

Truth is steamier than fiction in new HBO documentaries

'America Undercover,' monthly series, will examine subjects of 'primal interest' such as murder, child abuse and homosexuality

HBO is introducing this month a new series of monthly one-hour documentary programs which will be presented under the umbrella title, *America Undercover*. The first program, which explores mass murderers (Edward Kemper, Theodore Bundy and others) and their victims is entitled "Murder: No Apparent Motive" and debuts April 24.

HBO aired several documentaries over the past year (including one called "Women Who Kill," produced by actress Lee Grant) and decided the programs could be better promoted to viewers if they were packaged in an ongoing series.

Bridget Potter, HBO senior vice president, original programming, stressed that *America Undercover* is not an attempt by the cable network to get into the news business. "We are not trying to be a news organization here," she said. And while HBO has neither the interest nor the resources to become a news organization, Potter says "I think there's a kind of storytelling to be done in the nonfiction area, where the networks are cut-

ting back quite a bit."

The HBO documentaries will focus on "subjects we know there is a kind of a primal interest in," Potter said, such as murder, child abuse, homosexuality and emergency room medical treatment, all of which will be dealt with in upcoming programs. While the program topics may be sensational on their face, Potter insists they will not be handled in a sensationalized manner.

The first *America Undercover* program lives up to that promise. "Murder: No Apparent Motive" was produced by Imre Horvath, who was a film editor and later a producer for CBS's *60 Minutes* for 11 years. (He won an Emmy for a segment he produced during his last year with the show, 1979, which focused on a family with an autistic child.)

This murder documentary, from a standards and practices viewpoint, contains nothing that would be unacceptable on broadcast television, but is still explicit in its treatment of the crimes. Horvath conducts an interview at Vacaville State Penitentiary in California with convicted murderer Edward Kemper, who calmly and candidly analyzes his series of brutal killings, which involved stabbings, shootings and decapita-

tions, the last victim being his mother. The program also features interviews with investigators, psychologists and people close to some of the victims.

"Essentially, there were no advance guidelines," said Horvath. "We did what was effective and necessary to get the point across." Potter added that the only standards applied to the series are those of "good taste and judgment." She said, however, that "we can and will" be more graphic in some of the programs than might be acceptable on network TV if the circumstances of the program call for it.

All the documentaries are being produced by outside production companies. Potter declined to reveal the budget that's been allocated to *America Undercover*, but Horvath said the cost of producing "Murder: No Apparent Motive" was "comparable" to what it would cost to produce a one-hour documentary on network television.

Potter said HBO's commitment to the documentary series is "open ended" and that programs have been lined up through 1984.

"We've been doing nonfiction programming since we started producing original programming," said Potter. "*America Undercover* is a maturing of that effort." □

Five nights give CBS the week

CBS recaptured the front position in prime time ratings for the week ended March 25 after an upset by ABC the week before, marking CBS's 17th win in the 26-week-old season. According to Nielsen's National Television Index, CBS took a lead of two rating points over second place ABC to win an average of 17.7% of all television households and a 29% share of all television sets in use. ABC recorded a 15.7 rating and 25 share and NBC had a 14.4/23. The combined three-network share of 77 is 1% less than the same week one year ago.

In the season-to-date averages, CBS maintained a lead of eight-

tenths of a rating point with an 18.1/28 compared to ABC's 17.3/27 and NBC's 15/24.

CBS had eight of the top 10 programs while ABC and NBC had one each with, respectively, *Dynasty* and *A-Team*. The premiere of CBS's new *Kate and Allie* was the fourth-ranked program of the week with an average 23.1/34, but *60 Minutes* fell to 10th place—its lowest position this season—with a 21.8/36.

CBS won five nights—Monday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. ABC won Wednesday and NBC won Tuesday.

Rank	Show	Network	Rating/Share	Rank	Show	Network	Rating/Share	Rank	Show	Network	Rating/Share
1.	Dallas	CBS	26.0/41	24.	Mike Hammer	CBS	17.3/32	49.	Rich And Famous	ABC	14.5/23
2.	Dynasty	ABC	25.1/39	25.	Trapper John, M.D.	CBS	17.3/30	50.	Blue Thunder	ABC	14.2/23
3.	Simon & Simon	CBS	23.7/36	26.	Facts of Life	NBC	17.3/27	51.	Fantasy Island	ABC	14.0/26
4.	Kate & Allie	CBS	23.1/34	27.	Time Bomb	ABC	17.1/28	52.	Suzanne Pleshette Show	CBS	14.0/22
5.	Falcon Crest	CBS	23.0/39	28.	Webster	ABC	17.0/27	53.	Mama's Family	NBC	13.9/23
6.	Knot's Landing	CBS	22.4/37	29.	Real People	NBC	16.8/26	54.	Domestic Life	NBC	13.2/20
7.	Newhart	CBS	22.4/34	30.	a.k.a. Pablo	ABC	16.5/24	55.	Hart To Hart	ABC	13.1/23
8.	A-Team	NBC	22.3/33	31.	20/20	ABC	16.4/27	56.	One Day At A Time	CBS	13.0/20
9.	Cagney & Lacey	CBS	21.8/37	32.	Shaping Up	ABC	16.4/25	57.	Back Roads	CBS	12.9/21
10.	60 Minutes	CBS	21.8/36	33.	Remington Steele	NBC	16.2/28	58.	Ripley's Believe It or Not	ABC	12.8/21
11.	Fall Guy	ABC	20.8/32	34.	Johnny Carson Special	NBC	15.8/27	59.	Lottery	ABC	12.8/20
12.	TV's Bloopers, Practical Jokes	NBC	20.8/31	35.	Cheers	NBC	15.8/24	60.	Dukes Of Hazzard (Sat.)	CBS	15.6/26
13.	Hotel	ABC	19.9/34	36.	Night Court	NBC	15.8/24	61.	Automan	ABC	12.6/19
14.	Hardcastle & McCormick	ABC	19.7/30	37.	People Are Funny*	NBC	15.7/26	62.	Bugs Bunny Special	CBS	12.4/18
15.	Magnum, P.I.	CBS	19.6/31	38.	Dukes Of Hazzard	CBS	15.6/26	63.	Mister Roberts	NBC	12.1/20
16.	Three's Company	ABC	19.3/29	39.	Silver Spoons	NBC	15.6/26	64.	Hill Street Blues	NBC	11.7/19
17.	Alice	CBS	18.9/29	40.	Love Boat	ABC	15.5/26	65.	Buffalo Bill	NBC	11.7/18
18.	Gimme A Break	NBC	18.4/30	41.	Matt Houston	ABC	15.5/26	66.	Mama Malone	CBS	11.5/18
19.	Jeffersons	CBS	18.3/28	42.	Airwolf	CBS	15.4/26	67.	Master	NBC	11.4/19
20.	Scarecrow & Mrs. King	CBS	10.3/27	43.	Diffrent Strokes	NBC	15.2/26	68.	Yellow Rose	NBC	10.6/20
21.	Riptide	NBC	17.6/27	44.	Benson	ABC	15.2/25	69.	Two Marriages	ABC	9.0/14
22.	Facts of Life	NBC	17.3/27	45.	T.J. Hooker	ABC	15.1/26	70.	We Got It Made	NBC	8.2/13
21.	Matt Houston	ABC	17.6/31	46.	Knight Rider	NBC	15.1/23	71.	New Show	NBC	7.0/12
22.	Family Ties	NBC	17.5/27	47.	Getting Physical	CBS	14.9/24	72.	First Camera	NBC	6.4/11
23.	Poulups, Bleeps & Blunders	ABC	17.4/26	48.	Alien	ABC	14.8/25				

*indicates premiere episode