

Avco's Credo: Produce Shows Live for TV

By Bill Sachs

Avco Broadcasting Corp.'s WLW-TV, which this year celebrates its 50th Anniversary, maintains a loyalty for live programming. With Avco, WLW-TV and its affiliate stations, live programming has long ceased to be an experiment. As Avco president John T. Murphy might say, it's a tradition—and a highly successful adventure revenue-wise.

While other of the nation's leading TV centers have enjoyed a fair measure of success with live programming, Avco and its Cincinnati based predecessor, the Crosley Broadcasting Co., has remained with it the longest. In most of the other cases it has been an on-and-off adventure over the years.

Avco currently beams four corporate shows over WLW-TV and its affiliates—WLW-I, Indianapolis; WOAI, San Antonio; WLW-D, Dayton, Ohio, and WLW-C, Columbus, Ohio. The shows are "50-50 Club," hosted by the versatile Bob Braun; "The Paul Dixon Show," piloted by Paul Dixon, a name in radio and television in the Cincinnati area for many years; "Midwestern Hayride," headed by Kenny Price, and "The Phil Donahue Show," with Phil as the standard bearer and generally regarded as Avco's prime asset among its live shows. It is presently syndicated in nearly 40 cities, including many of the nation's top markets. Three of the shows are carried on the four-city hook-up. "Hayride" also carries in addition a fifth city—San Antonio.

Of the four shows mentioned, none is alike in presentation or format. Variety is the key in Avco's live-programming success. All are shot before an audience and all depend greatly upon audience participation. "50-50 Club," simulcast for 90 minutes at noon six days a week, geared to the hausfrau, with music, chatter and interviews with top names from all fields. The audience plays an important role in the show's success, with members frequently invited to handle the commercials.

The Dixon show, telecast an hour and a half each morning, is a rocking, zany laugh show, with

Paul exchanging ad lib, and frequently corny, banter with the feds out front. As the name implies, "Midwestern Hayride," is a country and western opus, with a top country name as guest each week.

"The Phil Donahue Show" is a well-produced, meaningful talk opus that runs the gamut of topics from homosexuality to music, from politics to prejudice—with no holds barred.

"Hayride" is spotted for 60 minutes Saturday nights only. Only the hour-long Donahue show originates via WLW-D, Dayton, five days a week.

"50-50 Club" started on radio Feb. 18, 1946, when Ruth Lyons made the switch to WLW from WKRC, Cincinnati. The show went TV Sept. 19, 1949, and since has been aired simulcast via WLW-TV and its affiliate stations. It is said to be the only program in the nation to carry that distinction.

When Miss Lyons was forced by ill health to retire in January of 1967, Braun, who had been a member of the cast, took over the helm and has carried on successfully ever since.

During her tenure at WLW, Miss Lyons became one of the most distinguished radio and TV personalities in America. At the time she was credited with chalking up more sponsor revenue than any other TV personality in the country next to Arthur Godfrey.

The Paul Dixon segment started on WLW and affiliate stations April 24, 1955.

Produced by Dick Murgatroyd, "50-50 Club" backs up Bob Braun with regulars Marian Spelman, the Cliff Lash Orchestra and the Kiddie Korps of singers Gwen Conley, Randy Weidner, Rob Reider and Dave McCoy.

TRAV Builds Pubservice

With an annual radio budget of \$80,000, the Presbyterian Church of the U.S. Television-Radio Audio-Visual Agency (TRAV) has been turning out three top public service programs.

With four other denominations,



Phil Donahue talks with Ohio State Penitentiary warden during telecast of his show from that facility.

"The Paul Dixon Show," produced by Gordy Waltz, is the only Avco Show that doesn't spotlight daily guests. But Paul covers that by presenting frequent special features such as Baby Day, when every member of the audience is required to bring an infant; Brides' Day, for girls about to marry; Tall Girls Day, for feds over 5 feet, 10; Chicken Wedding, marriage of two rubber chickens. These and similar zany events in the past have netted heavy press coverage and program interest. Dixon's sidekicks on the show are Bonnie Lou, Colleen Sharp and the Bruce Brownfield Orchestra.

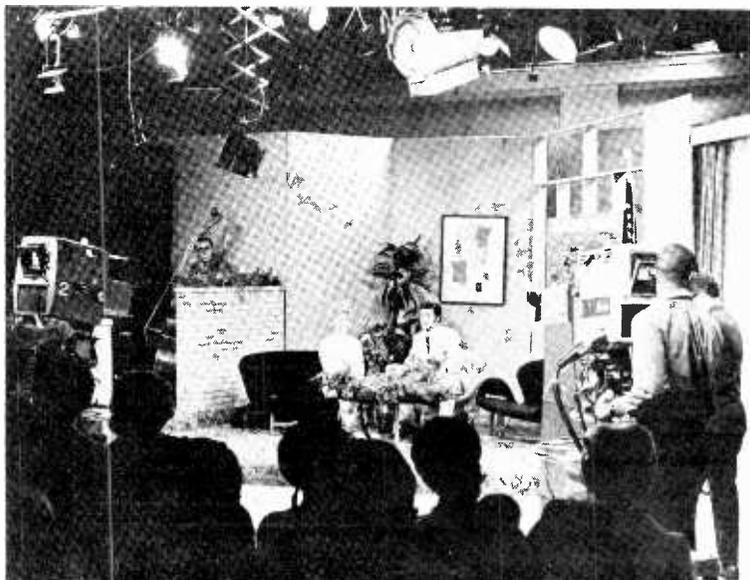
Dick Mincer is producer of "The Phil Donahue Show," which attracts a predominately female audience. Donahue's guests are of unusual interest and quality.

the Methodists, Lutherans and Episcopalians, TRAV produces segments of "The Protestant Hour," a weekly 30-minute show of sermons and music carried on 560 stations. The show is 27 years old and generates from 3,000 to 5,000 letters weekly.

"Be Still and Know" is a two and one-half minute daily sermon carried on 1,450 U.S. stations and several hundred more overseas. Fourteen days of programs are shipped on an LP. In a recent survey, 600 stations replied to TRAV and only 32 suggested any changes in the sermonette format.

TRAV's newest show, going into its 118th week and now reaching some 520 stations, is "What's It All About?" Host Bill Huie is both a minister and a widely experienced professional disk jockey. He has been able to get rock stars on the level of John Lennon and B.J. Thomas to be interviewed on his weekly five five-minute spots.

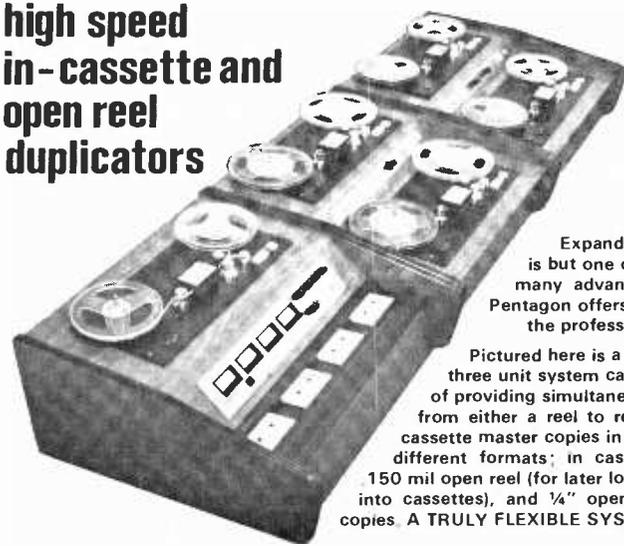
TRAV has no regular TV series, but regularly produces brief spots and sign-offs. Their three newest spots portray incidents in the life of Jesus actually filmed on location in Israel.



Bob Braun, host of the "50-50 Club" and regular Marian Spelman with friends for that day, their studio audience.

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