS.

**The Electric Horseman.** The romance of a cowboy (Robert Redford) and a TV reporter (Jane Fonda) is the focus of this 1979 film. Home Theater Network (cable).

**Mystery! Sergeant Cribb** and *The Racing Game* return for two new episodes each. PBS.

## SPORTS

**Baseball.** NBC's *Game-of-the-Week* with Joe Garagiola and Tony Kubek begins April 11, and cable's USA Network begins *Thursday Night Baseball* on April 16.

**The Masters Tournament.** Golf's classiest competition is cov-

ered live from Augusta, Ga., on April 9-12. CBS.

**Basketball.** The NBA play-offs start this month. CBS, USA Network (cable).

**ABC's Wide World of Sports.** The show's 20th anniversary is celebrated in prime time. ABC.

**Vic Braden's Tennis for the Future.** The sport's funniest teacher begins a new instructional series. PBS.

**The NFL Draft.** The first round, live from New York. Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (cable).

**Hockey.** The NHL play-offs begin this month. USA Network (cable).

## MUSIC AND CULTURAL PROGRAMS

**Alpha Repertory Television Service (ARTS).** A new cable channel devoted to cultural programming signs on this month (see page 18).

**Great Performances.** Leonard Bernstein conducts Mahler's "Resurrection" symphony. PBS.

**One Night Stand: A Keyboard Event.** Jazz greats, including Herbie Hancock, Hubert Laws and nonagenarian Eubie Blake, in concert at Carnegie Hall. Bravo (cable).

**Show Time at the Apollo.** A film record of acts in the '50s and '60s at the great Harlem nightclub includes performances by Duke Ellington, Count Basie and Sarah Vaughan. Black Entertainment Television (cable).

**Tulsa Country Music Festival.** Mel Tillis, Roy Clark, the Oak Ridge Boys and others recorded at last year's gathering. Showtime (cable).

**War Requiem.** Benjamin Britten's composition, performed in the cathedral of Dresden. PBS.

**Standing Room Only.** Mac Davis in concert in Monte Carlo. Home Box Office (cable).

**On Stage at the Agora.** Rockers Eddie Money and Ian Hunter perform in Cleveland. Nickelodeon (cable).

## CHILDREN'S SHOWS

**Studio See and Vegetable Soup.** Two new series have premieres this month. The first, for teens and preteens, takes a "behind-the-scenes look at the world." The second, for children ages 6 to 9, presents people of many cultures "doing real things." Nickelodeon (cable).

**Once Upon a Classic.** Sir Walter Scott's medieval adventure story *The Talisman* continues. PBS.

## NEWS AND DOCUMENTARIES



**Gorilla: King Kong et al. waning.**

**National Geographic Special: Gorilla.** All about the largest ape and his chances of avoiding extinction. PBS.

**ABC News Closeup.** Marshall Frady is the host for this look at nuclear proliferation, with special attention to the Middle East. ABC.

**Consumer Reports: The Car Show.** How-to's of and new developments in auto buying and ownership. Home Box Office (cable).

**Bill Moyers' Journal: Alternatives to Disaster.** Russian and American panelists examine the arms race. PBS.

**Brother, Can You Spare a Dime? A** chronicle of the Depression era, released theatrically in 1975. The Movie Channel (cable).

**The Day After Trinity.** The story of J. Robert Oppenheimer and the development of the atomic bomb. PBS. ■

# The Ratings Race

## Who Is Killing the Blockbuster Movies?

BY PHILIP BURRELL

Is the heyday of blockbuster movies on network television ending? Very possibly. High ratings, once virtually guaranteed when a big box-office picture was scheduled, are no longer a sure thing. And in the current economy, it's timely to speculate whether the networks will continue to risk huge investments in theatricals in the face of declining Nielsen trends.

The prices of first-rate theatricals have escalated to the \$5-to-10-million-per-play range. Clearly, the stakes are now too lofty for broadcasters to engage regularly in an uncertain game of reel-to-reel roulette. *Rocky* (a 53 share in its premiere) and *Jaws* (a 57) notwithstanding, the networks have been badly burned by commitments to high-grossing films whose lowly TV ratings bear no resemblance to record revenues at the box office.

Against this economic background, it's highly ironic how the networks themselves have created a major roadblock to movie-programming success by indulging in a self-destructive scheduling technique motivated by the old ratings game. Standard network procedure now includes "blunting" a proven theatrical blockbuster by running another strong film—be it a theatrical or TV movie—in head-to-head competition. The tragic side effect of this practice is that network programmers have spoiled the TV debuts of many smash theatrical films by their overzealous efforts to exploit one box-office or TV-movie biggie over another.

The classic example of this kind of scheduling lunacy took place in February 1979 when ABC scheduled its premiere of the made-for-TV *Elvis* against CBS's encore of *Gone with the Wind*. Not content to be outmaneuvered in the ratings race, NBC countered with the

Academy-Award credentials of *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*. When the Nielsen tapes were tallied, *Elvis* emerged the long-shot winner by a mere three rating points. However, the real winner in the crazy counter-programming game was the guy with his trusty Beta-max—the only one with a clear viewing alternative.

A further blow to theatricals is the high ratio of hits

emerging from the current large crop of made-for-TV films commissioned by the networks themselves. Some of these movies have performed well enough to rival the expensive theatricals (see chart) but, more important, they've been responsible for transferring the power of financial and artistic control back into network quarters. If these "in-house" network movies, produced with smaller budgets and lesser-known casts, continue to flourish, audiences may have to endure even longer intervals between home-screen visits from Clint, Barbra and Burt.

As for the new technologies, the Nielsen jury is still out on the degree to which saturation booking on cable systems hurts network movie ratings—even though, as PANORAMA's Doug Hill reports in his column on page 14, network executives are concerned enough to try to minimize cable's impact by grabbing films for broadcast *before* they appear on cable. However, ABC's experience with *Saturday Night Fever* rates as a prime example of what cable's impact *might* be. Not only did Travolta and Company grossly underperform in their network debut relative to expectations (the film got a 38 share), but combined network shares were off five to 10 percent on nights when the film had its premiere cable show-cases in major markets.

For an expanded look at scheduling malpractice employed by the networks, this month's chart illustrates how the head-to-head programming of movies has weakened the ratings clout of many theatrical films. ■

### MOVIES VS. MOVIES

DATE	NETWORK	TITLE	RATING	SHARE
11/25/79	CBS	Oh, God!	31.7	45
	NBC	Smokey and the Bandit	31.8	44
10/19/80	NBC	The Outlaw Josey Wales (R)	27.9	44
	ABC	Funny Lady	16.0	25
11/15/79	CBS	Silver Streak	25.1	40
	NBC	A Bridge Too Far	16.9	26
2/11/79	ABC	*Elvis	27.4	40
	CBS	Gone with the Wind (R)	24.3	36
	NBC	One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest	22.5	32
11/2/80	NBC	The Gauntlet	25.1	39
	ABC	A Star Is Born	15.2	23
1/21/79	ABC	The Longest Yard (R)	24.6	39
	CBS	Black Sunday	20.4	35
11/16/80	ABC	Saturday Night Fever	26.7	38
	NBC	The Godfather (R)	16.9	25
9/28/80	ABC	*Marilyn: The Untold Story	23.4	37
	NBC	The Boys from Brazil	18.4	29
11/5/80	CBS	Love at First Bite	23.3	37
	NBC	*Alcatraz: The Whole Shocking Story	16.9	27
5/5/80	NBC	Breaking Away	21.4	33
	ABC	*Off the Minnesota Strip	20.6	32
2/12/80	CBS	The Exorcist	21.0	32
	NBC	The Swarm	16.1	24
11/9/80	ABC	The Spy Who Loved Me	19.7	28
	NBC	All the President's Men	13.6	19
11/14/80	ABC	California Suite	14.1	22
	NBC	The Godfather (R)	14.1	22

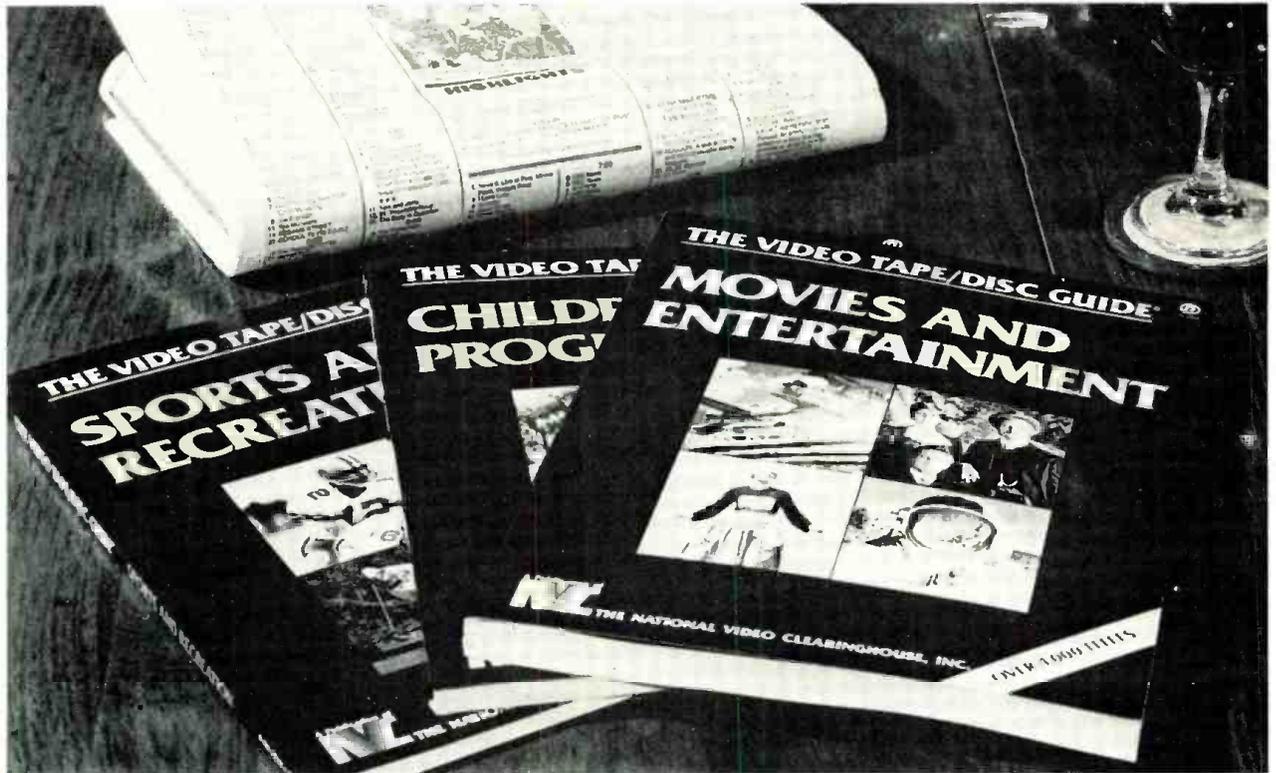
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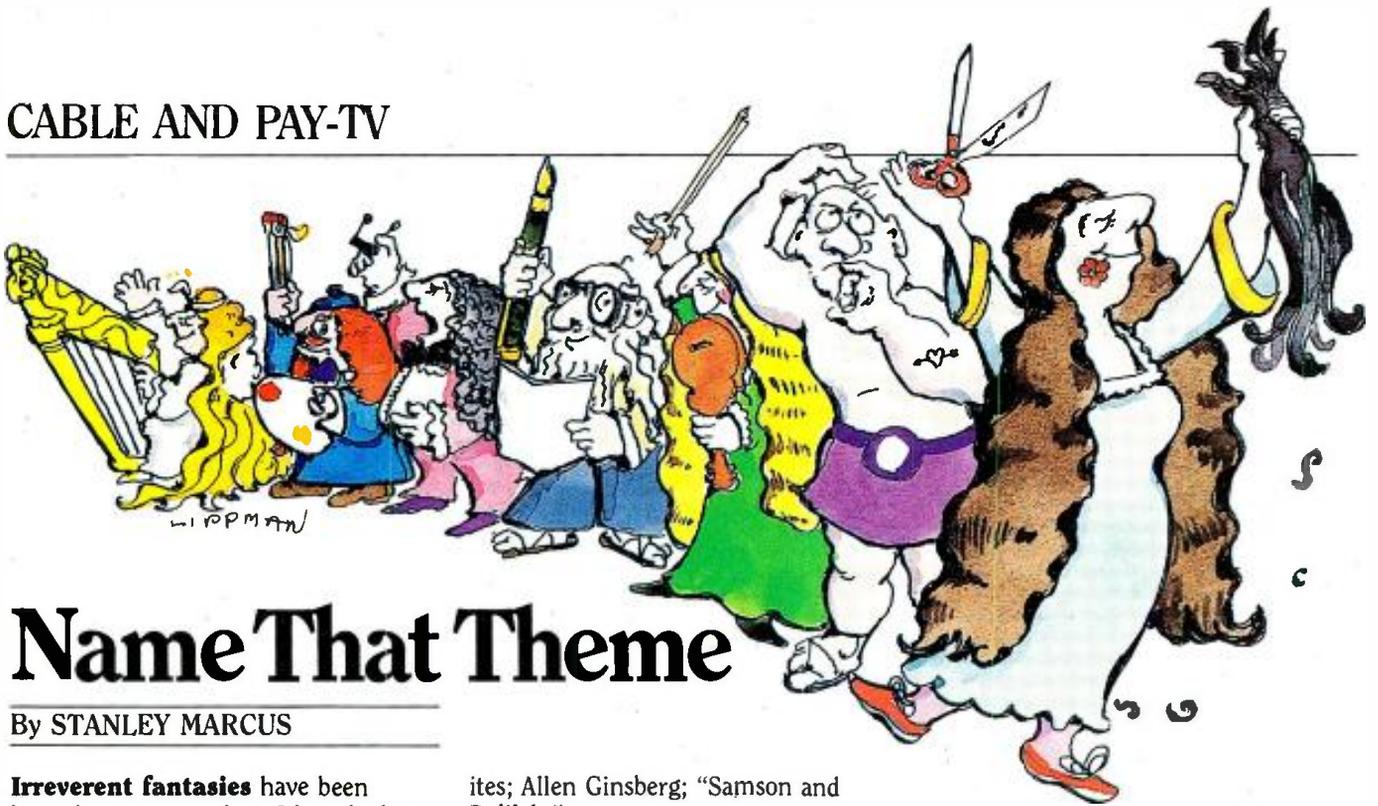
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# Name That Theme

By STANLEY MARCUS

**Irreverent fantasies** have been haunting me ever since I heard what ABC Video Enterprises is planning for its new cultural cable service, which is due to take off April 12.

The unique feature of the Alpha Repertory Television Service (ARTS) is the fact that each week will have its own Theme. Meaning that, in the course of a week's viewing (three hours per night, on the channel that in earlier hours carries Nickelodeon), we can expect to see opera, chamber recitals, jazz, painting, ballet, theater and symphonies—all strung together on the thread of a single thematic idea.

The first week's theme will be "Paris as an Artist's Heaven." Hence, Debussy's first book of preludes, played by pianist Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli, and the New York City Ballet dancing Ravel's *La Valse*. Most of ABC Video's programs will, like these, be European imports; they will be linked and backed up by home-produced pieces about the weekly themes and the featured performers.

By Thanksgiving, I picture Herb Granath, vice president in charge of ABC Video, paging through the *Britannica Micropaedia*, desperate for New Themes. This will be the moment when my fantasies acquire market value. Granath will tell me that I can name my own price for suggestions such as the following:

*Long-Hair Week:* The Pre-Raphael-

ites; Allen Ginsberg; "Samson and Delilah."

*Grass Week:* Walt Whitman; Bach's "Sheep May Safely Graze"; Allen Ginsberg Redux.

*Rain Week:* *The Tempest*; Britten's *Noye's Fludde*; Renoir's *Les Parapluies*; Gene Kelly.

*Liquor Week:* Dylan Thomas; *The Bacchae*; Louis XVI and the Bourbons.

**I shouldn't underestimate** Granath's skills as a packager. Back in 1976, when he was a vice president at ABC Sports, he had the task of turning the Innsbruck Olympics into a prime-time attraction despite the fact that most of the competitors were totally unknown to the viewing public, and foreigners to boot. He adopted the "up close and personal" approach, an attempt to give viewers a sense of the athletes as human beings. Now he's doing the same thing with the music-and-art squad, hoping to lure into his fold the 24 percent of the population who have shown up in ABC surveys as marginal culture buffs—people who don't go out very often to a theater or concert hall, and don't like PBS because they find it dull, but who are above average in education and would probably respond well to arts programming if it were made more palatable.

One thing, at least, is on Granath's side: He's not looking for *paying* customers. The ABC Video service will form part of the basic-cable package

offered by 700 systems nationwide—those which currently run Nickelodeon. Corporate underwriters will keep it afloat.

## GOOD MORNING, PENNSYLVANIA

Citizens of Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware—or at least those who subscribe to the Prism pay-TV network—now have an early-morning alternative to the networks' A.M. fare. As part of its move to 24-hour operation, Prism has introduced *Showin' Off*, a magazine program that runs from 6 A.M. to 8 A.M., consisting of sports features, community-oriented shows from local affiliates, and bend-and-stretch exercise classes. Prism president Jack Williams says the sequence is designed for an audience that's on the move.

The rest of the Prism schedule consists, as before, of movies and sports events. Among the movies, there still isn't an X to be seen, even at 4 A.M., when the kids are safely dreaming of Luke Skywalker.

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The National Benefit Auction, scheduled for the Satellite Program Network this month and previewed in this column in February, has been canceled owing to lack of support from sponsors. ■

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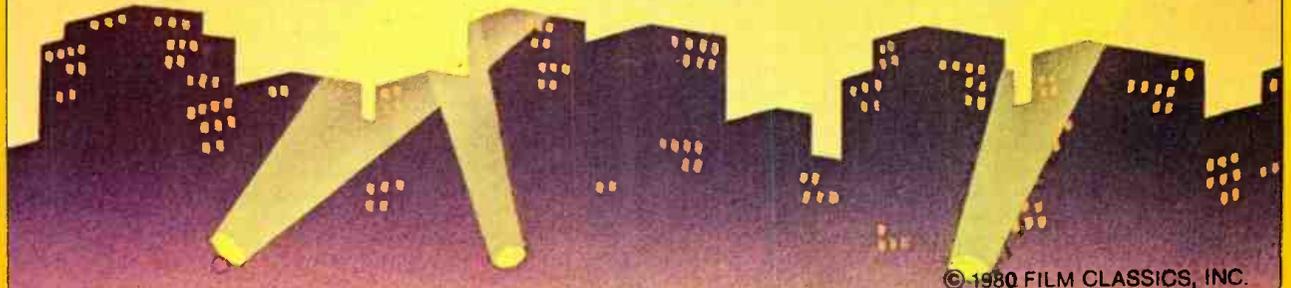
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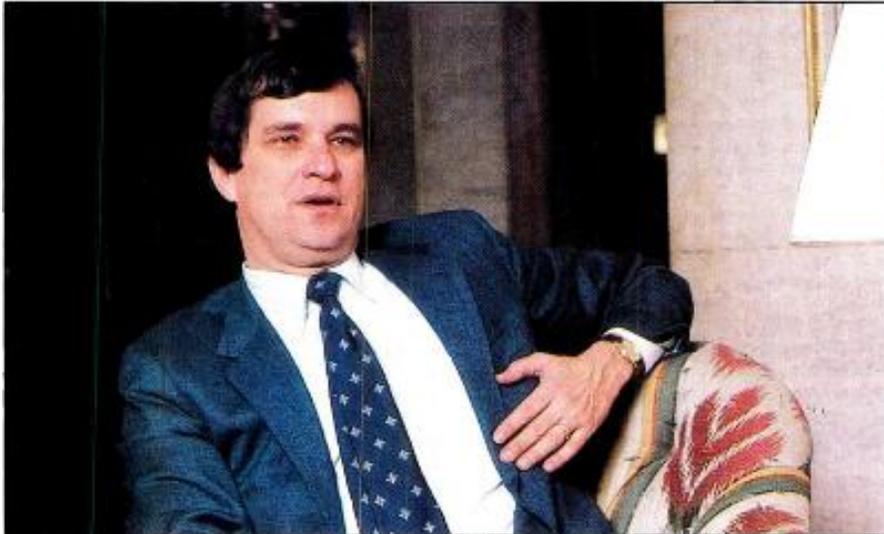
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# Q&A with Hodding Carter III

## “Détente Was Oversold for About Two Years”

Looking back, a former State Department spokesman pinpoints what he believes were errors in projecting policy



Hodding Carter III is a big, bluff Mississippian whose usual expression is a mischievous grin that makes him look like he knows a wonderful secret. Maybe he does.

He certainly knows the secret for pulling off a rare Washington achievement: After a lifetime in journalism, he changed sides, became a high-visibility Government spokesman, tangled with his former colleagues of the press at daily pressure-cooker briefings, openly advocated controversial Administration policies, withheld information he felt should not be broadcast or published—and,

after 39 months in Jimmy Carter's Administration, still emerged with his reputation not just intact but enhanced.

Grinning even more mischievously than usual, Carter claims he succeeded in Washington where many of his predecessors failed because nobody expected very much in the first place from the editor of a small newspaper in a small Mississippi town. (For more than 40 years, the Carter family and its legendary Delta Democrat-Times of Greenville, Miss., have been heroic and influential advocates of liberalism and civil rights in the Deep South. The father of Hodding

Carter III, Hodding Jr., won a Pulitzer Prize for his uncompromising stands.)

Hodding III left the newspaper (subsequently sold by the family) and came to Washington in 1977 with his friends in President Jimmy Carter's new Government to take a job as assistant secretary of state for public affairs.

At first, Hodding Carter disappeared in the bureaucratic forest while his buddy Jody Powell, President Carter's press secretary, got all the press and TV attention. But in November 1979, Iranian militants seized the American hostages. Suddenly, night after night, there was State Department spokesman Hodding Carter telling what was known of the seizure and what the United States Government was doing to get its people back. He spoke calmly, reassuringly, good-naturedly, in soft Southern tones, refusing to be provoked in his daily confrontations with reporters. Overnight, Hodding Carter had become a media star.

Today, out of government, with an army of fans and a glowing reputation, Carter is returning to journalism, sort of. He is writing a periodic column for *The Wall Street Journal* and a biography of his father to be published by Harper & Row. He also will be the anchorman of a weekly half-hour TV program, *Inside Story*, scheduled to begin on PBS on May 7, that will examine the performance of print, television and radio news.

Relaxed, animated, speaking candidly, even bluntly, Carter recently spent time discussing his views of TV news with Ron Nessen, former press secretary to Gerald Ford. This is an edited transcript of that conversation.

**PANORAMA:** *Do you have any advice for your successor in the Reagan Administration?*

**CARTER:** I think the only advice you can give is to try to guarantee that you have access to the policy-maker and that you have the latitude to interpret [his policies] in the stress of the briefings with some discretion.

**PANORAMA:** *Did you have that with Secretary of State Cyrus Vance?*

**CARTER:** I had a great deal of that. I don't pretend that I was the ultimate insider. I obviously did not know some things. I did not know in advance about the raid in Iran. I did not know, some-

times, of the Secretary's dealings with the President.

**PANORAMA:** *How did you handle the situation where you didn't know something but you were asked a question?*

**CARTER:** I said I didn't know. I had almost split advice from my predecessors. About half of them said, "Rough it out," and the other half said, "Admit it." Well, the half that told me to admit it were right. There was also an assumption that I was pretty damn ignorant anyway because I'd come out of running a small paper concentrating on domestic affairs.

**PANORAMA:** *What about those occasions when you knew something but you couldn't say?*

**CARTER:** Then I'd stonewall. Now that could take the form of trying to laugh and scratch my way out of it. But ultimately it just took the form of saying, "I don't want to go down that road; it will not be useful to the policy of the country; it wouldn't be useful to the Secretary of State, and I'm simply not going to go any further with it."

And then you get your brains beat in [by reporters], which is what the name of the game is.

**PANORAMA:** *Did you see any difference in the way television covered foreign policy and the way newspaper and magazine writers covered it?*

**CARTER:** Oh, absolutely. The [television] business as a whole suffers from the necessity to reduce things to encapsulated caricatures of what is going on. The press in general has a problem because it is always suffering from space and time constraints. The people in the media are the first to admit it. Television just takes that a triple-step further. The amount of information that can be imparted in a minute and 30 seconds is very limited. And that just has to be distorted. Television, unfortunately, is supposed to accent the Cronkite sign-off: "And that's the way it is." And that's just wrong. Cronkite sometimes gives a speech in which he says TV is a headline service. But a lot of people don't hear him give that speech; they only see the news every night and they think that what they are seeing is the way it is. The television

business also is inherently without memory. It's without context.

**PANORAMA:** *The world starts fresh every morning for television.*

**CARTER:** Exactly. And again part of that is a function of time and, in my old linear print terms, space. It means that people are fed a staggering amount of facts for which they are given virtually no context. And that is extremely confusing. But hell, I don't want to stay on television entirely here and look like I'm forgetting my old business, the newspapers. The average newspaper out there, when it comes to foreign policy, thought it was doing its readers a great service when it would run something called "World News Roundup" and give them six items of a paragraph and a half each.

**PANORAMA:** *What would be an answer? Walter Cronkite, among others,*



*has said an hour of network TV news each night would help.*

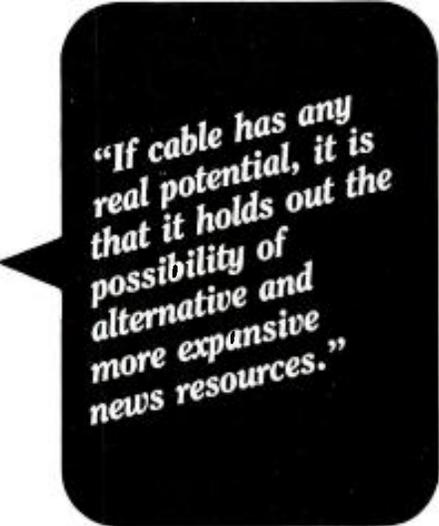
**CARTER:** I think you've got to have more time for TV news. The networks really want it, but the affiliates really are still fighting it for economic reasons. I think diversity would help. If cable has any real potential, it is that it holds out the possibility of alternative and more expansive news resources for people who are now hooked on video as their source of information.

I think a recognition that you really can't put 17, or 13, or 15 news items into a half hour would help. You know, to say

these things is always to sound naive because the economics of it simply doesn't look attractive to the people who run the enterprise. It's no use for me to argue this way because television, by definition, is a vast entertainment medium which almost as an afterthought carries news. I think that one of the nice things going on, however, is that the networks are discovering that people really are drawn to news. Maybe that will justify doing more.

**PANORAMA:** *You went into government after a lifetime of journalism and from a family of journalists. Now you come out, obviously, with some thoughts about your profession, the practitioners of your profession.*

**CARTER:** Two things: I'm even more of the mind that what journalism—the press and television—does is vitally important to the country. This huge insti-



*"If cable has any real potential, it is that it holds out the possibility of alternative and more expansive news resources."*

tution is the absolutely necessary link between what goes on in the world and the people's ability to understand, to deal and to cope with it, and to react to it.

The second thing—putting in the very clear little disclaimer that the American press does the best job, as a whole, of any in the world—you've got to go on and say that it doesn't begin to do the kind of job the public needs and deserves. It doesn't fail because it doesn't have the resources to do the job. The press today, as everybody outside the press may not understand, is one of the most highly profitable institutions in the United States. In the industrial sector it makes a rate of

# Q&A

continued



profit which, as we used to say of the oil companies, is obscene.

**PANORAMA:** *Well, you clearly go away from this job with some thoughts about journalism and how to improve it. You are going to formalize this, I gather, with a PBS series observing the press. What are your plans for that show?*

**CARTER:** It is, in essence, a weekly magazine. It will try to do for and to the press what the press does to every other institution, which is to examine its performance using journalistic techniques and, particularly in this case, television journalistic techniques. We're going to be looking at both television and print, both local and national. We'll have crews out in the country working on stories constantly. We're also going to have our cartoon strip and comics, in that Bob and Ray will be doing a sign-off bit about foibles of the press. I trust it will be good-hearted and pointed humor.

**PANORAMA:** *Why do you think that up until now this big institution, which, as you pointed out earlier, makes profits rivaling those of the oil companies, has never been held up to the kind of scrutiny that it gives to all the other institutions in our society?*

**CARTER:** As we've gotten bigger, increasingly monopolistic, we've also become rather stuffy institutions that wouldn't dream of calling to the public's attention the mistakes of our fellow gentlemen in the business. I came out of a different tradition. Half of the business down in Mississippi was calling each

"Because there's not a hell of a lot of depth [in the White House press corps] on some subjects, you can get away with murder."

other names in the newspapers. There's some fast and very fancy footwork involved when criticism of the press for alleged faults quickly is elevated into an assault on the First Amendment. It happens all the time.

I'll never forget when I walked into the State Department briefing room one day with stories from three major American metropolitan newspapers. One headline said, "Japan Intends to Violate Boycott." The next headline said, "Japan Certain to Participate with America in Iranian Boycott." The third headline said, "Japan Uncertain as to What Course to Take." And somebody asked me in the course of the briefing, "Hodding, doesn't the Administration know what Japan's going to do? After all, The New York Times today said so and so." And I said, "Well one of the reasons we're confused is that The New York Times said that, but The Washington Post said this and the Chicago Tribune said something else."

After the briefing, one of the senior

diplomatic correspondents in this country, a network person, called up and said, "Hodding, you were dangerously close to McCarthyism today."

**PANORAMA:** *But almost certainly you are going to get reporters watching you criticize the press on PBS and saying, "You know Hodding; he's all bent out of shape because we beat him up when he was in the State Department."*

**CARTER:** I got damn near a free ride as far as being beat up. When I think about what happened to Jody [Powell], what happens to almost anybody in that job, I'm the least likely candidate for somebody saying, "Oh, Hodding feels like he was jerked around," because it just didn't happen that way.

**PANORAMA:** *Do you think that the daily briefing at the State Department, or at the White House for that matter, is a useful way to move information from the Government to the public?*

**CARTER:** I think it is a necessary beginning of the way to move the information. I think there has to be some place in which, simply, the official line is put out. And I think that for the reporter, on the other side, the daily briefing is a point of departure. It's not the last place they're going to go. From my point of view, obviously, I would have preferred that they take the official line as the last word, but they won't. I don't know if it's necessary, in retrospect, that a briefing be done every day at State.

**PANORAMA:** *Secretary of State Henry Kissinger used to argue that he preferred to brief the White House press corps because the State Department press corps was on to him. It was easier to put something over on the generalists at the White House.*

**CARTER:** I think that has to be true. Because there's not a hell of a lot of depth there [in the White House press corps] on some subjects, you can get away with murder. There's a problem at State and it's that there's occasional confusion there as to whether or not reporters are advisers to the Secretary of State or whether they are just trying to deal with American policies for their publications and networks. I'm being semi-facetious, but it is one of the things

that goes with being in the territory for a long time.

**PANORAMA:** *Did you see part of your role being to encourage public support for American foreign policy?*

**CARTER:** Absolutely. I always figured that there were two legitimate functions for any Administration. One is mandated by Congress, which is to fully explain policy to the American people. And since we don't live in a value-free world, that leads to the second function, which is to justify policy, to give the evidence in favor of it, and to lay it out in as good a light as you can. And if everybody doesn't understand that, they're crazy.

**PANORAMA:** *Jody Powell has complained that the public didn't have a proper perception of the real accomplishments of the Carter Administration. Do you share that view in the foreign-policy field?*

**CARTER:** Yes I do, and I believe that it's one of those things that unfortunately is

a very real fact of life for almost every Administration.

**PANORAMA:** *Is it faulty perception by the people watching TV and reading the papers? Or is it faulty transmission on the part of the reporters? Or is it your fault?*

**CARTER:** First, it is hard to make a good story out of success. The biggest single fight we expected, the most probable prescription for disaster, was the multilateral trade negotiation. Well, that one went through like a greased pig. That got us exactly 30 seconds on the evening news. A victory is like a good editorial—as I recall from being an editorial writer—and is soon forgotten.

Second, from Vietnam till now, the American public has been living with an undigested lump of frustration about the nation's standing in the world.

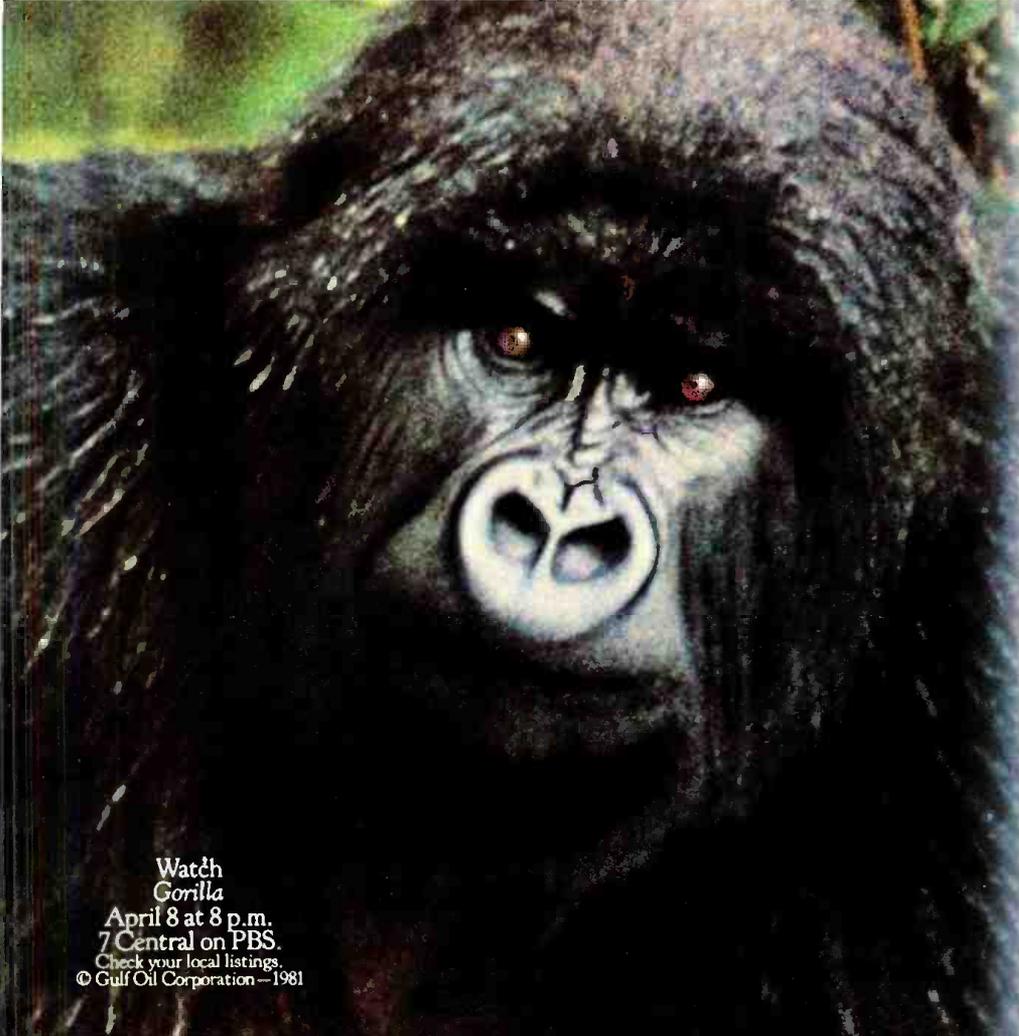
Beyond that, I think, there was some reaction against the overselling of some achievements in the past. I mean, détente was oversold for about two years and it's pointless not to admit it. Those of us who were all in favor of it helped to

oversell it and the [Carter] Administration damn well did. And then, suddenly, it turns out the Russians are exactly the way they've always been. They're out there goosing us wherever they can, stirring it wherever they can, confronting us when they think they can. And people say, "What the hell, they're still kicking us in the teeth. What's wrong?"

Finally, of course, is the real problem of the Carter Administration, its central flaw in this field: It simply couldn't talk with one voice. Every Administration suffers from back-channel dissent, leaks, and all of that, but we hemorrhaged in this area. There just wasn't enough kicking in the teeth.

**PANORAMA:** *Where does the kicking have to come from?*

**CARTER:** The President, always. God save us from the State Department's view or the Defense Department's view or the [Central Intelligence] Agency's view, or any one of them having unquestioned supremacy. So they ought to fight like dogs in the formulation of policy. But



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# Q&A

continued



after it's over, the President's got to tell them, "All right, folks, that's it, I've decided."

**PANORAMA:** Was there any particular foreign-policy issue in which the public understanding was undermined—by casting it as a shoot-out between National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and Cyrus Vance, for instance?

**CARTER:** I think the continuing debate about how you deal with the reality of a Soviet presence probably was one that is always most undermined. It's always put in terms of the soft guy versus the tough guy. I am probably only a half-reconstructed hawk when it comes right down to it, as a personal matter of ideology. But I find the discussion to be almost hopeless when it comes down to trying to define what the right policy is as being "hairy-chested" or "appeaser." I mean, you've got to adapt the policy to the situation.

**PANORAMA:** You are one of those rare people who comes out of journalism into the Government for a public-affairs job and emerges a few years later with your reputation largely intact, with your integrity intact.

**CARTER:** That's pure luck and you know it. What happened was that I got two years with no real crisis and, therefore, no real whipsawing. When the crisis came, it wasn't war, it wasn't having to justify things that an awful lot of people didn't want to hear justified. The way the game played out, that [Iranian hostage] crisis happened to manufacture the press

"After President Carter said some derogatory things about Cyrus Vance, I decided 'the hell with it' and left."

spokesman into a symbol of something beyond being the press spokesman.

**PANORAMA:** Do you think you were made the spokesman so, in case it blew up in everybody's face, you were going to be the guy to give the bad news?

**CARTER:** Certainly. And it should be that way. The old joke has got to be so: The White House gives the good news and, wherever possible, all the other agencies give the bad news.

**PANORAMA:** You came across every night on television as calm and unflappable, with a little bit of humor. You must have had days when you were steaming and under a lot of pressure.

**CARTER:** There were days when I wanted to go out there and say to the reporters, "Come on, you jerks, you're really screwing up this and that and the other." Or other days I would go out there

thinking, "Good God, I've got to go out there and make a case for something that's semi-insane."

**PANORAMA:** You did have some other days during that period when some of the reporters learned things that, had they been published or broadcast, could have been harmful or even caused death to the hostages.

**CARTER:** I used to say—I'm not quite as sure it's true now—but I used to say that I never saw a leak which ultimately damaged the national security, though I saw some that were very embarrassing. I guess we went to the press maybe a dozen times in the course of my tenure there, trying to get something held. And I guess about eight of those times they didn't hold it. And in those eight instances, frankly, the world didn't come to an end.

**PANORAMA:** Did they all involve the Iranian hostages?

**CARTER:** No, not all of them. But on matters which were really vital to life and death for people or which might have seriously compromised the country, the decisions were made to hold off—not never to print, but to hold off. My complaint is not that the press is irresponsible in some sense of yellow journalism, or damn the torpedos and the hell with everything else, print or perish. That's not a complaint. My complaint is simply about the gap between the potential and what is realized in the press, and that huge, huge necessity to do more.

**PANORAMA:** Why did you resign from the State Department before the resolution of the hostage crisis that brought you so much public attention?

**CARTER:** I left because Cyrus Vance left. It wasn't so much that I agreed with his opposition to the [hostage rescue] raid. Whether we should have made the raid is still an open question, although the passage of time has proven Vance right. I left because I was Vance's spokesman and I felt a close personal attachment to him. I like Ed Muskie, too, and was debating staying after he was named Secretary. But after President Carter said some derogatory things about Vance, I decided "the hell with it" and left. ■

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# PANORAMIC VIEW

*A Real-Life View of the Lou Grant Crew . . .  
A Coast-to-Coast "Picturephone" Connection . . .  
Merrill Lynch Is Bullish on Its Bull . . .  
The Bolstered DeBolts . . . A New TV Fad from  
California . . . How TV Solves Weight Problems . . .  
Is 3-D Coming Back?*

## Get Me Rewrite, Sweetheart

Rossi's doing a piece on the rackets. Billie Newman's trying to convince Lou to give her tougher stories. And Mrs. Pynchon is in a meeting making sure that the Trib is doing its fair share of inner-city stories. *Lou Grant* is life on a big-city newspaper, just

like real life. Or is it? We asked a few people who are in a position to know.

Washington Post reporter Rudy Maxa, who helped break the news of Rep. Wayne Hays' Government-subsidized affair with Elizabeth Ray, has one major complaint: "What knocks me over is how everything works out in a 24-hour

period. The morning begins with a crisis, then halfway through somebody interferes and it becomes all complicated. As soon as Rossi is stuck, the phone rings and it's some mysterious source whispering, 'Meet at McDonald's in one hour.' The stories they illustrate on *Lou Grant* generally take us a month to do."

David Shaw, media critic for The Los Angeles Times (and official prototype for the Joe Rossi character), finds the

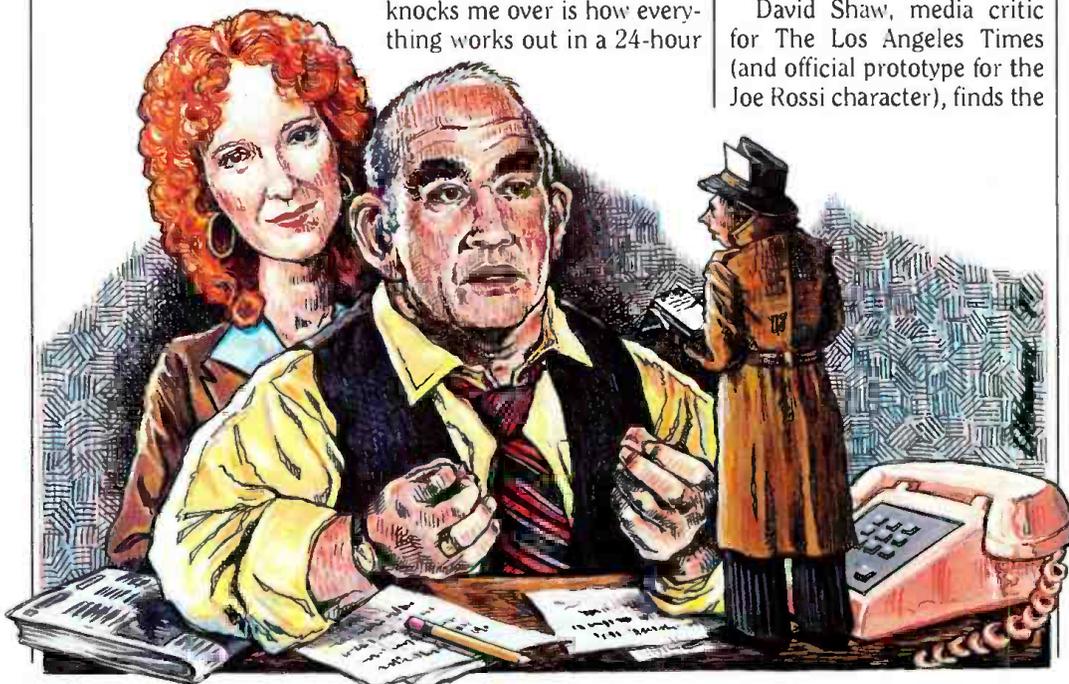
show to be realistic "once you accept the very unrealistic conditions of television." Says Shaw: "Newspapering is becoming incidental to the show. They've built such strong characters that they can afford to write stories that don't revolve around the paper. In terms of accuracy, that city editor gets out of the office and into stories far more often than ever happens in real life."

Ben Bradlee, executive editor of The Washington Post, has met Mason Adams, who plays Bradlee's fictional counterpart, Charlie Hume. Bradlee deems the portrayal "pretty good." But he adds, "I don't think my relationship with my publisher [Katharine Graham] is like his with Mrs. Pynchon. He seems scared of his and I'm not scared of mine." As to Lou Grant, Bradlee thinks he is "sort of old-school. He was everybody's city editor when we were getting started, but he doesn't seem to be now. All the city editors I know these days are about 12 years old."

Laura Kiernan's reporting job at The Post is much like Billie Newman's at the Trib. "I like Billie best," says Kiernan, "when she doesn't let anybody kick her around. The only thing that bothers me about the character is that she sometimes gets too emotionally involved with her stories. I recently had a hostage assignment. I have a personal concern for—quote—My Hostage. I was particularly happy when he turned out to be a hero. But I have to keep all that in mind when I'm writing about him."

There are times when reporters refuse to watch *Lou Grant*. "Sometimes when I've had a bad day," says Kiernan, "and I'm sitting there having a Scotch. I say to myself, 'Do I want to watch my job on TV?' Answer: 'No way.'"

—Mark Baker



## Show and Tell

George Orwell may have been right on the money.

In his classic novel, *1984*, Orwell predicted the advent of two-way TV screens whereby people could simultaneously see and hear one another over long distances. Well, so-called picturephones are here—at least on a limited basis.

Recently, two artists gave New Yorkers and Los Angelenos a three-evening opportunity to see one another and shoot the breeze for free. Sherrie Rabinowitz and Kit Galloway—who work under the name Mobile Image—installed 9-by-12-foot screens behind windows at Lincoln

Center in New York and at the Broadway department store in Century City, Cal. The two artists pointed hidden cameras at the sidewalks in front of each screen, relayed the images coast-to-coast via satellite and recorded the scene as passers-by in each city discovered what was happening and viewed and chatted with life-size images from the other side of America.

During the first evening of what was called “Hole in Space: A Public Communication Sculpture,” the questions that bounced between the coasts were casually mundane: “What’s going on?” “Where are you?” “How’s the weather?”

The activity during the sec-

ond evening was more organized, culminating in an impromptu transcontinental charades game and coverage on local television news in both cities. The publicity turned the groups in front of each screen into crowds by the third night. It was not the time for intimate tête-à-tête.

Some of the communication was musical—solos and duets were sung, and each city performed as a unit during a round of “Row, Row, Row Your Boat.” Generally, the New York participants were “a little more dynamic,” says Galloway. But it was from Los Angeles that a prankster called out, “Hey, someone just picked your pocket,” creating a sudden about-face by

the New Yorkers who were on the screen.

Galloway and Rabinowitz would like to create more “communication sculptures” connecting such locales as Harlem and Watts; Havana, Cuba, and Tampa; Tokyo and Little Tokyo in Los Angeles; a big city and a small town; or two small towns. However, the raw materials of their art are not cheap: The actual cost of “Hole in Space” may have approached \$200,000. Funds and equipment for the project were supplied primarily from corporate donations and a Federal Government grant. So don’t expect “holes in space” to appear on your block tomorrow. By 1984, maybe.

—Don Shirley

## Neat on the Hoof

Anyone familiar with Merrill Lynch & Company probably remembers the slogan that made the firm a household name—“Merrill Lynch is bullish on America.” To promote its new theme—“Merrill Lynch is a breed apart”—the company’s latest commercial features the visual interpretation of an old cliché: a 4-year-old, 1400-pound bull plodding through a china shop.

“The commercial is literally as it appears,” says Bill Appelmann, Young & Rubicam’s creative director for Merrill Lynch. Incredibly, after only two rehearsals, the bull wandered through the set exactly on cue, without the use of a lure. “There was \$40,000 worth of china and glass on those shelves, and the aisles were quite narrow. We used absolutely no trick photography.” Several times, the bull’s horns came “within millimeters” of the delicate crystal, but the filming ended accident-free, expensive props intact.

The bull, aptly named Mer-

rill, was discovered by veteran trainer Joan Edwards, whose previous credits include a seven-year association with Schlitz Malt Liquor and a number of one-shot film and television spots. “We searched Colorado, Texas, Arizona—all over,” remembers Edwards. “looking for a bull with a good disposition and exceptional intelligence.” After seeing “what seemed like a thousand bulls,” Edwards found the star-to-be grazing on Southern California grass. “There was a certain quality about him,” she says. “He was quiet, accustomed to hand-feedings and human contact. He was exactly what we wanted.”

According to Franklin McCants, a corporate advertising manager at Merrill Lynch, response to the commercial has been “phenomenal. What we’re trying to do is bring Wall Street to Main Street, and with that goal in mind, the commercial should be very successful. We’ve already had dozens of phone calls, and not one negative remark.”

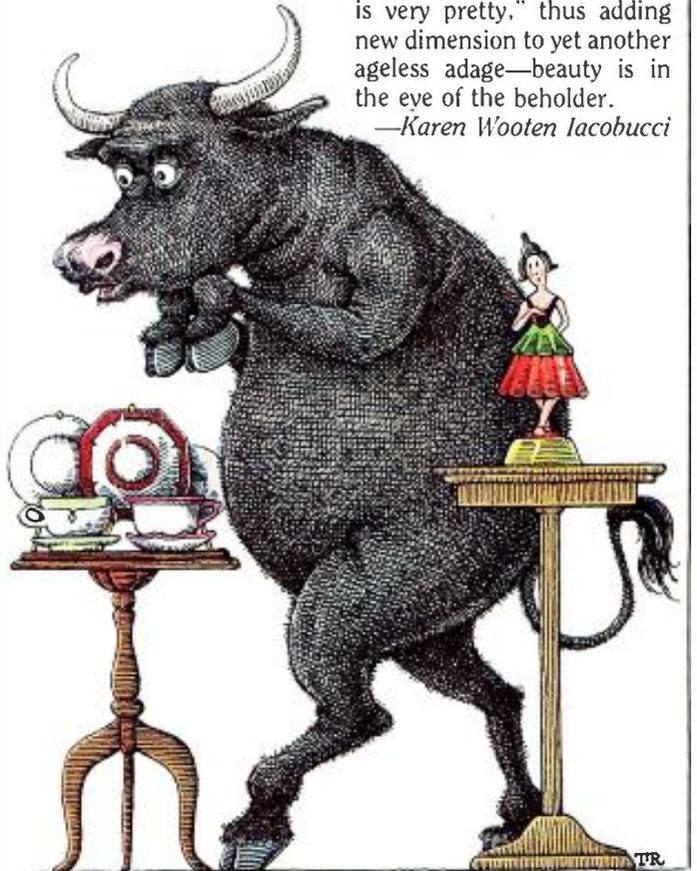
The four-legged Merrill has not been lacking in attention either since his television de-

but. Besides having developed “quite a fan club,” Edwards says the bull has “had offers from all over the place.” So far, however, he has filmed only for his namesake, recent-

ly having completed an encore commercial for Merrill Lynch.

In addition to his cooperative demeanor, Edwards attributes much of Merrill’s success to the fact that “he really is very pretty,” thus adding new dimension to yet another ageless adage—beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

—Karen Wooten Iacobucci



# PANORAMIC VIEW

## On the Family Plan

What happens when a film producer, a director, an entourage of camera, sound and lighting crews, two parents, 19 children and a dog get together in an average-sized two-story house in California?

"Bedlam," says Dorothy DeBolt, whose extraordinary family was the subject of the Academy Award-winning documentary *Who Are the DeBolts and Where Did They Get 19 Kids?* Originally shown in California film festivals, the movie focuses on the emotionally charged lives of Bob and Dorothy DeBolt and their 19 children—14 of whom are adopted, most of whom have severe physical handicaps.

Brought to television in 1978, the documentary prompted a multitude of interviews, lecture engagements and talk-show appearances for the DeBolts, and ultimately gave birth to a sequel, *Stepping Out: The DeBolts Grow Up*, recently seen on Home Box Office.

The two-and-half-year filming process had its tedious moments—tripping over equipment and running into the film crew during "private" dinners out became commonplace—but the end result spawned the financially successful tours that now support the family. The organization they head—Aid to the Adoption of Special Kids (AASK)—has been equally aided.

The DeBolts permanently removed their own TV set five

years ago. Mrs. DeBolt feels "many programs represent what is perceived to be the typical family life. Our family is so atypical—we have kids from such different cultures and backgrounds—that we felt the constant need to explain, 'No, this isn't the way we live.'" They do borrow a television set to watch "fine shows like *Roots*," and never miss seeing themselves, "to go on an ego trip."

Meeting Henry Winkler, narrator of the original documentary, and Kris Kristofferson, the sequel's host, were high points during the filming. "It was love at first sight," daughter Doni DeBolt remembers of her introduction to Kristofferson. As for Winkler, Doni says she "had come close to idolizing him," but "blew my composure" almost immediately. "The first thing my little sister told him was that I had a pair of underwear with a picture of The Fonz on the back, then asked if he'd like to see them," she recalls. "Embarrassment isn't even the word."

Will the DeBolts give television a third go-round? Doni feels that "should another sequel be necessary, I'm sure everyone would agree to it. In a family this size, there's not much privacy anyway. It was very positive for all of us."

Mrs. DeBolt agrees. "We are not the Louds," she says. "This was in no way an ordeal." —K. W. I.

## Dial a Cultural Insight

It's a new fad and it comes, naturally enough, from California. It's called "playing tube." What it is . . . well, when you try to *explain* it, the trouble starts.

"Playing tube," begins one of the game's many enthusiasts, "is isolating those things on TV which are . . . it's being able to isolate those moments," he sputters, reaching for the right words, "that are so stupid or funny they're unforgettable. That's it!" he concludes happily.

Says another self-described "tube-zany": "You look for something on the tube that you can't quite believe. Like when Richard Dawson says, 'Survey Says!' Or when Orson Welles claims: 'We will sell no wine before its time.' Clearly, the humor is cerebral."

And how does a player know when somebody is going to say something worth capturing?

"That's how you get to be a good tube player," claims our tube-zany.

While the rest of the world sees television as a series of programs interrupted by commercial messages, tube players view TV as a series of well-created statements interspersed among so much theatrical uselessness. They see

themselves as prospectors mining the vast wasteland of television in order to isolate by sound, image, or both, those video gems which define the depths of our culture.

It's a party in the North Beach district of San Francisco. Most of the guests are chatting in the living room. The conversation runs the gamut from politics to holistic medicine. But in a small room off the hallway, three of the guests are sitting in semi-darkness. The only sound comes from the television sets directly in front of them. Every once in a while, the volume is turned sharply upward, giving forth:

"Some people call these age spots. I call them ugly."

"Kinda free, kinda wow, Charlie!"

Finally, the hostess slips into the room and suggests sweetly that maybe the tube players should mingle with the other guests. Grudgingly, they agree and begin walking toward the door. Something catches one player's eye on the way out and he hurries back just in time to turn up the volume full blast: "And she told two friends, and so on, and so on, and so on."

You figure it out.

—Rich Stim



## Weight and See

TV is so often criticized for its antisocial effects that it's refreshing to learn from London that some hospital psychologists are using video to aid patients with pathological eating habits.

Dr. Bernard Rosen of Guy's Hospital, London, has discovered that women suffering from obesity or anorexia nervosa (a refusal to eat, causing extreme thinness) are more likely to recognize the serious consequences of their illness by seeing themselves on a TV screen than in a mirror or in photographs. Anorexics, particularly, have a distorted image of their own bodies, says Dr. Rosen. "They think they are fat and no one can convince them otherwise, even if they are emaciated."

Along with two other psychologists, Dr. Rosen set up a controlled experiment in which a group of anorexics took part in a videotaped discussion about some paintings. Before the playback on TV, the patients were asked to describe their own personalities and characters with a set of adjectives—assertive, ineffective, etc. The anorexics chose a strong collection of adjectives with which to present

their positive images. But after they had seen themselves on video, they selected more negative adjectives and described themselves as less attractive and effective people.

For the psychologists, this was an important breakthrough; further, it suggested that the anorexics had at last opened up therapeutically. "Video is a unique form of feedback," says Dr. Rosen. "It's the only way you really see yourself as others see you. Video playbacks—like tape-recordings—amaze people.

Our anorexics were suddenly confronted with themselves as others see them."

While follow-up studies with anorexics are being made, other experiments have shown that those with the opposite problem—obesity—have definitely been aided by video. A group of "carboholics" watched themselves regularly on closed-circuit TV. At the end of the 18-week experiment, seven of the 11 had lost weight, and all showed positive changes in their self-images after watch-

ing themselves on video.

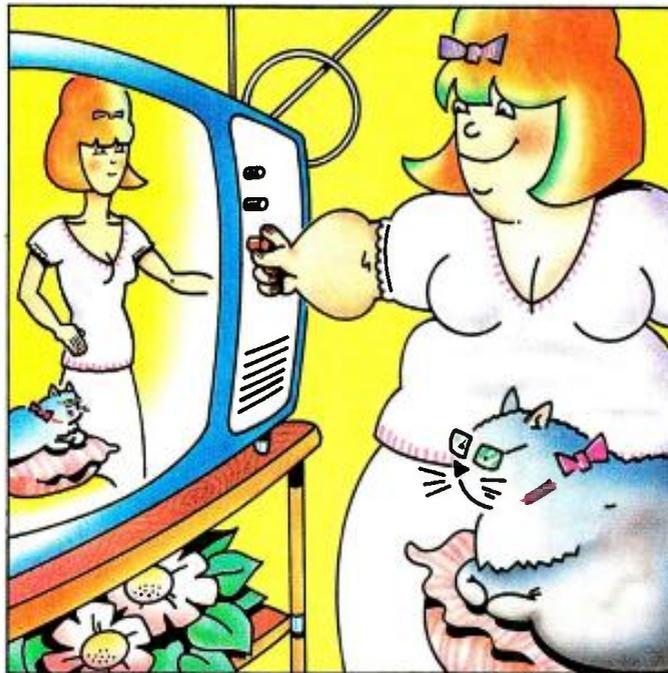
In an even more ingenious experiment developed from the work at Guy's Hospital, Celia McCrea of Queen's University in Belfast, Northern Ireland, has created the TV equivalent of a hall of mirrors for her obese patients. By turning controls that create horizontal and vertical distortion, patients can literally reshape their images to what they would like them to be.

This image is then used as the "target size" for which the patients must aim during treatment for obesity; their progress is measured down to the last millimeter by calibrating the difference between reality and the ideal.

According to Dr. Rosen, the most ambitious experiment based on video will involve patients with a variety of behavior disturbances *editing* videotapes shot of themselves. These edited highlights will reveal these patients in a positive light—or at least (and this is invaluable for the psychiatrists) in what the patients think of as a positive light.

The end product sounds as if it might make better video than certain panel games and talk shows we wish we had the space to mention.

—Richard Gilbert



## Another Dimension

Remember "I like Ike"? Sputniks? Joltin' Joe DiMaggio? Ragtops? 3-D movies?

3-D movies?

Right, 3-D movies. They're back—on television. SelecTV, an over-the-air subscription-television service, recently offered its Los Angeles and Milwaukee subscribers three-dimensional hootchy-kootchy (Rita Hayworth in *Miss Sadie Thompson*). In L.A., SelecTV viewers also were treated to the three-dimensional heebie-jeebies of the Three Stooges in *Spooks*. The two films—both

products of the 3-D heyday of the '50s—appeared twice on the SelecTV schedule. They were followed a month later by *Bwana Devil*, the first commercial feature film made in the 3-D mode, plus in L.A., another Three Stooges short.

In order to appreciate the effects (remember?), subscribers were given two pairs of 3-D glasses and were invited to buy more (\$1.25 per package of two). SelecTV suggested that everyone invite friends over for the spectacle; one subscriber ordered 38 addi-

tional pairs of glasses. Thirty percent of SelecTV's L.A. subscribers tuned in the initial double bill—a rating comparable to those registered by most first-run films, said a SelecTV official.

Meanwhile, MCA issued two 3-D videocassettes late last year—*The Creature from the Black Lagoon* and *It Came from Outer Space*, which didn't go over as well as the SelecTV presentation. Washington Post TV critic Tom Shales, for example, labels the *Creature* cassette "unwatchable." The list price of each film is \$65—including glasses.

In January, MCA reported that there were no plans to release additional films on 3-D.

This won't daunt 3-D enthusiasts, though. They remain convinced the technical kinks will be worked out and that 3-D is an idea whose time has come again. They will have to overcome attitudes like those expressed by one SelecTV subscriber, however: "It's a gimmick, a novelty. The kids love it, but there's a limit to how much the adults will go for it."

Didn't they say the same thing about the Hula-Hoop?

—D. S.



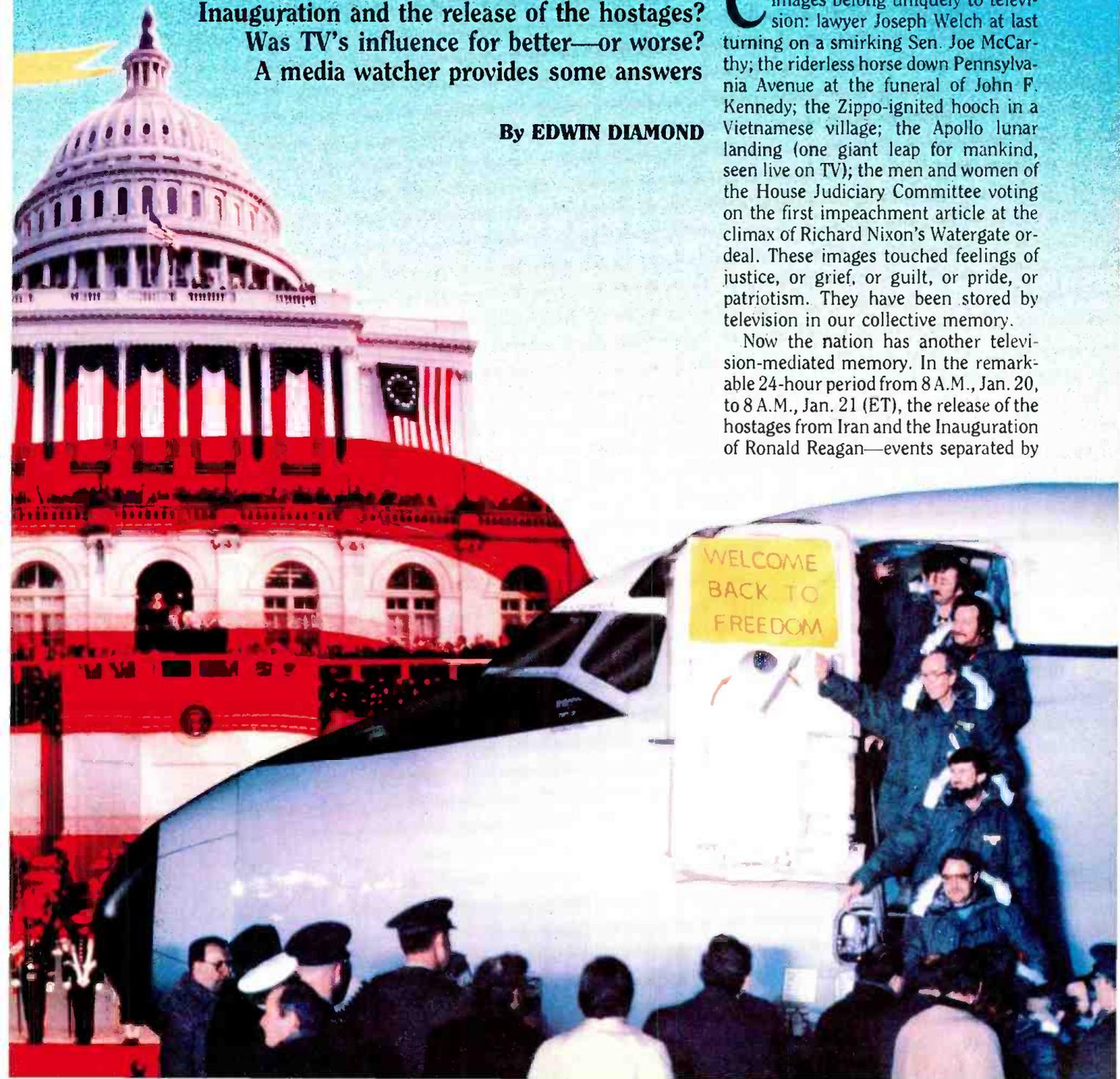
# The Day TV News Brought Us Together

**How good was the network coverage of the Inauguration and the release of the hostages? Was TV's influence for better—or worse? A media watcher provides some answers**

By **EDWIN DIAMOND**

Certain days, certain events, certain images belong uniquely to television: lawyer Joseph Welch at last turning on a smirking Sen. Joe McCarthy; the riderless horse down Pennsylvania Avenue at the funeral of John F. Kennedy; the Zippo-ignited hooch in a Vietnamese village; the Apollo lunar landing (one giant leap for mankind, seen live on TV); the men and women of the House Judiciary Committee voting on the first impeachment article at the climax of Richard Nixon's Watergate ordeal. These images touched feelings of justice, or grief, or guilt, or pride, or patriotism. They have been stored by television in our collective memory.

Now the nation has another television-mediated memory. In the remarkable 24-hour period from 8 A.M., Jan. 20, to 8 A.M., Jan. 21 (ET), the release of the hostages from Iran and the Inauguration of Ronald Reagan—events separated by



6350 miles but related in the political fortunes of the United States—moved along a parallel course toward resolution, meeting on television, the medium preeminently capable of creating a split-screen reality. While some news events are covered best by print journalism (only a long reading, for example, could do justice to Nixon's White House tapes during Watergate), Jan. 20 and the days that followed belonged to television, with the networks acting as the producers, the prompters and—in a new and disturbing role—the reshapers of reality. We witnessed not one narrative event, but two entwined—Return/Renewal: transit home for the hostages/the transfer of authority from the Jimmy Carter to the Ronald Reagan Presidency.

CBS's Walter Cronkite told viewers they had seen "one of the great dramatic days in American history." Jeff Gralnick, the executive producer of ABC's *World News Tonight*, also had superlatives for the day: "It was the most fragile, complex technological operation ever put together in the history of television." Les Crystal, NBC's senior executive producer for the coverage, recalls that on Tuesday night, when the hostage plane landed in Algiers, 60 million Americans—the three networks' total—"shared in a common experience, mass communications in its true sense."

Three of us at the News Study Group at MIT, after sharing these same experiences as viewers and then replaying the three networks' videotapes and reading the transcripts, were drawn to another, less lofty, perspective about Return/Renewal Day. We found that with the split-screen reality, we got a double vision. Was it a great victory we were celebrating? Or was it a wound we were covering over?

The television images were confused and ambiguous—the hostages running a gauntlet of jeering Iranians at the Tehran airport; the dogged Jimmy Carter leaving the White House for the last time without achieving final security for the hostages, defeated again by the Iranian clerics who may have cost him his Presidency; the new President, relaxed, telling a Capitol Hill luncheon that the hostages had left Iranian air space; the flood-lit Algerian runway as the 52 Americans clambered from their aircraft, each individualistic in dress and demeanor. And with these onrushing messages, we viewers felt our own per-

sonal split-screen of tumultuous emotion: pride/anger, joy/guilt, confidence/doubt, patriotism unabashed/patriotism tempered.

**Television, indeed,** could give us the highest of highs and then gratuitously dismay us with the most banal idiocy. By most accounts, the purest moments of Return/Renewal came at 4:45 P.M. (ET), when the last float of the Inaugural parade, carrying the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, stopped before President and Mrs. Reagan at the reviewing stand. The women in the choir were dressed in blue; the men in blue suits, white shirts and red ties. The blue-and-white float carried the lettering AMERICA A GREAT NEW BEGINNING (from a line in Ronald Reagan's speeches). The hostages were en route home. The choir sang *The Battle*



*Renewal: Dancing at an Inaugural ball.*

*Hymn of the Republic.* President Reagan brushed away a tear, and then walked with his wife to the White House.

Then, on NBC, the cameras cut to Tom Brokaw, co-anchoring NBC's parade coverage. He commented on the fact that Ronald Reagan and his brother Neil were teary-eyed, and observed that they were probably thinking of their childhood in small-town Illinois and of their father, "an affable sort, a shoe salesman, though, who had more fondness for liquor than he might have—might have been better for his family if he had not been so fond of it. But anyway

they've come a long way. Today, President of the United States. A grand day for him, obviously. The hostages have been freed. . . ."

NBC was not alone in the gaffe department; each network had its share. But each, too, had its triumphs. In terms of ratings, CBS won the day—from 10 A.M. (ET) until roughly 5:30 P.M.—with a 32 share, with ABC's at 28 and NBC's at 24. The return of the former hostages, shown from 8 P.M. until 9:30, brought forth a slightly different result: Here, ABC edged out CBS, 31 to 30, with NBC again bringing up the rear with a 25. (Both NBC's and ABC's evening coverage were "sustaining"—that is, without commercial interruption—so only CBS's score counted in the official Nielsen averages.)

To make a personal but, I hope, fair evaluation of the performance of the three networks' hostage coverage, I broke the story down into three phases:

- *The Captivity.* On one criterion alone, I commend NBC News: It did not get into the day-counting gimmickry of CBS and ABC (America Held Hostage . . . Day 255 etc., etc.). Thus, NBC did not pour superheated hype on a political situation already volatile.

- *The Return.* CBS was the winner for its technical excellence, for Dan Rather's sharp commentary, and for the skilled use of former hostage Richard Queen.

- *The Aftermath.* ABC deserves all the praise it has received for Pierre Salinger's story of the secret negotiations, broadcast as a three-hour edition of *20/20*. This show was nothing less than a quantum leap for television news. The investigative reconstruction of a complex event has traditionally been the exclusive province of our quality newspapers and news magazines. These reconstructions—called "ticktocks" in the trade—are usually presented a week or two afterward. ABC News was on the air within 48 hours with its clear beat—and a valuable story.

Looking back at the networks' coverage, it became clear to us at MIT how television reshaped the day and our reality. Three characteristics of television, it seems, made the day greater than the sum of its parts and masked the longer-term meaning of events. In the end, ironically, television's hardest news did what critics accuse television's entertainment of doing: giving the public what it wants.



*Return: The 52 hostages deplane in Algeria during a journey followed by millions.*

### THE MAGIC MACHINE

The first quality, as Gralnick says, is television's technological prowess, its ability to make all the world a stage. The networks are justifiably proud of the logistics of the day: Washington wired for sight and sound at a dozen different vantage points; land lines bringing images of families from 20 states into New York studios; satellite transmissions emanating from Germany and from Algeria. "Live from Algeria," proclaimed a CBS superimposition picture—a thrill in itself to viewers, even if they didn't know that the satellite feed blacked out as the plane approached Algiers and didn't come on again until just 15 minutes before the plane landed. "That was too damn close," says Joan Richman, executive producer for CBS's coverage.

At ABC, Gralnick recalls that his crews had been preparing in earnest for the hostage release since last October; by early November an ABC studio was built in Frankfurt near the Air Force base where the decompression hospital had been set up. People were also posted to Zurich, Geneva and the Azores—"in case of need." All told, ABC had about 450 people at work on the two stories, evenly divided. About the same number were deployed at CBS and NBC.

The capabilities of the new technologies were determining the magnitude of the event before it occurred. "I had my hands on a series of keys," says Gralnick, "which allowed me to talk to Peter Jennings [in Frankfurt], Ted Koppel [Washington], Algiers and the rest of the world.

It was a machine ready for the biggest story ever."

The networks had wired the world so well that reporters covering the swearing-in ceremony at the Capitol, sitting in the best seats in the house, only had to turn to little TV monitors to find out what was going on half a globe away at the Tehran airport and half a mile away in the motorcade of the outgoing President and the President-elect. Even state secrets became public over television. Right before noon, President Carter, riding to the swearing-in ceremony in the limousine, received a telephone call from his aides that the hostages' departure would take place within 15 minutes. House Speaker Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill, who was in the car, told NBC's Tom Pettit and ABC's Brit Hume, who in turn broadcast the word.

At times, television itself brought the latest news to officials. Mrs. Theresa Lodeski, mother of hostage Bruce German, was interviewed as she celebrated in the bar she runs in Edwardsville, Pa. Moments later, former (by a few hours) Secretary of State Edmund Muskie telephoned her: "I just saw you on NBC and you looked terrific. I'm so happy for you."

**Technology and planning** awarded each of the networks the scoops that helped drive the TV machine. CBS had a phone arrangement with Tony Allaway, of The London Times, at the Tehran airport. "As soon as the plane left, Tony drove to a secluded spot 10 minutes away

and phoned us," says Joan Richman. ABC's Jennings, in Frankfurt, managed two calls to the Tehran airport control tower and to the VIP lounge and then advised New York. And each network had former hostage "consultants"—earlier returnees Richard Queen at CBS, Lloyd Rollins at NBC and William Quarles at ABC. They acted as spotters when the planes landed and offered "now-it-can-be-told" interviews when final freedom was assured.

As often happens in journalism, however, sometimes coverage comes down to one reporter armed with nothing more than initiative. ABC's Hal Walker obtained one of the first long interviews with one of the freed hostages when he heard that Sgt. Donald R. Hohman had left the hospital and simply gone home to his German-born wife in Wiesbaden. Walker looked up the address in the phone book, gathered his crew, knocked on the door, was invited in and began rolling the camera.

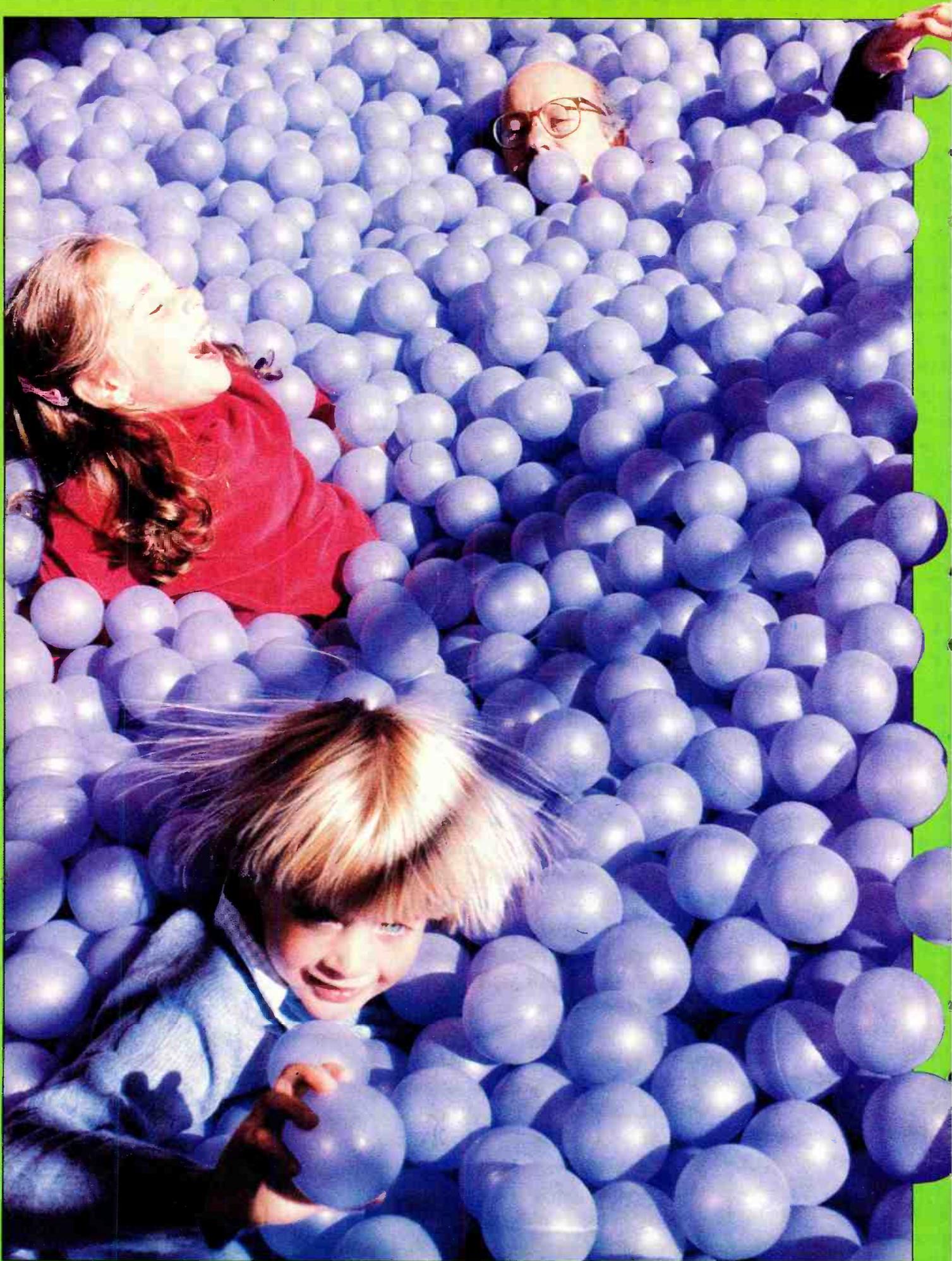
These interviews were among the most gripping and substantive narratives, particularly Richard Queen's with CBS's Dan Rather and later with Richard Wagner. Rather scored one of the sharpest beats when he held up to viewers and to Queen two still photos of the hostages running the gauntlet in Tehran, flanked by their guards:

Rather: Do you recognize any of the militants?

Queen: Yes. I'm pretty sure that one was about the slimiest of the militants. I called him "Weasel" and my roommate called him "Rat Face."

But often the technical machine produced trivia. Even with two stories as big as the Inauguration and the hostages, the networks could not maintain a consistent level of newsworthiness in their reports for live coverage stretching to 12 and 13 hours. The Inauguration coverage was slowed by fillers—the price of stand tickets, the parade courses and the need to get used to bagpipe music, reruns of the fireworks, etc., etc., etc. This need to fill was also evident at the Inaugural balls, where celebrants were mindlessly interviewed. Roy Rogers in particular looked unhorsed when the cameras zeroed in on him, wanting some deep-think on the hostage story. In general, all three networks appeared uncomfortable at the balls, with Barbara Walters in pink and lavender admitting that she felt guilty at the celebrations while

*continued on page 66*



In the summer of 1980, something new appeared on the amusement-park horizon: *Sesame Place*. Located in Langhorne, Pa., a few miles north of Philadelphia, the three-acre park was developed by the Children's Television Workshop, in association with the Busch Entertainment Corp. *Sesame Place* is billed as "a total learning experience that blends wholesome physical activity, stimulating science experiments and challenging computer games"—and it's a prototype for other parks to be built elsewhere around the country.

With CTW's backing and such admirable aims, parents' expectations of *Sesame Place* and future parks are likely to be high. But does this "innovative family play park" accomplish its goals? To find out, PANORAMA sent a trio of investigators: Seth Hedderick (age 6), Karen Adele (age 8) and Dr. Lee Salk (age somewhat more advanced). Author of five best-selling books on parenthood, the family and child-raising, he is a professor of psychology in psychiatry and pediatrics at Cornell University Medical College and an adjunct professor in child development at Brown University. While Karen and Seth tried out the facilities, Dr. Salk observed, jotted notes and often joined in the fun. When the day was over, we asked Dr. Salk to evaluate *Sesame Place*—on its own terms and his.

**I** find it hard to reconcile my own one-day experience at *Sesame Place* with the developers' claims. It does provide a setting as colorful as the *Sesame Street* TV production, with the comfortable familiarity of the show's characters and set as a bonus. Beyond this, though, I found little to justify calling it anything more than a "super playground."

Some—though not all—of the attractions allow grown-ups to participate with their children. Outgoing Karen quickly decided she preferred the places where I could come, too, and shy, quiet Seth became much more at ease after we'd bounced around together on the Rubber Duckie Pond, a water mattress the area of a good-sized room. There children and grown-ups have a chance to do acrobatics or otherwise "let themselves

go." A competent attendant joined us and played with the children, showing them ways to use this unusual surface and encouraging them to try their own ideas. Having dealt with the Rubber Duckie Pond, we all felt far better coordinated when back on solid ground—not unlike the way Demosthenes must have felt about speaking after he took the pebbles out of his mouth.

I must say I also enjoyed throwing myself into The Count's Ball Room (pictured at left): a pit filled to a two-foot depth with lightweight blue plastic balls. It's just right for wallowing, diving and surfacing, and playing peekaboo. The fun of this feature is purely physical, with little need to employ imagination, so I'd doubt that children would want to return to it very often. (At the end of this first visit, though, both my young companions named the Ball Room their favorite attraction.) Cookie Mountain, an eight-foot-high vinyl peak at the center of a similar, though shallower, pit of green balls, is off limits to grown-ups. The children struggle up its slippery slopes alone or with the help of others who've reached the top—and I observed a great deal more pulling up than pushing down of the weaker climbers by the stronger.

Heavy cargo nets suspended at altitudes up to 30 feet above ground crisscross one section of the park for still more adventurous climbers. Closer to the ground—at least it seemed so at first glance—was The Amazing Mumford's Water Maze (page 37, top), a progression of nets and tunnels suspended over another pit. While we enjoyed the clambering, we weren't getting the full treatment. A network of pipes and sprayers makes the trip more exciting—and considerably damper—in warm weather, but the water had been turned off once autumn set in. (The entire park closes for the coldest months, reopening this year on April 11.)

According to Dr. Marilyn Rothenberg, one of the many childhood-education specialists involved in planning *Sesame Place*, "We have attempted to create an environment in which youngsters can experiment without fear or failure." One ideal spot for such experimentation is Grover's Rubber Band Bounce (page 36, bottom), where children can throw themselves full force into a rubbery wall and be bounced back. Something in this chance for reckless abandon certainly appealed to the once-reserved Seth, but when I asked him why he liked it so much, he simply gasped (between bounces), "Because it's fun!"

As for education—several of the park's designers believe "play and learning are the same process," helping children "develop a positive and realistic concept of themselves and their abilities." On these terms the outdoor elements score well. But features that might introduce simple scientific concepts—for instance, the Rainbow Pyramid, where balls tossed just the right way will balance on vertical airstreams (touted in one brochure as "demonstrating the Bernoulli effect that causes lift on airplane wings")—generally do not transmit their messages. Neither signs nor attendants hint how children might begin to think about the causes of the effects they see—or that they ought to think about such things.

"When can we eat?" Karen asked at the end of almost every activity she tried, but then interrupted herself with "Oh, but let's do *that* first!" as yet another attraction caught her eye. When we finally arrived at the *Sesame Place* Food Factory (page 37, bottom), it provided a very pleasant setting for the break we all needed following our exertions (and my exhaus-

# Having a Ball

A leading child psychologist notes the learning pluses—and minuses—at a "Sesame Street" theme park

By LEE SALK, Ph.D.

tion). The food—ranging in price from 59 cents to \$1.50—was an attractive, varied assortment, close enough in appearance to amusement-park fare but actually full of nutritious elements like whole-grain flour, sprouts, low-cholesterol meats and real fruit juices. A behind-the-counter menu listed the contents of each dish.

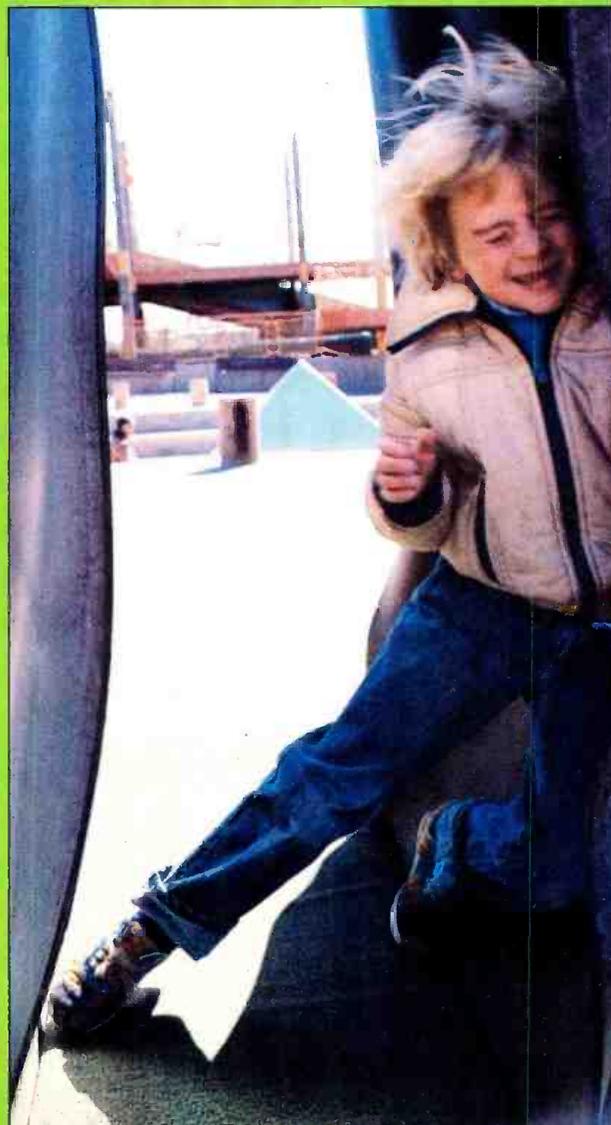
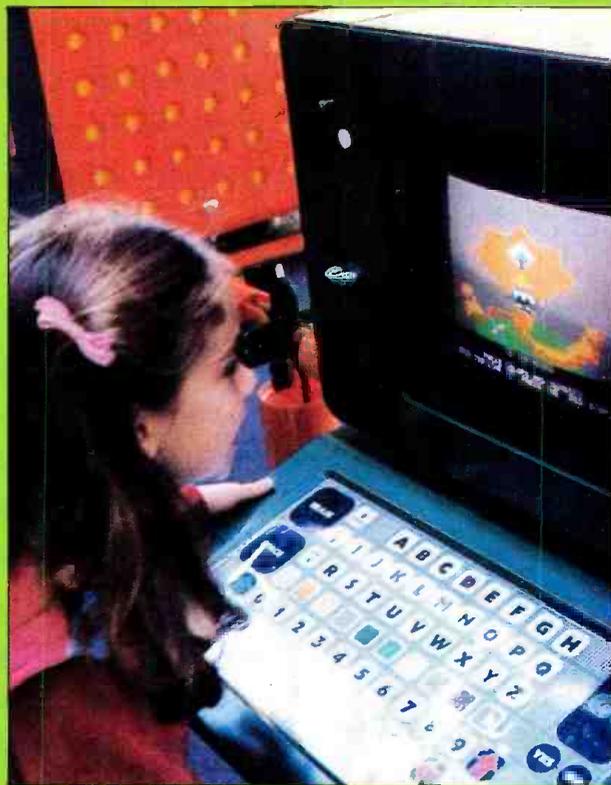
Just a few feet from the Food Factory, Sesame Studios provides a number of potentially stimulating and fascinating attractions. The principal one is the *Sesame Street* TV-show set—complete with steps, trash cans for Grouch fans like Seth to lurk in, and video monitors to let everyone be a guest on the show. The building also houses such things as distorting mirrors, a zoetrope, a voice-graph display, several optical illusions, a “whispering wall” and a Shadow Room where silhouettes are frozen on the treated walls for several seconds.

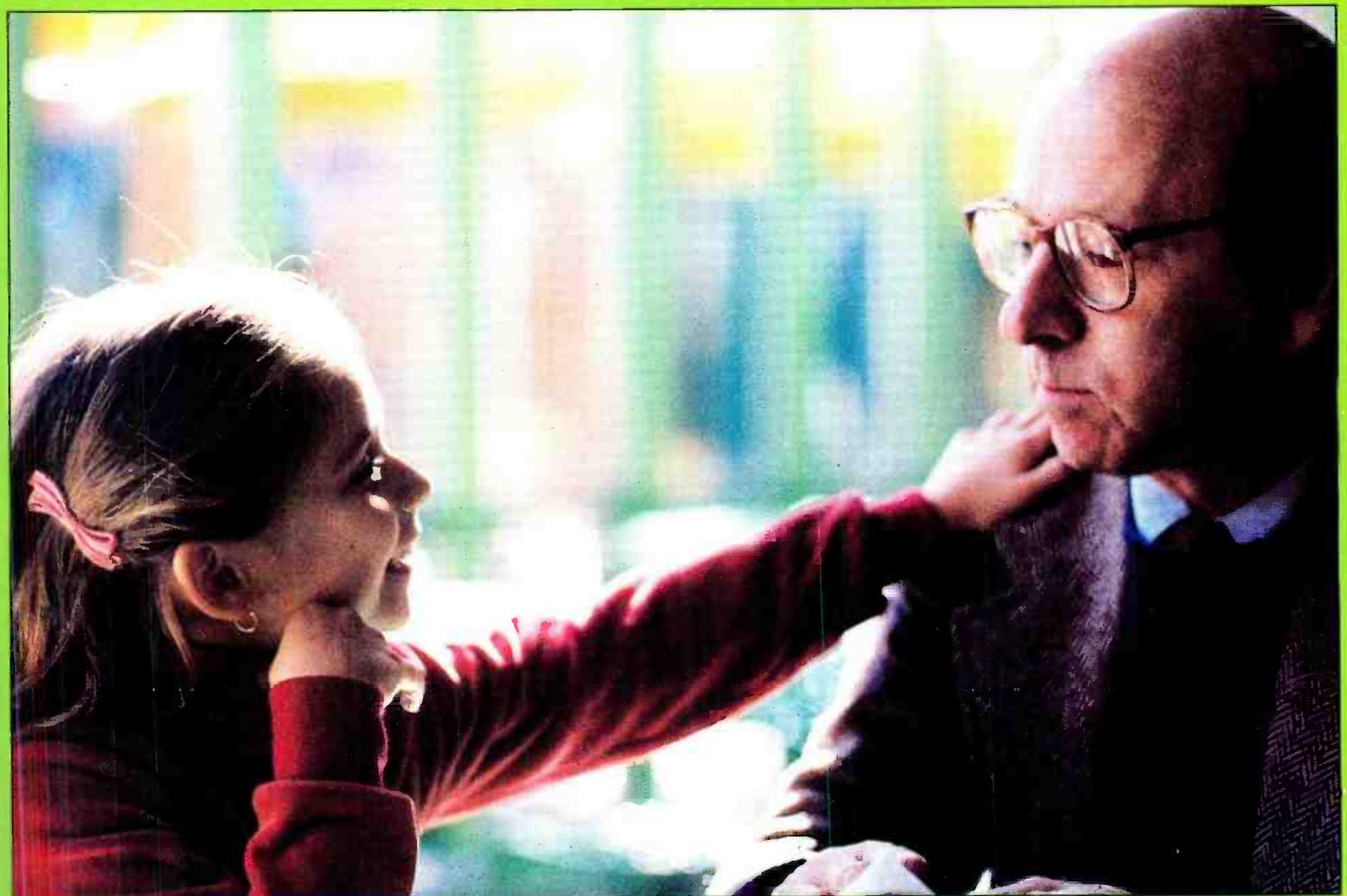
**I** asked an attendant (who, like all attendants, wore a big button saying “ASK ME A QUESTION”) what she told children who asked why the shadows stayed. She replied, “I don’t know myself—and most children don’t stop to ask for explanations anyway.” Similar answers came from other attendants. Polite, pleasant and gracious though they were, none was able to give explanations or answer questions. Thus, the exhibits’ value was largely lost without a way to encourage and answer the questions they raised.

The Computer Gallery (page 36, top) houses a number of computer games—which, unfortunately, require the purchase of tokens (three for \$1) for operation. Parents who have already paid a \$3.95 admission fee for each member of the party—adult or child—may sooner or later have to say “no” because they simply can’t afford more. Further, the instructions on some of the games are complicated and even confusing. As shown in the picture, Karen was fairly comfortable with the games she chose. However, with three weeks of first grade (and a couple of years of *Sesame Street* viewing) under his belt, Seth struggled mightily to sound out the instructions on a “designed for ages 3 to 7” game’s video screen, but couldn’t quite do it alone. (The 3-year-olds must *really* have problems!)

The Computer Gallery houses a few more science exhibits like those in the studio building. Again the phenomena require some technical explanation—or at least a few hints—but there is no one to offer such explanations. Granted, one might say this is a time to tell a child, “Look it up in the school library,” but from a psychological viewpoint it would be far better to have the explanation at hand when the child expresses curiosity.

I came away from Sesame Place feeling very well-exercised after my climbing, crawling, falling, sliding and hoisting, but not as intellectually stimulated as the publicity had led me to hope. Sesame Place can provide plenty of fun, but it’s not what I’d call a “new concept in family entertainment.” It *is* colorful and well-designed. But many of the basic elements are variations on familiar themes, and the more unusual areas—the Computer Gallery and science demonstrations—haven’t reached their potential. This park is a prototype, and its management seems to be monitoring the effectiveness of the play elements and modifying the less successful ones. We can hope they are likewise studying and planning improvements for the educational features, which could raise it beyond the rank of “super playground.” ■







TARGET

*The Social Force*

*of Television*

AMERICA

*(Fourth of a series)*

# Welcome to Alaska, Six Million Dollar Man

**Watching television is now as vital to Alaskan villagers as skinning foxes and weaving traps**

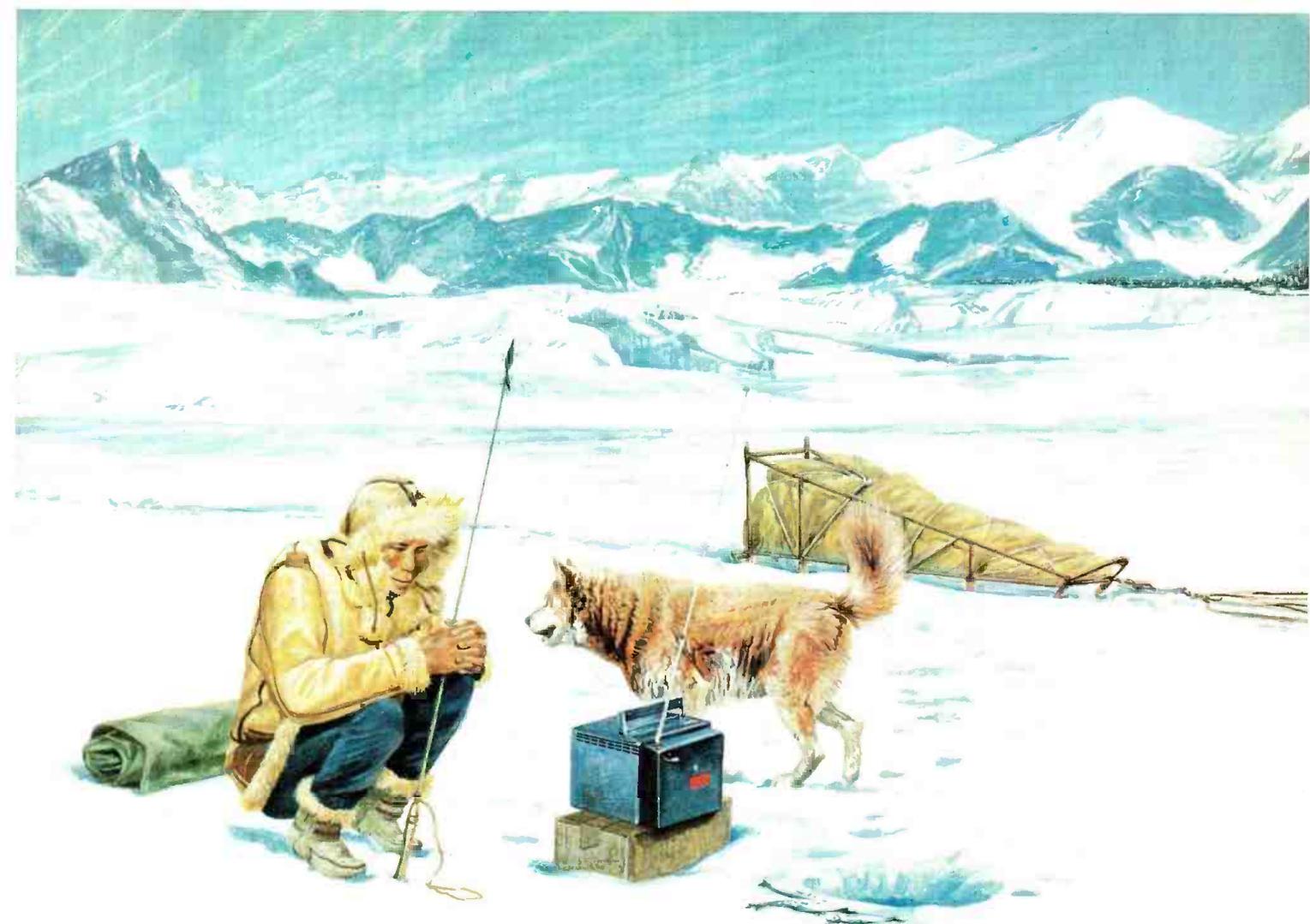
**By JOE MCGINNISS**

*In the fall of 1975, Joe McGinniss, author of Heroes and The Selling of the President 1968, set out to experience and record what he thought might be the last days of America's last frontier, Alaska. With the Alaskan Pipeline, he writes, the Americanization of Alaska had begun; the vast wilderness and the lives of the people who inhabited it were*

*rapidly being transformed by the irresistible forces of modern technology. For two years, McGinniss wandered across the state—watching, talking and listening to a society racing to keep up with, and profit from, Alaska's entry into the modern age; a society both elated and devastated. The result was Going to Extremes, published last August by Al-*

*fred A. Knopf, Inc.*

*One of the few Alaskans McGinniss knew before leaving for Alaska was Olive Cook, a troubled young Eskimo woman he had met in Washington, D.C. Attracted by the prospect of an exciting and convenient life in mainstream American society, Cook, at 18, had left her small, primitive fishing village to live and work*



*in Washington—a move that proved disastrous for her. Her unrewarding, rigid job at the Department of the Interior, writes McGinniss, in a completely alien environment, combined with feelings of homesickness and culture shock, soon brought her close to a nervous breakdown. She frequently threw herself into parties, where she would either “drink too much too quickly or . . . smoke so much dope that, temporarily, she would no longer care where she was.”*

*After a few months, Olive Cook decided that she needed to go back to the village for a while; she would go home for “the Slavic”—the Russian Orthodox Christmas festival that dated back to the Russian ownership of Alaska and was for her village the most festive and solemn time of year. When they had met in Washington, Cook invited McGinniss to come to the Slavic. In the excerpt below, from *Going to Extremes*, McGinniss tells the story of his visit to her village—a visit that, to his surprise, turned out to be first and foremost a disturbing encounter with what may be the strongest technological force altering the lives of*

*the villagers and their view of the world: television. As the story begins, McGinniss has just arrived in the village and is met by Olive Cook:*

**“Hey, you crazy guy, you really nuts, you know that? I never thought you would come. How long you staying anyway? It’s very crowded here for the Slavic. I think you just be in the way.”** Then she laughed. A bit hysterically, I thought.

“Look at that bag. What you got in there? You got presents for me, I sure hope. I don’t know where you going to put a big bag like that. We don’t have no extra space in our house. When you going back? When you tell that pilot to come for you? Oh boy, you crazy guy, I don’t know what you are doing here.”

We walked down the river to her house. Most of the village had been built on the east bank of the river. The Cook family, and one or two others, lived on the west bank, so in summer to pick up their mail, or to use the telephone, or simply to go out and visit, they would have to cross the river in a boat. In

winter, of course, it made no difference. The river was like a six-lane highway right through town.

The house was an unpainted wooden shack. Olive pushed open the door and we stepped inside, accompanied by billows of steam.

“Take off your boots, you.” This was Olive’s mother. Glaring at me, and pointing to a pile of boots by the door. In my socks, I stepped into the room that served as kitchen, living room and dining room, and as bedroom for Olive’s younger brothers and her cousin.

The room contained a wood-burning stove, a big table and a couch that folded out to be a bed. There was a basin to wash in. Water was obtained by melting ice. There was a small storage closet, separated from the kitchen by a curtain. At the rear of the storage closet there was a bucket. This bucket was the Cook family’s toilet. Every couple of days, they dumped it outside and started again. In spring, when breakup came—when the snow melted and the ground thawed and the river started flowing—the winter’s waste pile would gradually disappear. As

would all the other waste piles around the village.

There was a second, smaller room. With a bed in one corner for the parents, a bunk bed next to it, a bunk bed at the other end, and a cot pushed up against a wall. Normally, five people slept in this room. The parents, Olive, her sister, who was 14 years old, and a male relative who lived with the family much of the time.

Olive's father was sitting cross-legged by the stove, working intently with a knife. A bald and bloody carcass lay beside him. He looked up, nodded once, went back to work.

"What's the matter?" Olive said. "You never seen anybody skin a fox?"

There was fur, blood, gristle and bones all over the floor. Olive's father worked silently, with head bowed. He was a short man, of medium build, with a crew cut. Her mother was taller, lighter in color, less Asiatic-looking.

"Hey, what do you think?" her mother said. "This is some kind of hotel? What you come here for with that big bag?"

"It's not so big."

"Yeah, where you think we gonna put it? We don't have no space in here."

"Hey, goddamn you," Olive said. "I sure hope you brought us some vegetables."

But no, I had not brought vegetables. I should have. I had thought of buying vegetables and fruit in Anchorage. But then I had been in a rush to catch my plane.

Olive's father put down his knife, wiped his bloody hands on his pants, and sat down at the table to eat lunch. Olive's mother put a bowl in front of me. She filled it with a light brown, pasty substance. There was a plate of pilot bread—thick, flat crackers—to go with it.

"I hope you like moose soup," Olive said. "That's all we eat here in the winter."

Actually, this was not quite true. That night, for dinner, following an afternoon during which Olive took me on a walking tour of the village, there was moose stew. The difference was, moose stew had gristly joints of moose in it, while the soup was just moose-flavored gruel.

As soon as the evening meal was over, Olive's father went back to the floor, where, now that he was finished skinning fox, he had started to build a blackfish trap.

Blackfish were oily little fish that swam all winter long in the river that

flowed through the village. To catch them, you lowered the trap into the water through a hole in the ice, and pulled it out the next day. The trap was made of freshly cut wood, which was peeled, cut into strips and then woven together to make a basket. A cone was placed over the open end. The fish would swim into the basket but then would be unable to get out.

It was a painstaking, intricate process, but Olive's father worked quickly, with total concentration, his sharp knife flashing, his stubby, worn fingers handling the wood the way a professional blackjack dealer handles cards.

The children had disappeared right after dinner into the other room of the house. Olive was helping her mother wash some clothes. They had an old-fashioned washtub, with a wringer that had to be cranked by hand.



## Gone was the symbolism of the raven and the bear. The new gods were Big Bird, and Bert and Ernie



By 9 P.M. Olive's father had almost finished the trap. Just two or three more strips to weave into place. His breathing was steady and rhythmic. He sat with head bowed, legs crossed, nothing moving but the masterful hands. To watch him work was to see not just the heart of a separate culture, but, it seemed, the essence of a dying age.

All over Alaska, Eskimos were giving up, moving to the cities, signing on for government aid. Taking jobs on the Pipeline, or staying home and cashing welfare checks. Some, the more adaptable, had begun going to school to learn white men's trades: real estate, construction, and other forms of profitable entrepreneurship.

But here, in the village, was Al Cook. A survivor. Impervious to the assaults of time and progress upon the sacred traditions of his people.

His expression had not changed; he had not uttered a sound for more than an hour. The blackfish trap had come to seem an extension of himself. Then, suddenly, Olive's 8-year-old brother ran in from the back room.

"Papa, Papa!" the boy shouted. "Hurry up! Hurry up! *Six Million Dollar Man* on TV!"

Al Cook dropped his knife. He tossed the almost-completed blackfish trap aside. He jumped to his feet, his face animated for the first time all day. Grinning and chattering and rubbing his hands in anticipation, he hurried toward the other room, following his son.

"Oh boy," he said. "Hurry up." Motioning for me to accompany him. "*Six Million Dollar Man* on TV."

**Television was new.** This was its first winter in the village, which had been chosen as part of a pilot project. Ostensibly, to see if the introduction of television would improve the quality of Eskimo life. Although some considered it a not-so-subtle form of genocide.

For the villagers, television was the biggest innovation since the airplane. Even bigger, in a way, since the airplane affected the lives of a comparatively small percentage of the population, whereas television influenced every life.

No more were ancient stories told late into the night. No more the quiet visits, the dances, the little games. Now, not even a blackfish trap was more important than a program as exciting as *The Six Million Dollar Man*.

For the first time in history, the Eskimo had been given an opportunity to live vicariously. And he had seized it and was clinging to it for dear life. No matter that very few of the viewers could understand the dialogue—the English spoken was too quick, and the accent, to the Eskimo ear, was too foreign—the picture alone was enough. After centuries of staring into the flickering fire through the night, the village people could now stare at electronic images that flickered in a variety of adventurous ways.

It was television, I soon discovered, even more than the celebration of the Slavic, around which the life of the village seemed to revolve. There was only one channel—from Bethel. It broadcast a mixture of commercial and educational programs. The children watched *Sesame Street* each afternoon. Little Eskimo kids coming off the tundra and sitting three

feet from the screen. Learning to count from one to 10 in Spanish. Gone was the symbolism of the raven and the bear. The new gods were Big Bird, and Bert and Ernie.

It did not matter what program was on. After centuries of changeless frozen winter, where the only thing that moved for miles around was the snow when the wind happened to blow, it was now possible to turn one switch and this magic machine would bring a seemingly infinite variety of hallucinatory images before your eyes. It was almost a form of peyote.

*Starsky & Hutch. Charlie's Angels. Mister Rogers.* The residents of the village loved them all. One afternoon, the entire Cook family sat transfixed for half an hour watching *Book Beat* as Robert Cromie directed questions at Saul Bellow.

**I slept on the folding** couch in the front room. The 8-year-old was next to me. His cousin slept next to him. A younger brother slept on the floor. Olive's parents got up at 6 A.M. Her father went outside and attached a sled to their snow machine. Her mother made coffee, then went to help with the sled.

"Where are they off to at this time of day?" I asked Olive.

"To Bethel."

"To Bethel? By snow machine? But that must be 50 miles away."

"Yeah, so what? Otherwise, how we gonna get our food for the Slavic? You think we can phone up and they deliver?"

When the sled was attached, Olive's parents came back inside. They ate crackers with jam and drank coffee. Then they told their children what the chores were for the day. I gave Olive's mother some money for the food, in place of the vegetables I did not bring from Anchorage. She thanked me, they put on their parkas, and they were gone.

"How much did you give her?" Olive asked.

"Thirty dollars."

"Yeah, why don't you give her more, you rich white man? You come out here and eat all our food and take up all our space with your goddamn duffel bag. Why are you here? Didn't you know I was drunk and stoned when I invited you?"

I shrugged. This seemed just Olive's way of saying good morning. I spread some butter and jam on a piece of pilot bread for my breakfast. Kool-Aid was the

only thing to drink. The little kids drank Kool-Aid all the time, and chewed gum constantly, and told their mother to be sure to bring back the Sugar Pops. I think they saw commercials for sugared breakfast cereals on TV.

"Now what are you going to do, god-damn you? I got to do the wash. I am not here just to entertain you. Why don't you go play with the kids, that's all you are good for. Go on, don't bother me, I don't have no time for you. I got to be nice to you yesterday just because my mother and father are around, but today they are gone and I wish that you were gone, too."

Then, inexplicably, she broke into a grin and leaned close to me and squeezed my arm and said, "Hey, don't worry. I just get a little upset, that is all. I'm only fooling. It's OK. You stay here as long as you want."



**The entire Cook family  
sat transfixed for  
half an hour watching  
*Book Beat* as  
Robert Cromie  
directed questions at  
Saul Bellow**



She did another load of wash, she mopped the floors, refusing any offers to help, and she tried to make a spaghetti sauce that afternoon, to show her parents the kind of food she ate in Washington. The sauce was doing well, too, until she decided that, having no meatballs, she should instead add little pieces of moose.

That night, there was a basketball game against a team from a nearby village to the north. The game was played in the school gymnasium. The gymnasium had a low roof, and the baskets were only nine feet high, but, otherwise, basketball was basketball, anywhere in the world.

Olive and I sat in the second row of folding wooden bleachers. The bleachers were only half filled. Another sign of the impact of television. Before TV, it had been standing room only for every game.

**The Slavic began the** next day. It did not seem a very structured affair. Village leaders would carry a prayer wheel and incense into a home, followed by whoever was participating at any given time. As many people as possible would crowd into the house, and then, for 20 minutes or half an hour, they would chant prayers and sing ancient Russian hymns. When the singing was over, food would be served. And that was the problem. The praying and the singing were not so bad: exotic enough to be interesting for a while, and kind of stirring, really, when you realized how closely in touch these people still were with the days when the only white men here were the Russians.

But after the singing came the food. Sometimes there would be moose soup. Sometimes fermented seal meat, which was worse. But always as a staple, there was something called Eskimo ice cream. This was either seal oil or Crisco, whipped to a batterlike consistency, and laced heavily with a particularly noxious and bitter type of berry.

Unfortunately, you were expected to eat it. To pass a bowl back unfinished would have been considered not merely rude but, under the circumstances, almost blasphemous. And this stuff was served at every house.

At each house, also, the children were given bags full of candy. For three days, no one under the age of 14 in the village ate anything else. And no matter how much they ate, their reserve supply seemed to increase. They would have candy enough, by the conclusion of the Slavic, to last them until freeze-up again the next fall. That they would have any teeth left was a doubtful proposition.

It was by far the most awesome, revolting and chilling orgy of sugar consumption I'd ever seen. No Halloween, no Easter Sunday, no Christmas vacation in even the most permissive or uncaring American household could have begun to approach what Slavic meant to Eskimo children in western Alaska.

Over the next 24 hours it became obvious that Olive Cook did truly regret having invited me to the Slavic. She had never expected that I would come, she was deeply embarrassed by my presence—I was, other than the schoolteacher, the only white person in the village—and she would feel immense relief when I departed. In addition to that, I couldn't take any more Eskimo ice cream.

*continued on page 75*

## Boxing and TV

# It's the Viewers Who Are Taking It on the Chin

By SAM TOPEROFF

*In a crowded, smoke-fogged Long Island arena last October, I sat next to a typical boxing fan, a fellow in his mid-20s named Tony. We had each sprung for 20 bucks to watch a fuzzy projection on a distant movie screen of what was billed as Muhammad Ali's "Last Hurrah" against heavyweight champ Larry Holmes. It was more humbug than hurrah.*

*After the fight, as we walked through a misty rain toward our cars, Tony told me that he was a piano player in a cocktail lounge, that he'd taken the night off to see Ali give it one last try. He said, the anger slowly rising, "Being stung by Ali doesn't bother me that much. You know what really gets me? This whole setup. I watch all the fights on TV, but when there's a really good one, like Duran-Leonard, Hearns-Cuevas, or even like this one was supposed to be, the promoters keep it for themselves and go closed circuit. And I'm out 20 bucks and a night's pay. It's like I'm being played for a sucker."*

*"Tony," I said, "did you ever hear of a guy named James D. Norris?"*

*He shrugged and shook his head.*

### I. DEATH AND TRANSFIGURATION

James D. Norris cornered boxing back in the 1950s. Through his International Boxing Club, Norris controlled the large arenas and television outlets. So, be-

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### The networks refuse to police the sport—thus creating the climate for greed and corruption

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cause he ran the biggest, most successful game in town, fight managers quickly got his message: *You want to move your boy, you do business with Mr. Norris—on Mr. Norris's terms.* Mr. Norris's terms were so one-sided that in the boxing business the IBC became known as Octopus, Inc.

About the same time, a number of state boxing commissions began to investigate reports that underworld types like Blinky Palermo, Mickey Cohen and Frankie Carbo were approaching boxers with bribes to throw fights and offering managers deals to sell pieces of their fighters, deals that were extremely difficult to refuse. Things got so mean and dirty that eventually the FBI had to step in. Then the Justice Department sent some of the thugs off to the Federal pen,

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*Sam Toperoff is a professor of art history at Hofstra University. His latest novel is A Family Matter, written with James Roosevelt.*

cutting the Octopus's tentacles off with an antitrust suit. But the cleanup had come a little too late. When Rocky Marciano retired in 1956, boxing was dead as a major American sport.

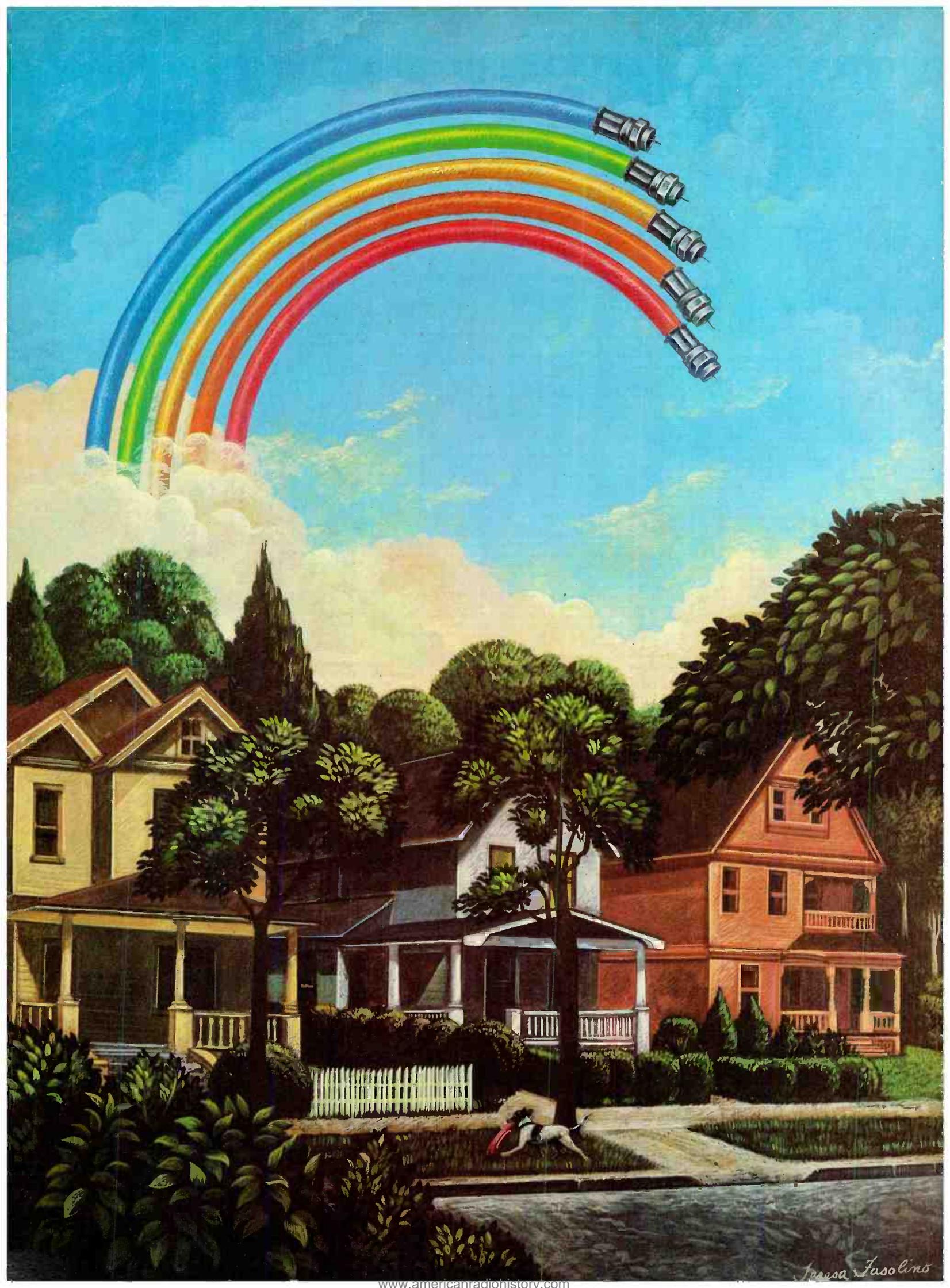
But boxing and TV is an unbreakable marriage made in heaven. The restricted, easy-to-cover, 20-foot square; the raw, elemental drama reflected in the bloodied faces (perfect for color) of two fighters; the regularly scheduled one-minute breaks (ideal for commercials)—my God, if the sport hadn't already existed, Boone Arledge would have had to invent it. And there, at center stage in the '60s, was Cassius Clay—handsome, querulous, absolutely brilliant in the ring—to bring the sport back, all the way back, from the tattered margins of legitimacy.

Conventional wisdom in the business has always held that "as the heavyweights go, so goes boxing." And it had been true that the greatest eras of the sport coincided with great heavyweight champions like Dempsey, Louis, and Ali. That same conventional wisdom believed that when Ali went, boxing's latest golden age would tarnish with his passing. The wisdom was wrong: Boxing has become so big an attraction, and the networks have learned to showcase it so well, that this time around it is going to outlive its heavyweight savior.

Sugar Ray Leonard, at 147 pounds,

*continued on page 76*





# There's Gold in Them Thar Suburbs

By FRANK DONEGAN

If you've been following the Great Cable Wars for the last year or two, you've heard lots about the battles going on in places like Pittsburgh, Dallas and Cincinnati. You've been treated to thrilling tales of pillage, venality and intrigue as the industry's giants grappled for the country's most desirable franchises. But unless you've been paying especially close attention, you may have missed a whole theater of combat. While the big-city franchise battles have grabbed the headlines, a robust guerrilla war has been percolating along nicely in the nation's suburbs. And there's been enough action to please even the most seasoned jungle fighter.

While it would be rash to make any sweeping generalizations about the fate and progress of cable in the polyglot world of the suburbs, a few preliminary observations might be in order:

- As a class, the suburbs tend to be further along the cable road than cities. This does not mean that every suburban area is ahead of every city, but it's probably safe to say that, on a national scale, the suburbs have been more active in franchising systems than urban areas.

- Partly because of ignorance, obstinacy, parochialism and plain orneriness, the suburbs sometimes end up with cable systems that aren't as good as those being proposed for major cities.

- While in the past some towns have been hustled out of their pants by sharp operators, suburbs are learning fast. They are beginning to demand the best and—in some cases, at least—getting it.

For years, of course, the suburbs, like the cities they surround, weren't particularly interested in cable. Except for the occasional fringe suburb or one that was on the wrong side of a mountain, they already received good TV signals from nearby urban stations. By the mid-1970s, however, cable was offering more

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**Business is booming,  
but many towns could have  
gotten even better deals  
than they have now  
if they'd had more  
patience and know-how**

---

than improved reception. It offered diversity: the prospect of an ever-expanding TV universe. And that aroused some curiosity in the suburbs.

Stephen Bell, a reporter for The (Stamford, Conn.) Advocate who has been following the hotly contested franchise in Fairfield County, outside New York City, describes the evolution of suburban attitudes toward cable: "The people in this area were not really chafing at the bit for cable because they've already got all the New York stations. But gradually the idea gets around. A guy here finds out his brother or cousin who lives someplace else has had it for a year and he begins asking, 'When am I gonna get it?'"

Suburban politicians and cable operators began sensing this change in attitude a couple of years ago and before you could say "Sign on the dotted line," franchises were being doled out all over the landscape.

There are good reasons why cable operators thirst after suburbs. They're cheap to wire, for one thing. Suburbs usually run their utilities above ground, which means cable companies can attach their wires to already-existing roadside poles. Laying cable in cities means digging up streets and bury-

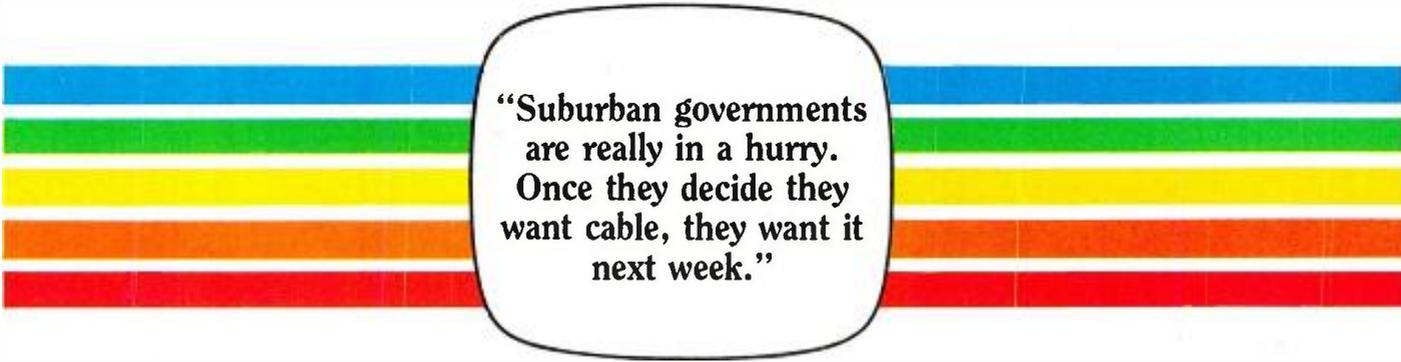
ing wires underground, at a cost as high as \$100,000 per mile, while slapping cable onto utility poles runs about a tenth of that amount.

Bidding on a big-city franchise also means running up heavy bills for engineering studies. Charles Hamilton, director of public affairs for Teleprompter, the nation's largest cable operator, says, "When we go in to bid on a franchise we check out every street to see what problems we may run into. When you're talking about a major city, that's a tremendous expense."

The suburban cable operator, of course, gives up the potentially enormous audience available in a city, but his reduced start-up costs easily offset the lower density. (Cable operators estimate that you need about 30 homes per mile to make a system economically feasible; almost all but the leafiest suburbs can hit this density mark.)

Suburbs caught up in the process of rapid growth are particularly appealing targets. When new subdivisions or whole "new towns" are going up, cable operators can run their wires in at the same time as other utilities, again reducing front-end costs. These newer suburbs also tend to attract the younger, upwardly mobile types who are prime cable prospects. In an article in Broadcasting magazine last year, John Thorne of Cox Cable Communications explained, "The typical cable subscriber is between the ages of 20 and 45 and that age group tends to subscribe to everything you have to offer."

In the planned community of Woodlands, Texas, just north of Houston, for example, 95 percent of the residences subscribe to cable (the national rate is about 23 percent). Better yet, from the cable operator's viewpoint, a substantial number of the 3000 Woodlands homeowners buy the extras that throw off much higher



**“Suburban governments  
are really in a hurry.  
Once they decide they  
want cable, they want it  
next week.”**

profits than basic service: 40 percent pick up the pay-TV options, which include HBO and Cinemax; and 60 percent have taken the cable-based home-security system, for which the company charges an additional \$9.75 a month.

Another thing cable operators like about suburbs is their homogeneity. Not only are there fewer poor people around to louse up the demographics, there are also fewer contentious local groups to demand access channels in the proposed system. Blacks, Hispanics, Ukrainians, Latvians, gays, militant feminists, ex-drug addicts, dissident librarians and dogooders of all stripes are better represented—and more vocal—in the cities. Says Teleprompter’s Charles Hamilton, “There are a hundred times more community organizations to touch base with in a big city. I used to be community-development director for Teleprompter. I attended God knows how many of those local meetings and I can testify to how wild they can get.”

**I**t’s hard to pin down how deeply cable has penetrated into the suburbs. This is partly due to measurement techniques that focus on ADI (Area of Dominant Influence) markets, in which central cities and suburbs tend to be lumped together. Industry pollsters often make comparisons between urban and rural figures but rarely acknowledge that there’s something between the two.

Nevertheless, people who have a national perspective can cite a few figures that hint at how substantial cable activity in the suburbs has been. For example, the Northeast and the West Coast—two regions that could legitimately be called the most suburbanized areas of the country—show the highest rate of cable penetration: about 75 percent higher than the Midwest, and 25 to 30 percent higher than in the Southern or Central regions, according to Arbitron. A list of

the 10 largest cable systems confirms the industry’s health in at least some of the suburbs. While the list includes such cities as San Diego (number 1), New York (2) and Los Angeles (4), it also has some strong suburban entries: Oyster Bay, Long Island (3), Suffolk County, Long Island (6), West Orange, N.J. (9), and Erie County, N.Y. (7), which contains the suburbs of Buffalo as well as the city itself.

Frank Greif, who heads Seattle’s Office of Cable Communications and who also heads the newly formed National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors, says, “We’ve seen a great leap toward franchising the cities recently but for years it was just the opposite. All the activity was in suburbs and rural areas. Here in my area, they were building all around Seattle for three years before we got going in the city.”

Still and all, there seems to be a widespread conviction among industry observers that, while the suburbs may have been more active in cable franchising than major cities, they have not always been getting the best systems.

Nancy Jesuale of the Cable Television Information Center (a nonprofit group that helps local governments through the treacherous franchising process) says, “Suburbs are not seeing the same level of services as cities. In Dallas, for example, Warner is providing a million dollars for programming by local organizations, including all kinds of studios, mobile vans and staff people. The suburbs may be getting modern systems, but they’re not in the same ball game.”

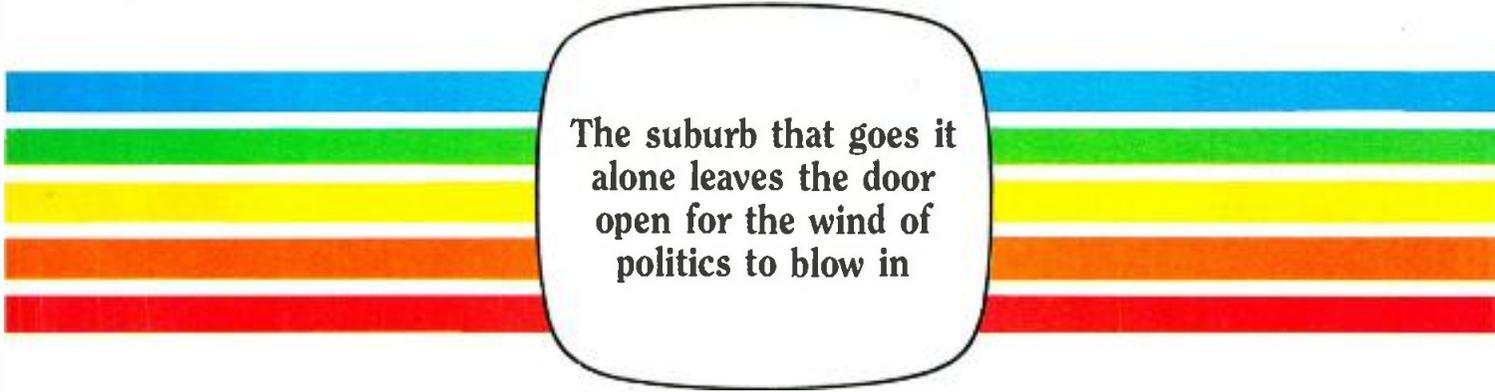
The suburbs’ early entry into the cable field in itself accounts for part of the discrepancy. Towns that brought in cable even a few years back now find themselves with systems that look down-

right antediluvian, thanks to the rapid development of cable technology. Most older systems offer no more than 12 channels. They allow little room for diversity and have no capacity at all for the two-way interactive services that everyone seems to think will be the wave of the future. And unless those services—home security, shop-at-home, information retrieval—become extremely popular, it’s unlikely that cable operators are going to invest the \$1000 to \$1500 per mile it would cost to update older systems. (Many of these franchises, which often were granted for 10 or 15 years, come up for renewal during the next decade. Then—and only then—the suburbs involved may be able to use some leverage to get more modern systems.)

**M**any in the industry feel that even the most recently franchised suburban systems often fall far short of what they might be. “The suburbs just don’t ask for as much,” says Richard Aurelio, a senior vice president for Warner Amex Cable Communications.

One reason they don’t is that they’re in a rush. Nancy Jesuale says, “Suburban governments are really in a hurry. Once they decide they want cable, they want it next week. They don’t want to go through all the political stuff you have to in order to get a really good franchise.”

This less-than-rigorous attitude on the part of local officials charged with granting franchises probably reflects accurately the feelings of their constituents. The average guy in the suburbs wants cable so he can get more programs on his tube. Maybe he wants the movies on Home Box Office or extra sports from Madison Square Garden. He’s either unaware of, or not particularly interested in, the futuristic uses that are being touted for cable. (Ironically, the suburbanite stands to benefit most in the future if two-way cable services become



**The suburb that goes it  
alone leaves the door  
open for the wind of  
politics to blow in**

widespread. The ability to shop at home or attend town meetings via cable could cut dependence on automobiles.)

Lack of expertise can also hamstring a suburb. Says Frank Greif, "A city like Seattle can afford a full-time guy like me who does nothing but work on cable. But in a small town that maybe has only one or two full-time executives on its payroll . . . cable gets buried with whichever agency or committee handles utilities."

But perhaps the greatest suburban handicap is size. "Suburbs don't have clout," Greif says. "They don't offer enough potential subscribers to induce cable companies to come in and throw a lot of money around."

Of course, the suburbs often have no one but themselves to blame for their lack of clout since they resolutely refuse to cooperate with one another. Adjoining suburbs that gather together into consortiums stand a much better chance of coaxing a top-flight system from cable operators, but all too many simply will not yield any of their autonomy.

Warner Amex's Dick Aurelio says, "We try to encourage consortiums. When a suburb goes individually, you have a smaller universe. You lose the economies of scale. For example, instead of one antenna to take signals off the satellite, you need one for each town." He also notes that an operator bidding on a franchise has certain fixed costs (such as high-priced legal talent) "whether the franchise is going to cover one town or 41. It's hard to print up a proposal for even the smallest town for less than \$50,000."

Then, too, the suburb that goes it alone leaves the door open (sometimes purposely, sometimes unwittingly) for the wind of politics to blow in.

"Suburban governments," says Nancy Jesuale, "are a little more likely to yield to the political suavities of big franchisers." They don't realize, she says, that

they are pitting themselves against companies that have been through the process dozens or hundreds of times before.

Most suburban officials have the good sense these days to set up citizens' advisory boards when they initiate the franchise process. Yet they often have to beg people to sit on them, since cable just doesn't generate the heat in suburbs that it does in cities. "In the small bedroom suburbs," Frank Greif says, "people often are not so interested in their local governments." Families know they may be transferred across the country by their companies next year; as long as property values stay high, they let their local pols handle the boring details of town government.

So far there hasn't been any blatant wrongdoing uncovered in suburban cable franchising. This doesn't mean there hasn't been an occasional raised eyebrow. After Hyattsville, Md., recently awarded its franchise to Storer Cable Communications Inc., for example, the local newspaper ran an editorial musing about whether everything had been quite proper. A reporter for the paper, The Prince Georges (County) Sentinel, told me, "We've had a lot of talk about cable firms coming in and wining and dining local officials. Some people think the franchising was done real fast and that something was fishy. But nobody has proven anything."

**I**t might not be a bad idea to pause here and look a little more closely at Prince Georges County, since it exhibits many of the wrangles, disputes, contests, trials and tribulations that typify cable franchising in the suburbs.

The county sprawls around the entire eastern half of the District of Columbia, running from the area north of the

University of Maryland down to Andrews Air Force Base and the Potomac in the south. The Washington suburban ring, housing as it does legions of highly paid Government employees, is considered one of the most luscious uncabled areas in the country still up for grabs. Twenty-four companies have expressed interest in the Prince Georges franchise. (Actually, two franchises will be granted: one in the northern half of the county, one in the southern half. Each will encompass about 100,000 homes; neither had been awarded at press time.)

These particular suburbs seem to have learned something from the big-city franchise battles. Dolores Early, executive director of the county's cable-TV commission, says, "We've tried to avoid the 'rent-a-citizen' and 'rent-an-institution' approaches"—referring to the fact that when cable companies rumble into a town they try to line up power blocs to lobby for them, by offering prominent local individuals or groups a share in the company and asking for little or no investment in return. As one wag has put it: "You might describe it more accurately as 'bribe-a-citizen' and 'bribe-an-institution'."

Early says, "We've had a couple of companies give away shares to prominent citizens, but we've put rather strong language into our RFP [Request for Proposals] to discourage that. You can't have companies giving away free shares and still think it's not going to hurt you some way. It usually means higher rates down the line."

Early has made an especially strong effort to prevent educational organizations—traditionally centers of power in any community and thus prime targets for franchisers' enticements—from climbing aboard any rent-an-institution bandwagon. "As soon as we began thinking about franchising," Early says, "we lined up an educators' advisory group

*continued on page 72*

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*Today*  
*Kill the Boss*

*Dinner at 6:00*

*Pick up dress from the Cleaners*

*Hair appointment at 5:00*

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JAYE FORD

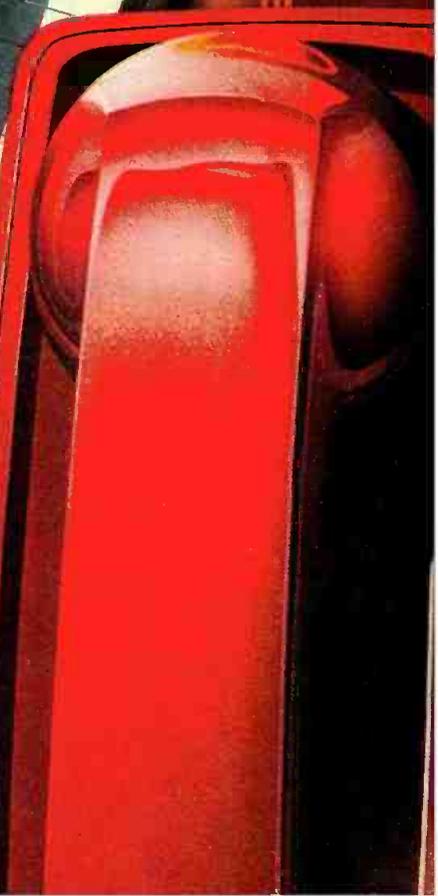
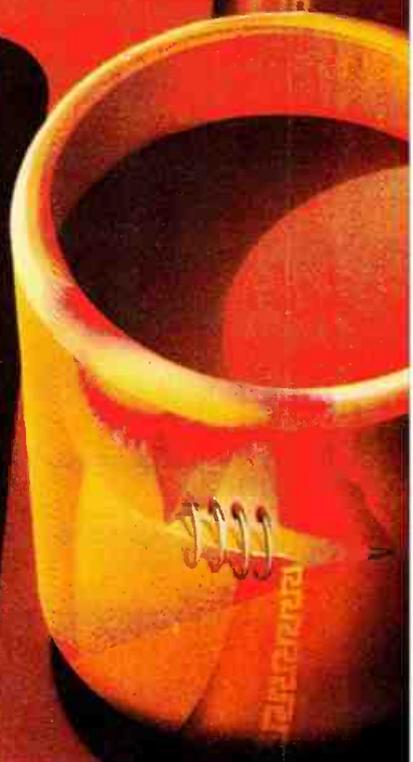
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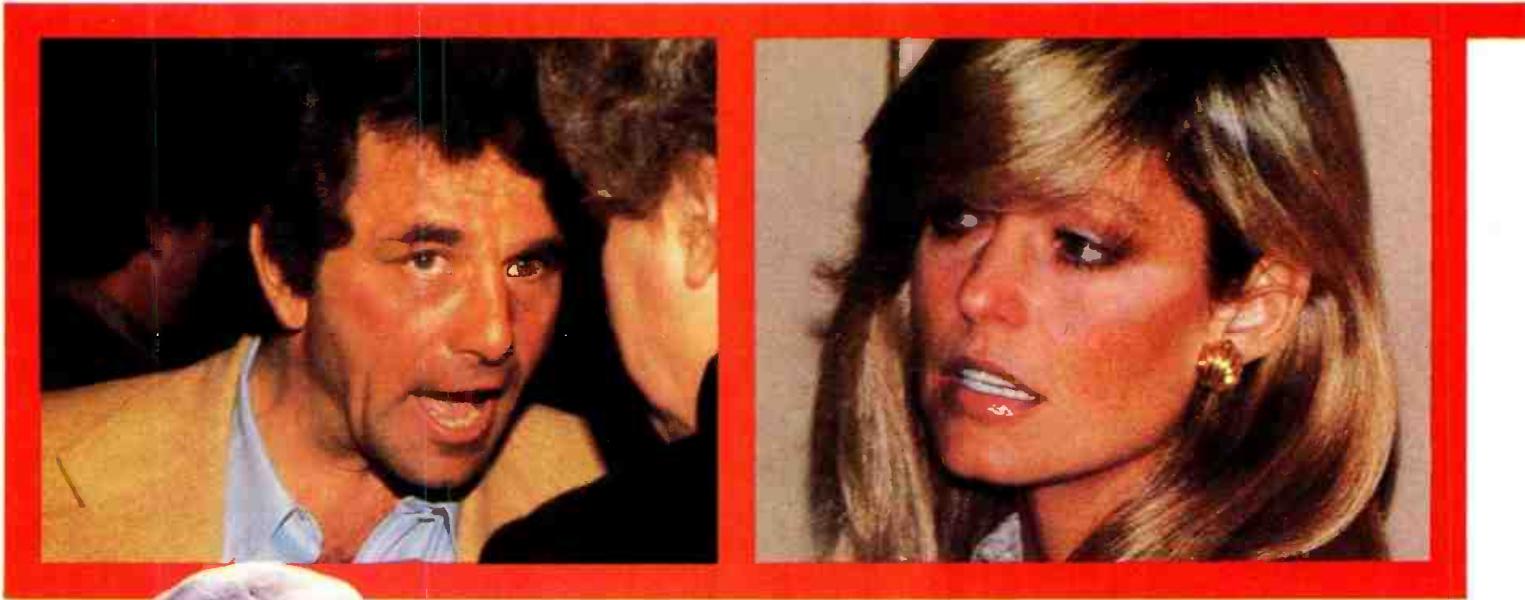


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Produced by BRUCE GILBERT Directed by COLIN HIGGINS  
OLIN HIGGINS and PATRICIA RESNICK Story by PATRICIA RESNICK  
Music by CHARLES FOX COLOR BY DELUXE



# TEMPER!



Inside those Hollywood battles over scripts, casting and dressing rooms—and how they affect what you see on the screen

By JEFF SILVERMAN

In the early 1960s, at the same time Vince Edwards' TV series, *Ben Casey*, was beginning to move up in the ratings, the actor regularly spent afternoons betting the horses at Southern California's race tracks. As his television popularity increased, he asked for—and received—permission to knock off work in time to make the third race. To help facilitate his early exit, others on the set would paste cue cards to their chests: Edwards, it seems, had trouble remembering his lines.

"It was real hard to do a scene with him," recalls a former guest actress on the show, "especially for us girls. He'd never look at your face. His eyes would constantly be right at your chest, where

his lines were written." Still, the show got done. On schedule, on budget—and on its star's terms.

Similarly, back when *The Wild, Wild West* was in the Nielsen top 25, its star, Robert Conrad, talked CBS into building him a prizefighting ring on an unused sound stage so he could work out between takes. "They even let him live on the lot in his trailer when he had some family problems," says a former network executive. "They even put a picket fence around it for him."

Yet, when Redd Foxx, at the crest of his initial success on *Sanford and Son*, demanded a window in his dressing room, no window appeared. And when he then threatened to walk off the show in protest, the producers simply went ahead and wrote him out of the next nine episodes.

So, who has the real power in televi-

Jeff Silverman is a columnist for the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner* and Hollywood correspondent for the *Cable News Network*.

# TEMPER!

*Creative disputes call forth a wide range of unlovely expressions from TV's much-loved stars. Clockwise from right: Carroll O'Connor, Jack Klugman, Peter Falk, Farrah Fawcett.*

sion: the actors or the producers?

"We're in a collaborative business," says Bud Yorkin. He and Norman Lear head up Tandem Productions, the company responsible for changing television in the 1970s with such innovative sitcoms as *All in the Family* and *Maude*. "I've always worked under the assumption that everyone has a right to his opinion," says Yorkin. "Everyone is welcome to contribute. . . . You have a right to disagree with my point of view. I have a right to disagree with yours. That's this business. That's the excitement of it."

Fine—but where does creative contribution end and plain old hassling begin? Who, finally, has the clout to decide? And, perhaps more telling, where does the clout come from?

**"All that matters is** the goddamned numbers," sniffs actor Robert Stack, himself a high scorer for performances in *The Untouchables* and *The Name of the Game*. "That's the bottom line."

The numbers, of course—the only ones that count in network board rooms—are the Niensens. And the more consistently these figures favor a given show, the more power that show's principals develop—on both sides of the camera.

"It's a human thing," observes producer Gene Roddenberry, the creator of *Star Trek*, "that the lead who's helped make a good show will begin stepping in, for example, and telling a new director how to lay out shots. It's the job of the producer then to step in and lay down the line, to mediate the battle."

Monique James, an independent pro-



ducer who was co-director of Universal's New Talent Program, is a longtime observer of actor-studio battles. "We have to face reality," she says. "Some actors are a lot brighter than others. For instance, Jack Klugman. There's been a difficult [situation] on *Quincy* from the beginning. But the bottom line is that *Quincy* has been a hit because of Jack Klugman—because he cares, he desperately cares. And so, when I would sit at the studio and people would say, 'Oh, that sonofabitch,' I'd say, 'Wait a minute. He's fighting for what he believes in.' Yes, Klugman's volatile. Yes, he's opinionated. But the show is successful for only one reason—Jack Klugman."

As a result, Klugman has become one of a handful of actors—along with, say industry insiders, Alan Alda of *M\*A\*S\*H*, Ed Asner of *Lou Grant*, Larry Hagman of *Dallas*, Michael Landon of *Little House on the Prairie* and Carroll O'Connor of *Archie Bunker's Place*—who have the clout to shape consistently the destiny of their shows. (Others have had it in the past, too: Mary Tyler Moore, Jim Garner, Peter Falk during his *Columbo* run.)

Of course, actors don't start with this power. Back when Larry Hagman was only Capt. Tony Nelson on *I Dream of Jeannie*, he was so appalled with the general quality of the series, and so powerless to do anything about it, that he went to the production-company president and threatened to walk. Fine, said Jackie Cooper.

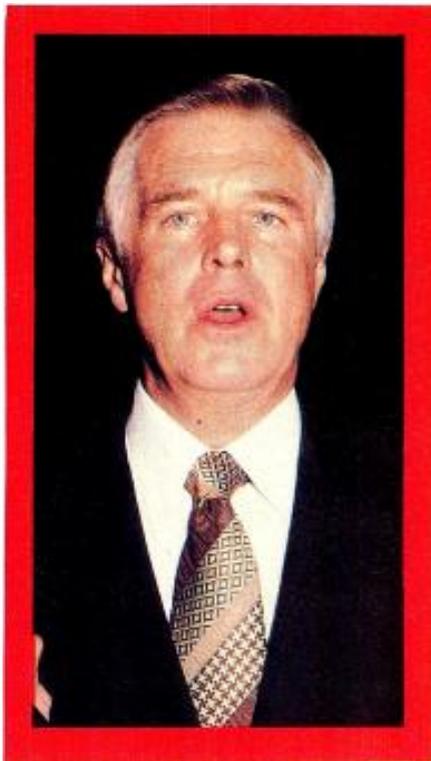
I ask Cooper—a screen star himself as a child, later head of Columbia Pictures Television and now one of TV's most active and respected producer-directors—about the episode. Yes, he says, "some of the material was garbage. But that kind of garbage had been selling on *Lucy* and *Danny Thomas* and *December Bride* for years. I told Hagman, 'This is the business you're in. When you get into a series, you know what you're getting into.' If you like four episodes out of 20 all year, you're lucky."

Hagman returned to the *Jeannie* set three days after his ultimatum. Muses Cooper, 16 years later, were he and Hagman in similar positions on the actor's current show, "they'd get rid of me before they'd touch Larry."

Between the power of a J. R. Ewing and the powerlessness of a Capt. Tony

Nelson lies a vast and tricky territory where even seasoned actors maneuver with difficulty.

"An actor," George Peppard was explaining by phone, "is a series of instruments. If you want a violin, if you want a cello, if you want a trumpet, he can give you these things. But," he went on, his words forming slowly around the



George Peppard: Summarily dispatched from *Dynasty* over differences in character interpretation.

hiss of his deep dragging on a cigarette, "he has to know what you want."

Peppard was speaking from New Zealand, where he was shooting a movie. He was supposed to have been in Hollywood, creating the character of Blake Carrington, the steel-skinned martinet of *Dynasty*. Peppard had signed for the role and, in fact, was nearly halfway through filming the *Dynasty* pilot when the producers decided his interpretation of the character and their interpretation of the character had very little to do with each other.

"George is a wonderful actor," says Lynn Loring, vice president of creative affairs and talent for Aaron Spelling Pro-

ductions. "But with him, *Dynasty* wasn't turning into the ensemble piece we'd envisioned. There were frictions and problems." He was, she adds, directing himself and attempting, at the same time, to direct fellow cast members.

"They said the work was wrong," says a still-confused Peppard, "that it had to be reshot. My reply was, fine, get the film up here. Let me look at it . . . and we'll redo it."

Executive producer Richard Shapiro, *Dynasty*'s co-creator, refused to show Peppard the dailies.

Memos began taking off like flocks of geese heading south for winter. Telegrams were exchanged between the actor and ABC president of entertainment Tony Thomopoulos, who quickly offered Peppard the network's equivalent of a vote of confidence. A few days later, as if a page from the *Dynasty* script had come to life, Peppard was summarily dispatched and replaced by John Forsythe.

"Aaron Spelling has told people he would never do a series where an actor was not replaceable," says a casting director who has done several shows for both Spelling Productions and Spelling-Goldberg Productions. "That's why all his shows have had a group: *The Rookies*, *Charlie's Angels*, *Fantasy Island*, *The Love Boat*. Everybody is replaceable. Guys in the business for a long time know you don't do a series, for example, called *Kojak*, because then you're at the mercy of the star."

Not that producers are unwilling to stroke a star's ego. As long as his demands don't become ridiculous, as long as no threats are made, an actor's wish is his producer's command. Charlie's three angels all wanted to keep their on-camera wardrobes? Fine. They wanted top-of-the-line trailers? Fine. Farrah Fawcett wanted to renegotiate her contract? Forget it. The networks and production companies will only bend so far before drawing up battle lines, usually at the precise point where costs, crew or ratings start to be affected. The battles that result rarely do any damage to a studio or network, beyond the minor irritation of publicity. But in an age when the networks have almost total power in casting a show, such battles can have serious and costly effects on an actor's career. The casualties are legion.

"There was a period of time when people thought James Farentino [then starring in *The Bold Ones*] was just too much trouble," says Monique James. She wants to be fair: "But that's true of all who rise quickly. And Jimmy's a real pro. . . ." Yet "he was very opinionated. He felt he knew everything on every score. He was under contract to us for a long time, and he spent as much time on suspension as not—not necessarily for his behavior on the set, but for refusing to do things he didn't believe in. Understand, he did damned well, but he would have done so much better had he put all that energy into constructive things."

Suspension is not the worst fate Universal has dealt out. Tony Franciosa, the most popular lead on *The Name of the Game* in 1970, quickly learned just where the real power was concentrated. Following continued production disagreements, including one in which he socked director Barry Shear, the studio simply removed Franciosa's name—and face—from the series.

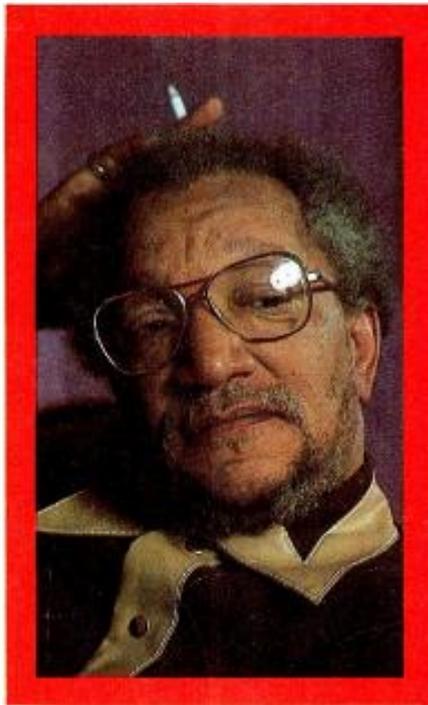
"That Franciosa was one of the most brilliant actors on the Universal lot, no one disputed," wrote syndicated columnist Marilyn Beck. "That he was *The Game's* lead whom viewers held in great regard was a point not even argued. The issue under consideration had nothing to do with talent or appeal, but with the amount of aggravation he was creating on the set. And that aggravation, Universal decided, was excessive." Without Franciosa, the show quickly folded. But the studio had made its point—as management has always managed to do.

"None of this is new to television," observes Jackie Cooper. "Loretta Young had this reputation. She acted with a mirror on the set to watch herself, and it drove her leading men crazy. But Young was a real star. The point is, you couldn't be an Erik Estrada at MGM in the '30s or '40s and within six months start calling your own shots. That's the power an actor feels when he's got the numbers behind him."

Of course, part of having real clout is knowing when to use it. When an actor cries "wolf" all the time, as Robert Blake used to do on *Baretta* and Abe Vigoda tried to do on *Barney Miller* and *Fish*, the powers that be not only stop listening to him—they stop using him. They may

continue to put up with him while his current series is riding high in the ratings, but never again. And other producers follow this cue.

"There is," confides a well-known agent, "a network blacklist, unwritten though it may be. If an actor's been difficult, all three networks know it. His name will be passed around by the producers. If all three networks say no, the guy can't be a lead in a series, no matter how popular he has been in the past, or



*Redd Foxx: When he threatened to quit over a missing window, his producers simply wrote him out of the script.*

how popular he may think he is in the present."

**There are ways for actors** to exercise power without sacrificing either their professionalism or their profession. A case in point: After years of quietly feeling "stuck" in her role as Michael Landon's wife on *Little House*, Karen Grassle finally made some moves recently to get herself unstuck—and got her way, with Landon's encouragement. A dedicated feminist, Grassle helped conceive an episode, shown last January, on the subject of women's property rights. (She also had exerted strong influence on the authenticity of a TV

movie she wrote and starred in, *Battered*, which graphically treated the problem of wife-beating.)

Grassle is aware that her series' stability amplifies her voice on such projects. "One of the things that people don't like to do with a hit is make a change. It behooves everyone to keep a unit together . . . particularly on a family show." But she also is conscious of having used that voice cautiously. "There seem to be a lot of ways to skin a cat," she smiles. "In my own case, it's been more a question of years of working together, years of my own ideas and presence. Finally, it had an effect. . . . I didn't say 'either we do a women's show or I'm out of here.'"

Which is exactly where Redd Foxx went wrong in the case of the missing dressing-room window. He made the fatal error of trying to hold his character hostage, on the theory that *Sanford* would fall apart without its irascible junkman. It didn't.

"I didn't give a damn if NBC put a window in there or not," says Bud Yorkin. "But don't hold the gun against my head and tell me, 'If I don't have a window I don't work.'"

While the producer readily admits he'd rather have a harmonious working set with actors, writers and directors all contributing, somebody has to grab the authority to make the final say. And that somebody is the producer. "We insist that the final creative decision is going to be ours," says Yorkin. "We would never give that up to anybody."

Not even to the networks.

**While squabbles** between actors and management tend to make spicy Hollywood column notes, it's the fights between producers and the networks that pit heavyweight against heavyweight. Quite simply, the networks provide the air space and the cash that producers need to develop and display their work. They then scrutinize this work through their Standards and Practices departments—the folks Johnny Carson likes to call "the network censors"—and, if they're not pleased, the show doesn't go on. Or it goes on in adulterated form in a time slot no one watches. In other words, the network has the clout. Usually.

The exceptions are based first on ratings and second on past performance and reputation. *continued on page 94*

**Cable television** used to provide viewers with better reception—and not much more. The cable technology expanded the channel capacity of television but there remained one fundamental problem: Most of those newly created channels remained unused. And for good reason. There wasn't any additional programming to offer.

But in the last couple of years, the programming situation has changed radically. New cable networks have been developed and are being delivered into subscribers' homes at no additional cost beyond the basic monthly subscription fee of about \$9. These networks are paid for, in most cases, by the local cable stations as a means of attracting more subscribers and keeping their present ones happy. Of course, there is no such thing as a completely free ride. Many new basic cable networks are relying on an old business practice used by the likes of ABC, NBC and CBS: They carry commercials.

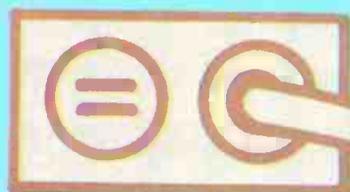
While most of the cable networks described in the accompanying chart were created especially for cable TV, three of the outfits listed are local over-the-air television stations that transmit their signals to cable stations around the country via

satellite. They're known in the trade as "Superstations," which generally refers to their ability to reach a large audience and not to their programming. All of the networks mentioned in the chart have one thing in common: The majority of cable systems offer them *free* to subscribers.

Presently there are about 20 basic cable networks. But more are planned in the immediate future. ABC and Warner Amex have formed the Alpha Repertory Television Service (ARTS), a culturally oriented network that will appear on TV screens sometime this spring. By the end of the summer, the CBS Cable unit expects to launch its own performing-arts network. Also in the works is a network called Cinemerica. Aimed toward viewers over 45, it will offer shows on health, second careers, early retirement, et al. Debut is slated for this summer.

There are virtually no cable stations that carry all of the basic cable networks currently available. If you want to receive more networks on your cable system, you have two options: Tell your cable operator that you want network X. (Come to think of it, don't do that. In the future there could very well be

Network	Headquarters	Month/Year Began Satellite Operation
Appalachian Community Service Network (ACSN)	1200 New Hampshire, Suite 240 Washington, D.C. 20036	October 1979
Black Entertainment Television	Suite 300, Prospect Place 3222 N. Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20007	January 1980
Cable News Network (CNN)	1050 Techwood Drive, N.W. Atlanta, Ga. 30318	June 1980
Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network (C-SPAN)	3800 North Fairfax Drive Arlington, Va. 22203	March 1979
Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN)	Virginia Beach, Va. 23463	April 1977
Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (ESPN)	ESPN Plaza Bristol, Conn. 06010	September 1979



# They're Free and Clear

Our exclusive guide to TV's basic cable networks and the services they offer

a network devoted to X-rated programs. So make it network Y.) Then apply a little friendly pressure. If he doesn't carry the network you'd like to see, you might suggest that you could become so unhappy with his service that you would have to consider disconnecting. Your second option is to write directly to the networks, telling them that your cable system doesn't carry their network and you would enjoy viewing it. They

might increase their sales effort in your area. But don't expect results overnight and don't expect your cable system to carry everything. As the Rolling Stones say, "You can't always get what you want."

*Editor's note: In the coming months, PANORAMA will feature an equally thorough survey of the services available on pay-cable.*

Number of Affiliates	Number of Households	Hours per Day/ Days per Week	Description of Network
50	500,000	64 hours weekly/ seven days	Broadcasts college-credit courses, teleconferences, continuing-education courses and general-interest community programming. This nonprofit network has 45 colleges (most in Appalachian region) affiliated with its services. Viewers can receive college credit for courses shown on ACSN.
544	5.4 million	11 P.M. to 2 A.M. (ET)/ Friday	Nation's first and only black-oriented cable network. Features mainly tape-delayed sporting events from black colleges, black films such as <i>Which Way Is Up?</i> and black special events. Advertiser-supported.
765	4.7 million	24 hours/ seven days	Round-the-clock live information network featuring news, interviews, commentary, reviews, business reports, sports and weather coverage. Commentators include Barry Goldwater, Coretta Scott King, Bella Abzug. Daniel Schorr is the anchor on the Washington desk. The network is owned and operated by cable-TV entrepreneur and sportsman Ted Turner. Advertiser-supported.
950	Seven million	9:30 A.M. to 6 P.M. (ET) Monday to Friday; four or five hours on Sunday	Televises gavel-to-gavel proceedings of the U.S. House of Representatives. Also covers National Press Club luncheon speeches and produces a high-school government series called <i>Close-up</i> .
1800	Five million	24 hours/ seven days	The network's avowed purpose is to present family entertainment with a moral perspective that reaches a Catholic and Protestant audience. Shows movies, dramas, variety shows, holiday specials and kids' programs. Supported by its own telethons, which raise over 90 percent of the operating cost of the network.
1404	7.9 million	24 hours/ seven days	Round-the-clock sports network. Last year telecast more than 45 different types of sports, including Australian-rules football, tractor-pulling contests and table-tennis tournaments. Most programming focuses on NCAA basketball, boxing, tennis, skiing, and college and Canadian football. Backed by Getty Oil. Advertiser-supported.

chart continued on page 68



# Secrets of the Video-Games Superstars

Here's a thinking man's approach to winning at  
Asteroids and Space Invaders

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By LEN ALBIN

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## INSERT COIN.

DOONK. DOONK. DOONK. . . .  
*Pweeng! Pweeng! Pweeng! Pweeng!*

The sounds are unmistakable. Relentlessly advancing alien invaders are tasting hot laser blasts and getting blown up. The carnage is horrible. I've seen such battles before, but this is the first time I feel sympathy for the creepy invaders.

Now, I know full well that these aliens, horrible and vicious as they are, only exist in the computer chips of Midway's Space Invaders coin-operated arcade video game. And that the danger only exists in the mind of the reckless space cadet who slaps a quarter down the slot and picks a fight with them. But never had I seen the poor fiends *embarrassed!* Don't get me wrong—I hate those vile creatures, and their noises, and their missiles, and their reinforcements, as much as any man. My top score is a pitiful 980. But here . . . what death! What destruction! What technique!

I am jealously watching the Invaders' Guadalcanal over the left shoulder of 25-year-old Steve Weidlich, a transplanted Florida good ol' boy (and Ted Turner

look-alike) from Meriden, Conn. He is a machinist for Pratt & Whitney Aircraft, but more important, a young fellow whose personal high on Space Invaders is about 95,000 points. This Saturday night, to demonstrate that his brag was fact, Steve had hopped into a yellow Pinto station wagon and headed on over to Crazy Eight's arcade in Wallingford Center, just across from the K mart.

*Pweeng! Pweeng!* DOONK. DOONK. DOONK. DOONK. DOONK. DOONK. DOONK. DOONK. *Pweeeeng!*

"That's the last of 'em," he draws, as the screen refills with fresh aliens. "The first rack, I mean."

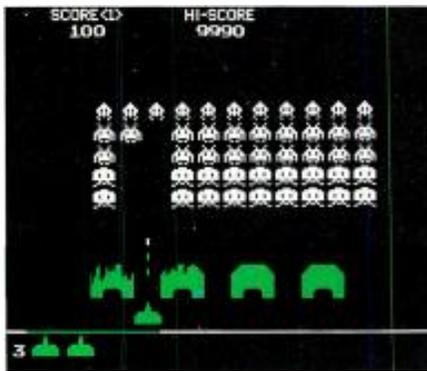
"Looked like the last one almost got you, Steve."

"Yeah, well, there's nothin' to get upset about," he says. "There's no point in gettin' nervous over somethin' you *know* is gonna happen! Honestly, when Space Invaders first came out, it was real exciting; I must admit, I dreamed about it! But now there's no excitement in it hardly, as when I first started. The heart isn't there. You don't even care if you get hit, after playing for an hour."

DOONK. DOONK. DOONK. . . .  
*Pweeng! Pweeng! Pweeng!*

Well, it sure *looks* simple enough. In Space Invaders, introduced to America in November 1978, shooting an Invader in each of the five-row, 11-column, 55-alien arrays (or "racks") is worth from 10 to 30 points, but they keep approaching—and if you don't kill them all, they overrun your laser base. If even one Invader gets through, that ends the game. However, most players usually "die" long before that, because the aliens fire missiles at your laser base; although you can slide the base from side to side, the Invaders usually manage to destroy it, plus your two spares—one after another. (For a look at a game in progress, see Diagram 1 on page 58.)

For added fun, a flying saucer (a k a "Mystery") periodically emerges above this ground action, and it's worth 50 to 300 points, depending on when you hit it. If you manage to kill all the Invaders and survive, it's a major feat. But you don't win. You just get more Invaders. What's worse, the successive racks start their advances even closer. *continued*



**Diagram 1:** *Space Invaders* just after the start of the game (from top): Current player's score (100) and previous high on the machine (9990); grid of aliens; four shields (which are virtually useless) against alien fire; operative laser base; two spare laser bases.

But Steve mows 'em down and plugs saucers with chilling ease. He doesn't lose a single laser base—not even during the dread seventh, eighth and ninth racks, when the Invaders begin their advance “on your front porch.” a mere two inches from glory. Down they go! It's as easy as bowling. Which reminds me . . . Steve's 20-year-old brother David, a boy with Evangelist-length sideburns and Southern vowels more robust than Steve's, has returned from posting an impressive 57,000+ on a nearby Midway Galaxian game. Once a student at Central Connecticut State, David has a 211 bowling average, has applied for his pro bowler's card, and works part-time in a local bowling alley. He also learned to play *Space Invaders* in a bowling alley, but it wasn't there but in “some bar” where he set his own all-time high of nearly 102,000. The boys begin talking Invader shop and it sounds like a promising TV pilot called *The Dukes of Hazzard in the 25th Century*.

“Steve's slightly better,” says David, settling his hands in his pockets. “But I tend to explode. We didn't decide to master it: just that hangin' round with our friends, ev'rybody wants t' beat th'other guy. And we don't like anybody bein' better'n us. Ev'rywhere we go now, there's at least one of us who can play for money.”

“How much have you spent learning it, though?” I ask.

“No idea,” Steve says.

“It's hard to say,” David agrees.

“But the funny thing is,” Steve adds,

“most people are disappointed at how little we've actually put in. That's the heartbreaker on most people.”

“What we did,” David confesses, “we'd watch the other guy sometimes. And when he messed up, we kinda saw what he did. What ways they'd get destroyed. Sometimes it's easier to watch and say, ‘Ya shouldn't a done that!’ than it is to do it. So, we began to discover little short-cuts.”

Obviously, the Invaders must be killed quickly—and better still, in a way that postpones the advance of the ones left. Shooting the front row, then the second row, and so on, sounds like a good battle plan, but it's actually the *worst*. That's because the Invader grid moves side to side constantly, alternating direction, and it's only when the last column on either side reaches the edge of the screen that the whole phalanx drops down a level (and reverses direction). Clearly, it's their lateral movement that's more dangerous, and so a row-by-row plan is virtual suicide. The same goes for starting your attack on the middle columns of their formation.

“But that's the way we first started,” says David. “Then Steve said, ‘There has to be a better way!’”

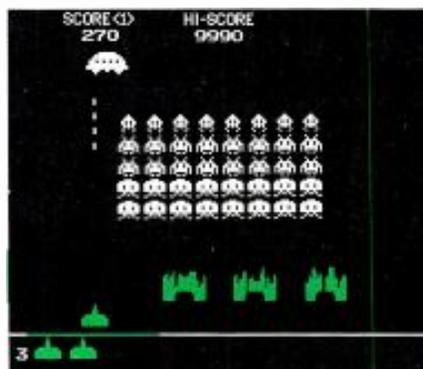
**The solution of how** to defeat an army much larger than your own turns out to be the same one Gary Cooper figured out in the classic World War I film, *Sergeant York* (1941)—namely, pick off the guys on the ends first. Tennessee-bred York slew one German at a time, starting at the end, so the rest wouldn't get wise. *Space Invaders* don't get wise, either, but as their grid is made more narrow, it takes them longer to

reach the screen's edge and drop down. That buys time. So Steve starts every rack by plowing the three left-side columns of aliens first.

About this time, the first Mystery swoops over the moonscape. Its point value varies, but Steve solved that mystery, too. Now he gets 300 points every time. At a country fair about two years ago, he heard a man, who knew a *Space Invaders* distributor, whisper to another man that “there was a pattern to it.” Unfortunately, he didn't say what the pattern was. But that was enough. Steve, who'd innocently believed that the point value was chance, first tested the theory that the Mystery's position determined the value. That didn't work. So maybe it was the timing. Soon, he found you got 300 when the saucer was hit with the 23rd and 38th laser blast of every rack, and every 15th shot thereafter. So Steve learned to waste a few shots—loading up number 23—and wait for the big payoff. With three columns erased, he had enough room to “hide” free from alien fire. (See Diagrams 2 and 3.) Eventually, he figured out which side the saucers emerged from and when, so now he can nail up to eight 300-pointers in a rack, as he trims the Invader phalanx to keep it harmlessly distant. Finally, the saucers stop appearing and the remaining aliens must be slaughtered with the destructo-beam. Next rack, please!

“The big thing for us,” Steve says, “was finding out that the racks start from the top level again on the 10th rack. We were scared for a while that the game would be over after nine racks, until we got there.”

“Yup,” says David. “After that it was a *whole new ball game!*”



**Diagram 2 (left):** In Steve Weidlich's sure-fire technique, laser base “hides” at left, away from alien grid at right, and waits for the Mystery saucer (top). Note: Left shield has already been destroyed by the fire of the aliens and the laser base. In Diagram 3 at right, Mystery saucer, when hit at the proper time, vaporizes and yields 300 points.

## Advanced Invader Strategy

The most fascinating quirk in the Space Invaders computer program—and one that has boomeranged on the aliens—is that when they drop to the last notch before overrunning you, their front line does *not* fire missiles. So one astute Japanese player devised the strategy of mowing down all but the top Invader in the far left column, clearing out the next four columns, and leaving the right six columns intact. That's right—they advance into your front porch unscathed! But that's good. The player passes the time in the "hole" under the emptied columns, counting shots and snaring 300-pointers. (See Diagram 4.) When the six columns finally drop into the last level, he speeds his laser base to the extreme right and heartlessly picks off the helpless front line, one by



one, going right to left. (See Diagram 5.) Then it's back into the foxhole. And so on. Finally, he plugs the lone Invader he purposely left straggling in column one.

All told, this tactic—though very cute—is coolly reckless, because if a player misses just one front-liner in the final row, he gets overrun almost instantly. This ploy was long ago dubbed "The Nagoya Technique" in honor of the Japanese town where it was invented. But the Weidlich brothers scoff at this martial space art as if it were a shoddy Japanese import. "That's a last-resort thing," said Steve. "Only an extreme measure if you've messed up earlier."

"Well, I do it ev'ry once inna while when I wanna just play around," David observed.—L.A.



**The Nagoya Technique:** In Diagram 4 (left), laser base lies in wait under the emptied columns for Mystery saucer, until the alien grid gets into close range, where the Invaders can't shoot at the base. Diagram 5 (right) shows the coup de grâce: The Invaders have descended all the way into the "telltale" green area, and the laser base picks off the helpless bottom row, moving right to left.

"The basic thing is to learn to move," Steve adds. "If you move too much, it's a waste of time. And you *don't* move under 'em unless you're ready to fire! Also, people are too heavy with their fingers, and they got too much overlappin' on their movin'."

Meanwhile, David starts lecturing me on post-doctoral nuances in the game: how the score resets to zero after 10,000; about 500- and 1000-point bonuses that aren't even mentioned in the instructions. David leans over, sees that Steve is up to 25,000 points, then turns to me and says, "It's awful *boring*, is what it is."

At Steve's pace, it still takes an hour to reach 60,000 points, and this means

trouble in saloons, where custom says that players may reserve the next game by placing a quarter on the machine. "After 15 minutes," David says, "they'll see I haven't lost any bases and get mad and take their quarters. At college, I'd take bets on how many quarters would come up and down before I was done. Now, I've played a lot of guys that are drunk, and I can lay down a little and really sucker 'em in!"

"I don't hustle," Steve interrupts. "I don't think it's fair."

"But I do!" David insists. "When Space Invaders first was in bars around here, I was averaging 35,000. They ask me what I average, and I say about 30, maybe 40.

## Earth Invaded

Japan was the first country to try Space Invaders, and, judging from that nation's love of electronic gadgets and science-fiction monster movies, it seemed that the game had a decent chance to catch on. The chemistry seemed right. But, in retrospect, it was *perfect*. Space Invaders quickly became a national mania, even surpassing photography.

Within a year of the game's world debut in June 1978 (compliments of Tokyo's Taito Corporation), more than 350,000 units were operating in Japan. Soon, many of Nippon's 300,000 tearooms were converted into "Invader Houses" and up to 60 cocktail-table models appeared in some Tokyo locations. These sites were constantly jammed, but, to attract even *more* zombie-like habitués, the machines' sounds were piped over loudspeakers into the street. By summer 1979, Space Invaders had created a shortage of the 100-yen coin (then worth 43 cents) and the Japanese mint was forced to strike more.

In the West, after Taito licensed the game to Midway, Space Invaders was not only a hit, but the inspiration for a hit 45-rpm rock-'n'-roll single (*Space Invader*) by The Pretenders, which reached the Top Five in Cash Box (with a bullet) last March. About that time, Walter Cronkite told the San Francisco Chronicle: "When I *really* retire, I'm going to fill one room with nothing but pinball machines and electronic games, and just sit there in the dark, playing Space Invaders."—L.A.

And they'll think 3000 or 4000, 'cause they never seen the score turned over. They assume that's what you meant. I played about five guys like that, and afterwards, they'd say, 'I thought you meant . . . I *never* thought. . . .' And I'd say, 'Well, I *told* you!'"

No. David's victims won't forget that moment—very spooky!—when a normal-looking boy achieved ruthless control over a sophisticated computer program that baffles the average person. They realized, like the citizens who watched the pod people spring up in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, that something was *wrong* here. This kid was *different*. And this eerie feeling is quite common when

*continued on page 70*

# Home Video—Where

Looking 5, 10 and 20 years down the road . . . so  
you can make intelligent buying decisions

By DAVID LACHENBRUCH

**R**ecently I've noticed a certain wistfulness creeping into the conversation of some hard-core video consumers I know. Wouldn't it be nice, they say dreamily in the pause between new purchases of VCRs and disc players and video cameras—wouldn't it be nice if technology could just stop for, say, five or 10 years: long enough to buy up all the current marvels, wear them out—even have them paid for—before the next technological advance catches up with us?

Unfortunately, technology is no gazelle; it doesn't stop, look and then leap ahead so much as it *lumbers* along—more like a water buffalo, actually—throwing off new products with every tread. Even as you linger lovingly over the latest innovations in your VCR, developments are afoot that will make that machine look like a 19th-century invention. And, in fact, that's essentially what it is.

To the extent that the VCR and the disc player rely on mechanical parts, they are primitive tools, owing their existence to such discoveries of the past as the phonograph in the late 1800s, television in the 1920s, the audio tape recorder in the 1930s and solid-state electronics in the 1940s. Not until video can get rid of physical motion altogether will it truly belong to the future—would you believe 20 years from now?

Meanwhile, you'd better brace yourself for some more immediate changes. There's a lot of ground to cover before 2001; and the farther in time we travel, the more exotic the territory becomes.

**Many of the important** near-term developments in home video relate to so-called peripheral devices rather than to the recorder or player itself. The most immediate will be a gradual change in

the design of the TV set to make it more hospitable to home video, and this will start—in a small but expensive way—as early as this spring.

Television sets are still designed primarily for viewing and listening to material broadcast over the air. The basic set consists of a tuner and input section to select and process signals received over the air; an intermediate section to strip these signals from the broadcast frequency, change them to another frequency and amplify them; and video and audio circuits, which culminate in the picture tube and loudspeaker. To accommodate most video devices, only the final stage is needed—the remainder merely add cost and cause picture deterioration.

The next generation of TV sets actually will be more—or less—than just TV sets. They'll be patterned on the component, or modular, approach common to the home stereo system, and quite likely will be combined with that system. The modular home video/audio terminal will contain separate components for various functions. The heart will be the video monitor, to which may be attached a wide variety of inputs: the tuner, VCR, videodisc player, video games, cable-TV tuner, home satellite receiver and so forth. Existing audio components can be incorporated in the system, and the same sound system used for both hi-fi and video sound. Separate loudspeakers in their own cabinets will complete the setup.

The first modular video components probably will come within a year from Sony, which is successfully marketing them in Japan now.

A breakthrough of sorts is due this year in another peripheral area, video photography, with the introduction of color cameras using tiny solid-state chips instead of bulky, power-consuming

pickup tubes. The advantages are light weight, low power consumption, and quite possibly a clearer, more detailed picture. Although all-solid-state cameras aren't even available for broadcast use yet, a consumer model is scheduled for sale in the United States this year by Hitachi—initially at around \$1500, but within a few years the tiny cameras should be comparable in price to today's tube-type units.

Simultaneously with the miniaturization of the camera, there are intensive efforts to shrink the VCR, making it a replacement for the super-8 home movie camera and projector. The mini-VCR introduced by Technicolor last year weighs seven pounds, including audio-size cassette and rechargeable battery; a separate, conventional camera must be used with it, though, and that can weigh more than the recorder itself.

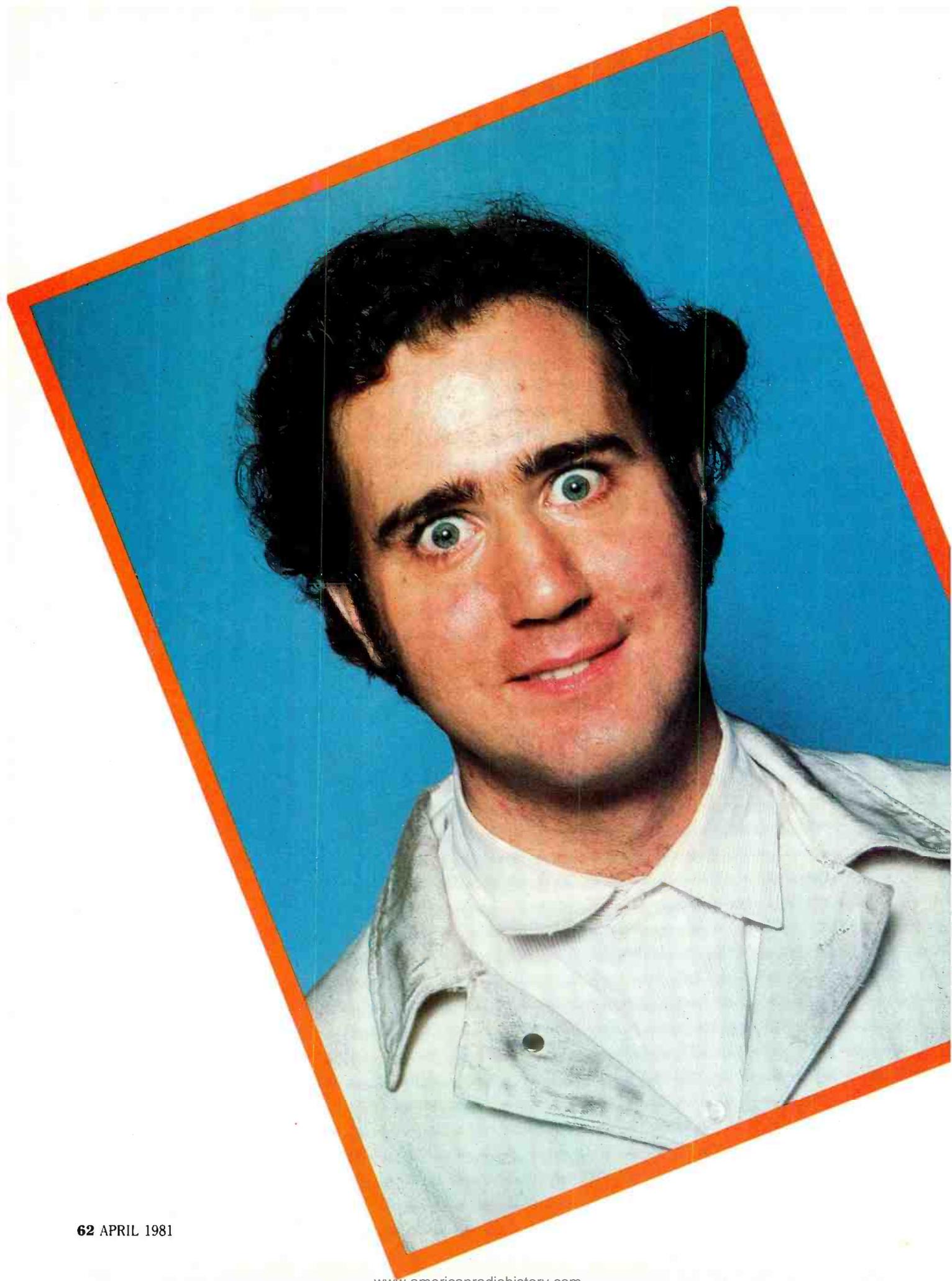
The next step will be to combine the minicamera and minirecorder into something that looks, feels and works like a movie camera. Hitachi promises to do that next year with a single unit that may get up to two hours on a cassette about the size of Technicolor's but, unfortunately, incompatible with it. Sony has demonstrated a single-unit camera-recorder, weighing less than four-and-a-half pounds, which can record for 20 minutes on a cassette about the size of a pocket box of safety matches. We can hope that some kind of standard will be developed to assure interchangeability of personal camera cassettes—but don't hold your breath.

Another advance within the next five years will be the addition of multiple sound tracks to broadcast and cable television. Japan already enjoys two-channel audio with its TV, and the odds favor introduction of a version of the Japanese system here within three years. This will

*continued on page 74*

# We're Going from Here





# “I Think They Consider Me Nuts”

By TOM NOLAN

There is a momentary lull on Stage 23 at Paramount Studios in Hollywood, the stage on which *Taxi*, consistently one of television's most popular programs, is taped each Friday night before a live studio audience. The crew and cast of that show, dressed in street clothes, are dispersed this Friday afternoon around the brightly lit garage familiar to millions of viewers. A man with a clipboard suddenly calls out, “Andy Kaufman! Andy Kaufman, please!” The call is repeated here and there around the stage. One or two people are prompted into action, peering into the shadows and around corners, asking, “Where's Andy?”

“Is he meditating?” asks Danny DeVito from his character Louie's dispatcher's cage. “He'll be floating in through the air vents any minute now.”

Andy Kaufman, of course, plays Latka, *Taxi*'s garage mechanic of indeterminate national origin who faces life with one-and-a-half languages and a wide-eyed expression of perpetual innocence. With *Taxi* in its third season, Kaufman is still something of an outsider, the man apart, the unique comedian whose work in one of TV's biggest hits is but one of the many projects he's constantly involved with, projects blooming from a creative imagination rarely geared to the taste or even comprehension of an audience as huge as *Taxi*'s. His coterie of fans, however, is devoted and growing larger. In the past two years it's been treated to such Kaufmania as his *Saturday Night Live* wrestling matches with women, his feature film debut in Marty Feldman's *In God We Trust*, and the long-delayed showing of his first network special. Kaufman continues to maintain a heavy schedule of club and concert appearances. Add in the fact that he faithfully practices Transcendental Meditation each day and it's no wonder “Where's Andy?” seems the most frequently asked question on the *Taxi* set.

Yet even a casual observer of this *Taxi* rehearsal can sense that Kaufman's relationship to the show has changed lately, that he has become much more of an ensemble player, a more confident actor who has grown and developed in the context of

the series. And, the occasional sarcastic remark notwithstanding, the other actors seem to accept Kaufman much more now as one of their own.

“Here I am,” says a voice, and Andy Kaufman emerges from somewhere, dressed in the height of unpretension in cotton pants, a white T-shirt and a dirty salmon-colored sports coat with phony shirt cuffs attached.

He is needed to run through a scene in which Latka meets Tony's sister (played by guest star Julie Kavner), whom Tony has already warned him to stay away from.

“Did you know you and I are *forbidden to love*?” Latka sweetly asks the bewildered girl. “Is a shame, because we could have made beau-tee-ful babies together,” he tells her in his melancholy way before wandering off.

The scene has played well enough, but staff and cast have a conference in which an alternate interpretation is suggested. Andy and Julie then act it again, but this time Latka is angry, leaving the girl even more astonished. “*Is a shame!* We could have made *beau-tee-ful babies* together!” He turns on his heel and stalks off, shaking his head in frustration. The staff laughs and applauds; thanks to Kaufman's flexibility, the scene is now much funnier.

A few minutes later, sitting in his dressing room, while also eating from a container of ice cream, opening mail with his secretary Linda and making telephone calls, Andy Kaufman explains the origins of the character that has brought him national fame.

“Latka comes from a character called ‘Foreign Man’ I used to do in clubs. Foreign Man was this poor fellow who just got off the boat and barely spoke English, but by some fluke was allowed up on a nightclub stage, on talent night or whatever, and was trying to do comedy. People used to be embarrassed when they saw him; they'd look away; and out of that embarrassment they would start laughing—and he'd mistake their laughter for appreciation, and tell more jokes, and so on. Nowadays someone would see that and say, ‘Oh, isn't that great—a comical foreign immigrant who tells inept jokes. What a funny *premise*.’ They would see the outer effect—a ‘funny premise’—but they would miss the whole *point*, the whole *depth* of where it came from. And where it *came* from—the drama, the sadness—is what makes it funny.”

One of Kaufman's persistent dreams is to have a series of

Is it Andy Kaufman's bizarre antics that scare network officials? His latest, uh, offbeat ideas? Or what?

Tom Nolan is a Los Angeles-based writer.

his own in which to present such concepts, not in diluted form as in *Taxi*, but in pure unadulterated Kaufman fashion. The very suggestion of such an opportunity summons a burst of enthusiasm and exuberance.

"If I could get to do a series, it would be so great! I would have the greatest show in television! Every week, every month, whatever; I wouldn't want it to get tired. The writers would have to be so carefully selected. . . . See, I don't do comedy per se. What I do doesn't fall into any known definitions or rhythms of comedy, and it takes very special people to click into it. Any idea I come up with is based on some very deep thing, and if I had my own show I would want to present those deep ideas constantly. I wouldn't just make people laugh; I'd make them cry; I'd shock them; I'd get all different reactions. It would be a variety show. There are no true variety shows now—all they do is music and comedy. A real variety show would have the whole *rainbow* of emotions: tragedy, comedy, sorrow, drama, horror, mystery, surprise, songs—everything that can move you in some way. *That's* entertainment, *that's* variety."

That's also unlikely—at least in the near future for Andy Kaufman. The one special he's done, commissioned by ABC in 1977, was rejected first by that network and then by NBC.

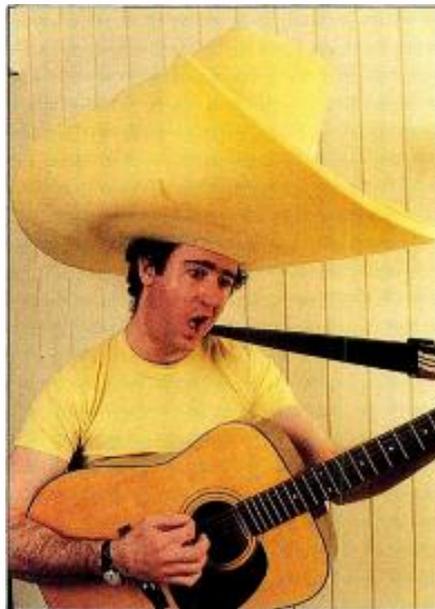
"They were afraid of it," Kaufman says. "They were nervous about the whole thing, but I have a feeling it was this one sketch especially—the luncheonette sketch. It's a very brief sketch. People are sitting at a counter. A waitress asks each person what he wants—everyone says different things. I'm the last one and I say, 'I'll have a cuppa coffee.'"

"Um-hmm," he nods decisively. "That was the one that did it. See, that sketch is symbolic of the type of humor running all through that special, and that's the kind of humor they're afraid of. It's a whole new kind of humor. Are they afraid the viewers won't get it? *They* don't even get it! It's very *simple* though. I mean, the guy—wants a cuppa coffee!"

In 1979, when his special had been kicking around for two years, Kaufman happened to run into Tony Thomopoulos, the new president of ABC Entertainment, and asked him to look at the show. "He did, and he liked it, and finally it was on the air. It came in number one in its time slot—it beat Johnny Carson. It was

a really great special—it was a lotta fun, and I wish I could do more. But . . . no network will give me a show, it seems. I don't know why. I think they consider me nuts."

**Such a notion**, should it exist, might possibly be attributable to Kaufman's zany antics on- and off-stage, in which the lines between reality and fantasy, art and life, comedy and pain, are purposely blurred. His talent is to push the audience out of step, make it uncertain whether it's watching an "act" or some-



*Even his cowboy hat is bigger than life.*

thing else. Long before *Taxi*, he went on *The Dating Game* as Foreign Man and broke into an emotional tirade ("Is not fair!") when the girl did not pick him. He's been known to end public appearances by herding the audience out of the theater and into buses to be taken for an actual après-concert snack. The roots of this unusual approach, Kaufman says, go back to his childhood on Long Island where he spent long hours in solitary play, putting on elaborate imaginary television shows for his own amusement.

After graduating from Graham Junior College in Boston, where he frequently entertained at children's parties, Kaufman spent the first years of his career working virtually without pay, perfecting his now-familiar characters and routines at showcase clubs like New York's Improvisation and Catch a Rising Star. It was there he was seen by producer Carl Reiner, who, impressed by Andy's "manipulative madness," was instrumental

in getting Kaufman a manager and his first TV work in Hollywood.

"I don't know what it is that he does exactly," says Reiner. "It's more like living theater than comedy. He twists and turns the audience at will. It's a very strange kind of work, and is very affecting. I sometimes object to the manipulative quality of this, but I always admire the effect on the audience."

Television audiences first saw Andy on a summer show with host Dick Van Dyke, then on numerous and increasingly outrageous installments of *Saturday Night Live*, where Kaufman lip-synced to a record of the Mighty Mouse theme, tortured spectators with prolonged readings of *The Great Gatsby*, and, finally, challenged any woman to pin him in a wrestling match. (He won.)

Perhaps Kaufman's most notorious creation is an obnoxious saloon singer named Tony Clifton. Clifton rarely finishes a chorus, spends his time instead heckling his own hecklers and occasionally pours a drink on someone. He is Kaufman's least agreeable character, and you can't blame Kaufman for insisting he and Tony are two separate people. Undoubtedly, the low point in Kaufman's relationship with his *Taxi* comrades came last year when Tony Clifton was hired to guest-star in an episode of the show. Clifton didn't work out, and, when told he was fired, threw such a rowdy tantrum he was ejected from the Paramount lot by security guards. "Tony Clifton will never work for me again," says *Taxi's* producer-writer Ed Weinberger, adding quickly, "Andy, I love."

Of Tony Clifton, Carl Reiner says: "That thing is a total mystery to me. I mean, I know the *idea*—to create a character theatrically that people believe is true and honestly exists. Well, he goes one step further: He carries it past the proscenium, backstage, into his dressing room! You probably need to go to a psychiatrist to get the proper analysis of what Andy does," he says with a chuckle.

Nothing nearly so outrageous as being thrown off the Paramount lot has happened lately in Kaufman's life—unless you count his appearance on *The David Letterman Show*.

"When I'm in New York," he begins by way of describing that performance, "I usually turn into some sort of bum or derelict. It's my nature. I walk the streets. I talk to myself. I become one of those crazy people you see. It's a charac-



Kaufman, a meditation devotee, in the bedroom of his Laurel Canyon, Cal., home, which is casually decorated in Early Debris.

ter I do, and I really have fun with it. I don't shave for about a week. I become very bedraggled. . . . So I decided to adapt this routine to television."

He went on the Letterman show, he says, unshaven and unkempt, and having stayed up all night. "David Letterman was really playing it up. He gave me a tissue to wipe off this mucus from my nose—it was Vaseline—and he said, 'Would you like a *mint?*' meaning I had bad breath or something. Then I went over to the stage area, sat on a stool and said, 'I'd like to talk about my marriage.'

"I made up a whole story about my wife and kids—now the truth is I've never been married, never had kids—about how, when I was trying to get started, my wife would work in the daytime and at night I'd go into the clubs and perform for free; how I did *Saturday Night Live* and then went to California and got a manager and finally got on *Taxi*. I was using specific names and

dates so it was a very *real* thing.

"At first the audience was laughing, but then I stopped and very *serious* I went, 'You know I'd appreciate it if you people wouldn't laugh because I'm *not* trying to be *funny*'—and they all went *whoaaa!* And they stopped laughing."

He went on then telling the audience about how he'd felt creatively stifled on *Taxi*, trapped in one character with no time for his other projects; how, ignoring his wife's pleas, he quit the show, only to find that, because of his wrestling women on television, the powers that be were afraid to incur the wrath of feminists and would not give him work.

"Finally," Kaufman says, "I said to the audience, 'One morning I'm in my manager's office trying to make a deal to do some dinner-theater work in Wisconsin—it falls through—when I get a call from my wife's lawyer. She wants a divorce. I fight, but she gets it. She gets the kids, the house, all my money. So I

moved back to New York, and here I am with no place to live, no income. Sometimes I stay with friends but otherwise I have to sleep on sidewalks, in doorways. I haven't eaten in a few days.' I said, 'I know this is a cliché but if anybody has any spare change I'd really appreciate it.'

"And," Kaufman says excitedly, "people started throwing money to me! And I went up into the audience and started panhandling. And then this security guard came out on this live show and said, 'Hey, c'mon, you can't do this here,' and he took me out. That was all planned, but it looked very real, and no one knew what to believe!

"Lots of people phoned the show. Lots of people sent letters. Boy, those letters they sent—aw, they were so great! One guy wrote, 'Look, life isn't easy; I mean *I'm* havin' a hard time, too, but you don't see *me* goin' on television and cryin' about it like a *baby!*' Angry letters. sad letters—I loved those letters."

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the hostage story was unfolding. But the networks were trying to have it both ways, looking in at the parties while suggesting that it was somehow inappropriate to celebrate.

Though the networks were always on top of the hostage story, they could not be omniscient. The demand that correspondents produce something fresh and newsworthy every half hour or so could not be met. This was particularly so late Monday night. Judy Woodruff, in an *NBC Special Report*: "We don't yet know, frankly, what is going on. We only know that we are told to stand by and wait." Lloyd Dobyns, also of NBC: "We are all becoming very good at standing by and waiting. This is what we know so far: almost nothing, except there has been some sort of hinting at financial arrangements."

Also, the dependence on foreign or non-network news sources in Tehran and even in Algiers meant that nearly all the news was qualified as "unconfirmed reports. . . ." "We have it from two sources that. . . ." "According to a UPI report. . . ." "Information about what we are seeing is sketchy." As Roger Mudd put it, "We are really flying by the seat of our pants. . . ."

Technically, there was little to choose from among the three networks; each performed smoothly. The CBS arrangement with Rather in New York for breaking hostage news and Cronkite in Washington for the Inauguration—plus CBS's use of Richard Queen to reconstruct events, aided by a scale model of the Embassy in Tehran—on balance gave CBS a slight edge on Jan. 20.

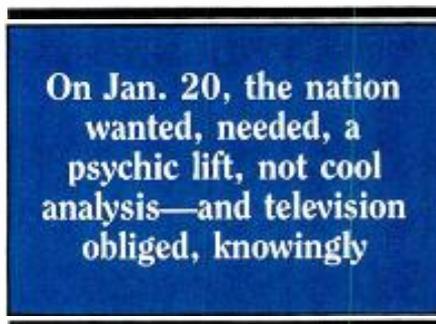
### EMOTIONAL CATHARSIS

The second characteristic of television, again displayed clearly during the coverage, is its unparalleled ability to convey feelings. Television is an emotion-rich, information-poor medium. Ideological critics of television faulted the Jan. 20 coverage for "empty chatter," "brushes of emotion," "lack of reflection" (are they all really heroes?); as being, in short, a national soap opera. But those critics (on the left) who wanted the day given over to an examination of the misdeeds of the "corrupt, false" Shah, who provoked the Islamic revolution, and those critics (on the right) who wanted an airing of Jimmy Carter's presumed culpabilities in "allowing" the hostages to be seized and then to lan-

guish in captivity, were all looking in the wrong direction. Television fulfilled a different role that day.

In truth, the nation wanted, needed, a psychic lift, not cool analysis—and television obliged, knowingly.

"The country is very, very frustrated right now," says Les Crystal. "We had been humiliated for 444 days and we had a need for heroes, for success; we wanted to bury our feelings of impotence, and the hostage release gave the public a chance to express its yearnings for old values, for standards, for old feelings about the country's prestige." ABC's Gralnick used almost the same words: "The nation needed purging from 444 days of embarrassment." A Third World country—non-Christian, small and



weak except for its access to oil—had defied a nation accustomed to being number one. "We managed to rub the nose of the biggest superpower in the world in the dust," television quoted an Iranian negotiator as saying.

Television judged that people wanted to express feeling. Walter Cronkite has presided over times of national stress for two decades: at Presidential funerals, war, riots, moon-landings. Respected, attended to, he can delineate as well as reflect mood. Tuesday morning around 10:30, when it seemed clear that the Iranians were holding the hostages until Carter was out of office, Cronkite said: "I try to remain the cool correspondent, impartial and unaffected by events, but it seems like the most uncivilized final touch to an uncivilized performance that I can imagine."

**Journalists, hostages, families** became as one in their feelings. CBS's Joan Richman remembers most of all the scene in the CBS studio as the hostages deplored in Algiers: "Richard Queen and Barbara Rosen, hostage Barry Rosen's wife, were with us. As the doors of the plane opened, Barbara and Richard

moved closer together until their shoulders were touching. Finally they were holding hands. As the first hostage came out they were shaky and teary. Then they broke out in smiles from ear to ear. We cut to them and put them on the air at that moment." Another CBS staffer, looking around the studio tearfully, saw she was not alone: "There wasn't a dry eye in the house."

Then, with the hostages' freedom, it was time for anger to be replaced by joy. The Inauguration's rhetorical New Beginning in fact became a real-life new beginning for the 52 and for 225 million other Americans. Pent-up emotions could be freed, including the long-unfashionable feelings of patriotism. The Inauguration parade, with its images that resonated from our childhood, and from the nation's, became the vehicle for celebration. Television that afternoon brought viewers a sea of familiar and reassuring symbols—an opening pan shot of the American flag at full mast over the White House, the new President on the reviewing platform, the flow of high-school bands and riders on horseback, smart-stepping Marines and Coast Guard. These were comforting sights and powerful images of American power and stability, of a nation newly rejoicing and meeting the affirmation of its dreams; they were the validation of the basic soundness of our institutions.

But if the hostage story had only collective or national meanings it would not have become the extended dramatic experience it did. The hostages also carried private weights. They were sons or daughters, fathers, sisters, brothers and husbands. Each of us could identify with one of them. We view the networks' tapes and transcripts and see that the most visceral, personal words are repeated: *family, home, freedom, separation, reunion*. Who among us has not personally waited for a plane—or train or bus—carrying a loved one? Who hasn't prepared to receive someone long absent? When NBC's cameras showed, in a few masterful cuts, the young children of one of the hostages preparing to go to meet their father—modest frame house . . . helping neighbors . . . carefully folded new clothes . . . apprehensive ride to the airport, stuffed animals clutched protectively—a personal universe of feelings was engaged.

Television helped make their story our story. Not surprisingly, the medium col-

lectively and correspondents individually lost the journalistic *distance* that is supposed to separate news events from news reports. It was appropriate, then, that CBS News should buy lunch and send it up to the men and women of the Iran Working Group at the State Department building—and then allow a prideful Robert Pierpoint to announce the gesture to viewers.

### TELEVISION AT STAGE CENTER

The fact that the networks brought us, in small ways and large ways, the Jan. 20 banquet of emotions comes as a consequence of television's third characteristic—its increasingly commanding presence at all our national feast days.

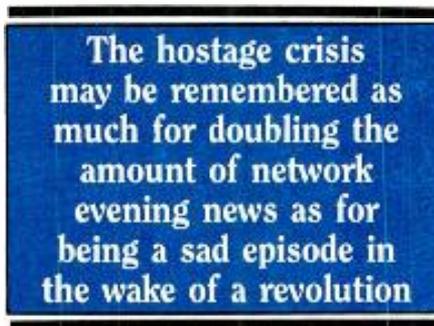
Television on Jan. 20 not only became stage and prompter—the consequences of its technological and emotive powers—but participant as well. The passive patriotism of the networks during the Inaugural parade became a positively expressed stance later in the day. Walter Cronkite ended CBS's parade coverage by noting, "We have witnessed a peaceful and cerimonious transfer of power." And Marvin Kalb, opening an *NBC Special Report* that night, declared, "It has been a very, very special . . . extraordinary, historic, fantastic day. . . ." America changed Presidents, doing so "without a hitch, and without a coup, and given the general, revolutionary state of the world these days, that was quite a political achievement." Thus, the two events were finally and emotionally tied together: The hostage story represented the results of foreign revolution and anarchy; the Inauguration stood for American peace and order.

The seizure of the U.S. Embassy and the hostage story—events that began as insult and injury, an act of war, legally speaking—ended by being heralded implicitly as straight-out victory. In the months ahead, Congressional hearings on Iran, as well as the Reagan Administration's stewardship of the nation, will help determine the accuracy of those judgments. Nevertheless, network television seldom steps out to stage front and declaims its underlying attitude. On Jan. 20, ABC, CBS and NBC's openness was understandable: the Iranian clerics had jerked *them* around professionally, too.

**But there was another**, more serious and intrusive role that television took upon itself in the hostage story. It

was a role that started back at the beginnings of the Embassy seizure in November 1979. ABC News and CBS News kept counting, on their evening news programs, the number of days the hostages were held captive . . . Day 25 . . . Day 150 . . . Day 265. . . . No one did that on television when the USS *Pueblo* and its crew were seized by North Koreans back in 1968, nor were counts tolled for the POWs held by the North Vietnamese. Were the Iranian hostages more important than those prisoners? Or has television become more competitive, more important, even more self-important?

CBS's Joan Richman argues that "the level of the story was set by others. From Day One, the President of the United States, the Secretary General of the Unit-



The hostage crisis  
may be remembered as  
much for doubling the  
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evening news as for  
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the wake of a revolution

ed Nations and virtually every world leader were involved in the crisis. . . . They created the event's magnitude—they made it the major story of the year. On Day Three, Carter canceled a scheduled trip to Canada because he said he was too preoccupied with the hostages. We had to report things like that. . . . There was no way of getting around the hostage story for the last 14 months."

Yet NBC News did not get involved in the day-counting melodrama—to its credit, I believe. NBC's Les Crystal, while reflecting the networks' argument that Jimmy Carter made the hostages a political issue and kept them before the public, nevertheless shied away from, as he says, "picking at a national scab every evening for 14 months." Network news organizations have developed their own styles of coverage: CBS usually ranks number one in ratings and prestige; it tends to be the certifier of events. ABC is, of course, the upstart team, scrambling forward under the energetic leadership of sportsman-turned-newshawk Roone Arledge. NBC, perhaps, lacks the authority of CBS and the flash of ABC, but on Jan. 20, at least when John Chancellor was on-camera, NBC achieved a solidity

of performance, in part by forsaking the gimmickry.

Still, bad news can be good news for the aggressive networks and eventually for the viewers. The hostage story produced a major development in television news when ABC used the crisis to start its *Nightline* broadcast, an excellent late-night news service. Pushing its program, ABC also may have pushed along a story that should have been contained, if not by officials in Washington, then by journalists exercising editorial judgment. But then some journalists get caught up in their magic machines and may not even see the results of their work.

Jeff Gralnick very humanly explains how the *process* itself takes over: "It will be months," he reflects, "before I can disengage from the technological success and talk about the hostages' release as a human experience. . . ." Maybe years from now the hostage crisis will be remembered as much as an occasion that doubled the amount of network evening news as for a sad episode in the chaotic wake of a militant religious revolution half a world away.

In any case, television on Return/Renewal Day moved forward to stage center, playing its own split-screen role of actor and watcher. ABC News achieved the biggest coup of the entire coverage when it offered, later in Inauguration week, its three-hour account of the secret negotiations involving the United States, the Iranians and various Arab and European intermediaries. And how did ABC get onto its great scoop? Two French lawyers, acting as intermediaries, sought out Pierre Salinger, ABC's Paris bureau chief. They thought that Salinger, the former press secretary to John F. Kennedy, would still have some Washington connections to help start the snagged negotiations again. They were right. Salinger aided in restoring the official lines of communication—while simultaneously beginning to cover those negotiations. He became intermediary/reporter, two roles in one. And that's the way it is now, as a new kind of countdown for television news begins. ■

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Edwin Diamond is associate editor of the *New York Daily News* "Tonight" edition. He also directs the News Study Group at MIT. Journalists Clive Smith and Bill Meyers aided in the research, reporting and analysis for this article.

**CABLE-TV CHART** *continued from page 55*

Network	Headquarters	Month/Year Began Satellite Operation
Modern Satellite Network (MSN)	45 Rockefeller Plaza, Suite 1460 New York, N.Y. 10111	January 1979
National Christian Network (NCN)	P.O. Box 493 Cocoa, Fla. 32922	June 1980
National Spanish TV Network (SIN)	250 Park Avenue New York, N.Y. 10177	September 1979
Nickelodeon	1211 Avenue of the Americas New York, N.Y. 10036	April 1979
People That Love (PTL)	Charlotte, N.C. 28279	April 1978
Satellite Program Network (SPN)	8252 South Harvard Tulsa, Okla. 74136	January 1979
The Women's Channel	P.O. Box 45684 Tulsa, Okla. 74145	June 1980
Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN)	P.O. Box A Santa Ana, Cal. 92711	May 1978
USA Network	208 Harristown Road Glen Rock, N.J. 07452	September 1977 (as the Madison Square Garden Sports Network. Changed name to USA Network in April 1980)
WGN-TV, Channel 9	2501 W. Bradley Place Chicago, Ill. 60618	November 1978
WOR-TV, Channel 9	1440 Broadway New York, N.Y. 10018	April 1979
WTBS, Channel 17 ("The Superstation")	1050 Techwood Drive, N.W. Atlanta, Ga. 30318	December 1976

Number of Affiliates	Number of Households	Hours per Day/ Days per Week	Description of Network
420	3.2 million	Five hours/ seven days	Division of Modern Talking Picture Service, distributor of sponsored films. This network is geared to the homemaker. Televises programs on health, cooking and consumer inquiries. Regular series include <i>The Home Shopping Show</i> , <i>Fun and Fitness</i> and <i>Financial Inquiry</i> .
50	250,000	14 hours/ seven days	Religiously oriented network representing over 70 denominations, which produce many of the shows televised. Programs include <i>Faith for Today</i> (Seventh Day Adventist), <i>At Home with the Bible</i> (Southern Baptist Convention) and <i>Christopher Close-up</i> (Catholic).
94	2.6 million	24 hours/ seven days	Spanish-language television network televising sports, movies, sitcoms, variety shows and news. Advertiser-supported.
700	3.5 million	13 hours/ seven days	First and only young people's channel. Produced, created and packaged by Warner Amex Satellite Entertainment Company. Programming for preschoolers through teen-agers. Shows include <i>Livewire</i> , teen-age talk/variety program; and <i>Pinwheel</i> , a magazine-format show for preschoolers.
242	3.5 million	24 hours/ seven days	Network run by James Bakker, ordained Assembly of God Evangelist. All programming has religious overtones. Features talk shows (including <i>The PTL Club</i> , which is also carried by over-the-air broadcasters), preachers like Oral Roberts, children's shows, and two fund-raising telethons a year.
283	2.9 million	24 hours/ seven days	Varied programming mix featuring talk shows, how-to's, classic movies and women-oriented shows. Broadcasts <i>Telefrance</i> , a three-hour series of French movies and variety programs, seven nights a week. Other regular programs include <i>Jimmy Houston Outdoors</i> , <i>The Gourmet</i> and <i>Real Money</i> .
185	Two million	24 hours/ seven days	A TV network geared to women. Tapes previously written material from magazines like <i>Family Circle</i> and <i>Women's Sports</i> , adapts it to audio-script form, and then picks graphics to accompany the material. Video portion of network in slow scan; new image appears every 12 seconds giving the effect of a slow slide show. Programming includes <i>Feeling Your Best</i> and <i>On the Job</i> .
200	2.5 million	24 hours/ seven days	Christian programming representative of 18 mainstream denominations including Catholic, Baptist and Methodist. Network produces 48 regular series featuring variety programs, quiz shows, musicals and live special events. All have a Christian flavor.
1200	6.3 million	About 10 hours/ seven days	Seventy-five percent of programming devoted to sports, including professional baseball, basketball, hockey and soccer. Other programming features <i>Calliope</i> , the children's show, six days a week, eight hours total. Also televises <i>The English Channel</i> , a series of culturally oriented shows, most of which are produced in England. At press time, USA Network was on the sales block and several companies—including broadcast giant CBS—were bidding for acquisition.
1300	3.7 million	24 hours/ seven days	Local Chicago independent television station. Offers mainly older movies, children's programs ( <i>The Flintstones</i> , <i>Star Trek</i> ), and Chicago-area sports coverage (Cubs, White Sox, Bulls, Notre Dame and DePaul basketball). Carries <i>Donahue</i> live.
450	3.2 million	24 hours/ seven days	Local New York independent television station. Regularly broadcasts movies (on election night it broadcast <i>The Deer Hunter</i> ) and New York professional sports teams like the Knicks and Islanders.
2780	10.3 million	24 hours/ seven days	Independent Atlanta television station owned and operated by Ted Turner. Covers three main programming areas: movies, Atlanta professional sports (mainly the Braves and Hawks), and syndicated programs like <i>Sanford and Son</i> and <i>Green Acres</i> .

## VIDEO GAMES *continued from page 59*

ever a video game, surrounded by fascinated witnesses, is broken like a stallion by a kid—invariably male—with more pimples on his face than there are blips on the screen. Yes, I *told* you! They're *here!* They are among us! A vast army of Captain Video's descendants—video rangers—who were nurtured by Pong, weaned on Tank, later hooked on Space Wars, and, after honing their hand-eye coordination and button technique, graduated with Space Invaders and Asteroids (1979), currently America's most popular arcade video game.

**The average human** struggles to score 10,000 on Asteroids. But in the city of Chicago *alone*, reports North Clark Street arcade owner Steve Kirk, "There are at least a dozen players who regularly shoot in the *millions* on Asteroids." Who

are these players? "They tend to be very, uh, obscure people, who are obsessed by a game and do nothing but play that game for a solid year."

They appear to have their own language, too; in the San Francisco Bay Area, Asteroids is known as "Stroids" and the object of the game is to shoot the "stroids." They overwhelmingly favor all games with a science-fiction motif, such as Galaxian, Lunar Lander, Astro Invader, Moon Cresta, Space Zap and Ripoff (in which cosmic bandits try to rip off the fuel canisters in your space depot). They also are united in their general disdain for pinball: video games seem more "alive," especially Space Invaders, whose bass "DOONK-DOONK" sound speeds up as the action gets fiercer, so that its rhythm often coincides with the player's heartbeat.

"A player gets so intense," observes Frank Ballouz, a marketing director at Atari, which manufactures Asteroids, "that he has put himself *inside* that rocket ship. He'll jump back off the machine when his ship gets blown up. That is the realism of the fantasy of playing the game."

But the video rangers shun games with built-in time limits, even though they may *never* get blown up. "One thing we've noticed is that on most successful games, eventually you die," says Lyle Rains, the man who invented Asteroids. "But the question is, how well did you do until that time? Did you do better than other people? If you did, you won. It's like life. Everybody dies, but it's what you do in between."

Some space soldiers never die—they just get bored and walk away. But most

## *The Empire Strikes Back*

The fiercest struggle in the video-game wars is not the one between players and blips, but the struggle of the games' manufacturers to keep one step ahead of the public's improving skill. Atari, at first, was confident that no one would ever top 100,000 points in Asteroids. "The highest score we ever had in engineering," says Atari's Ballouz, "was in the high 80,000's." But, in April 1980, just five months after the unit was in the field, Atari was shaken by the first report of an Asteroids score in the millions. "First one locally, then one in New York," Ballouz recalls. "Then it was like cancer."

How could this happen? they asked Atari Engineering. The men there are not just scientists, but ardent video rangers themselves, who often play space games for up to five hours after quitting time. This is a crew who calls Asteroids' big saucer "Sluggo" and the little one "Mr. Bill." Yet they had blundered.

"We had that game in the lab for months, but it didn't occur to us to try for the small saucer," says inventor Rains, sadly. "And now, even though I know the technique, I *still* can't make it work."

So the Atari empire decided to strike back. Operators may now order a change in the computer program

that makes the small saucer start firing as soon as it appears, gives its bullets greater range, and now gives those shots the ability to reappear on the other side of the screen. Midway has also counterattacked, with Deluxe Space Invaders, where some of the varmints don't vaporize when hit, but split into *two* invaders! Well, that's aliens for you.

However, the Taito America Corporation is trying détente. They recently published *How to Play Space Invaders: Secrets from an Expert* (\$1.95 from Taito, 1256 Estes, Elk Grove Village, Ill. 60007), with diagrams and chapters with titles like "Attack Is the Best Defense." "But some techniques have not been divulged," says Taito's Keith Egging. "There's going to be an

element of surprise in that game that will last for centuries."

The next offensive from Atari was Missile Command, introduced last August. In this game, modeled after nuclear war, you must defend cities and your missile bases against wave after wave of enemy missiles that fall from the sky. It's easily the most difficult video game extant and its score meter goes up to a stratospheric 999,995. "And we believe nobody will get up there," says Ballouz, smugly.

There are no shortcuts in Missile Command. Each wave is different, even from replay to replay, and there's no telling when or how the enemy will come at you. The action is so complex that some spectators never even bother to try the game, shown at left. And if they do try it, it's a long time before they play it again. But once a player gets mildly proficient (50,000 points), there's no game as addicting. That's all Atari wanted, anyway.

Since any score over 300,000 is truly astonishing, Ballouz may be right. But he has never seen tall, long-haired George Chan play. George is a 17-year-old senior at New York's Brooklyn Tech. Within five months, George had topped one million in Missile Command. "Aaah, it kills time," he says. "There's nothing *else* to do at night."—L.A.



*A typical Missile Command battle scene.*

grab the opportunity to punch their initials into a machine when they're finished, to register their high scores. When unoccupied, an Asteroids screen looks like this:

HIGH SCORES	
1. 99990	JIM
2. 99980	JLA
3. 99970	XAB
4. 99900	SID
5. 84790	SID
6. 79750	AAA
7. 53060	J
8. 52620	KKK
9. 46430	J
10. 46170	ACE

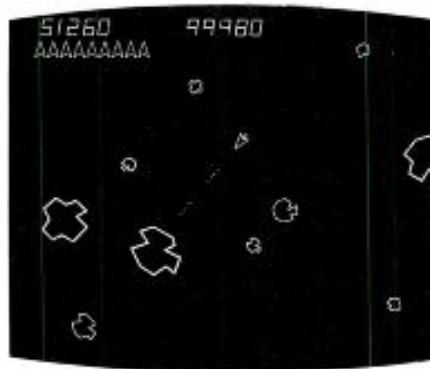
ONE COIN ONE PLAY

This hieroglyphic, in fact, turned up at the enormous Broadway Arcade Amusement Center ("Ladies Welcome!") near Times Square. Any video archaeologist could plainly see that some very intelligent life forms had been by here recently. Since Asteroids' score meters "turn over" at 100,000, chances were that JIM was not only capable of much higher scores, but that he played one game and intentionally stopped at 99,990 (the highest number recordable), just to nose out JLA. And JLA had done the same to XAB. It's the American way.

Dominican-born Ricardo Rojas, a 14-year-old seventh-grader roughly 4 feet 10 and 85 pounds, is one of the Asteroids regulars here. When I show up, he already has 250,000 points on his game and has turned the machine over twice. Since Asteroids awards a bonus ship for every 10,000 points, Ricardo also has managed to expand his original supply of four ships to 18.

To reach this proficiency, Ricardo had been spending 50 cents a day for months on an Asteroids in a Hell's Kitchen pizza joint near his home. He doesn't play there any more; he was kicked out for hogging the machine. But playing the game is now free, since Ricardo often sells his swollen ship supply to a waiting player and gets his 25-cent investment back. When he grows up, Ricardo would like to be a baseball player.

**In Asteroids, your mission** is to shoot down randomly floating asteroids with your 360-degree-rotating spaceship in the screen's center, before the "rocks" hit you. It's challenging because the big rocks you start with (20 points) split into smaller ones (50) and, in turn, into the smallest ones (100). The catch



**Diagram 6 shows Asteroids in progress.** From top: Current player's score (51260) and previous high on the machine (99980); expanded ship inventory. Big rock is at left, medium-sized rock at lower left, player's rocket ship (firing away) near center, and small rock at bottom right. Note: Small rocks do not split, but instead vaporize completely.

is that outer space here is "cylindrical"—so that rocks floating off the screen appear on the opposite side! To dodge them, you may hit the Thrust button (to move your ship to any spot) or, in an emergency, the Hyperspace button—which makes your ship disappear for a second and reenter space at some other point. If you get destroyed, a new ship is taken from your inventory and the battle begins anew. Novices leave their ship in the center and try to "defend the Alamo," but Ricardo maneuvers—and frighteningly well. (For a look at an Asteroids game in progress, see Diagram 6.)

"I need Thrust to be comfortable," he says in a Latin voice reminiscent of Topo Gigio. "And now, I show you the sandwich!" He slips his ship between two large rocks. "I show you another trick later," he beams. "The rocks, I just shoot any of them. Sometimes, your mind tells you which ones to hit. I have to get the fast ones. . . ."

WHAM! Ricardo's right hand flashes to hit the Hyperspace button. While in limbo, he cunningly keeps shooting—so he can find his ship again quickly when he reenters, from the bullet trail.

"That was a close one," he says. "That almost got me."

"Maybe you could hide the whole game in Hyperspace." I kid him.

"I tried that. It doesn't work."

Suddenly, the Big Saucer, which Ricardo calls "Fat Man," appears on the screen's right edge. Fat Man only shows

up when space has been almost emptied of rocks. He fires bullets at the player's ship, but his aim is always terrible and even a beginner can dispatch this slow, big target. Now Ricardo has one small rock left. After it's blazed, the screen will refill with fresh asteroids. But, strangely, Ricardo does not shoot at it. I warn him that, with one rock left, the dread Small Saucer will appear—a fast, deadly accurate shooter. Ricardo thinks I'm nuts. "I am not afraid of Little Man," he says. "And, right here, I fly!"

Ricardo hits Thrust full and sends his ship on a vertical path, off the top of the screen and up the bottom. He's going so fast, the odds of colliding with the last rock are nil. Little Man, as expected, appears—emerging from the right on a horizontal track, firing away. (See Diagram 7.) But Ricardo's ship is too fast to be hit. When their paths are about to cross, he rotates his ship right and fires four bullets in what seems a microsecond. Little Man is dead. The



**How Ricardo Rojas mows 'em down:** In Diagram 7 (above), small saucer enters from right, firing; Ricardo's ship is ascending from the bottom of the screen at high speed. In Diagram 8 (below), Ricardo's ship rotates right and fires; small saucer is destroyed.



continued on page 72  
PANORAMA 71

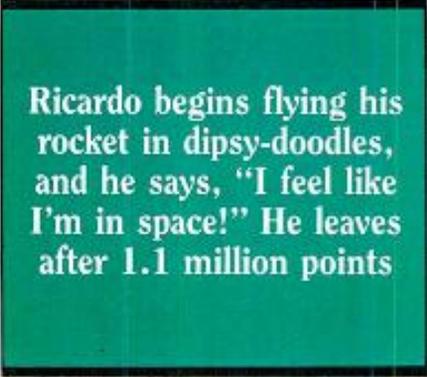
## VIDEO GAMES

continued from page 71

volley was so dense he had no chance. (See Diagram 8, page 71.)

"That was my spray," Ricardo boasts. "I like shooting rocks more, but it is better to get the Little Man." I'll say! He's worth 1000 points, and with one rock left, he's programmed to keep reappearing on schedule, although from different spots. Ricardo nails 22 in a row, but number 23 collides with the last rock fragment. The scam's temporarily over.

"Right there he hit my rock. That's what I don't like," says Ricardo. Next time, he vows, he'll leave *two* rocks, just in case, so the gold mine will last longer. Meanwhile, his light, quick touch on the Fire button (right index and middle finger) splits tons of rocks.



Ricardo begins flying his rocket in dipsy-doodles, and he says, "I feel like I'm in space!" He leaves after 1.1 million points

"What's your favorite subject in school?" I ask.

"Math."

"What is it you like about math so much?"

"Fractions."

Approaching one million points, two hours after he started, Ricardo looks worried. The attendant is on a collection route of the machines and headed his way. But the danger passes, and Ricardo calls his friend Alberto over to witness the moment he "turns the clock" for the tenth time. That done, Ricardo begins flying his rocket in dipsy-doodles, and he says, "I feel like I'm in space!" He leaves at 10:45 P.M. after 1.1 million points, with 12 ships left. Tomorrow is a school day.

Well, I've seen enough. Now it's *my* turn! Armed with a fistful of quarters, I play almost every video game in the house. (With little skill overall.) But with my blip-lust ignited into a frenzy, I don't stop until I've dropped a coin into Esmeralda, an antique mechanical fortune-telling dummy in a glass booth. My fortune: *You need a great deal of exercise, particularly in the open air.* ■

## CABLE IN THE SUBURBS

continued from page 47

made up of people from places like the University of Maryland and the state college branches. They've promised not to link up with any one franchiser."

Early has also had to combat widespread apathy among her suburban constituency. "I had to beat the bushes to get the public interested. In the suburbs people are not really that involved."

While all this activity has been going on at the county level, there's been another subplot taking place at the municipal level. Although 75 percent of Prince Georges County is unincorporated, the remainder is made up of 28 separate municipalities, each of which is entitled to grant its own cable franchise. (As a rule, the legal body that has jurisdiction over streets has the right to grant franchises.) As of this writing, 15 of these towns have voted to go it alone.

Early, obviously disturbed by the lack of togetherness within her realm, says that in some of the independent towns "the franchising practices were sloppy. They ended up with government officials or former officials on the boards of the cable companies." She also feels that the towns that went on their own will end up with inferior systems. "You need 35,000 to 80,000 houses for a full two-way interactive system. Many of these towns have no more than a few hundred or a few thousand homes."

In the competition for the individual towns, two firms have surfaced as antagonists. The local subsidiary of Storer Broadcasting, Storer Cable Communications, is far in the lead with 12 towns. Its principal rival in these skirmishes is the local subsidiary of Cross Country Cable, which has taken the other three independents. (Cross Country is a relatively small company that has become more aggressive of late. It has 19 franchises in New Jersey, where its headquarters are located, but it also has taken franchises in Phoenix, and Riverside, Cal.)

**Winfield Kelly**, vice president of the Prince Georges Storer operation, calls himself "a local equity partner. That's what the industry calls rent-a-citizen." He also was a county executive until 1978. "Two or three months after I left office," he says, "a few cable firms approached me. I looked them over and thought Storer was best."

Since then Storer has done exceptionally well in the county. It is interesting to note that most of the towns won by the

company are located in the northern part of the county—Kelly's political stomping ground.

Storer allowed Kelly to buy a six-percent interest in the Prince Georges operation for \$6000. Other local investors own another nine percent. Storer retains 85 percent for itself. Kelly doesn't feel he was "given" anything. "I invested \$6000; that's not an insignificant amount to people like me, especially when you consider that it will be five or six years before we show a profit."

Kelly doesn't see anything wrong in the marriage of politicians and cable operators: "Sure we try to win for our company. But we also know what the people want. We live here and we can tell the company." But neither does he think Storer's success among the towns of Prince Georges County has been due to political clout alone: "Most of the bigger companies are not willing to go in and take the time and laborious effort for these smaller towns. Storer is."

Kelly also says the small towns are not being duped into accepting mediocre systems. "We got most of the communities around the University of Maryland and they're pretty sophisticated up there. Don't forget, Washington is the data capital of the world and the people we're dealing with are very, very sophisticated. We've had lots of interest in the more futuristic services. And our systems are, at base, interactive." (Taken together, Storer's towns comprise a population of 75,000 to 80,000.)

Kelly points to Hyattsville, the first of the municipal systems to be turned on, as an example of what the towns will get. "We offered 35 channels to Hyattsville. But since then, we offered 54 channels to the county, so we turned on 54 in Hyattsville. We've told our towns, 'You eventually will get whatever we bid to the county.'" Of course, if another company wins the county with a better bid, Storer does not say it will match *that* in the towns it already holds.

Kelly resents all the muttering about how the Hyattsville franchise was handled. "The newspapers are trying to create an atmosphere of some tackiness, saying that the franchise was granted too fast. It took 10 months. We went to them in May and the franchise was granted in February. I don't call that fast."

**Kelly's counterpart** at Cross Country doesn't apologize for being a politi-

cian, either. He's Frank Komenda and he's a state legislator as well as general manager of Cross Country Cable of Prince Georges County, Inc.

Cross Country follows the usual cable-company pattern of offering local investors a slice of the pie in return for their good will. According to Komenda, local folks who own a piece of the action include two lawyers, a black woman schoolteacher (including women and minorities is considered a must), a woman insurance broker, a former General Electric executive, a beer distributor, a black IBM executive and Chris Hamburger, former linebacker for the Washington Redskins.

Komenda became involved with Cross Country when he was approached by George Troutman, the former G.E. executive, who had done consulting for the cable company. "George and I are old friends," explains Komenda, "I was selling my hardware store at the time, and I said, 'What a coincidence. I'm looking for a new career field.'"

His new career has included a considerable amount of entertaining—dinners, buffet lunches and cocktail hours for local officials and other worthies. (He doesn't wine and dine county officials, however; that's against the law.) He doesn't see anything wrong with this. "If you want to make a pitch to folks and it's in the evening, you've got to feed 'em. Basically it's not much different than selling soap."

The fact is that Storer's brand of soap has been outselling Cross Country's four to one. Komenda says his string of defeats at the hands of Storer has been "very frustrating" but adds, "most of the franchises awarded so far have been in the northern part of the county. That's Mr. Kelly's home base. I was born and raised in the southern part of the county and we hope my identification will help us there." Komenda also hopes that by waging the good fight he's put his firm in a better position to take the countywide franchise.

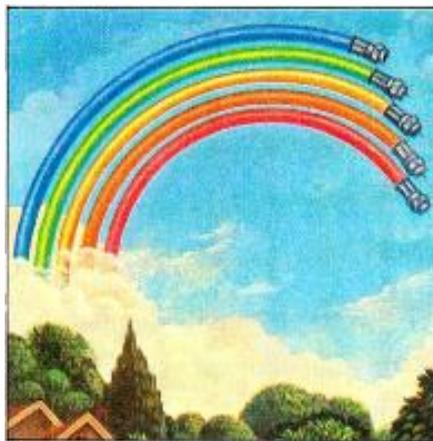
Cross Country's proposals have not always been judged entirely on their merits, according to its general manager. "In some cases we offered better packages, but Kelly had the political edge," he says.

Komenda also charges Storer with appropriating some of Cross Country's proposals. He says that when he bid for the College Park franchise, he offered a

52-channel system. "We lost the franchise," he claims. "because Storer convinced the town officers that a 52-channel system was only a marketing gimmick and that it wasn't technologically possible yet." Six weeks later, Cross Country lost the Landover Hills system when Storer proposed a 54-channel system. "I know technology moves fast in this business," says Komenda. "But not *that* fast."

Komenda claims he also lost the town of Glenarden due to Storer's machinations. "We said we would build an access studio in the town hall. Storer got wind of this and verbally amended its proposal."

If that seems a minor point on which



### Cable companies may be promising more than they can deliver

to hang a franchise, how about this? Eugene Zamer, public administration consultant for Capitol Heights, Md. (one of the three towns that have thrown in their lot with Komenda's firm), says his town went with Cross Country because "They were more down to earth and they're giving keys so people can lock up the channel that has X-rated movies."

And the fight goes on. . . .

**It seems clear that** the suburbs, perhaps as a result of getting hornswoggled in the past, are smartening up. At least no one is getting the 12-channel (or fewer) cable systems that make up three quarters of all the franchises currently in operation. In fact, most suburbs today are making sure they have "state-of-the-art" language in their contracts. This

way they protect themselves from inordinate political deal-making and ensure that their systems will be up-to-date.

Still, the suburbs—unless they combine into extremely powerful consortiums—will probably never top the best urban systems. Charles Hamilton of Teleprompter gives an example: "A year ago we bid a 35-channel system for Saint Bernard Parish outside New Orleans. Now we're bidding a 201-channel system for the city of New Orleans. [Teleprompter has since lost the New Orleans franchise to Cox Cable Communications, Inc.] This, in part, reflects advances in technology, but it also has to do with basic differences in market size. Cable companies can only be pushed so far by competition. If a town has 2000 homes, you can't offer 200 channels and five mobile vans."

Yet there's a possibility that cable companies, in their frenzy to lock up the last lucrative markets, may be doing just that—namely, promising more than they can deliver. In a recent New York Times article, Michael Botein, a New York Law School professor who has studied cable needs and possible proposals for New York's outlying boroughs, said of the exotic technology promised by cable operators: "If the companies had to put it in tomorrow they'd be very hard put."

At the very least, there are indications that some companies involved in heavy franchise battles have promised so much that they won't make money for years—unless hefty numbers of customers can be persuaded to take more than basic service, or unless new add-on services with built-in profits appear on the scene to bail the franchisers out. The alternative—that companies who have signed themselves into unworkable deals may begin renegeing on those deals—could mean years of confusion and litigation for the suburbs.

Broken promises, or state-of-the-art systems? Odds are, the likely fate of most suburbs will fall somewhere in between the two extremes. The Cable Television Information Center's Nancy Jesuale, for one, is betting on suburbia's growing savvy to make the compromise a livable one for all concerned. "It used to be," she says, "that cable companies would ride into town with a two-page agreement and ride out the next day with it signed, sealed and delivered. The suburbs don't sign those any more." ■

## HOME VIDEO *continued from page 60*

permit the broadcasting of sound either in stereo or in two different languages. (Converters will be available to bring in the new sound on today's TV sets.)

Two of the videodisc systems—the optical LaserVision type and the upcoming VHD variety—have stereo sound already, and the RCA-developed CED system will feature dual sound tracks in next year's models. One brand of VCR available on the American market—Akai's most recent ActiVideo model—is capable of recording and playing back in stereo sound, and all other brands will be stereophonic (as they are in Japan) by the time multichannel broadcasting begins here.

**In the intermediate future**—say, within 10 years—we can envision video reaching out even farther into new but related areas. Now that electronics has begun to preempt home movie equipment, still video photography won't be far behind. On the basis of patents already issued and lab work in progress, it's not difficult to foresee a lifetime electronic still camera that will never need to be loaded with film, tape or anything else (except possibly batteries).

The microcassette used in Sony's developmental camera-recorder is capable of storing 36,000 still TV pictures; next could easily be a palm-sized camera with the cassette completely sealed and loaded inside with a lifetime tape supply—say, 10,000 or 20,000, even 50,000, color exposures. Upon returning from the beach or a family outing, the amateur video photographer would insert the little camera into a component of his home video terminal and view his color snapshots on the screen. If he desired prints, he could leave the camera off at a processing center with instructions as to which shots should be printed—or quite possibly make instant prints himself by pushing the “print” button on his video remote-control panel.

Within the next decade, work will be proceeding at an accelerated pace on high-definition video: a system with perhaps double the number of lines of today's TV picture, providing an extremely detailed image without any visible line structure, even when viewed in CinemaScope proportions. The first programs to use the system probably will be delivered by special, deluxe cable service to video monitors leased as part of the cable package, or by direct satellite-to-

home transmission. Eventually, such high-definition transmission (likely called “hi-def”) will become standard for broadcast television, VCRs and videodiscs, as well as for cable and satellite.

**Looking ahead perhaps 20 years** (either before or after the popularization of hi-def, with which it may well be intertwined), we can expect the employment of a new method of encoding the video signal, which will make it possible to reproduce at home a picture virtually identical to that on the studio monitor—banishing forever such problems as snow, ghosts, and picture degradation generated within a VCR or videodisc player. This is digital video: in effect, a computerized picture. It won't be receivable on existing TV sets but could be seen, after replacement of some mod-

**It's not difficult to  
foresee a lifetime  
electronic still camera  
that will never need to be  
loaded with film, tape or  
anything else**

ules, on the component video terminal.

Digital video equipment is already being used in TV broadcasting, and within five years the first digital video recorders probably will be available for broadcast use, improving the quality of picture processing at the television studio. It will be much longer before digital pictures are available to the home, by broadcast, cable or VCR, because of the need to develop completely new technical standards and a new generation of home equipment.

As time goes by, the problems posed by video's mechanical parts—prone to catastrophic failure and guaranteed to wear out—will become more worrisome. The delicate spinning heads of a VCR in average use, for instance, travel more than 10,000 miles a year, all the while rubbing directly against the tape.

The television set itself shed its most bothersome moving part before the in-

roduction of regular telecasting in the United States. Through the 1920s and most of the '30s, the TV picture was generated in the studio and reconstructed at the receiver by means of synchronized spinning discs pierced with holes. The picture tube, successor to the whirling disc, has no mechanical parts, instead simulating motion by means of a sweeping electron beam that “paints” the picture. The last cantankerous moving part was expelled from the TV set just a few years ago, when the mechanical tuner was replaced in the majority of sets by all-electronic tuning.

The anomaly of spinning discs and rotating tape heads suggests that one part of electronic science has gotten way ahead of another. There's a major effort underway in the computer industry to correct the situation by developing solid-state memories with the capacity to store large amounts of information—without the restraints of things that go bump-bump or spin-spin.

Sharp Electronics recently demonstrated a developmental television set called “PlaybackVision,” which has the knack of recapturing time without tape or disc. At the push of a button, it provides instant replay of the last 10 seconds of picture and sound. What is remarkable about it is that it records and plays back courtesy of a solid-state memory *without any moving parts*.

Practical, low-cost, solid-state memories may some day be small enough to be contained entirely within the home video terminal, providing thousands of hours of storage capacity. The only question is when.

Solid-state recording ultimately will be instrumental in the merger of today's cable TV, video recorder and videodisc player into a single component of the home video terminal. Instead of shopping in stores for a videodisc or cassette movie, or scanning the program listings for a TV show to tape, you may some day be able to dial up on your screen a catalogue of perhaps 10,000 available program selections. Punching the proper number into your remote-control unit will place your order for the program you want, which will be delivered in digital form to your video terminal from the cable, satellite or broadcast station (and automatically charged to your bank account if it's a pay program). Once it's stored in your video terminal's magnetic memory, it's yours—for life. ■

I walked over to Yeako Slim's, who had the only phone in the village, and phoned the flying service in Bethel. They said they would send out a plane the next morning. I paid Yeako Slim a dollar for the call. There was a sign on the wall which said: PLEASE TRY TO AVOID SCRIBBLING ON TELEPHONE LOGS. SHOW SOME RESPECT. If you made a call, you marked down where you called and how long you talked. Then, every once in a while Yeako Slim would make you pay. It was like owing money at the grocery store.

In the evening, in the Cooks' house, all was ready for the celebration of the Slavic. The children were dressed in their finest clothes. Their hair was combed, their faces washed. Olive's mother and father had finished the cleaning and the preparation of the food. There was no more to do but to wait for the procession to arrive.

The 8-year-old went out to see how much longer it might be. He came back saying two more houses, and then ours. That meant maybe an hour, maybe two. The family crowded into the bedroom and turned on the TV. The program was a public-television production of *Macbeth*. The little boy thought it superb. Lots of sword fights. Olive's father felt it was not quite as good as *The Six Million Dollar Man*, *Macbeth*, of course, not being bionic.

*Macbeth* was followed by a special: *Christmas from Disneyland*. A one-hour program which had been broadcast across the rest of America three weeks before. Disney characters singing Christmas carols; Mickey Mouse riding in a sleigh; glittery decorations strung from palm trees.

The entire Cook family was ecstatic. They had heard about this place called Disneyland, and now here it was, right in their home, for them to see.

I don't know if it was Anita Bryant who was the hostess, but someone like that. It was classic Disney. *Silver Bells*, *Frosty the Snowman*, *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*. In the village they had real reindeer practically outside their back door, but this was better. This was TV.

A chorus of children dressed as snowballs was standing in front of a phony cathedral, singing *Santa Claus Is Coming to Town*, when, very softly, in the background, the first faint sounds of the approaching Slavic procession could be heard.

**Olive's father felt *Macbeth* was not quite as good as *The Six Million Dollar Man*, *Macbeth*, of course, not being bionic**

The worshippers had left the last house on the other side of the river, and now were walking slowly across, spinning the prayer wheel, waving the incense, singing the ancient Russian processional hymn. Fifty or 60 people, keeping a centuries-old tradition alive.

They crossed the river and started up the path toward the front door. The singing was coming now in rich, mellow

tones through the frigid night air.

Olive's mother got up and turned off the television. Disneyland vanished. The Slavic procession arrived, as it had been arriving among these people for 200 years.

Olive jumped to her feet and angrily threw a dish towel against a wall. "This goddamn Slavic ruins everything," she yelled. "You can't even watch real Christmas on TV."

**In the morning**, when I left, Olive came with me, even though there were three days left of Slavic. Her decision was sudden: she packed in a hurry, laughing and crying, as the pilot waited impatiently by the plane. For a couple of days, she said, she'd stay in Bethel, where there were people she wanted to see. Then she would go to Anchorage, where she wanted to spend a few days being drunk. Eventually, she would go back to Washington, to the Department of the Interior to try again; but this time with less enthusiasm than despair. □

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has proven that even a little man can have star quality and draw millions of non-boxing fans on prime time. After a TV buildup to the welterweight championship, beautifully orchestrated by ABC, Leonard's first major title defense against Roberto Duran went closed circuit. Leonard had become much larger than the screen that spawned him. The gate overall was approximately \$30 million; Sugar Ray took away about \$10 million. For a single fight, those are numbers that outstrip Ali's. The Duran-Leonard rematch was even bigger, perhaps the largest gross in boxing history.

Without a doubt, boxing is booming, and revenues—from live gates, pay-TV, and the networks—are higher than ever before. But like an old TV rerun, the ghost of corruption has begun to float again from the arenas, the offices of promoters and perhaps even the executive suites at some of the networks.

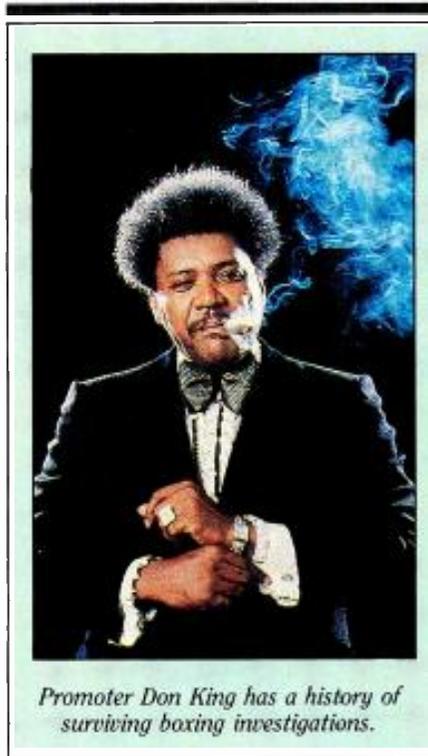
For about eight months now, the FBI has been quietly but systematically and thoroughly conducting an investigation into what it calls "allegations regarding corruption in boxing." Although he could not yet discuss specifics, FBI agent Joseph Spinelli, who is heading the probe, said that his investigation was "all-encompassing." Some of the boxing people who have been questioned said they had been asked about possible promotional monopolies, kickbacks, exclusive fighter contracts and, in one instance, the allegation that a boxing judge in a world-championship elimination match had been bribed. A Federal grand jury in the Southern District of New York has been hearing testimony. The Justice Department generally does not bring its case before a grand jury unless it anticipates indictments.

The investigation has most boxing people—normally a very tight-lipped and cynical bunch—tighter-lipped and more cynical than usual. "Nothin'll come of it," one fight manager, who insisted on anonymity, said. "It'll all blow over. The fat cats'll get fatter. Me 'n' my fighter'll still have to settle for crumbs. It's a rotten business."

But it's not just independent managers and fighters who are being cheated. It's you, Tony. And me. And millions of TV boxing fans, who are losing out on most of the really competitive matches we all deserve. But why? And how exactly does the con work?

## II. DOUBLE OCTOPUS, INC.

Paddy Flood, the fight manager, has the sort of face you only see in the boxing business. A few years ago, when he was associated with Don King Productions, Flood was riding boxing's gravy train. Basically that translates into meaning he had no trouble getting his fighter on television. Now he's a boxing have-not—"not well-connected" is the operative phrase—and it's a struggle for him to get any of his fighters on the tube. So, naturally, he has fewer fighters in his stable these days. The experience seems to have chastened and mellowed him.



*Promoter Don King has a history of surviving boxing investigations.*

Slightly swollen and scarred around the eyes from his own days in the ring, Flood's rugged face reveals surprisingly little bitterness as he gives this contemporary analysis: "It ain't changed all that much. Sure, television's the name of the game, and still it's the best thing that's ever happened for fighters. But *they* got it all locked up. Just like back in the '50s."

*They* are Don King of Don King Enterprises and Bob Arum, head of Top Rank, Inc.

"I got a great middleweight," Flood says, "a Syrian kid named Mustafa Hamsho. He's ranked by the World Boxing Association, the World Boxing Council,

and Ring magazine. I'll fight anyone, anywhere. Yet I've got to go begging to the networks to put him on. NBC offers me peanuts to fight a real tough kid, but I got to take it to get my boy seen. Arum controls Marvin Hagler, the middle-weight champ. You know when I can expect to get a title shot? When I sell a piece of my fighter to Arum."

Another manager, far more timid than Flood, tells me repeatedly, "Remember, I've got to work in this business." That means he wants anonymity. He has three fighters, one of whom is undefeated in 16 fights, but instead of being pleased with his and his fighter's future, he sees nothing but problems ahead: "The next logical step for Rocky [not the boxer's name] is a TV shot. That's where the money is. When I go to the networks, you know what they tell me? 'Get your fighter rated, then maybe we can use him.' But unless you're very well-connected in this business, you can't get a fighter rated."

What do you have to do to get *very well-connected*?

"Negotiate a piece of my boy to Don King or Bob Arum, who can get him rated and get him on TV. That's one way."

What's the other way?

"Bribe the ratings committees. But it's probably smarter to do business with King or Arum. When you get that heavily connected, you can even lose a couple of times and still continue to get some decent TV paydays. When you're not well-connected, lose and it's back to Toledo."

This time around Octopus, Inc., has two heads—one black, one white—and 16 long, grasping tentacles, but the refrain's the same: *You want to move your boy, you do business with Mr. King or Mr. Arum—on Mr. King's or Mr. Arum's terms.*

Don King is a former Cleveland numbers baron whose rough-and-ready business skills have grown smoother and sharper as the stakes have grown higher. Time magazine once called King "the most powerful promoter in sports . . . one of the most successful black businessmen in America."

Bob Arum is one of America's top legal minds, a man who seems to have discovered in boxing a more exciting arena for his talents. Hilary Cosell, Howard's daughter and a producer for NBC Sports, has made a fine TV essay on Bob Arum. "Arum," she has said, "is a brilliant lawyer admired by other lawyers because

he can get away with murder."

"Promoter" is really a misnomer for these two. The word conjures up an energetic little guy in a derby and sleeve garters who signs up two boxers for a match, rents a hall and gets the advertising out. King and Arum are not promoters in that quaint sense. They are better understood as boxing brokers, as packagers and shippers of meat, not all of it U.S. Inspected. There is, in fact, very little room for anyone else in the business of packaging big-time boxing.

For a while it appeared that another group, Muhammad Ali Professional Sports, or MAPS as it is known in the business, had emerged to rival Double Octopus, Inc. Harold J. Smith, chairman of MAPS, began drawing fighters from everywhere with enticements of large amounts of dollars. Since Ali had no financial connection with the outfit except to allow the use of his name, boxing people could not divine the source of MAPS' wealth. When the Beverly Hills branch of Wells Fargo Bank recently brought suit against Smith for allegedly embezzling \$21.3 million, some suspicions were answered.

At this writing, Smith and MAPS are finished as promotional forces in boxing. Given the reported threats against Smith's life, there is even some question now of how long he is expected to be breathing. The boxing-promotion field, cluttered though it might be with possible indictments, still belongs to King and Arum.

King and Arum enjoy accenting their rivalry, often spicing it with public insults. King has called Arum "a television peddler, a white slave-master." A typical Arum response? "Don King, he's beneath contempt." Nice things like that.

Even if the personal animosity isn't real (which, by the way, smart boxing people tend to think), it gives the impression of rivalry and independence. In a sport being investigated for monopolistic practices, that impression has been very good for business. Their mutual detestation, however, does not keep them from doing business together on certain closed-circuit fights when the money is right. Each walked away from the first Leonard-Duran fight with a cool million. For all their bad-mouthing, King and Arum actually function as a joint monopoly, the GM and Ford of the U.S. boxing industry—and without any

significant Japanese competition to keep them honest.

The price fighters pay for signing with King or Arum is the so-called contract of exclusivity with multifight options, which means the promoter picks the fighter's next opponent. That's how the promoter gets control of a division.

Although it is illegal for a promoter to also manage a boxer, Don King blatantly flaunts his power. The manager of record of Leon Spinks is Carl King, Don's son. Holmes' manager is Rich Giachetti, recently a loyal employee of Don King Productions. In past years King's wife, members of his production staff, his secretary and his trusted friends have all managed boxers whose fights King has sold to the networks. It's heads King wins, tails King wins. And that's pretty much the way it is in most fights you see King and Arum package for TV.

Ronald "Butch" Lewis, a young boxing entrepreneur who would like to crack the monopoly, complains, "Every time you guys in the press write about how

powerful King and Arum are, you make them even stronger. You turn them into complete Pied Pipers. So when they whistle, managers and fighters just follow along. And you make my job that much harder."

### III. THE MORAL VACUUM TUBE

Mention the names of King and Arum in the offices of network sports executives and they get a facial expression like they smell something organic decomposing under the plush carpet. The networks appear to be almost as much captives of Double Octopus, Inc., as the manager who wants to get his fighter on TV. But theirs is a comfortable, uptown captivity, and they aren't complaining very loudly. Boxing produces big rating numbers, and those big numbers translate into big revenues—a commercial minute on a Sugar Ray Leonard mismatch on ABC in March '80 went for \$250,000.

"It's a Catch-22," moans a network spokesman. "We want to put on the best

*continued on page 78*

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## BOXING AND TV *continued from page 77*

fighters we can and King and Arum seem to have the best fighters. We obviously go to the people who can supply us the best boxers. We are not in the promoting business."

Admittedly, King and Arum control most of the name fighters, but it's the networks that hold the trumps if they want to play them. They alone decide who goes on the tube and who doesn't. To break the King-Arum stranglehold, all they'd have to do is use some of the good fighters and negotiate with some of the managers and promoters who are not quite so "well-connected."

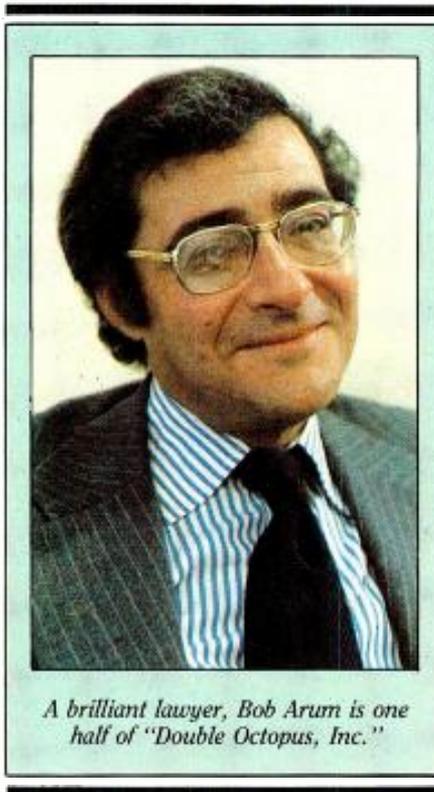
Networks need fighters for two types of fight packages. Most are aimed primarily at boxing fans. These fights are plugged into weekend sports anthologies (ABC's *Wide World of Sports*, CBS's *Sports Spectacular*, NBC's *SportsWorld*). But bouts with fighters like Leonard, who have a general appeal, more than hold their own prime time. Butch Lewis knows well how the networks buy their fights. "King and Arum go to a network with one of their big fights, let's say the heavyweight champ and the number-one contender. If the nets want that fight, they're going to have to take other fights. It's a vicious circle, and Arum and King can then get more fighters to sign with them on their terms. When I go to the networks, in order to get on I have to sell some of my dates for less money." Lewis's voice rings with indignation.

The great irony in TV's willingness to go along is that when a great fight like Leonard-Duran develops, the networks are priced out. TV boxing fans like Tony, who have supported the sport and the fighters up to that point, have to leave the living room, drive to a theater and shell out 20 or 30 bucks. Bill Nack, who keeps a cocked eye on boxing for *Sports Illustrated*, says sadly, "It's all so cynical. Depressing for the fans. TV has become the minor leagues, closed circuit is now the majors."

So why do the networks play along? The consensus is that they're making too much money to risk changing anything. The way business is presently being done suits them just fine—their apparent helplessness relieves them of any responsibility for the quality and legitimacy of the product they're presenting. While everyone is waiting for the grand jury's decision, that's not such a bad stance to maintain.

ABC, the leader in the presentation of boxing on TV, aborted Don King's *U.S. Tournament of Champions* in 1977 after five shows, amid charges of falsified boxing records and kickbacks. The network then hired New York attorney Michael Armstrong, former head of the Knapp Commission, to examine the charges. Not surprisingly, the panel cleared ABC of responsibility, but it found "a good deal of unethical behavior by individuals involved with the administration and organization of the tournament."

Jim Spence, a Roone Arledge protégé and heir apparent at ABC Sports, said,



back when the tournament scandal unfolded, "It's not our job to police boxing. A network wouldn't police major-league baseball or the NFL." The analogy between those sports and boxing is dangerously naive, at the very least. Meanwhile, the network's Standards and Practices departments insist on fine-combing commercials for any word or gesture that might offend viewers' standards of decency. Perhaps the networks have concluded that a tainted fight is less offensive than a dirty word.

Asked what his network was doing these days to ensure the purity of the boxing product it was offering, Van Gordon Sauter, president of CBS Sports,

wanted his position made perfectly clear: "We broadcast fights. We neither manage fighters nor promote their bouts. We bid in a highly competitive world for fights we feel are valid contests and of interest to our viewers. Before we bid, a CBS Sports boxing consultant ascertains that the fighters in the proposed bout are well matched. Mort Sharnik, a reporter at *Sports Illustrated* for more than 20 years, talks to fighters and managers and people in the boxing world to ensure . . . that our bid and any resulting contract conform to very stringent company policy on boxing. Finally, we put at ringside two of the leading authorities on boxing, Gil Clancy and Angelo Dundee." It's an impressive enough statement, until a fight fan recalls that it was CBS that brought us the "Too Tall" Jones fiasco, in which the Dallas Cowboy football player made a painfully inept showing in his first professional fight.

The other two networks are every bit as concerned about being hit with a low blow. Arthur Watson, president of NBC Sports, says, "We do consider Ferdie Pacheco an expert whose counsel we value. In addition, we have a director of compliance and practices who is most familiar with the boxing scene. He, independent of anyone else, checks the rankings, discusses arrangements with promoters, and is on-site at almost every fight we present."

Charles Stanford, staff legal counsel for ABC Sports: "If we decide to carry a fight, our legal department and our in-house boxing experts begin an exhaustive checking process to ensure that, among other things, the fighters' records and rankings, as supplied by the promoter, are accurate; that the fight has been properly sanctioned by both state and world boxing authorities; that the fighters have received medical exams; and that fighters and promoters have complied with other applicable laws and regulations." Again impressive, until it is pointed out that some of the same people at ABC are still doing business with some of the "individuals" that made the Armstrong inquiry necessary.

Clearly, the networks' main concern is to protect themselves. Their defensive posture is, however, a far cry from making themselves accountable for the integrity of the product they're selling. "Watching their asses while the money's rolling in," is how a veteran manager puts it.

The main reason the networks can avoid trying to clean up boxing is simple: They don't have to. They're covered. Two organizations already exist that are supposed to oversee the integrity of the sport—the World Boxing Association and the World Boxing Council. Anyone who knows much about the WBA and the WBC knows how hollow the networks' position really is. As applied to these two organizations, "rump" is still a little too high on boxing's posterior to be accurate.

#### IV. WHO'S RATING THE RATINGS?

The WBA and WBC ratings are the linchpin of the whole system. They take the pressure off everyone. Their ratings committees rank the top 10 fighters in the world in each weight class and every title match has to be approved by their championship committees. So when King or Arum sells and when the networks buy a fight, there is something "official" to back up the quality of the merchandise, a sort of Good Housekeeping Seal. Not a bad system. In theory.

In practice it stinks, because the WBA and WBC are not Good Housekeeping. The officers of these organizations tend to be fellows who've kicked around boxing's back rooms for years, men for whom the deal and a piece of the action is a way of life. They skim a percentage of the pot for each bout they sanction, and when they junket around the world to oversee a championship fight in, say, Seoul, Montreal or Johannesburg, they are accommodated in style, with many of their expenses usually picked up by the promoter. No wonder Bob Arum has bragged publicly, "I have a big impact with the people who make the ratings."

Among boxing writers, stories of WBA and WBC payola provide great at-the-bar amusement. There is, for example, the one about a boxing organization big shot and his legendary suitcase. The guy always seems to arrive on the scene of a major fight and announce his suitcase has been lost en route. And some promoter always seems to buy him a new one, filled with luxurious surprises. Then there's the charge to managers levied by the newsletters of these organizations "to defray the costs" of printing their fighters' biographies—\$1200 a pair in one expensive instance.

Like the "competition" between King and Arum, the "rivalry" between the

WBA and the WBC also happens to be very good for business. Because there are *two* "official" organizations, there are now *two* different champions possible in all weight classes, so there can be twice

as many split-discount championships sold and advertised. Actually, the number has more than doubled, because the WBA and WBC have inflated the eight traditional weight divisions to 13 and 14

*continued on page 86*

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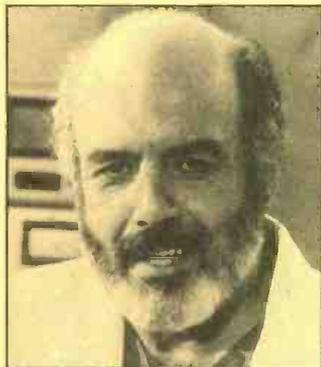
## **NEEDHAM, HARPER & STEERS**

High Profile Advertising

continued from page 14

rector of communications for the machinists, says members tracking newscasts "found that union positions on inflation, energy, foreign trade, health care and tax reform were examined in less than one eighth of all the stories broadcast. But the networks dutifully recorded the corporate views on each issue almost all the time."

Entertainment shows singled out for their negative portrayals included *Trapper John, M.D.*, *Skag* and *Taxi*.



**Pernell Roberts: Ring around the blue collar.**

According to the monitors, in a *Trapper John* episode, "Nurses were hassled about their union membership and a nurses' strike was shown as obstructing the critical routine of the hospital." An episode of *Skag* portrayed union officials as "uncaring and brutal bullies." As for *Taxi*, the union on that show "allowed the personal degradation of a female shop steward in order to settle a cabdrivers' strike."

William Winpisinger, president of the machinists' union, believes the portrayal of unionized workers on TV is connected to their negative public image. As a result, his membership plans to collect even more data this year in Phase Two of its Union Media Monitoring Project.

And while Phase Two is gearing up, the machinists will be trying to bring about

change with the results from Phase One. Director of Communications Kalaski says the union plans to petition the FCC, asking the agency to require that stations seek the views of union officials about what issues should receive media attention.

## Taming the White House Press Corps

Ronald Reagan's first televised news conference lacked something that viewers have come to expect: the vaguely zoo-like atmosphere caused by reporters jumping to their feet, waving and shouting. "Mr. President, Mr. President. . . ." This improvement in press-corps decorum—reporters meekly raising their hands and waiting to be called on—was hardly an accident. It was one of several changes recommended by the Commission on Presidential Press Conferences.

The panel, co-chaired by former NBC White House correspondent Ray Scherer, noted that "a curtain of distrust" had come between the President and the press during the Johnson and Nixon Administrations. Things improved little under Presidents Ford and Carter, with news conferences all too frequently degenerating into "shouting contests among reporters for the President's eye [sic]."

The other key recommendations made by the Commission: The President should have a regular monthly press conference, on live TV, open to all reporters. He should conduct informal meetings with reporters, with or without TV equipment present, on a weekly basis. Reporters who conduct themselves with decorum should be allowed to ask a follow-up question.

James Brady, President

Reagan's press secretary, had read the panel's report soon after his appointment. Moments before the President arrived for his first news conference, Brady asked the press corps to remain seated and quiet during the session. To the surprise of network TV correspondents, the new system seemed to work.

"I was pleased with the way things went," said John Palmer, NBC's White House correspondent. "I felt a little funny sitting on my hands—it goes against the grain."

In this more sedate ambiance, follow-up questions tended to flow more freely and naturally; they were not simply a reward for good behavior. "When it's quiet," says Palmer, "you have the President's attention. When everyone was screaming to ask questions, the follow-ups were just lost."

The changes, however, have caused concern as well as optimism. For example, no TV reporters were included in the first informal session with Reagan. And when Brady announced that questioners at televised news conferences might be chosen in advance by lottery, there was hand-wringing by TV and wire-service reporters who had been guaranteed a chance to be heard under the old system.

"I have lots of reservations about the lottery," Palmer said. "What if the people chosen are those who show up at the White House once a month? Even if only the White House regulars are included I'm not sure about it. The President should make the decision about whom he calls on."

Palmer said a lottery might fall flat on its face. "There could be a lot of empty seats and that wouldn't look good. Why should a correspondent go if he knows he won't be called on? He can see it as well on TV."

**LONDON**  
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REPORTING

## Scrapping over Blockbuster Films

It's not quite *Godzilla vs. the Smog Monster*, but Britain's independent television stations and the BBC are in the midst of an epic struggle. The cause of their wrangling: Both are after the film rights to some of America's top movies.

ITV opened hostilities when it bought a package of 53 MCA films—including *Jaws* and *Jaws 2*—for \$9.75 million. The BBC then retaliated with a 56-film MGM deal—including *Gone with the Wind*. (The BBC's \$10.5 million bid beat out ITV's by a mere



**Clark Gable: The BBC goes with the Wind.**

\$50,000.) On the horizon is the upcoming battle for *Star Wars* and *The Empire Strikes Back*.

The BBC's top film buyer, Gunnar Rugheimer, described the MGM pact as "great value for the money. It's the last major collection of family films and will provide the BBC with 300 hours of feature films at a much lower cost than home-produced drama."

But bitterness simmers just beneath the surface. Alasdair Milne, managing director of BBC-TV, has described ITV's spending on films as "proflig-

gate." He went on to anger the ITVerS further by pointing out that almost two thirds of any expenditure made by ITV counts against the "levy." (The levy is the 66-percent tax that the commercial companies pay on all profits above a designated amount after expenses have been deducted.) Because programming is considered an "expense," Milne complained that if the independents were to buy "\$30 million of American films, the cost to them would only be \$10 million. . . . Whereas if the BBC were to buy these same films, it would have to pay the full price of \$30 million."

The ITV companies responded with their own salvo. Paul Fox, head of Yorkshire Television, said it was the BBC that had lost its grip on reality. He cited the \$4.25 million the BBC paid for rights to *The Sound of Music*. In fact, respond BBC partisans, this allows for 10 showings of the film; compared with the cost of original programming, they insist, this is a downright reasonable price to pay.

Last Christmas the largest TV audiences were won by the BBC, which showed *The Towering Inferno*, *Airport 1975* and *The Godfather* on consecutive nights. The consensus is that if the BBC does not get a new infusion of cash later this year—from a generous increase in the license fee—it simply will not be able to bid competitively with ITV when more big movies come up for grabs.

## Winners and Losers in the Franchise Sweepstakes

Curiouser and curiouser. That was the reaction many people had when 70-year-old Lady Bridget Plowden, chairman of the IBA (Independent Broad-

cast Authority), announced the names of the lucky companies chosen to run commercial TV from 1982 through 1989. Of the 35 applicants, 15 won regional franchises; two existing license-holders—Southern TV and Westward TV—were unceremoniously given the ax.

What reminded some observers of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*—in particular of the Queen of Hearts who kept crying "Off with their heads"—was the seemingly arbitrary way that Southern and Westward had their licenses pulled. True, the IBA held scores of meetings all across Britain to test viewers' opinions on programming. True, there were endless interviews with the 35 groups seeking the 15 licenses. Still, the feeling is that the programming offered by both Southern and Westward was not demonstrably inferior to—or all that different from—the programming offered by the license-winning companies.

TV cognoscenti see the IBA's decision primarily as an assertion of its regulatory powers and the IBA's way of saying it is no mere paper tiger of a bureaucracy. (Along with her 15 licenses, Lady Plowden handed out bouquets to some companies, brickbats to others, and serious warnings to yet others that they'd better get their acts together.) It's thought that Southern and Westward were chosen as the sacrificial lambs for the simple reason that they were politically more vulnerable than the other license-holders: Westward was in the midst of a bitter board-room row; Southern's investors live, for the most part, outside of the area their company serves.

The whole story will probably never be known. The IBA's decisions are irrevocable. They needn't be justified and, for that matter, they can't be appealed. ■

# Videocassettes

## New Releases

### MOVIES

**Beyond the Valley of the Dolls** (1970)—Rated X. (Magnetic Video Corp.; \$59.95)

**The Big Bird Cage** (1972)—Oversexed inmates plot to escape from a squalid women's prison. Pam Grier, Anitra Ford, Candice Roman. (Warner Home Video; \$45) (R)



**Alec Guinness: Gets trumped building bridge.**

**The Bridge on the River Kwai** (1957)—Oscar-winning tale of British POWs in WWII Burma. William Holden, Alec Guinness, Sessue Hayakawa. (Columbia Pictures Home Entertainment; \*)

**Brief Encounter** (1974)—Sophia Loren and Richard Burton in a TV remake of Noel Coward's bittersweet drama about two marrieds who accidentally fall in love. (Magnetic Video Corp.; \$59.95)

**California Suite** (1978)—Neil Simon's tale of five wisecracking couples battling it out in the Beverly Hills Hotel. Jane Fonda, Alan Alda, Maggie Smith, Michael Caine, Walter Matthau, Elaine May, Richard Pryor. (Columbia Pictures Home Entertainment; \*) (PG)

\*Price to be announced



**Gary Busey: On the road with flimflam.**

**Carny** (1980)—An innocent small-town runaway comes of age when she joins a traveling carnival troupe. Jodie Foster, Gary Busey, Robbie Robertson. (CBS Video Enterprises; \$59.95) (R)

**Cat Ballou** (1965)—Amusing parody of the Old West starring Lee Marvin and Jane Fonda. With Michael Callan, Dwayne Hickman. (Columbia Pictures Home Entertainment; \*)

**Cruising** (1980)—Al Pacino as a young undercover cop searching sadomasochist haunts for a brutal killer of homosexuals. (CBS Video Enterprises; \$59.95) (R)

**Death Race 2000** (1975)—Violent futuristic melodrama with David Carradine and Sylvester Stallone as cross-country racing drivers. With Simone Griffeth, Mary Woronov. (Warner Home Video; \$50) (R)

**Fame** (1980)—Musical about determined youths in a New York high school for performing artists. Eddie Barth, Irene Cara, Gene Anthony Ray. (CBS Video Enterprises; \$69.95) (R)

**Farewell My Lovely** (1975)—Third film version of Raymond Chandler's classic whodunit, with Robert Mitchum as sleuth Philip Marlowe. With Charlotte Rampling, John Ire-

land. (Magnetic Video Corp.; \$59.95) (R)

**The Guns of Navarone** (1961)—A six-man team is assigned to destroy German guns that

block Allied passage to the Aegean Sea. Gregory Peck, David Niven, Anthony Quinn, Stanley Baker, James Darren. (Columbia Pictures Home Entertainment,\*)

**Humanoids from the Deep** (1980)—Gruesome amphibians rise from the ocean to destroy terrified humans. Doug McClure, Ann Turkel, Vic Morrow. (Warner Home Video; \$45) (R)

**Muliny on the Bounty** (1962)—Lavish remake of the 1935 film classic, starring Marlon Brando as Fletcher Christian. With Trevor Howard, Richard Harris. (CBS Video Enterprises; \$89.95)

**Myra Breckinridge** (1970)—Adaptation of Gore Vidal's novel about a transsexual's vendetta against American manhood. Raquel Welch, Mae West, John Huston, Rex Reed, Farrah Fawcett. (Magnetic Video Corp.; \$59.95) (R)

**Nine to Five** (1980)—Jane Fonda, Lily Tomlin and Dolly Parton as three office workers who declare war on office sexism. With Sterling Hayden, Elizabeth Wilson. (Magnetic Video Corp.; \$69.95) (PG)

**Oklahoma!** (1955)—Rodgers and Hammerstein's landmark musical about life in the early Oklahoma territory. Gordon MacRae, Shirley Jones, Rod Steiger. (CBS Video Enterprises; \$69.95)

**Seven Blows of the Dragon** (1973)—Chinese martial-arts yarn about a band of outlaws fighting an oppressive dynasty. David Chiang, Ti Lung. (Warner Home Video; \$55) (R)

**The Sorrow and the Pity** (1971)—Marcel Ophuls' highly praised, four-and-a-half-hour documentary on the Nazi occupation of France. (Columbia Pictures Home Entertainment;\*)

**The Stunt Man** (1980)—Peter O'Toole as a maniacal film director who imperils the life of a fugitive seeking refuge from the police. With Steve Railsback, Barbara Hershey. (Magnetic Video Corp.; \$69.95) (R)

## Best Sellers

This list of the top 20 prerecorded videocassettes is based on sales figures from a survey of retail outlets around the country.



*Debra Winger: Rides bull and takes it in Urban Cowboy.*

**(1) 1. Close Encounters of the Third Kind—Special Edition** (1980)—Steven Spielberg's expanded UFO spectacular. (Columbia Pictures Home Entertainment; \$69.95)

**(-) 2. Airplane!** (1980)—Zany spoof of airport disaster movies. (Paramount Home Video; \$79.95)

**(2) 3. 2001: A Space Odyssey** (1968)—Stanley Kubrick's milestone space epic. (CBS Video Enterprises; \$69.95)

**(3) 4. Star Trek—The Motion Picture** (1979)—Starring the original TV-series crew. (Paramount Home Video; \$84.95)

**(6) 5. The Black Hole** (1979)—A Disney sci-fi tale of the search for Ultimate Knowledge. (Walt Disney Home Video; \$59.95)

**(-) 6. Xanadu** (1980)—Musical fantasy, starring Olivia Newton-John. (MCA Videocassette, Inc.; \$65)

**(13) 7. Superman** (1978)—Super-budget film, starring the special effects. (Warner Home Video; \$65)

**(5) 8. The Blues Brothers** (1980)—The satirical singing duo in their first feature film. (MCA Videocassette, Inc.; \$89)

**(-) 9. Urban Cowboy** (1980)—John Travolta in a glossy Texas melodrama. (Paramount Home Video; \$79.95)

**(7) 10. Mary Poppins** (1964)—Walt Disney's fantasy tale of a magical nanny and her chimney-sweep friend. (Walt Disney Home Video; \$74.95)

**(4) 11. Alien** (1979)—Haunted-house drama in outer space. (Magnetic Video Corp.; \$59.95)

**(14) 12. M\*A\*S\*H** (1970)—Robert Altman's antiwar farce. (Magnetic Video Corp.; \$59.95)

**(19) 13. Every Which Way but Loose** (1978)—Clint Eastwood

as a barroom-brawling truck driver with an orangutan as a buddy. (Warner Home Video; \$60)

**(-) 14. Brubaker** (1980)—Robert Redford tackles prison corruption. (Magnetic Video Corp.; \$69.95)

**(15) 15. Friday the 13th** (1980)—Six summer-camp counselors meet brutal deaths. (Paramount Home Video; \$79.95)

**(-) 16. All That Jazz** (1979)—Bob Fosse's high-energy musical, starring Roy Scheider. (Magnetic Video Corp.; \$69.95)

**(-) 17. The Fog** (1980)—Horror film directed by John Carpenter. (Magnetic Video Corp.; \$59.95)

**(12) 18. Debbie Does Dallas** (1978)—Rated X. (VCX; \$99.50)

**(20) 19. Coal Miner's Daughter** (1980)—Sissy Spacek in the rags-to-riches story of country singer Loretta Lynn. (MCA Videocassette, Inc.; \$65)

**(10) 20. Doctor Zhivago** (1965)—Omar Sharif plays the title role in this epic Russian love story. (CBS Video Enterprises; \$89.95)

**\*Position last month**

Sales figures are from the month of January. Retail outlets participating in our survey include: Associated Video, Houston; Audio Center, Honolulu; Audio Video Craft, Inc., Los Angeles; Barney Miller's Inc., Lexington, Ky.; Cinema Concepts, Inc., Wethersfield, Conn.; Communications Maintenance, Inc., Litchfield, Ill.; Concord Video Center, Stamford, Conn.; Cyclops Video, Sherman Oaks, Cal.; Discotronics, Inc., Cranbury, N.J.; Godwin Radio, Inc./Godwin Video Centers, Birmingham, Ala.; Jantzen Beach Magnavox

Home Entertainment Center, Portland, Ore.; Kaleidoscope Video Shops, Oklahoma City; Media Associates, Mountain View, Cal.; Media Concepts, Inc., St. Petersburg, Fla.; Modern Communications, St. Louis; Movies Unlimited, Philadelphia; Newbury TV & Appliances, New Bedford, Mass.; Nichols Electronics, Wichita, Kan.; Select Film Library, New York; The Sheik Video Corp., Metairie, La.; Stansbury Stereo, Baltimore; Televideo Systems, Richmond; Thomas Film Video, Royal Oak, Mich.; Video Audio Electronics,

Williamsport, Pa.; Video Cassette, Phoenix, Video Cassettes, Etc., Lubbock, Texas; Video Connection, Boston; The Video Connection, Toledo, Ohio; Video Corporation of America, Edison, N.J.; Video Dimensions, New York; Video Library, Torrance, Cal.; The Video Library Company, Narberth, Pa.; Video Services, Towson, Md.; Video Specialties, Houston; Video 2000, San Diego; Visual Adventures, Cleveland.

continued

**Treasure Island (1934)**—Wallace Beery as Long John Silver in Robert Louis Stevenson's classic adventure tale. With Jackie Cooper, Lionel Barrymore, Lewis Stone. (CBS Video Enterprises; \$49.95)

**Wifemistress (1977)**—Laura Antonelli as the neglected wife of a husband (Marcello Mastroianni) with a double life in turn-of-the-century Italy. With Leonard Mann, Olga Karlatos. (Columbia Pictures Home Entertainment; \*) (R)

### SPECIALS

**An Evening with Sir William Martin**—Fun and games with "famous author" Sir William Martin, a comic character created by comedy writer/musician Bill Martin. (Pacific Arts Video Records; \$39.95)

**Freedom's Finest Hour**—Award-winning documentary on the American Revolution and other crucial moments in American history; narrated by Ronald Reagan. (Thomas Productions; \$59)

\*Price to be announced

Some movie descriptions courtesy of TV Guide magazine. Ratings are those assigned by the Motion Picture Association of America for theatrical showings.

Readers wishing to obtain more information from the distributors of the above-listed movies and specials may do so at these addresses: CBS Video Enterprises, 1700 Broadway, 35th floor, New York, N.Y. 10019; Columbia Pictures Home Entertainment, 711 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022; Magnetic Video Corp., 23434 Industrial Park Court, Farmington Hills, Mich. 48024; Pacific Arts Mail-Order Company, P.O. Box 22770, Carmel, Cal. 93922; Thomas Productions, 3495 La Sombra Dr., Hollywood, Cal. 90068; Warner Home Video, C.N. 03050, Trenton, N.J. 08650.

# Passages

## WED

**David Frost** (*Headliners with David Frost, That Was the Week That Was*) and British actress **Lynne Frederick**, widow of Peter Sellers.

## HONORED

CBS News correspondent **Walter Cronkite**, with the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Carter; Cronkite was also honored with the University of Arizona's annual John Peter Zenger Award, New York University's Gold Medal. The Charles Evans Hughes Gold Medal from the National Conference of Christians and Jews, and the first Excellence in Science Communication Award from the Scientists' Institute for Public Information.

**Roone Arledge**, president of ABC News and Sports, with the Poor Richard Club's annual Gold Medal Award.

**Henry Winkler** (*Happy Days*), with the ninth annual Show Business Shrine Club Bob Hope Humanitarian Award. **NBC's Dick Enberg** and **ABC's Al Michaels**, as National Sports-casters of the Year, by the National Sports-casters and Sportswriters Association; **Warner Wolf**, sportscaster for WCBS-TV, New York, as New York State Sportscaster of the Year.

## SIGNED

**Hamilton Jordan**, former assistant and political adviser to President Jimmy Carter, to the Cable News Network as a political commentator.

**Greg Gumbel**, sportscaster for WMAQ-TV, Chicago, to the Entertainment and Sports Programming Network as an anchor on ESPN's *Sports-Center*.

**Rhonda Glenn**, to the Entertainment and Sports Program-

ming Network as a full-time sportscaster.

**Kerry Millerick**, as a reporter on CBS's *That's My Line*.

**Eddie Murphy**, a featured player on NBC's *Saturday Night Live*, as the seventh member of the show's repertory company.

**Terry O'Neil**, award-winning television sports producer and journalist, to a long-term contract with CBS Sports as executive in charge of production for a new CBS Sports weekend anthology program.

**Peggy Fleming**, Olympic figure-skating gold medalist, to a four-year exclusive contract with ABC Sports; Fleming will join the *Wide World of Sports* and 1984 Winter Olympics commentary teams and will appear in special figure-skating performances.

Former Broadway star **Mary Martin**, as co-host of PBS's *Over Easy*.

Former Presidential candidate **John Anderson**, to WLS-TV, Chicago, as a special full-time correspondent and commentator.



**David Letterman:** Déjà vu with peacock.

## RE-SIGNED

**David Letterman**, to a new exclusive contract with NBC.

## APPOINTED

At CBS News: **Robert Chandler**.

as senior vice president, administration; **Burton Benjamin**, as senior executive producer, hard news broadcasts; **Edward Fouhy**, as vice president, director of news; **Roger Colloff**, as vice president and director, public affairs broadcasts; **Jack Smith**, as vice president, CBS News, Washington.

## RESIGNED

**Edgar Griffiths**, as chairman of the RCA Corporation; Griffiths was replaced by **Thornton F. Bradshaw**, president of the Atlantic Richfield Company. **Diane Ladd**, from CBS's *Alice*.

## SWITCHED

**Gail Christian**, Washington correspondent for Chronicle Broadcasting, to director of news programming, Public Broadcasting Service.

**Dave Marash**, from correspondent, ABC News, to correspondent and anchor, WCBS-TV, New York.

**John Huddy**, from entertainment editor, Miami Herald, to segment producer, NBC's *Tonorrow Coast-to-Coast*.

**Alan Cohen**, from director of early-morning programming, ABC, to vice president of development, Time-Life Television.

**Matt Seigel**, from emcee of WCVB-TV's (Boston) *Five All Night Live*, to disc jockey, KISS-AM.

## CELEBRATED

The 25th anniversary of the ABC soap opera *The Edge of Night*.

## DIED

**Bill Lee**, 44, producer of ABC's *Fridays*.

**Paul Cunningham**, 63, former associate producer and correspondent for the *Today* show and NBC News.

**Gordon Russell**, 51, television writer for such shows as *One Life to Live*, *The Doctors* and *Dark Shadows*.

**Sydney Zelinka**, 74, writer for *The Honeymooners* and *The Phil Silvers Show*.

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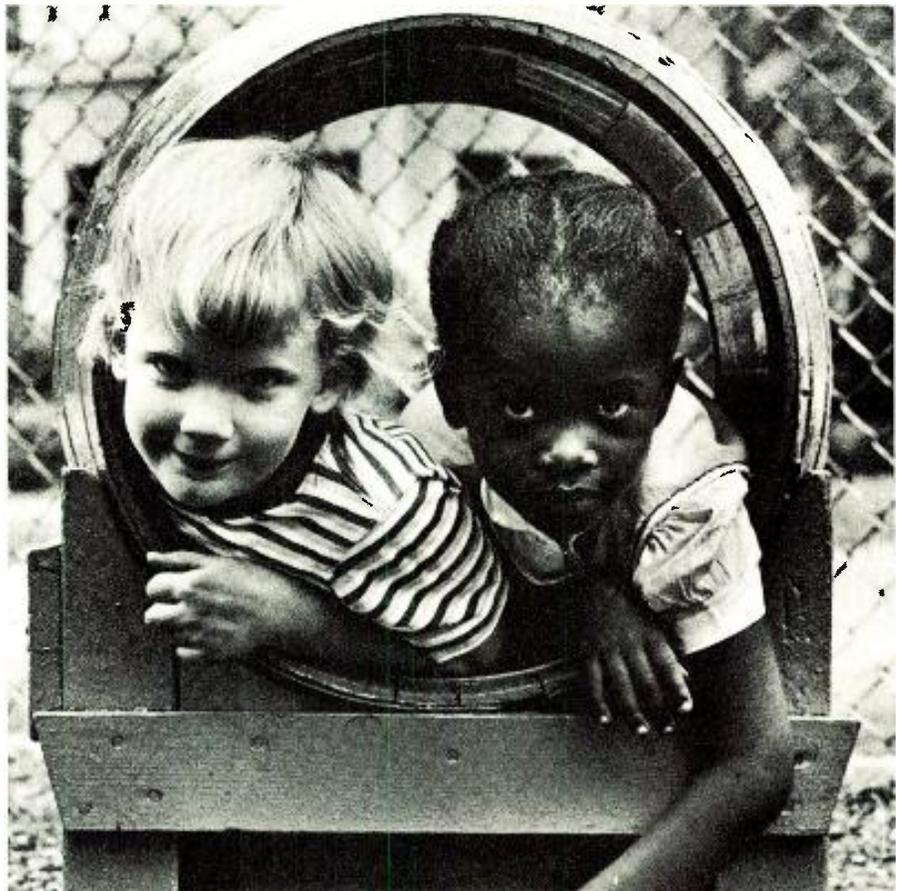
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## BOXING AND TV *continued from page 79*

respectively. There are now so many artificial categories that it's impossible even for a serious fight fan like you, Tony, to know the current WBC cruiser-weight champ or the WBA junior featherweight titleholder. On an average weekend, it's almost impossible *not* to see a title fight of some sort on TV. Some "truth in labeling" legislation is badly needed.

Bert R. Sugar is attempting to clean things up. Sugar bought *The Ring* magazine two years ago, after its reputation had been tarnished by association with the ABC-Don King tournament. The joke about *Ring*, once known as "The Bible of Boxing" was, "If this is the Bible, then boxing needs a New Testament." That's pretty much what Sugar has begun to publish.

"You've got to understand," says Sugar, "the TV sell is, 'This fight's the most important thing you've ever watched!' If they can call it a 'championship,' then they can really sell it."

So if the word "championship" will help sell a TV package, a fight stamped "championship" by the WBA or the WBC can be arranged. If the promoter needs a highly rated opponent to come out of nowhere and get pummeled into oblivion by an up-and-coming star, he's got one. The high number of mismatches among "rated" fighters on TV clearly belies the integrity of the rating systems and the networks' checks and balances.

Sugar adds, "Rating fighters is a very subjective matter, not like, say, measuring ground-gainers in the NFL. It's not easy. But finally *our* ratings are becoming credible. We've got 50 unaffiliated experts around the world who rank fighters. We may be wrong sometimes, but at least I know we're honest."

And the other guys aren't?

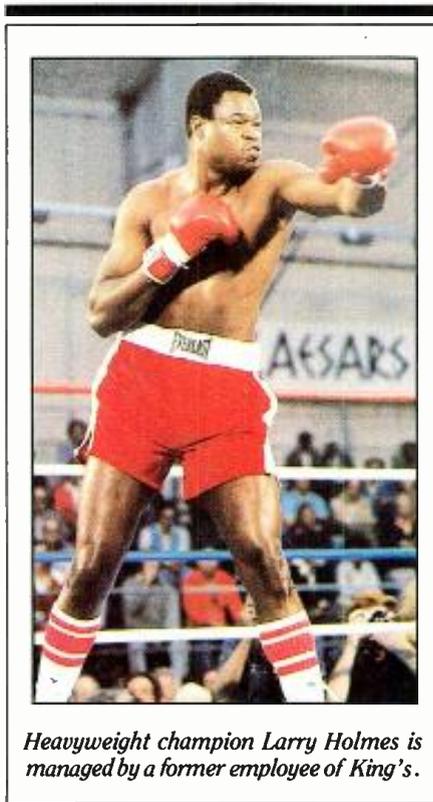
"Well, [WBC president] Jose Sulaiman insists that he's never taken even a cup of coffee. Anyone count the spoons?"

### V. O BRAVE NEW WORLD

If the viewer is getting cheated now, what in the world is going to happen in the future, when the stakes are going to be a great deal higher than they are now? Especially if the FBI investigation comes to naught?

Each day more pay-TV cable is being laid and more homes are being wired to it. Already those wires and an incredible technology have made it possible for companies to send live, blockbuster

fight directly into millions of homes. Jerry Perenchio's ON-TV, a coded over-the-air system in Los Angeles, sent the first Leonard-Duran fight directly into 125,000 homes (46 percent of its subscribers). Warner Amex Cable Communications' Qube cable system sold the fight in Columbus, Ohio, to about 7000 homes (30 percent of its audience). Each company charged \$10 for the event. When the national wiring job is completed and all the sophisticated new equipment has been set in place, the profits for everyone associated with a boxing spectacular will be enormous. In fact, boxing



*Heavyweight champion Larry Holmes is managed by a former employee of King's.*

on every level is expected to be one of the staples of the new day in TV.

Naturally, people in the industry are jockeying for position, trying to anticipate how it will all shake down, trying to guess which method of communication will ultimately prevail. It's a lot like a game of roulette—the sports communications' wheel is spinning and fortunes are riding on where it will stop.

Chet Simmons, president of ESPN, the 24-hour-a-day sports network, has made his bet, and he believes he knows what the boxing picture will look like for the decade ahead. Simmons believes there will be enough room and profits in

the future for everyone. "I envision a viewer having a range of options far greater than he has now. He will be able to call in for a single outstanding fight if he wishes. But I also see, right alongside, cable channels carrying some major fights on a fairly regular basis. Then there will be the networks, presenting fights a cut or two below the very top grades. Then, ESPN, primarily showing the development of new boxing talent; serious fans are interested in that."

ESPN, which has six million subscribers, already offers a weekly boxing show of the sort Simmons described. It usually features young, inexperienced fighters in a tournament format. The fights are raw but exciting. It's a show for hard-core fight fans. It provides the young fighters with a proving ground for developing their skills; in that sense it is the electronic equivalent of the small, local clubs in which boxers used to be developed. It's interesting to note, by the way, that the series is promoted and packaged by Bob Arum, who also has the inside track on whatever talent might be developed.

Alan Baker is an NBC vice president and an expert on boxing. As someone who used to promote closed-circuit theater fights, he knows boxing from both the pay and the network sides. Like Simmons and almost every other boxing futurist, Baker sees theater operations as doomed. "They're just an intermediate thing until the home technology is ready," he says.

But unlike most boxing fortunetellers, he doesn't believe in the inevitable superiority of pay-TV over the networks. "You've got, at most, two or three really big fights a year. And how often do you think an Ali is going to come along anyway?" The future, Baker suggests, usually doesn't follow the same script the scenarists write. "The networks," he adds, "have decades of experience, the best creative minds in the business and equipment that can't be matched. Do you really believe it's possible that we won't be playing a very prominent role in the future?"

Yes indeed, Tony, the media wheel is spinning and where it stops nobody knows. And the same uncertainty presently surrounds the FBI probe and the grand jury deliberations. Word at press time is that they're probably going to slap an indictment on Don King and other boxing operators for something or other, but no one is quite sure what

it will be. Not that there is a lack of possibilities.

The investigation has most boxing folk running very scared. On one hand, that means lots of rumors are flying around, few of which can be tracked down and confirmed. On the other hand, there is absolute silence. A normally talkative trainer told me, "We got a saying: When in doubt shut your mou'."

Although projecting various legal scenarios makes good copy, at this time it is simply not possible to anticipate reliably what the grand jury will do. It is against the law for any jury member or the prosecutor to reveal the vote before the defendant is arraigned in open court. If in fact there had been any leaks to the press, the entire case would be jeopardized. Nor is there any sure way of knowing who the real object of the investigation may be. Even an indictment of Don King and other boxing big shots would not of itself change things very much. So much of what's been going on has taken place in shady areas where the law is vague or nonexistent. There could be long trials, appeals and no final guarantee that the Government's case will be

strong enough. So newspaper sports-page titillation about the case is pure speculation. That's why the smart money is still hanging back.

In other words, reports of Don King's imminent demise are extremely premature. The fact that he has slipped into his dark coloration—"I know they're coming after me because I'm the black guy"—is merely a defensive reflex action, not proof that he's been nailed. That was his exact posture when the FBI gave a Baltimore grand jury information on King back in 1977. No indictment resulted.

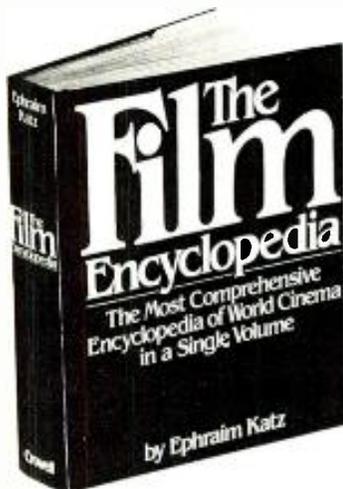
This time around, however, there is something different on the long list of questionable or illegal promotional practices. And that is the accounting of gate receipts from recent closed-circuit bouts. A manager of an arena that showed the Ali debacle in which an over-the-hill Ali tried to regain the heavy-weight championship from Larry Holmes told me, "No one checks my numbers. You know how many people are here? How many I say are here." Holmes's manager, Rich Giachetti, has said that "closed-circuit TV is a license to

steal." When they steal from you and me, Tony, it's one thing. When the IRS doesn't get theirs, we have the Feds stepping in with "the widest ranging investigation in the history of boxing."

It would be very healthy if this investigation really meant the cleansing of a dirty business; if the practices of King and Arum, the WBA and WBC, the boxing departments of the networks—in other words, the boxing business at every level—were brought out into the open. And there are even some optimistic souls around who believe it is about to happen. But don't bet on it quite yet, Tony. Remember, no one's ever gotten rich underestimating the trickeration of rogues.

*So, Tony, only time and the criminal justice system will tell what sorts of fights we'll be getting in the future, and how we'll be seeing them. It's a good bet we won't be meeting very often in smoky arenas or walking through misty rains to our cars. Only one thing is absolutely certain, Tony: Whatever boxing's future is, it won't belong to you, me or those guys who pound it out in the ring. ■*

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PANORAMA 87

## ANDY KAUFMAN

continued from page 65

Obviously, Kaufman derives great pleasure from using the media for his own oblique purposes, and, arguably, his most effective appearances have been of the Letterman variety: guerrilla raids on a slumbering collective consciousness. Yet the notion of a regular show—any regular show—is just as tantalizing to him.

Kaufmanites were treated recently to a very modest version, a preview as it were, of a program Andy Kaufman would be happy to throw himself into in an instant. The premiere (and possibly only) episode of "Uncle Andy's Fun House" was a six-and-a-half-minute segment independently produced for an ABC comedy pilot—broadcast but unsold—called *Buckshot*. A kiddie show for adults, "Fun House" drew upon Kaufman's extensive experience, while he was attending college, as an entertainer at children's parties. The show was taped in an exact replica of his parents' basement in Great Neck, N.Y. A lively peanut gallery of Kaufman's fans was treated to a puppet show, tricks by Lazz ("the only untrained dog on television"), and a hula lesson by Debra Jo Fondren, former *Playboy* Playmate of the Year.

"It was wonderful," he enthuses. "Imagine how great it would be if I had a half hour each week! What I was hoping was that *Buckshot* would be sold and 'Uncle Andy's Fun House' would be such a popular segment it would become its own half-hour show. But ABC's already vetoed that. They're so stupid! That would be the biggest show on TV! Can you imagine all these people in our generation who grew up with Winky Dink and all that, all of them buying the magic screen and magic crayons, the magic decoder ring; all of them calling their friends, gathering 'round the screen, wondering what surprises will they come up with *this* week? It would be like TV used to be, like it could be now! Debra Jo could be our Princess Summer-fall Winterspring, or maybe we'd have a different Playmate every week. We'd have more guests; we'd develop the characters of my parents—it would be great! A late-night program like that? *Great!* See? And that's just *one* kind of show I could have. But the networks—they're just not open-minded."

A few weeks later, Kaufman is discovered wearing a rather different identity on a movie set on the other side of the hill. On location out on the back lot at Univer-

sal Studios, he and costar Bernadette Peters are heavily made up as robots from a futuristic society for a feature comedy/love story called *Heart Beeps*, scheduled to be released this Christmas. Kaufman's face is now a thick distorted mask of his own features, a comical yet endearing visage.

A little clump of observers stands and watches as director Allan Arkush supervises the walk-through of a scene in which Kaufman and Peters, in their rigid



On the set with *Taxi* star Judd Hirsch.

robot clothes, make their way laboriously up a mountain trail toward a cave. This is Kaufman's first lead role in a movie, and Universal is talking seriously about letting him film his script for *The Tony Clifton Story*, having agreed already to Kaufman's most essential stipulation: that if the project goes forward, the title role, of course, be played by Clifton himself. One can only muse what grotesque havoc that surly boor could wreak with—and upon—a six-figure budget.

One of the observers, Estelle Endler, Kaufman's charming publicity agent, turns to the studio's unit publicist next to her and asks how things have been going.

"Fine," the woman says, then chuckles. "Something sort of funny happened the other week. We were in the middle of a very elaborate setup—it had this gorgeous sunset in it, very romantic—and the prop man wandered by, off to one side of the camera, with a big tray of candy, and Andy glimpsed him. 'What's that? What's that?' he says, and he walks right out of the scene after the prop man. Allan's calling after him, 'No, Andy! Andy! No!'"

A while later Kaufman relaxes in his dressing-room trailer with Endler, sec-

retary Linda and some other visitors. Face eerily expressionless behind the robot makeup, he is urged to recall other television projects he's conceived which seem unlikely to get network exposure.

"Well," he says, "there's Knuckles. Knuckles is my *prime* creation. That's one character they will not allow on nationwide TV. Latka is very innocent, right? Well compared to Knuckles, Latka is positively worldly. Knuckles is the complete *essence* of Innocence.

"A few years ago, ABC wanted me to do a project with them, so my partner Bob Zmuda and I presented some ideas, and one of them was a show called *Fingers and Knuckles*. The *Fingers and Knuckles* show was about two guys who meet each other and live together in New York. One of 'em is a street person, Fingers, who knows all about the city; the other one, Knuckles, he's very innocent; he's just gotten off the bus from the Midwest. And it's all about their escapades. When we pitched ABC the idea they loved it and everything, but when they read the script and saw the Knuckles character they said, 'Look, I mean, face it—this character can't make it from here to the *elevator*.' And we said, 'Yeah, that's *right*.' I mean neither could Lou Costello or Stan Laurel, *none* of those guys could make it to the elevator, you know what I mean? But they thought Knuckles was too innocent. They said, 'We thought when you said innocent you meant like Jon Voight in *Midnight Cowboy*.' And I guess they thought the worldly one would be like, I dunno, Ratso Rizzo I guess. And when they saw that Knuckles was Completely Innocent they said, 'Uh-uh, no way, we're not gonna let *this* guy go on television.'

"I remember this one guy actually said to me what I think is one of the classic lines ever by a network executive. He said, 'But this is like Laurel and Hardy or something. We don't want Laurel and Hardy; we want something *good* like Laverne and Shirley.'" Kaufman turns to Estelle and shakes his made-up head in exasperation at the memory. "I mean do you realize what that—? In a nutshell, that's. . . *Boy*."

Kaufman remembers something. "Incidentally," he says, "ABC *did* once offer me my own show—a spinoff of *Taxi* called *Latka*. I said no. I said, 'Only if you make it either *Latka Joins the Marines* or *Latka and the Talking Horse*.' But I was

just joking around. No, I would not want to do a spinoff with Latka."

A young bearded makeup man comes into the trailer to get Kaufman ready for the walk back to the set. Kaufman maneuvers into his robot clothes, stands for some quick facial touch-ups and heads outside. As he advances toward the new setup he's reminded by someone of an elaborate idea he once described involving the use of two television sets placed one on top of the other, tuned to different stations.

"Oh, yeah!" he remembers. "That was when we wanted to do the *Fingers and Knuckles* TV show! Zmuda and I had these two other characters called Tony and Bob, totally different personalities from Fingers and Knuckles, and what we wanted to do—it was gonna be so great! Let's say Channel 7 would have Fingers and Knuckles. OK! 'Member how Abbott and Costello used to come out in front of that curtain to begin their TV show? 'Hi, we're Abbott and Costello, know what we're gonna do today? Well! Today Mr. Fields is throwing us out of the apartment!' 'Oh, no! What're we gonna do?' That kinda stuff, and then they'd go to the apartment, and so on. OK! Well, so *Fingers and Knuckles* starts out the same way, 'It's the *Fingers and Knuckles* show!' And then Knuckles—and I won't do him, but he says—'Hello, folks! Stick around!' and so on, and in the meantime on, say, Channel 4—you got Tony and Bob in the *Tony and Bob* show! And they're saying, 'Yeah, I'm tellin' you, we got a great show today so don't watch those guys on 7; we got a better show than them!' And Fingers and Knuckles are saying, 'Hey, don't watch those guys on 4 no matter what they say; our show's gonna be much better!' And on Channel 4 they're going, 'Oh yeah? Oh yeah?'"

Standing still and stiff as a wardrobe man gives smoothing touches to his costume. Kaufman is alive with enthusiasm, but holding his mouth in only the tiniest suggestion of a laugh so as not to crack the makeup. The wardrobe man is breaking up, too, but he's also staring at Kaufman with this disbelieving, almost wary, sidelong glance.

Kaufman continues. "So like, Fingers and Knuckles are looking down below at the bottom set, shaking their fists: 'Hey listen, you guys, you can't say that!' And Tony and Bob are looking up at them: 'Oh yeah? Well, let me tell you something!' Know what I mean? And every

week it's like that; they have this running feud. That would be wonderful! Wouldn't it? But who's gonna let that happen?"

"Maybe it could be done as a special, though, a double-network special. Hey!" He turns to Estelle Endler. "That would be a great idea, as a matter of fact; not just Fingers and Knuckles and Tony and Bob, but you could do a whole lot of things using two different networks. Maybe two networks would let me do a

whole lot of things using two different networks. Maybe two networks would let me do a special."

Then, hearing what he's said, he pulls himself back to a self-deprecating reality.

"Maybe not, I don't know... not even one network will let me do a special."

The robot man arches his thick painted eyebrows a fraction of a millimeter, points one finger rigidly in the air, and booms: "But if they ever do—!"

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**508 • THE COLGATE COMEDY HOUR with Eddie Cantor (1952)**  
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**591 • THE BING CROSBY SHOW (1962)**  
BING with Bob Hope, the Smothers Brothers and an all-star cast! Plenty of songs, plus comedy and surprises (there's even an unintentional "blooper"—remember, this is from the days of "live" television).

**585 • THE HOWDY DOODY SHOW (1948; 1959)**  
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**636 • THE HOLLYWOOD PALACE "Farewell Show" (1970)**  
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**638 • LOST IS SPACE (1965)**  
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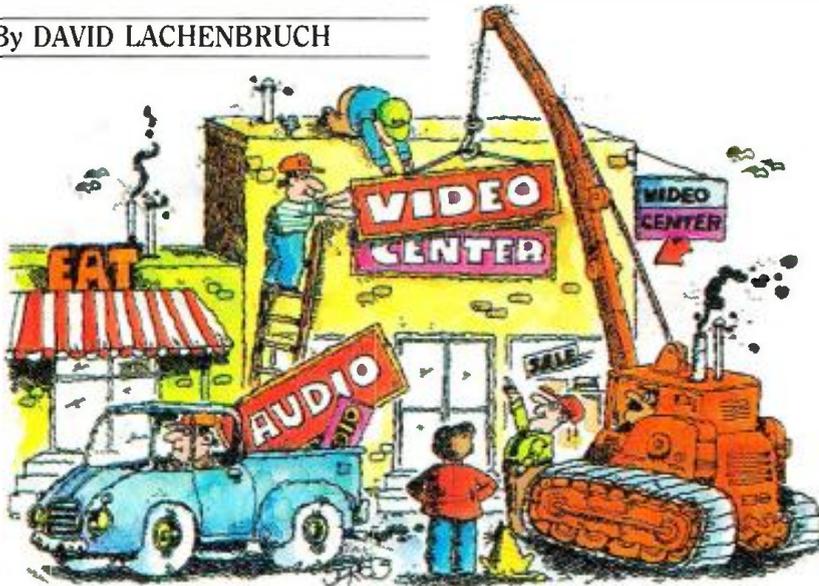
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# Audio Industry to Video Boom: "We Hear You"

By DAVID LACHENBRUCH



**Remember the hi-fi nut?** When most of us were talking about *M\*A\*S\*H* and *All in the Family*, he was enthusing over ohms, decibels and watts per channel. While we were ogling the tube, he was tweaking his tweeters. As far as he was concerned, TV was for morons. He was an audiophile. And a very large industry got very rich by devoting itself to serving his every esoteric need.

Well, those of us who stood staunchly by our Sonys are about to be rewarded. The quality of video sound may soon match that of video pictures, thanks, ironically enough, to that same audio industry—from which now issues romantic talk about “the wedding between audio and video.” You see, a funny thing happens to audiophiles on their way into middle age: They become videophiles.

Faced with the fact that the new generation coming of audio age has one-third fewer members than the baby-boom crop who made audio components a big business, the audio industry has lurched into a seemingly

bottomless depression. In fact, it hardly exists any longer. All over the country, audio dealers are becoming “audio/video specialists.”

“Video” is not to be confused with “television,” of course. Television is still for morons. Video is something brand-new, which means something the audiophile has just discovered. To be sure, it looks a lot like television, with accessories—*component* accessories.

“There is only one component market now, and it is the component home-entertainment business,” dealers at last spring’s Consumer Electronics Show were told by Bernie Mitchell, perhaps audio’s most astute statesman and president of Advent Corporation. “It’s easier to sell a \$5000 [video] hi-fi system in the 1980s than it was to sell a \$500 [audio] system in the ’70s.”

Judging by the seminars, exhibits and informal corridor conversations at this year’s CES, audio got the message. The emphasis at this traditionally audio-dominated affair was strictly video. To wit:

Advent, which early on introduced giant-screen color projection TV to the home, soon will add optical videodisc players and Beta videocassette recorders. . . . Pioneer is making and marketing an optical videodisc player and soon will offer projection TV sets, probably branching out later to conventional direct-view color sets. . . . Fisher, one of the grand old names of audio, plans to introduce, late this year, a color-TV console and a self-contained projection TV; next year, Fisher will move into component TV—er, video—with a modular system.

And what are the audio people bringing to this marriage of audio and video? It’s not, as they claim, the addition of “high fidelity to the video picture.” High-fidelity video images have been available for some time to anyone willing to put up the bucks for a really good TV set. No, it’s that ringing promise of quality video sound at last. For a shotgun wedding—arranged to save audio from a fate worse than harmonic distortion (namely, extinction)—that’s not a bad dowry.

## DISC-O FEVER

Brushing booths with the nouveau video at the recent Consumer Electronics Show were manufacturers of all three (incompatible) videodisc player formats. RCA, whose SelectaVision player hit the market with a huge splash this March, had the most impressive display: seven towers, each holding 12 CED (Capacitance Electronic Disc) players and 12 TV sets, all playing different programs.

The show also gave dealers a first look at three other brands of players designed to play RCA-type discs. Hitachi, Sanyo and Toshiba all mean to stay competitive with RCA’s suggested list price.

Magnavox demonstrated its optical LaserVision player, which has become available in a gradually increasing number of market areas.

The third disc system, VHD, was present in force, with multiscreen demonstrations by JVC, Panasonic and Quasar. Look for these three players (as well as a General Electric unit) late this year. ■

Panasonic

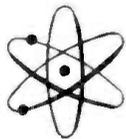
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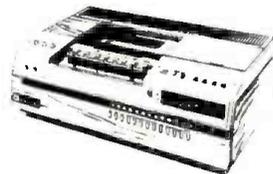
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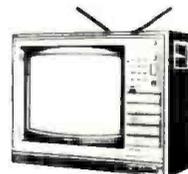
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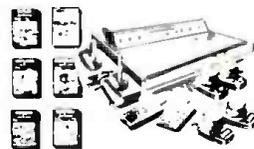
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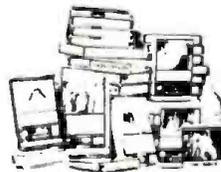
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## YESTERDAYS

**Grace Kelly becomes Princess Grace . . .  
Betty weds Steven on Peyton Place . . .  
Barbara Walters moves to ABC**

### 25 YEARS AGO: APRIL 1956

The 1955-56 season is over and the quiz show *The \$64,000 Question* finds itself on top of the ratings heap. Its success spawns *The \$64,000 Challenge*. . . . If lawyers can iron out the wrinkles in the contract, Fred MacMurray will appear in the lead role of a new detective series, *Perry Mason*. . . . Popeye's popularity is reaffirmed: 234 of the old salt's cartoons have just been sold to TV for a reported \$2.4 million. . . . On an episode of Ronald Reagan's *G.E. Theater* titled "That's the Man," Ray Milland stars as an honest, hard-working husband who is mistaken for a thief. Nancy Davis stands by as his wife. . . . ABC covers the baseball-season opener between the Phillies and the world champion Dodgers. . . . The social event of the season—the marriage of actress Grace Kelly to Prince Rainier III of Monaco—has the three networks scrambling for a scoop. NBC scores first with film footage of the civil ceremony on *Today*. . . . A divorce of sorts makes the headlines when Nanette



*Princess Grace and Prince Rainier.*

Fabray announces she will leave *The Sid Caesar Show*.

### 15 YEARS AGO: 1966

*Bonanza* tops the year-end ratings list. . . . In the baseball-season opener, the New York Mets take on the Cincinnati Reds. . . . *The National Income Tax Test*, the fourth in a series of viewer-participation tests telecast by CBS, zeroes in on taxpayers' most common mistakes and how to avoid them. . . . On *Peyton Place*, Betty Anderson ties the knot with Steven Cord. . . . Princess Grace of Monaco makes an appearance on ABC, introducing the fourth in a series of specials drama-

tizing the work of the United Nations. . . . ABC presents *The Academy Awards*, seen for the first time in color. Lee Marvin, nominated for his role in *Cat Ballou*, becomes the first TV series star to win the Oscar for Best Actor. . . . Rex Sparger, a former Congressional investigator, boasts that he rigged the TV ratings by bribing Nielsen families. When the A.C. Nielsen Co. files a \$1.5 million damage suit, Sparger threatens to do it again. . . . On *My Mother, the Car*, Dave (Jerry Van Dyke) fears for his mother's safety when car-strippers are reported in the area.

### 5 YEARS AGO: 1976

*All in the Family* is the number-one-rated show of the season. . . . Traditionally the third-ranking network, ABC is on an 11-week winning streak. Flexing its new-found muscle, the network signs news star Barbara Walters to anchor *The ABC Evening News with Harry Reasoner*, breaks NBC's 28-year exclusive hold on rights to national baseball coverage, and is the first on the broadcast block to announce its fall schedule. . . . The Yankees play the Brewers at Milwaukee. . . . Princess Grace visits *The Mike Douglas Show*, and Fred Rogers pays a neighborly visit to *Captain Kangaroo*. . . . White House press secretary Ron Nes- sen is the host of *Saturday Night Live*. Chevy Chase, as Gerald Ford, stages a mock press conference to make him feel at home.—Gail Harlow

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Robert Blake: Known for crying “wolf” on the set of *Baretta*.

Bud Yorkin’s well-known experiences in pushing controversial material onto CBS—*Maude*’s two-parter on abortion comes to mind most readily—is one example of a network bowing to proven success. “We told them we’d pay for [the episodes],” Yorkin says, “and if they didn’t want to put them on, they could get another company to produce the show.” Had *Maude* not been consistently at the top of the ratings, and had *Tandem*’s other shows not also been Nielsen winners, could Yorkin and Lear have pulled it off? “Not a chance,” says Yorkin.

Equally instructive is producer Gene Roddenberry’s long history of creative squabbling with network censorship. Chapter One took place nearly 30 years ago, when a scene in one of Roddenberry’s scripts for a Screen Gems production—an unsuccessful pilot—called for a street-corner news vendor to secure his papers from the wind with a tire iron. The network exploded. But newsstands all over the country do it that way, Roddenberry protested. The network did not care: What tire company will advertise on this show, he was asked, if you’re using tire irons? He was ordered to replace them with bricks. “The tire

iron,” Roddenberry recalls with a chuckle, “conjured up the image of a failed product.” Bricks it was.

This incident was nothing, says Roddenberry, compared with the troubles he had later with *Star Trek*. “When you try a risky show, when you beg for a chance to get that show on air, you considerably reduce your bargaining position, regardless of how successful you’ve been before.” Within the science-fiction format of *Star Trek*, Roddenberry was allowed to make an antiwar statement at a time when Vietnam protest was peaking. (“Had I been doing *Father Knows Best*, I probably wouldn’t have gotten away with it.”) But his dealings with NBC on other matters sound as if they could have been packaged and programmed for *Lost in Space*.

Chapter Two. The original plan called for a Starship Enterprise crew that was half male and half female. No way, said the network; it would look as if there were too much potential for fooling around. Roddenberry initially fought the point. Until, that is, the network objected to Mr. Spock’s features: Who is going to believe those ears? In order to keep Spock and his ears relatively intact, Rod-

denberry was forced to compromise on the male-female crew—two thirds to one third, which, Roddenberry likes to point out, doesn’t in any way negate the possibilities for intergalactic whoopee.

And still NBC was so opposed to Spock’s appearance that in the original prospectus circulated to potential advertisers, Spock’s aural marvels were actually airbrushed to look round.

“It’s not that network guys are bad guys,” Roddenberry contends. “They play golf and work for charities just like anyone else. But they happen to work for a system where the prime requirement is to sell a product. Actors and writers are, for the most part, interested in quality. There’s a basic schism. Success to one group doesn’t necessarily mean the same thing to the other. Like the Americans and the English, the networks and producers are separated by a common language.”

But let’s just say the language problems are overcome, however briefly. You’ve put together a show you’re proud of, fought the network to keep it intact, and the network has chosen to schedule it in a favorable time slot.

“If you win all these other battles,” says Jackie Cooper with a laugh, “the *worst* thing that can happen is you become a hit. Because now you have some no-name turned into a star overnight—and all the worries that go with him.”

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# Lights! Camera! Reggie!

By JOHN SCHULIAN

**August in Baltimore, 1980.** For reasons best known to the National Weather Service, the soggy, soggy phoo of summer has disappeared. Instead of the usual heat and humidity, there is only the pleasant warmth of the television cameras ABC has stationed in Memorial Stadium to capture the hometown Orioles and the New York Yankees clutching at each other's throats. Reggie Jackson, thumper of home runs, teller of tall tales and potentate of the Yankees, couldn't be happier.

In the fifth inning, he goes out of his way to show his gratitude. Baltimore's Doug DeCinces smashes a drive over his head in right field, and Jackson doesn't stop running until he has caught it to rob the hitter of a double and the Orioles of a run. The chase carries Sir Reginald full force into the fence in front of the Yankees' bullpen, and when he hits it, he does a surprisingly mortal thing: He collapses.

"My God!" gasps Scott McGregor, the Orioles' artful left-handed pitcher. "He's dead!"

"Don't kid yourself," manager Earl Weaver growls. "He's just playing it up for dramatics."

There is a school of thought, you see, that Jackson would have let himself be helped off the field a lot sooner if he hadn't realized the nation was turning its lonely eyes to him. There is another, even harsher body of opinion that he might not have even made the catch. "I don't want to accuse Reggie of not giving 100 percent," says an old foe, "but he always seems to rise above his own 100 percent when he's in front of a camera." Perhaps that makes Jackson the perfect hero for our most appealing and intimate sport.

Football players are hidden behind

face masks and stifled by coaches who won't let them unbuckle their chin straps. Basketball players are too big to identify with, golfers wear too much polyester, bowlers never really get out of their blue collars and tennis players stand for noblesse oblige.

Ah, but to play baseball is to be an actor in a drama that cuts across class lines and mesmerizes men and women alike with the *mano a mano* confrontation between pitcher and hitter. From this stare-down comes not only the big hit, the big strikeout or the big fielding play, but the television close-ups that make us think of the stars as people we know. Tell the truth now: When you see a slugger sulk after failing under pressure, don't you think you're seeing the inner man shining through?

The last best example the 1980 season gave us of the player as TV personality was Tug McGraw, the banty rooster who strutted out of the Philadelphia Phillies' bullpen in four World Series games. In almost 14 years as a major-leaguer, he had been something of a stand-up comedian, but that was usually in the dressing room, for quote-hungry newspaper reporters. It took the Series and a television audience approaching 100 million people to encourage him to unveil his gift for pantomime. Every time he pitched his way out of trouble against the muscular Kansas City Royals, he patted his heart with his hand, patted it with the same furious syncopation that was going on inside him. Great theater.

**More than a few** of his peers, however, refuse to acknowledge their awareness of television's presence. Perhaps it doesn't seem manly to genuflect to a medium that gives the world soap operas and newscasters, but macho concerns seldom taint life for Steve Stone of the Baltimore Orioles. Stone is a published poet, a restaurateur and the winner of the American League's 1980 Cy Young Award for pitching excellence. Yet he can be heard saying, loudly and clearly, "We're on TV too much to worry about it. You're never going to catch a big-leaguer going, 'Hi, Mom. Look at me'."

To be sure, Stone wasn't that gauche the first time he pitched on NBC's *Game-of-the-Week*. He couldn't afford to be after losing a game he should have won. "I guess the guy who beat me with a home run got interviewed," he said ruefully. Not that Stone wouldn't have his moments of televised glory, of course. Just two summers ago, in fact, he pitched a one-hitter on the tube and became a main course for autograph hounds. "The game was all they could talk about," he says. "I couldn't believe how many people watched it."

If his ratings keep going up, maybe Stone will quit pretending he doesn't care about them and admit that he has as much ham in him as the next big-league show-stopper. When the network camera's red light goes on, he does, too.

Hi, Mom. ■



# Have Fame (Sort of), Will Grovel

By HARRY STEIN

**Upon my arrival** at the local television station in Boston, I was informed that I was to be the sole guest on the show.

"Why?" I asked the associate producer.

"Why? Because you're the reigning expert in the field!"

The field in question was single unclehood. Several months earlier, I had written an article on the subject at the request of an alcoholic editor of a men's magazine. ("It's kind of like single fatherhood," he'd explained, "only different. It's gonna be *the* hot new topic.") I had spent an afternoon talking to a couple of puzzled uncles, and another hour struggling to make them seem interesting on paper. Reigning expertise in these United States ain't all it's cracked up to be.

Even though the show was only a minor-league version of *Donahue*, I was jittery. This was to be my very first TV appearance, and the audience was clearly hostile. I knew this because, 10 minutes prior to air time, I found myself in the midst of a gaggle of about 30 ladies imported for the occasion from a nearby senior-citizens' center.

"Helen," called out the audience member to my left, "you like?" She dangled an enormous bracelet an inch from my face.

"Oooh, Sylvia, what a snazzy thing!"

"You like it? My son gave it to me."

"It's very nice," I observed.

Sylvia turned and eyed me with disdain. "And who might you be?"

"Me? Uh . . . I'm the guest." I smiled. "I'm the uncle expert."

"And I suppose that gives you the right to interrupt a personal conversation?"

"You tell him, Sylvia!" chimed in Helen.

**And so, when I** assumed my seat on-stage beside the host, it was with more



than a little trepidation that I glanced at the audience. But once that red light on the camera flicked on, once the ladies could see me on the monitors, they were, all of them, pussycats. Suddenly they all were grinning at me like so many over-the-hill Moonies. Suddenly it was *Mr. Stein*.

"Mr. Stein," said Sylvia, rising from her seat toward the end of the show for what should have been a question, "I just want you to know how very grateful we are that you took the time to visit with us this morning." And I'll be damned if they all didn't start applauding. And five minutes later, when it was over, they surrounded me, begging, *begging* for my autograph.

"Oh, God," I exclaimed to my friend Murray a few days later, "I can't explain how it feels to be so loved. I need more."

"Tinsel," he said, "tinsel and baubles! What does it mean? What is its lasting value?"

I stared at him. "Mur, you wouldn't like my autograph by any chance, would you?"

"No."

"Oh, God, what's going to become of me?"

**With sudden, cruel** clarity, I understood what it meant to have the public's warmth and support—and then, abruptly, to lose it; suddenly I understood the tragedy of *Sunset Boulevard*, of *A Star Is Born*, of Tiny Tim. But I was not prepared to casually accept so gruesome a fate.

"Murray," I said, "call *The Tonight*

*Show*. Tell 'em you're my secretary."

He tossed the phone on my lap. "Tell 'em yourself."

"I don't need you!" I screeched. "I don't need anyone!"

I got the number and dialed. "Hello, *Tonight Show*, this is Harry Stein. Let me speak to the head talent coordinator."

"What," asked the secretary, "do you do?"

"I write magazine articles and do talk shows. Uncles mainly, but I'm flexible."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Stein, he's in conference right now. May I have him return your call?"

It went rapidly downhill from there. Merv wouldn't have me either, or Mike, or even Toni. Not even Toni! Within a month and a half I was reduced to sitting in the audience of *The Price Is Right* with a huge name tag affixed to my chest; not once, in eight appearances, was I summoned to come on down.

**Clearly, it was time** to write another article.

"What would you say," I queried the alcoholic editor, "to aunts?"

He harrumphed. "Idiot, that's a story for a *women's* magazine."

"All right, all right," I agreed quickly, "I see your editorial thrust." I paused an appropriately long moment. "How about *nephews*?"

"Stein," he said finally, "you're a bloody genius."

And so, my friends, there is a happy end to this tale. Check your local listings for details. ■



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