



TELECASTINGS



Prime time prediction

The way William Esty Co. sees it, the burning question about the upcoming prime time TV season is "[whether] the persistent network share erosion will finally stop, or at least slow down.

"In our opinion," the agency says, "this result is as important as, if not more so, which network delivers the most households.

"Even so," Esty continues, "we are willing to go out on a limb and predict that NBC and CBS in 1985-86 will run neck and neck for the household rating title, with NBC once again dominating in the key demographic categories of adults 18-49 and 25-54."

Esty offered its views in a network-by-network examination of 1985-86 prime time plans.

It finds some encouragement in an apparent rebirth of anthology programing. "The programs of this genre which will appear in 1985-86 are generally quite good, at least in pilot form," the report says. It cites *Twilight Zone* and the *George Burns Comedy Show* on CBS and *Steven Spielberg's Amazing Stories* and *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* on NBC.

It also feels that at all three networks there is a "focus on real-life situations rather than an emphasis on escapist action/adventure plots which have become somewhat worn over the last two years.

"To be sure," Esty concedes, "NBC's *The A Team* remains quite popular. But several programs of that type will be replaced next season by shows like *Mr. Sunshine* on ABC [about a recently divorced professor who has gone blind and tries to retain his independence] and *227* on NBC [about a gossipy, wisecracking woman who wryly observes the comings and goings of her apartment-house neighbors]."

Esty also sees a recognition of cable's ability to reach small but highly targeted audiences in decisions by all three networks to create some new shows that "are aimed not at traditional, broad audiences, but rather at specific slices of the viewing public."

Esty offers these for-instances:

"*Hometown*, from CBS, is based on the successful theatrical movie, 'The Big Chill,' and is designed to reach those adults who were in college during the 1960's. *Golden Girls*, NBC's new situation comedy about four women over 50 living together in Miami, is the only show in recent memory to be exclusively about, and appeal to, senior citizens. At the other end of the age spectrum, NBC has a program about a group of young people who solve government cases by using super powers. It is called *Misfits of Science* and should attract a great deal of interest from children."

Esty notes that all three networks are scheduling about 40 hours of mini-series for 1985-86, despite a softening in mini-series ratings during the past year. The agency says it anticipates generally "moderate" ratings for them, plus "a sharp reduction in this type of programing in the year following."

In the movies department, Esty sees some "important theatrical titles" coming up, such as "The Right Stuff" on ABC, "Sophie's Choice" on CBS and "An Officer and a Gentleman" and "Flashdance" on NBC. "These," the agency says, "should work fairly well.

"But more important in terms of stemming the loss of viewer interest in network TV," Esty continues, "are the made-for-TV movies which will appear for the first time on the networks in 1985-86"—films that "are being made by a variety of production companies, all under the direction of the three network movie departments, which are the largest film companies in the world." Although ratings for made-fors vary widely, Esty said, they tend to "do particularly well against the adult 18-49 demographic category, making them attractive vehicles for many advertisers."

The agency finds it "most interesting" that CBS will have Saturday-evening movies next season. Saturday used to be a good movie night, Esty says, but videocassette recorders have taken a toll. "CBS is taking a real gamble pitting their made-for-TV fare

against the new power of home cassette viewing," Esty says. "We are not sure this strategy will work, but we admire the network's attempt to fight fire with fire. Without such efforts, there is little doubt that the alternative viewing media would continue to severely erode network audiences on Friday and Saturday nights."

Summer fare

CBS-TV has set debut dates for its limited-run original summer programing and will hold back *One Hogan Place*, the half-hour situation comedy previously announced as an August premiere for midseason.

In the schedule announced last week, *The CBS Tuesday Night Movies* will move back from 9-11 p.m. to 8-10 p.m. NYT beginning Tuesday, Aug. 13. *West 57th*, the news magazine from CBS News, will air at 10-11 p.m. for six weeks beginning Aug. 13. *I Had Three Wives*, a comedy-adventure about a roguish detective, begins a six-week run at 8-9 p.m. NYT on Wednesday beginning Aug. 7. *Hometown*, a one-hour comedy-drama, airs Thursdays at 10-11 p.m. NYT for five weeks starting Aug. 22, switching to its regular new-season time period, Tuesdays at 8-9 p.m., on Sept. 24.

CBS has also ordered episodes of a new series starring Mary Tyler Moore from MTM Enterprises for the 1984-85 season. Details regarding the series were to be announced by MTM late last week.

Vietnam revisited

A videocassette series, *The Vietnam War With Walter Cronkite*, is being developed as a cooperative venture by CBS Inc. units: CBS News, CBS Productions and Columbia House. Up to 15 one-hour cassettes will be produced, based on CBS News's coverage of the Vietnam conflict over more than 12 years. The first four programs are nearing completion, for exclusive distribution through the Columbia House division of CBS Records. A similar series of 14 90-minute cassettes is being offered by the unit on World War II. The Vietnam material is narrated by Cronkite and produced by Russ Bensley, a co-producer of *The CBS News with Walter Cronkite* from 1964 to 1971 and the supervisor of that broadcast's Vietnam field reports. Bensley also produced several CBS News special reports on the Southeast Asian conflict.

What's new

ProServ Television is offering *Ireland and the Irish*, a one-hour, made-for-television special to air in conjunction with St. Patrick's Day, March 17, 1986. The program, produced in association with Anheuser-Busch, will highlight "the romance, poetry, beauty, lit-

Best of the worst. Consumer groups, including the Washington-based Center for Science in the Public Interest, Action for Children's Television and the Council on Alcohol Policy, presented the first Harlan Page Hubbard Memorial Awards in Washington for the "worst in American advertising" and to protest what it called the "failure of the Federal Trade Commission and other federal regulatory agencies to police unfair and deceptive advertising claims."

Said CSPI legal director, Bruce Silverglade: "While ad agencies deserve recognition for the creative genius that enlivens ads, they should not escape responsibility for the trickery and deceit that pervade current advertising."

The dubious distinction is named after Hubbard, "the first person to advertise deceptively on a national basis," according to CSPI. In the 1890's, Hubbard promoted Lydia Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, "a quack cure" advertised as a remedy for kidney disease and weaknesses of the so-called "generative organs of either sex," CSPI said.

Among broadcast advertisers receiving the award were Skoal chewing tobacco, Volvo and the Arrow Toy Co.