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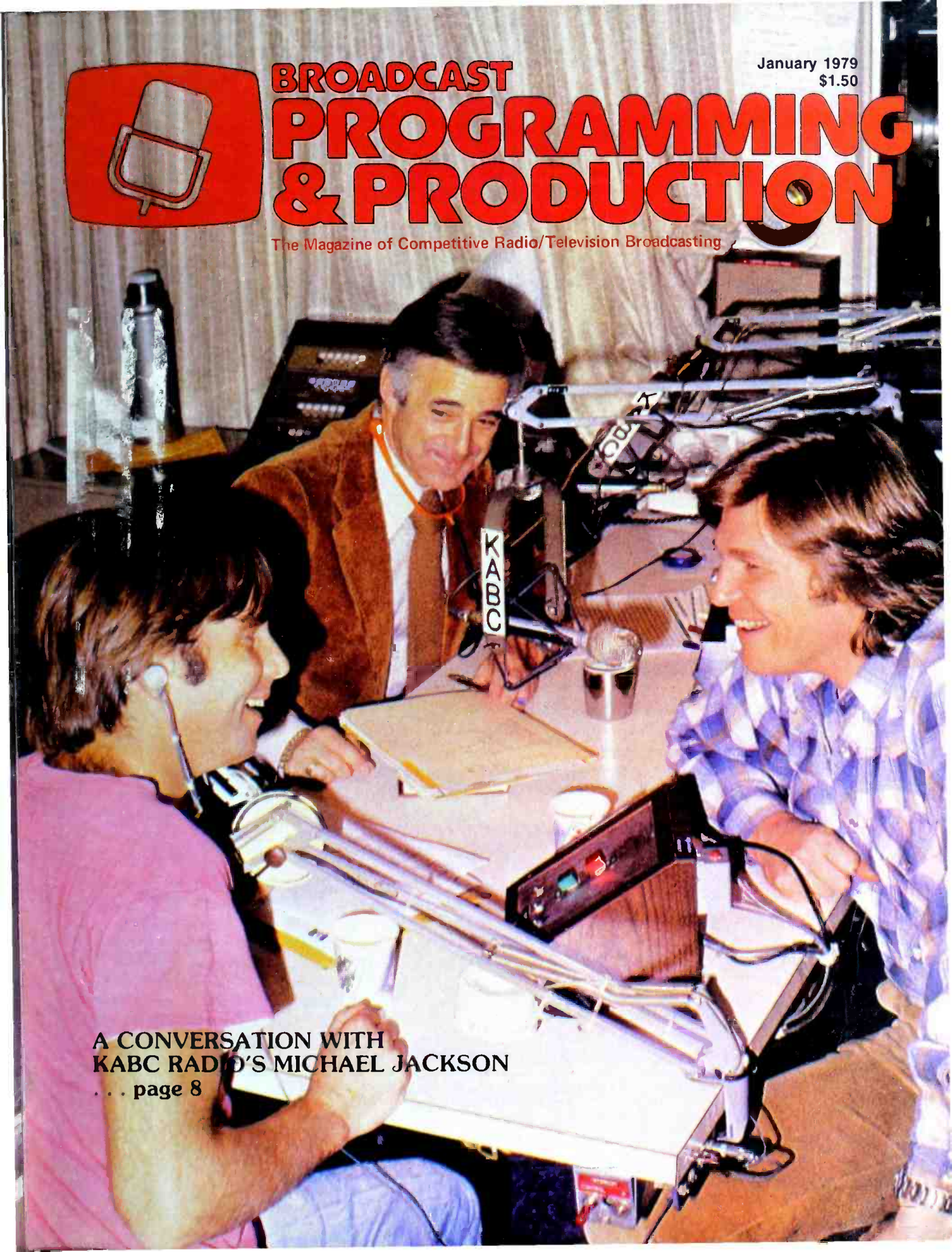

A CONVERSATION WITH KABC RADIO'S MICHAEL JACKSON

. . . page 8

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The Cover:
KABC's Michael Jackson talks with actors Beau Bridges (left) and Jeff Bridges. Photo by Bella Lagmay-Singh.

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Letters

from: **Karl D. Lahm**
Assistant Chief Engineer
KPOL/KZLA
Los Angeles, CA

Donn Werrbach's AM stereo article is absolutely the best technically-oriented piece ever to occupy *BP&P's* pages. It is a very pleasant change from the uninformed and uneducated norm exemplified by recent articles by John Price and Peter Butt. I certainly hope *BP&P* features more articles of this caliber in the future and less spouting the rumors and superstitions of the pop-tech "cowboys" and audio equipment peddlers.

I would like to clarify several minor errors in Donn's otherwise excellent article. First, an obvious "typo" was made in the "Quick Comparison" chart. As explained elsewhere in the text, FM exhibits signal shadows but AM largely doesn't.

Second, the FM pre-emphasis curve is defined as a 6 dB/octave rise above a corner frequency of 2120 Hz, not 500 Hz; which means a rise of 17.1 dB at 15 kHz, not 18 dB. While this is being a bit picky, there are certain standards in engineering terminology. In an era of pseudo-engineers run amuck, one must be carefully precise.

A mostly ignored area of concern in antenna engineering is the *transmission function* of the antenna system. This is simply the relationship between radiated signal and transmitter output. A good load will improve performance somewhat, but the system transmission function may still need quite a bit of improvement. Unfortunately, most consulting engineers aren't *currently* very experienced in this area; which is not to say that they don't have the ability to become good at it as more research becomes available. In considering such functions as transmitter load or antenna system transmission, attention must be paid to both amplitude (level) and phase (time) response. The latter, even today, receives pitifully small attention by far too many antenna system designers.

Phase response will become even more critical if one of the more non-linear AM stereo systems is accepted by the FCC. It is probably too much to expect anything approaching decent AM stereo service in the nulls of a directional antenna system. The complexity of the transmission function due to the extent and quirks of a conventional phasing system prevent its easy optimization for within-null performance. The use of individual transmitters at each tower (a possibility with current technology) might well allow phase optimization throughout a larger portion of the station's service area.

AM stereo offers a great opportunity to advance the state-of-the-art in broadcast electronic systems. A careful and thorough analysis of the engineering considerations involved throughout the station system, as Donn Werrbach's acticle implies, is the only way this will occur. The time is long overdue for station engineers to apply their educational backgrounds better and abandon the wait for "genius

BIG BROTHER: "DO AS I SAY, NOT AS I DO"

In the May/June issue of *BP&P*, this column predicted that the FCC would re-open the PSA inquiry and implied that the spirit of rivalry and competition between newly appointed staffs at the FCC and FTC would lead to a new wave of regulatory proposals.

Not to be outdone by any "columnist," the FCC moved quickly and not only re-opened the PSA inquiry, but also re-activated its Children's Television Programming Docket (19142). Specifically, the FCC is seeking comments on a variety of alternative policies including reduction of commercials on children's programs, rules requiring separation of program matter from commercial material by the "clustering" of commercials, and a re-definition of children's programming to take into account the percentages of children in the viewing audience of a program. In what appeared to be a "stacked deck" request, the Commission asked for any research or information which would show that a *reduction* in children's television commercials would be *beneficial* to children.

Broadcasters and advertisers should not take this "inquiry" lightly! As is clearly evident from past regulatory actions, what starts out as "only a Notice of Inquiry," often results in a Notice of Proposed *Rulemaking*. Not satisfied with the Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit's affirming the Commission in its 1974 Children's Report after an attack by Action for Children's Television (ACT), the Commission proceeded to issue its new Inquiry, and at the same time indicate that its own staff, as well as consultants, would launch a concurrent review of the various issues in Children's television programming and advertising policies.

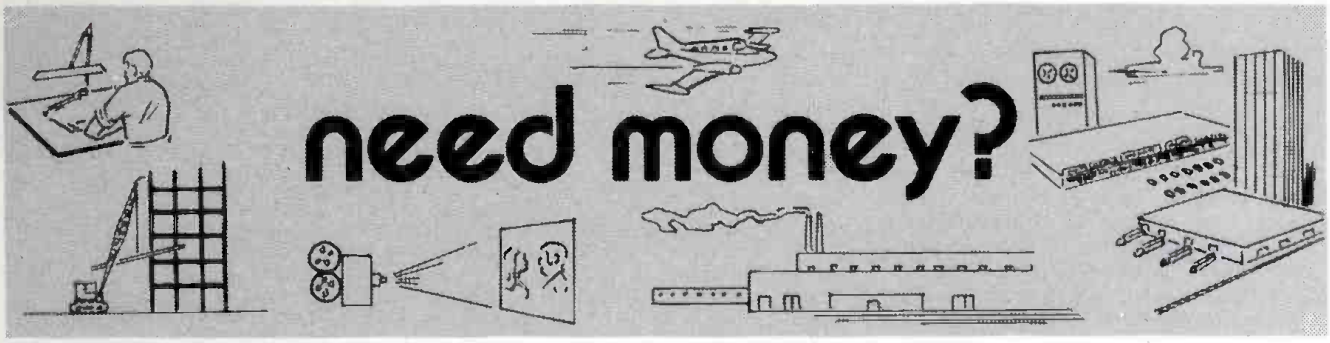
While the FCC was busy making paperwork for the industry and the public interest groups over a matter that was adequately resolved in 1974, President Carter was telling regulatory agency heads to do all that they could in their regulatory policies to curb inflation. In a recent meeting, the President told top "feds" that the national policy of holding the line against inflation also applied to them and urged them to keep it in mind in their regulatory policies. FCC Chairman Charles Ferris was so impressed with the President's argument that he went back to the Commission and sent a memo to his Broadcast Bureau Chief inquiring as to the Commission's authority in the area of "spiraling" broadcast advertising rates.

Who's Listening Though?

Meanwhile, down-yonder in the bowels of the Commission, the Procurement Division was busy preparing a contract bid for independent research to look into the problems of separation of program and commercial matter by clustering and other devices. The project was estimated to take "one man-year of work". It is ironic that the independent contractor will be researching and gathering the exact same data that is being requested by the Commission in its Notice of Inquiry on Children's Advertising and Programming Policies. In addition, the Notice of Inquiry indicates that the Commission staff would be doing its own review and research on this and other matters related to children's television advertising — while at the same time the industry and the public will have spent vast sums of money responding to the Commission's requests for information and data in those same areas.

Even more interesting is the fact that the FCC's own Network Inquiry staff is concurrently reviewing commercial practices in networking which certainly involves some of the very same economic issues involved in its Children's Inquiry, to wit, the economic impact of a reduction in children's television commercials on licensees, advertisers, advertising agencies, etc. Realizing that any study of network broadcasting would be incomplete without a thorough understanding of the key component of our commercial broadcasting system — advertising — the Commission issued a Further Notice of Inquiry in October seeking more information,

continued on page 33



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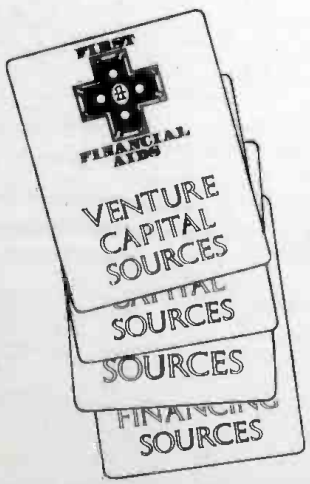

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manufacturers to so generously provide such wonderful products," as well as abandoning the pseudo-engineering techniques and buzzwords of the audio and RF "cowboys."

Finally, the time has come for broadcasters to make a concerted effort to get receiver manufacturers to produce AM receiver sections compatible with the quality of other sections of home and auto "hi-fi" equipment.

from: **JoAnn Burkhart**
Public Relations Manager
IGM/NTI
Bellingham, WA

I have always enjoyed the articles contained in your fine magazine, including the recent one concerning live assist. The only point distressing to me about the material is that the Marc VII, the only product specifically designed as a manual assist remote control for DJ's (to the best of my knowledge) was not even mentioned anywhere in the equipment round-up. The unit programs or schedules up to 18 events ahead, which may be started one at a time or several flagged to run consecutively, and controls seven audio sources.

Those who use it now for such formats as were described in the article find it a marvelously versatile planning and scheduling tool, enabling them to leave the mike long enough to go "down the hall" or check the newswire. . . . Well, one can never manage to cover all the bases, I'm sure. . . . Then there's the IGM cartridge machines, but doesn't everyone know about them?

from: **Robert L. Hill**
General Manager
WHRL Radio
Rensselaer, NY

I read the article on stereo AM in the May/June issue and was somewhat surprised at the claimed results expected from this innovative method of broadcasting. The article was filled with innuendo and some of it could be believed and some of it not told. Like sure FM has problems behind hills, but conversely AM has problems under bridges and near power lines and etc., etc. You quote the nice, almost believable stuff you want programming people to get excited about. Remember, though, there are others that sometimes pick up your magazine and read it also.

from: **Barry Hayes**
Broadcast Technical Consultant, AM & FM
Durham, NC

The coming of AM stereo has struck fear into the hearts of FM stereo loyalists, and some are now grabbing at straws. Broadcast Technical Consultant John M. Higdon has really asked for it in his well-written letter knocking the potential of AM stereo *(BP&P, September 1978)*. If he wants candor among the trade press I suspect he will get plenty of it now, so let me begin.

Audio Response — For all practical purposes the upper modulating frequency limit is the same for both AM and FM. Either must be attenuated severely above 15 kHz, but for different reasons, and the same cut-off techniques employed in FM stereo generators will work just as well to achieve this cut-off in AM. But so what? Please show me what you are listening to above 15 kHz — a stereo pilot, maybe, or tape hiss! Many FM broadcasters actually roll down the highs above 8 to 10 kHz in order to make a louder overall signal fit under the 75 microsecond pre-emphasis curve and to tame some of those grating FM peak limiters that clip highs or drive them up-and-down, up-and-down. Not so with AM where we can transmit a truly

station meeting minutes

by

Howard W. Coleman

Do We Or Don't We?

The question of ratings, relative standing in the market, more audience and more sales, was always before the Station WAAB management. With a solid position and good profit situation in a medium-sized, mostly-urban market, the station was not in danger. But it had to be alert, as manager Roy Fouts wrote in a memo to the staff: "To paraphrase that old-time baseball pitcher Satchel Paige, 'Keep runnin' and don't ever look back — some sonofagun might be gainin' on you!'"

In the same memo Fouts called for new ideas and directions to be shared at the next staff meeting.

Promotion manager Harry Burkey was bursting with a proposal, and placed it before Fouts and the other department managers with great enthusiasm. "For the next rating period we put on a series of daily spots, pointing out to listeners that this is a sweep month. We say to rating service diary keepers that they have a serious responsibility, that the survey is tremendously important to programmers and to advertisers, and we hope that they will be very conscientious in keeping the diary records.

"Of course, we wouldn't mention our station — this is really for the good of the industry and the market. But it wouldn't hurt to play the new call-letter jingle after each spot."

"No way," sales manager B. J. Blodgett said. "I'd like better ratings to sell with, but a stunt like that invites complaints to the rating services from our competition — then the services are compelled to flag the report with some phrase like 'Station WAAB conducted unusual promotion activities during this period.' I don't think we need that in dealing with our sales rep and clients!"

"But it's not illegal," Burkey protested. "It's not like the old days of giving secret clues every hour about where the treasure was hidden!"

"Maybe not illegal," program director Mark Abrahms said, "but not very sportsmanlike — whoops, sports*person*like," he amended, nodding to B.J.

She laughed: "This one you can call anything you like — it just isn't very professional."

"Sports, schmorts," Burkey snorted. "Nice guys finish last. We want higher ratings, boost the rate card, make the owners happy . . . "

Roy Fouts interrupted: "Okay, Harry, okay. This isn't a personal fight — we know that you're doing your job agressively and well.

"Now I read recently that something along this line was done in a major eastern market and that there was hell to pay. Most of the words said here came out during that battle also. One station did just what Harry is proposing, and the competition cried *foul* to the rating services. The offending station's manager replied — and in my personal opinion a little piously — that it was simply an effort to get the public to be more accurate in its diary keeping and to increase the percentage of diaries returned."

"Did the competition buy that?" B.J. asked.

"Not that I read," Fouts replied to general laughter. "The manager of one of the major competitors reasoned just about the way I did, that the regular — maybe even call 'em faithful — listener sitting with that diary is apt to believe that 'I can help my friends by putting down a lot of listening.'"

"Of course," program director Abrahms mused, "if the smoke clears and all that you've got against you is a little black mark in the rating book, but on the positive side you do indeed have higher audience levels — maybe it's worth taking a little heat from the competition."

"That thought does run through my head," Fouts answered. "We all have our special promotions during a sweep period — outdoor advertising, newspaper, personal appearances, lots of mail-ins and gifts.

"This time we'll have a new one — spots for us on all three television stations. Do we

— *continued on next page* —

"flat" response, if that is what we desire.

Perhaps " . . . the cheapest FM receivers can be made flat to 15 kHz . . . " with little trouble; but the fact is they aren't, because they don't come from the store that way. It appears that manufacturers deliberately chop off the highs in FM car radios, either to give the impression of increased bass, or to imitate the sound of the publicly accepted narrow-band AM receiver. Try 5 kHz for the upper frequency limit here. And what about those crispy little eight-track tape players.— FM stereo's worst enemy — again 5 or 6 kHz is your upper frequency limit. Finally, our program material isn't even "flat" but has been tailored to the tastes of recording engineers.

Distortion — "The finest state-of-the-art AM transmitters with one or two per cent harmonic distortion and typically three times that amount of intermodulation distortion . . . " *sure sound great!* That's because these specs exceed what is usually transmitted (which goes for FM, too, regardless of any supposed technical superiority). That's right. In this real world of carted-up music and mass duplication reel-to-reel automated formats, we still have one to five per cent harmonic distortion and five to twelve per cent intermodulation distortion right there on the tape (an area we really should try to improve)!

We could qualify the statement that, " . . . most AM transmitters on the air today can barely meet FCC regulations . . . ", by including most FM transmitters as well. I've seen some of those state-of-the-art AM transmitters easily meet FM distortion requirements, and, by the way, here on the east coast FM stations do not " . . . typically spec out at 0.1 per cent . . . " harmonic and intermodulation distortion but rather, say, 0.5 to 2.5 per cent.

Noise — It is true, " . . . Mother Nature and Man . . . " do indeed provide plenty of noise for AM reception, and for FM, too, with birdies and picket fences. Before we get down on AM's signal-to-noise ratio in the fringes, let's look at what happens to FM — it disappears! Considering the ability of an AM signal to travel far beyond the 30 to 50 miles to the horizon where FM stops, the signal-to-noise ratio at these distances for AM is superior to little or no signal at all. All heckling aside, let's remember, again, that we are broadcasting disk noise of -30 to -40 dB after a few plays and tape noise isn't far below that.

Separation — Regretably, Mr. Higdon left us nothing to rebut in this category.

If the above paints a gloomy picture for the purist, consider this — not even ears are perfect (although some "experts" would have us believe theirs are). Ears introduce several forms of distortion to the receiving process and to varying degrees: What about changing audio response with level — a built-in dynamic presence equalizer! What about variable sensitivity dependent upon level — a built-in compressor! And ears can't discern a few dB lack of something which is barely there in the first place (i.e. 15 kHz). Ears only begin to detect harmonic distortion at around two per cent. Many transmitters may outperform our ears.

Now what was all that about "high fidelity" — you remember — "flat" response, 0.1 per cent distortions, and -70 dB noise, as enjoyed by FM listeners? What it all comes down to is that AM and FM both are *great* media, and each has advantages and limitation of its own. Either is capable of faithfully reproducing the program material we send through them to our listening hardware. Come on, we're not fooling chief engineers with those audiophile numbers. On the dawn of AM stereo this is no time for "nit-picking" — the tests are history. My vote is cast for AM stereo, so let's get on with it.

□□□

STATION MEETING MINUTES — *Continued from previous page*

simply take Harry's spots as one more part of our promotion campaign, or do we want to be the good guys in the white hats?"

For Discussion:

Manager Fouts has stated the obvious: *Do we or don't we?*

- Is a "fill in your diary" campaign likely to have any truly high-impact results?
- Does a "Station conducted unusual audience promotion" entry in the rating book have a negative effect in selling? Does it impair your ability to advertise in the trades or believeability in press relations?
- Will professional relations in the local broadcast community be strained? If so, how far?

□□□

"Expect the Unexpected" with KABC Radio's Michael Jackson

The Leading Talk Show Host In Los Angeles

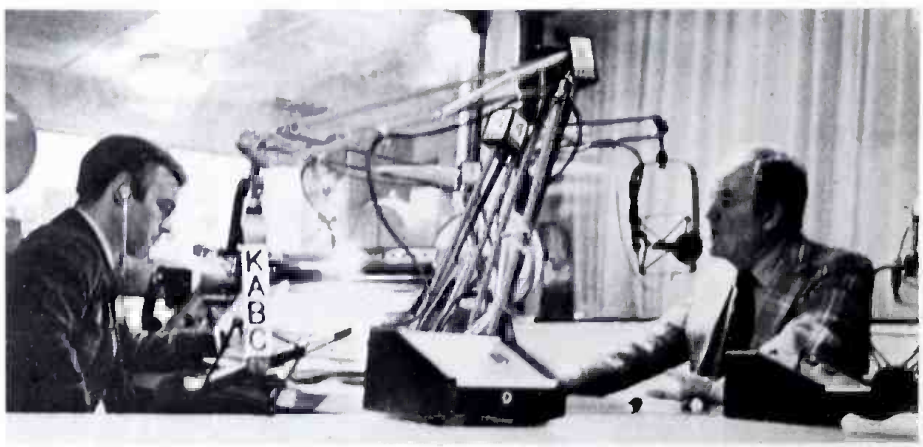
by Bob Marich

Hearing a radio voice with a smooth, aristocratic British accent is not unusual in many parts of the world, but the British Empire never extended over Southern California. Yet, according to Arbitron, the radio personality reigning over the Los Angeles market is Michael Jackson, voice of the South African Broadcasting Corporation for six years and BBC announcer in London for two years.

In 1959, Jackson immigrated to the U.S., first working at WHYN, in Springfield, Massachusetts. After 18 months as host of radio and television talk shows there, he moved to San Francisco, where he worked for KYA and KEWB. In 1962, KHJ radio brought him to Los Angeles. Jackson also worked at KNX before joining KABC TalkRadio in 1966. KABC features news/information/talk in a magazine format with Jackson hosting the 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. slot weekdays.

In the Los Angeles market, Jackson is noted for his dignified, unflappable presence as well as his affection for the liberal point of view. Rather than argue with guests and callers he disagrees with, he will often counter with, "Educate me," his polite way of asking someone to substantiate a statement.

Jackson has won five Emmies for television talk shows he has hosted at various times in Los Angeles, and eight Emmy nominations. He currently hosts a six-day-a-week talk show with KCET, the local PBS television affiliate. Jackson's wife Alana is the daughter of the late film star Alan Ladd, and the couple have three children.



Prominent political figures such as the late Hubert Humphrey have made studio appearances with Michael Jackson.

BP&P: The recent successes of music formats on FM have brought speculation that the information/personality format found on AM is entering a period of decline.
Michael Jackson: I think just the opposite. Music is on the decline on AM and consequently, I think, more and more stations are going to turn to some form of the informational/educational/talk format. I have been told the same thing for the past 13 years that I've been at KABC and all I have seen is growth. I really believe that it is the wave of the future.

BP&P: Isn't the number one station in this market an FM rocker?

Michael Jackson: As of the last ARB, it's KABC. The only time that we're surpassed is by background music stations who brag about the fact that they only "interrupt" their programming for advertising every now and then. If I were an advertiser, I would hate to be an interruption. I think you'll find that KABC is billing more money and producing higher ratings than they have in their history. By the way, I'm totally sold out with the most amazing variety of commercials.

BP&P: Your variety. Is it reflective of your audience? Is there great diversity in your audience?
Michael Jackson: I think it's reflective of the audience that I'm aiming for. I am constantly probing. Today's program has ranged from Sir Harold Wilson, who was prime minister of Britain for a greater period in peace time than anyone else in the last 100 years, to Raquel Welch. Tomorrow, I have two of the Bee Gees, Ray Charles, and Jack Anderson, the columnist. I've also got Paul Erdman, the man who wrote *The Crash of 1979*. Why? Because it's now 1979 and I want to find out if there is going to be a crash. By contrast, I have the scholarly opinion of Dr. Milton Friedman. So I'm trying for as broad an audience as possible.

I'm also trying very hard not to underestimate the audience and constantly make it a case of 'expect the unexpected.' That's why,

'I Also Try Very Hard Not To Underestimate The Audience'

for example, this morning we were able to switch from a discussion of the role of Andrew Young in Africa to Raquel Welch.

BP&P: Are all of these people in-studio guests?
Michael Jackson: Most are. In the case of Ray Charles, Sir Harold Wilson, Raquel Welch, yes. The Bee Gees will be on telephone.

BP&P: What do you perceive as the demographics of your audience?
Michael Jackson: Let's put it this way. My income can fluctuate and it so happens that it's been reckoned in a very complicated formula based upon my standings in the age group 18 - 49. I went into this with some trepidation because I didn't think that talk radio could do it. But in the last four books, I have not been lower than number two. This is one of the wonderful things about the management of Ben Hoberman. He gives you the incentive. Tough, yes. But I like that kind of stimulating challenge. In the current book, I'm number one overall, number two

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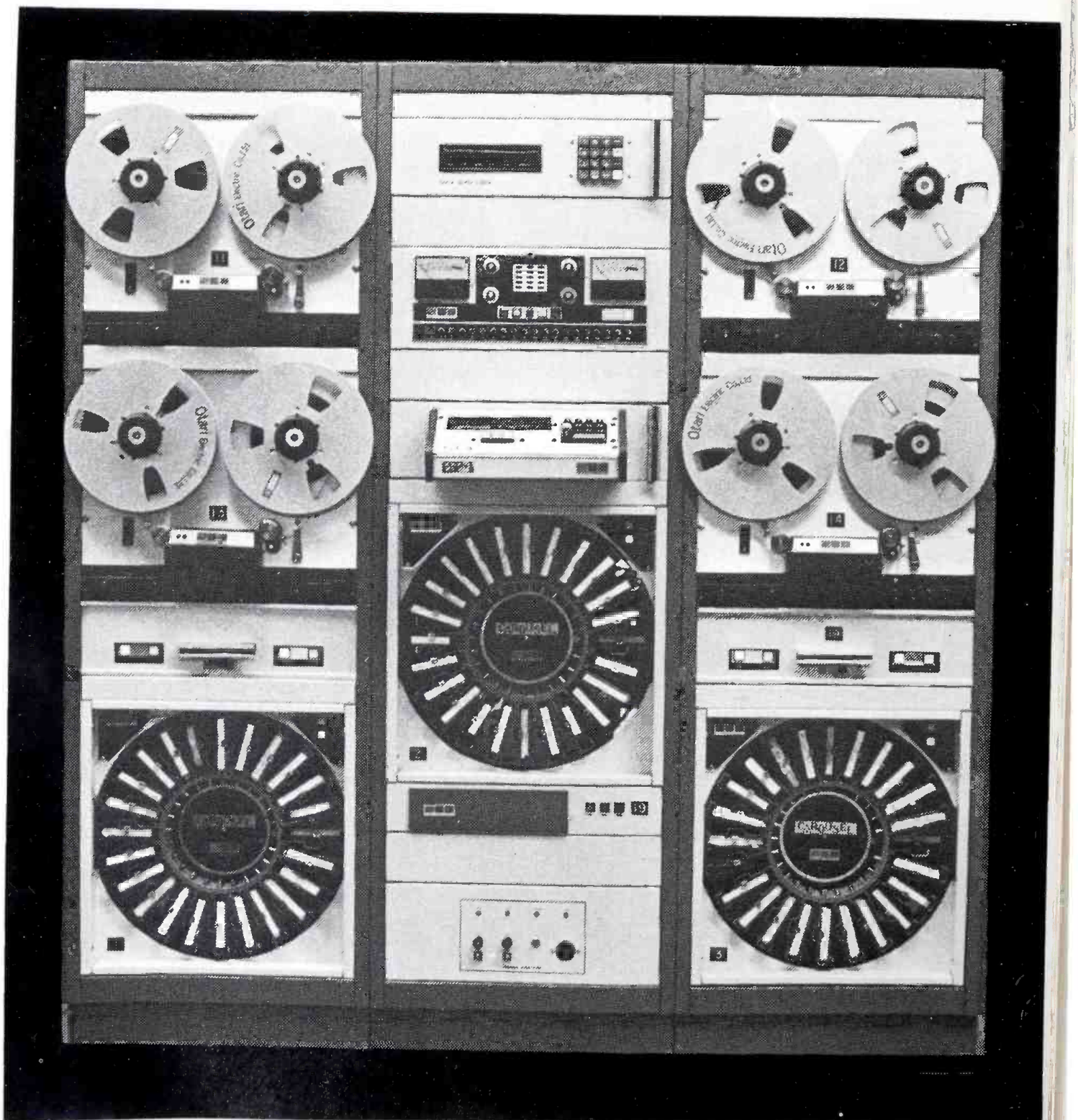

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in 18 - 49, men and women.

BP&P: That's astounding. I had seen the book, but I had not broken out the demographics.
MJ: Believe me, I work it out immediately! [Laughter all around]

BP&P: I've seen contracts come up for renewal based on demographics, but not an up-and-down fluctuation during the term of the contract.
MJ: I was two years into a three-year contract as of last week and Ben asked to tear up the contract and start again, which is very flattering. But then he's done that with each of my contracts.

BP&P: Because of better performance?
MJ: I'm working harder all the time and, I hope, building stature.

BP&P: How does stature help you in getting guests? Does the management book your...
MJ: Not on your life! And I wouldn't stay at the station two minutes after they decided who the guests would be.

But let's go back to your first question. How do I get guests? I look for them. Having the ratings that I do and the long standing that I have at the station, more and more they're coming to me. It's a case of, amongst those that come to us, weeding them out and then going after all the kinds of people that interest me in every walk of life, wherever they happen to be in the world.

BP&P: You mentioned, "whatever interests me." It's been said that if you program for yourself, your own interests, you'll get into trouble. But do you find that the best barometer for The Michael Jackson Show is your own interests?

Abba Eban, Israeli Ambassador to the U.S. and United Nations, confers with Michael Jackson.

MJ: I say that because, if my future is to depend upon the enthusiasm that somebody else has for what I'm doing, then I'm in bigger trouble.

BP&P: How often do you find yourself in the position where you've got a topic that you don't have a lot of personal interest in or faith in . . . something that you think is a lot of bunk. I'm talking about astrology or something like that.
MJ: How can you have a lack of interest when you can find both sides of the coin? So I don't have the right to be uninterested. If I'm uninterested, then I shouldn't tackle the topic. Healthy skepticism, I think, is worthwhile. I happen to think that astrology is bunk, but I have a marvelous, fun time tackling it on the air from time-to-time.

BP&P: So you don't let it slow you down.
MJ: Make the best of it! It's like every phone call that comes through. My first thought is, how do I end this conversation? I don't actively say, "What can I do to end it?" But my job is to make a short story out of it.

Whenever you hear a talk show host say, "I've gotta go," they're failing. They don't have to go anywhere. They're going to stay. My job is to find a way of satisfying the caller so that he ends up saying goodbye, but as briefly as possible. I always keep in mind, too, that some of the best conversations that I've ever had on the air came from callers who said, "I have nothing to say, but . . . "

When I first began doing talk radio, celebrity guests were not permitted. Why? Because management thought that they would show up the audience that calls in. They don't! They really don't.

BP&P: Let's say you've got a celebrity guest . . . an actor. Do you have any reservations about talking with this kind of guest in an area out of his field?
MJ: I much prefer it.

BP&P: The actor talking about politics or ecology. Why is that?
MJ: Because the others have all been heard over-and-over ad nauseam on those incestuous programs at night where they borrow guests from each other. And I have respect for these programs. But they all take the tried-and-true, safe guests. The Carson, Griffin, Douglas, Dinah Shore. They're all using the same people over-and-over again and they have other people writing their questions. So I'd rather get off that and get into subjects that they know, love and care to speak about. My job is to find something different in people.

Carroll O'Connor would much rather talk about Ireland and politics. In fact, the very first time he ever heard me on radio, he was driving his car and listening to me argue with an Irish woman. Then he suddenly realized that it was his wife. Nearly every person that I've met in the entertainment field has other interests.

BP&P: Do they necessarily have other knowledge?
MJ: No! But then sometimes by showing up the ignorance, you can reveal how over-priviledged they are.

BP&P: How does that fit into your concept of information? Isn't it a problem if it's misinformation sometimes?

MJ: If it is, I'll set them straight and I'll give you an example. This is a tough one. Paul Winfield, a fine actor, had just made a movie called *A Hero Ain't Nothing But A Sandwich*. He asked what I thought of it. I told him, "Don't ask me." He asked me again. I told him that I thought it was the anti-bussing textbook. He laughed.

I said, "Was the school that you depicted in that picture, where the kids were shooting up with heroin, anything like reality?" He said, "You bet. We took some poetic license, but you bet." I said, "What if your child were to be sent there? Wouldn't you fight like hell to make sure that he wasn't?" And he roared with laughter and said, "My children won't have to be sent there." I said, "Stop. You happen to be black, you happen to be wealthy; your kids will not be sent there. But what if they were?" And he said, "I'd fight like hell." I said, "Right . . . that's called love. If I was to take the same stand, that would be called racial bigotry." I said, "Now, let's get back to acting."

'I Don't See It As A Contest Between The Guest And Myself'

So, go just far enough. Make the point and then change topics. But I don't have to win everytime. I don't see it as a contest between the guest and myself.

A man like Charles Colson says he's found God and thinks that he's got the last word. Then he takes my hand across the table and says, "Mr. Jackson, I don't believe that you believe that I've found God." I fortunately had 10-seconds left in which to say, "Oh, yes sir, I do. I only wish that you had found Him a year earlier." [Laughter all around]

BP&P: That was one instance when you got in the last word. But your philosophy is that you don't have to.

MJ: Sometimes, you like to. But because radio is the art of being "unnaturally natural," you don't always have to. For example, you're sitting here nodding your head either in agreement or else to prove that you're listening. But on radio that isn't quite good enough. You have to sound slightly unnaturally natural to let the people at home know that you're not acquiescing, that you're not agreeing.

BP&P: What do you do when you have somebody on the circuit who's in town making the rounds. What are your requirements for exclusivity?

MJ: Only that I be the first. That's not being demanding or arrogant. All I'm saying is that if you don't want to be first with me, then

thank you go elsewhere. At least they know if they come on with me, the book would have been read.

BP&P: [Chuckling] That's a major point.
MJ: *Believe* me that's a major point! They nearly all make a point of noting it, like it's something astounding.

I'll tell you where it can sometimes backfire. Recently a guest said to me, "If you had read my book, you'd know the answer." I couldn't help but say, "May I correct you, sir? I asked the question because I *had* read the book and knew that the answer was worthwhile." He got the point.

BP&P: When a very prominent guest is being sought for the show, will you ever make the offer for an appearance yourself?
MJ: You can't rely on someone else always doing it. Walter Mondale came on the show three weeks ago. Now, would the vice president come on the show if some secretary or assistant had called up? Or, if someone in programming called and said, "We have a talk show and we'd like to get you on it"? He's much more flattered if the person at the helm takes the trouble. It's a hell of a lot more work, but it's paid off for me.

BP&P: How much of the day do you have to devote to making contacts?
MJ: Well, I'm on the air at 9:00 a.m. and I'm at the studio by 7:00. When I get there, there's no time for small talk. I may seem a little unfriendly, but I've got a job to do. I just get on with it immediately. Then, my other commitments include taping six PBS TV shows a week, which I am going to be stopping in March because it will be 260 television shows in one year, plus the radio show. That's enough.

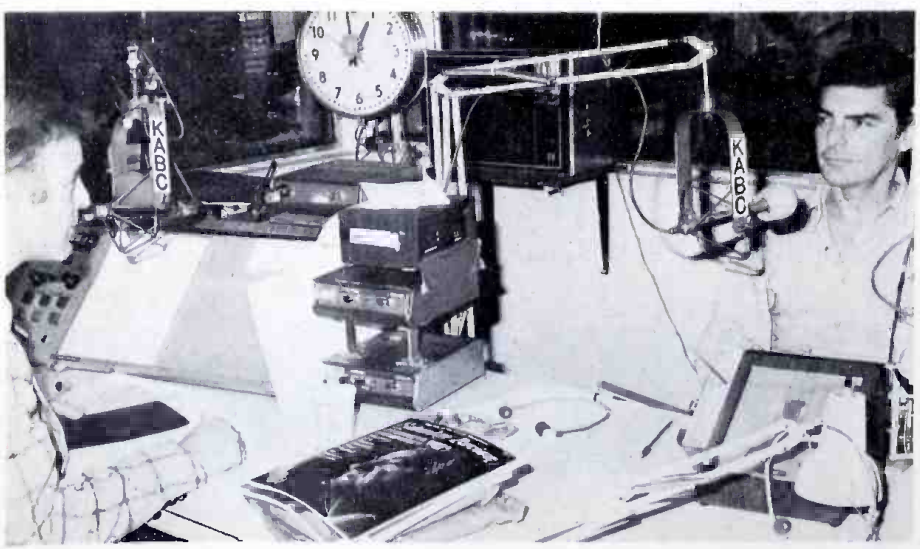
I try to put aside *at least* three hours a day for preparation because I write the scripts for the TV show, research the show and find the guests. Then my wife makes the phone calls for me.

BP&P: You do have some domestic assistance.
MJ: In producing babies and television shows. [Laughter all around]

BP&P: What did you do before you were doing this?
MJ: Radio. I've been in radio since I was 16. I was a network announcer in South Africa; I said I was 24. I went to the BBC when I was 22 and came to this country when I was 24. I started in a small town, Springfield, Massachusetts, because I realized that I had nothing to offer America. I had thought people would flip because I have a funny foreign accent! I learned that I had to become an American, which did *not* mean sounding like an American. Anyone can do that.

'Get Yourself A Good Consumer Advocate — Not Some Goodie Two Shoes'

And when I felt that I had learned enough there, I moved to San Francisco. I became a rock jock . . . all night. It was KYA, The Boss of the Bay. Then I started an all-night talk show on KEWB, which was also a rocker. It was the most fertile possible training ground because I had only two lines. I went six hours and did all my own news, six nights a week. If anyone blocked my two lines, I had to sit and ad lib all night. Then I came down to L.A. 16 years ago.



Entertainment personalities from Hollywood like actor Richard Benjamin are frequent guests.

BP&P: What is a fertile training ground for someone starting out?
MJ: Middle-market America because it is microcosmically America. Even in the radio station itself, you'll probably find the same competitive jealousies, the same frustrations, the same salesmen, the same good guys and the same bad guys.

BP&P: What is needed to make your program work in middle-market America? Can you "pull it off" the same way you do in a major market?
MJ: I think you have to have a different vision about it entirely. Whereas the mainstay, perhaps, of my program here is the marvelous flow of brilliant minds that either live here or pass through here, in a smaller town, I think that you'd have to get very much involved with the city. You have to be the conscience and the voice of the city. If there's a disaster or some big local cause, you've got to spearhead it. You've got to be the ombudsman of your city, if you're in middle America. And I think it can work.

BP&P: Now conscience is a very big role.
MJ: Yup!

BP&P: Isn't that a bigger role than a single person can perform?
MJ: But not a single station. I think that a station dedicated to really revealing-the-city-to-the-city is the approach. Make everything seem urgent. I think that it's easier and even proportionately less expensive to program than KABC.

BP&P: And the situation with guests in middle-sized markets. Would you advocate less reliance on in-studio guests and maybe use your phone more?
MJ: Build contacts, even with persons at other radio stations in other markets so that they know they can call on you when they want a story and you can call on them. For the author who's doing the circuit, maybe if you write to the publishers, they'll take the trouble to send the author to your market . . . if they know there's any interest. All you have to do is show willingness and *read the book.*

Don't be frightened to share your podium. You can develop local characters as well. I'll give you an example. I frequently use automotive experts and, wow, you'd swear people are married to their motorcars. I will frequently use the head of consumer fraud from the state attorney general's office. Get yourself a good consumer advocate — not some 'goodie two shoes' — but someone who's willing to expose, to explore, to explain.

Make friends with your newspaper. Don't think of them as competitors. Use their reporters as resources and guests.

BP&P: There's an issue in part of that statement. There are lots of consumer

activists around these days. If there is a representative of a consumer viewpoint, shouldn't there also be a representative of a business viewpoint? Couldn't you have a business advocate or a commerce advocate?
MJ: You do. They call them commercials.

BP&P: You think that they play off against each other?
MJ: Yes. And if what the consumer advocate is saying is true, I don't see any need for that.

The consumer advocate can't afford to buy the time. The sponsor can.

BP&P: If we're talking about advertising a specific product, I agree with that. And coming down on a specific company that is defrauding the public, I agree with that. But what about the extremist consumer advocate who is anti-business, anti-development on anything and everything?
MJ: I think it's necessary to get the other viewpoint and I do. For example, I have the head of TRW [credit rating firm] the day after tomorrow. I had the president of the phone company last week. I have representatives of GM and Ford early next month. I think they're a fascinating addition to your programming.

But I don't think it's a case of, "You've just given 17 minutes to a consumer advocate so now go out and get 17 minutes of the business viewpoint." I don't believe in that kind of equal time situation.

BP&P: Are you ever worried that a guest is going to promote something to extremes? For instance, politicians during election year promoting their own political ambitions.
MJ: You offer equal time, always. This takes time and trouble, and the offer is usually accepted.

But I don't think it's a major problem. The American public is, I think, aware of puffery. I hope that I don't overrate them. But I think that they are able to know when they are being sold something.

BP&P: I tend to agree with you except that we are being sold so much. Is it really possible for people to be able to juggle all these "balls" at once?
MJ: Well, let's assume that they're listening all the time with great interest and taking it all as gospel. And I don't think they are. I don't think that you have the right to put a politician on the air unless you've done your homework. If you can't challenge the statements that seem to be outlandish or wrong, the guest shouldn't be on the air. With politicians, you do have that wonderful "out" — you can offer equal time to the opponent.

BP&P: What do you like to talk about?
MJ: This is not in any "hit parade" order: people, politics, science, music, our city. You see, there's no limit. I'm doing a program next week with futurists, spending all four hours looking from all different angles at what our future might be like. It'll range from Buckminster Fuller to Ray Bradbury and others.

There's no way that we're going to run out of ideas for this type of program. But every day has got to be treated like a first day. It's not a case, like in my old days as a disc jockey of, "Oh, God, I've got to go in there and do some work." Every day has to be bloody exciting for it to work and for me it really is!

BP&P: In talking with guests in the half-hour segments or even the futurists which will be a full four hours, can you explore a subject fully? Do you preceive that as a problem?
MJ: The television networks think they give you the world's news in a half-hour, eight

'Every Day Has To Be Bloody Exciting For It To Work'

minutes or nine minutes of which is commercial. A couple of minutes is taken up with sports. The greatest length of any particular in-depth story is probably two minutes. Yet, most Americans say that they get their information from television.

I think radio can do much more. I think we can excite people to want to learn more, and most subjects that we tackle, if they were worthwhile, have a follow-up sometime soon.

Yesterday, Mark Lane was on for 45 minutes talking about the select committee on assassinations. He said, "There's one guy that you should get hold of . . . a guy called Marrs in Fort Worth. He's done fabulous work." The moment he said that, I turned off my microphone and said to my assistant Eileen, get him, please. By the time my conversation with Mark Lane was over, Marrs was on the line. There was follow-up, though it always doesn't work that smoothly.

BP&P: That kind of leads into an interesting situation and that is, the responsibility of the journalist in simply making the medium a platform that is available. Mark Lane is certainly a controversial figure. But I don't know of what consequence. I'm not really sure that he is controversial to any consequential *degree. At what level do you think that it's important for you to say, "Whoops, it's the wrong thing for me to do to present you to the people."*
MJ: Let's take him as an example. When he got back from Guyana he phoned me [Lane was an attorney for The People's Temple]. I wonder if any newsman would have turned down the opportunity of that conversation.

BP&P: Probably no. But that's exactly my point.
MJ: This is the easiest society in the world in which to become a media junky. This is the easiest society in the world in which to rivet the attention of the media. So again I stress that you've got to be informed.

What if Mark Lane was a "bad" man, and I'm making no value judgement. I really don't know. He's a superb guest, fine program material. Supposing I had to defend him and his being on the air. I would say, maybe you proved to me that he is a bad man, but look at what he has done along with a few others. His constant research caused the very being of a House select committee on assassinations. And *they* have now come out and said, ostensibly, what he has been saying for the past 15 years. If I could find, in something that he has said, lies, then it's my job to reveal them and never to use him again.

BP&P: I agree with your assessment. Maybe Mark Lane isn't the best example. What about Timothy Leary? Timothy Leary is an unusual kind of person. For all the time he's been on the air, it's been to nobody's *benefit, as far as I can tell, in retrospect. I mean, who benefited except for Timothy Leary?*
MJ: I think that the listening audience really benefited. Why? Because it revealed him for what he is. Now he's a yawn. Forget him.

And you know, too, what I've always believed in? It's the BBC motto, which sounds awfully pompous, and I was only an announcer there for two years. Under the crest, it says, "To Enlighten, Inform and Entertain." And I really think that includes commercials, though some of them aren't very entertaining.

'You Don't Promise Anybody A Set Length Of Time'

BP&P: You read your own commercials. Do you think that dilutes your impact on listeners?
MJ: Not at all. Anybody who has a program where they think they're above doing their own commercials has no right to have the commercials. Because what you're saying is, "I'm willing to inflict these noises on you, but I'm above doing them." I think it's an integral part of what we're doing. It's pretty clear when we're doing a commercial; it's quite separate from the body of the program. And we identify it by giving the time before, as well.

BP&P: So far, we've talked about some of your more exciting and fruitful discussions. What happens when you get bogged down in one that isn't exciting or fruitful?
MJ: You don't promise anybody a set length of time. You start with a conversation and if it's not going particularly well — and it could be my fault — you thank the guest very much for having come and change subjects. Always have in your mind another subject to bring up, another guest you can suddenly call. Always!

I can tell you that tomorrow, if anyone of those guests lets me down, I've got two or three other ideas in store. They're immediately in store and we'll do our damnedest to get them while the next three commercials are on.

BP&P: When you take on a highly technical subject, like nuclear energy, for example, it's very difficult to be fully informed on all the details of the technology, unless you happen to be a nuclear scientist.
MJ: You bet.

BP&P: If you find yourself in that position, will you tend to bring on both sides at the same time?
MJ: Seldom. For television, that's fine but for radio, too many voices confuse, I think. And, frankly, if somebody tells me something that I don't understand, then chances are a large percentage of the audience won't understand as well. I will say, as nicely as I know how, I don't understand. Please make it simpler. The purpose of language is communication.

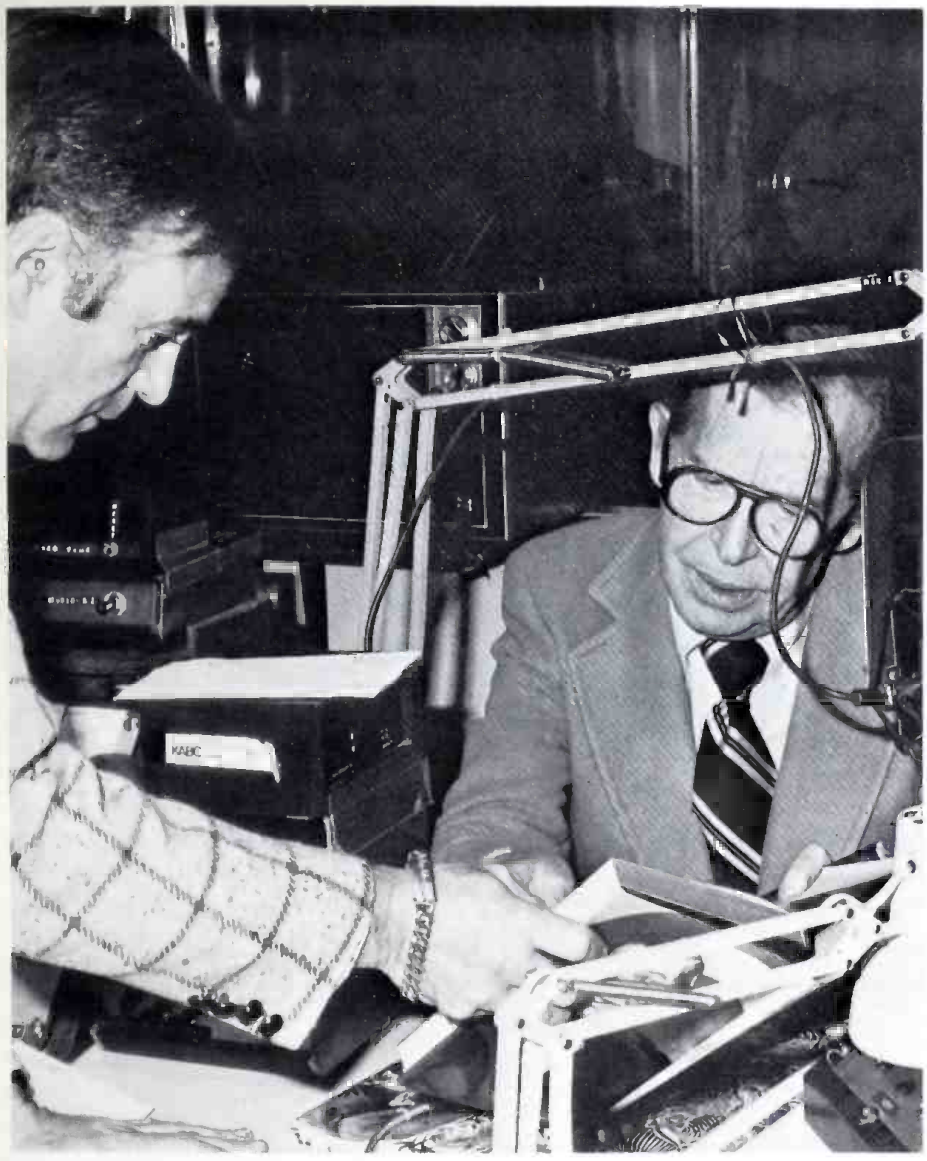
BP&P: Well, you don't necessarily know, though, whether you're being properly educated at that point. If you have someone who is anti-nuclear power and is able to use all of the emotional triggers that those folks are frequently able to use, can you counter that effectively yourself?
MJ: I don't think that you have the right to have the guest in the studio without knowing the basic approach that guest will take. So you have to be *fairly* well-informed. If they happen to use "high falutin'" terms you don't comprehend, then they have to put them into simpler terms for you. And don't be afraid to plead ignorance. I sometimes do. It's never been a worry or a problem.

BP&P: Do you sometimes have callers who will phone in with the other side of an issue?
MJ: Yes, bless them. And not to put the guest down. I think that people are far more compassionate than I ever believed possible when I first got into this. They're far more aware of radio.

Again, the purpose of language is communication. I think the Americans do it better than any other English-speaking people that I have ever met, which may sound like heresy from a former Limey. But there's no affectation when Americans speak. They may not always have the broadest vocabularies, but you know exactly what an American means whatever his social standing, whatever his education.

The BBC was over here doing a documentary on me. They also wanted to see if they could do this type of show in England. I said, no. With the class distinction in Britain, where the common man means somebody below you by contrast to here where the common man means your fellow man, I didn't think that they could do it . . . besides, the phone system stinks there.

BP&P: In your interviewing technique, I've heard it said that you want to bring out the best in your guests. How do you do that?
MJ: There's a word that we don't have in the English language. It's in German, French and Italian . . . simpatische, simpatico, sympatheque. We have no equivalent in this language, but you've got to show it. You've got to be interested in what *they* are doing and what *they* are all about. I don't care what the subject, if the guest thinks that you've



Milton Berle looks over a book with Michael Jackson at the KABC Radio Studios.

really put some study into them, they'll give. They'll give a great deal of themselves.

You know one of the best interviews recently was Gary Owens. I suddenly found a key to turn him on, which may sound strange because he seems like a man that you couldn't turn off. I said, "Gary, do you feel well?" I asked that question because he didn't look well. He said, "Michael, I've never had a day in my life when I've felt well all day long." I knew that the program was made. I knew that we had a great show.

BP&P: Was this your television show on the Los Angeles PBS affiliate, KCET?
MJ: Yes . . . but can you imagine? I bet you've had many days when you've felt super all day long. He's never had one. I said, "Gary, why this mad fantasy land that's yours? It's got to come from somewhere." He said, "My father had a stroke 15 years before he died and I watched him weeping every day for those last 15 years of his life. I had to build somewhere to hide." And it was one of the most simpatheque interviews.

Look for that; find it. He'd let me know by signals if it became too personal. Any guest will. Just watch them, feel them. Some you play with. Some you show respect for. Some you joust with. It doesn't take long to find out.

BP&P: Do you feel the need to shield your guests from antagonistic callers?
MJ: I'm guilty, at times, of coming too rapidly to the defense of a guest. I say guilty because, I think that it's a failing. I feel that if they're there in the arena, they should be able to take it.

BP&P: Why is that?
MJ: It's part of the old BBC discipline of being polite to people.

BP&P: Are you ever concerned about your show offending people?
MJ: You *can't* actively think about that because then you become pabulum, you become neuter. You've got to offend some. And I really think that some of your more ardent listeners *really* don't like what you stand for, think and say.

BP&P: I was listening to a program after the recent fires that devastated Malibu. You praised the efforts of firefighters. This was right after the fact. Later on, some of the residents of the area were critical of firefighting efforts. Do you have any reservations about getting on the soapbox?
MJ: No, I have the right to be wrong, too. I state my honest opinion and try to be fair.

In that instance, I only spoke about what I knew about. There were many things done by those firemen that were heroic and superbly efficient. But, obviously, based upon what some people in Malibu had to say, there were other areas that I didn't know about. But I'm not all knowing. I'm all inquiring, but I'm not all knowing.

BP&P: You mentioned that one of the strengths of a talk show host is being informed. How do you keep informed?
MJ: I have a lot of very wise friends. It may sound trivial, but it's important. From the moment I get into the studio, I go through reams of wire copy. Everyday, I ready everything from the L.A. *Times* to the *Herald Examiner*, from the Washington *Post* to the New York *Times*, from the *Wall Street Journal* to the *Christian Science Monitor*. I read many newsletters that are sent to me from different parts of the world. I read a variety of air mail editions of newspapers. It's constantly a learning process, for whatever the subject, I've got to learn.

I don't think it's necessarily a case of "how many facts can you store in your brain to impress your audience." That's why speed reading comes in useful. I used to find that I would read things and think, "Why the hell did I read that?" Now with speed reading, I am able to discard a great deal. As I go through the wire copy, I can say, "Don't need, don't need, don't need, ahh!" And then read it slightly more slowly.

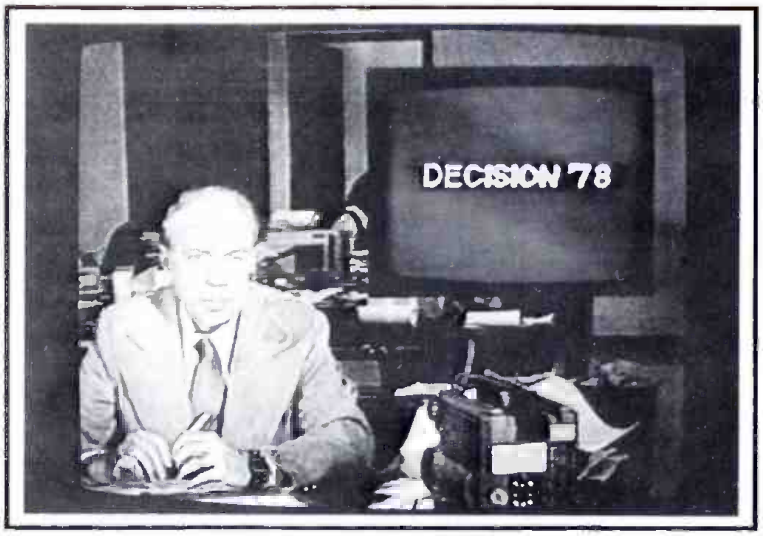
BP&P: Is it speed reading or your own skimming technique?
MJ: It's a speed reading technique that I went to school to study.

BP&P: I've heard it said that you would very much like to be a television talk-show host with one of the major commercial networks.
MJ: That is true.

BP&P: What do you find is useful in preparing for that role? Have you found in your local TV show that there is an extra dimension to television?
MJ: Going beyond the local show, my major concern is the kind of compromise that you have to make with a network show . . . where the interviews are pre-staged and rehearsed . . . where somebody else writes questions for you. That's my major concern. And if it has to be that way, chances are I'll stay local.

Beyond that, radio and television really aren't that different. I find the tempo much the same. I push myself and the people with whom I work at television to try to make the tempo the same.

But though I like television, I *adore* radio. □□□



A Simple Production Technique for Achieving A Rear Screen Window Effect

by Paul O'Dell

How do you present visuals for a television news election coverage in an interesting manner without the aid of chromakey, monitors, or video compressor?

This was the problem WCYB-TV faced when it decided to produce local election returns from the second floor newsroom. The main newsroom has working space for 10 with various smaller offices adjoining.

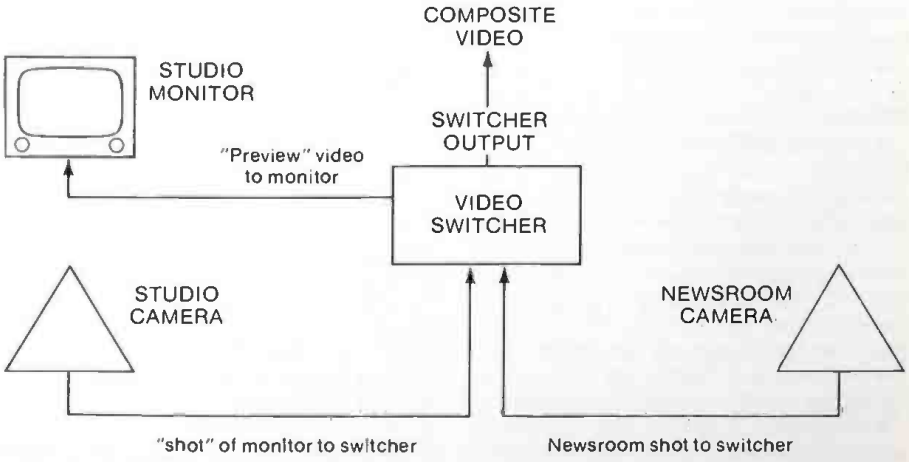
The goal was to make the newsroom functional so reporters and anchormen could relay the returns as quickly as field people telephoned results and as fast as received from the wire service machines located nearby. The newscenter would not be able to accommodate the normal multi-camera and monitor production employed for news programs.

We needed a production technique with few lights and minimal demands for hardware. Visually, the requirements were *Vidifont* of numbers, graphics, video tape and film which, in some instances, needed to be displayed behind the anchor.

Using a blue chromakey screen meant slides would have to be "matched" to the key area and *Vidifont* information could not be full-screened into the key area. Normal monitor displays would require too much space, construction of special monitor housing and lighting problems.

What was needed was a video compressor or an inexpensive way to achieve the same effect. We wanted a look similar to the *ABC World News* which uses a bordered wipe with compressed video in a newsroom setting. This effect was achieved through an unusual technique that can be easily duplicated by other TV stations.

The output of the video switcher "preview" was connected to a high-quality monitor located in the studio. By shooting the monitor with a studio camera, you are able to wipe the monitor shot into your second camera shot of the newsroom.



The quality of the monitor picture in the wipe was excellent. Only the brightness and hue of the monitor had to be adjusted. By framing the monitor camera in the proportion wanted on the final composite shot, we dissolved in a type of visual window with the newsroom camera zooming out to accommodate as needed.

Since the monitor was hooked into the "preview" side of the switcher,

WCYB-TV uses the rear screen window effect with anchor Merrill Moore on election night.

dissolves and all other effects were possible in the "window." Graphics, video tapes, films and *Vidifont* sources were displayed in the "window" — something that would not have been possible even with a chromakey screen. Thus, we had created our own form of video compression. Viewers and advertisers were highly complimentary.

This idea could be incorporated into a news set. By using a set with the "key screens" of any size, all full-screen video could be reduced proportionally. The monitor shot would be chromakeyed into the news set shot to give a rear screen or *Vismo* effect similar to those used by the networks.

Using this technique, problems associated with "keying" such as graphics fitting the key area would be resolved. Excellent results could be attained where electronic field reports are presented with the remote camera fed to the switcher-to-the-monitor and the monitor shot keyed behind your anchor via the key screen.

For those who don't have video compression or a rear screen projection system, this simple production technique can be used to enhance your news presentation. □□□

Author Paul O'Dell is a producer/director for WCYB-TV, in Bristol, Virginia. He has been involved in television production for twelve years.

RADIO

TRIES A DRAMATIC COMEBACK

by KEN ROSS

The place is Paramount Studios in Hollywood. The huge sound stages are buzzing with activity, generating the product that keeps the nation entertained. There's the movie version of *"Star Trek,"* along with *"LaVerne and Shirley," "M*A*S*H," "Mork and Mindy,"* and, of course, *"The Sears Radio Theater."*

Wait a minute! Did we say *radio* theater? Here in Hollywood, where screens — be they silver or 23-inch — reign supreme? Yes, we did say radio. In fact, Sears is sinking a million dollars into *"The Sears Radio Theatre."* A few miles away, in Studio City, a company that has made its name syndicating music programs for radio is creating a weekly science fiction extravaganza for radio called *"Alien Worlds."* And down on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood a company called Studiohouse is busy marketing a radio soap opera entitled *"The World At Our Fingertips."*

What's going on here? These people apparently don't seem to be aware that you can count the number of radio dramas that have reached a significant national audience on *one finger!*

What's going on is that radio drama is making the most significant attempt at a comeback since TV first knocked it out of national prominence some 25 years ago. Stepping through the door re-opened by *"The CBS Mystery Theater,"* these modern-day radio serial producers are betting a lot of time and money that Americans are ready to re-discover the "theater of the mind."

In her debut as a radio actress, Julie Newmar is cast with Mandel Kramer (left) and Earl Hammond in "Ordeal by Fire" on the *CBS Radio Mystery Theater.*

Radio Drama's Heydays

Ironically, the heritage from radio's Golden Era has been both an asset and a liability in the attempt to re-establish radio drama as an important entertainment medium. It's an asset because it gives ringing testimony to the power of radio. But it's a liability because it tends to make people associate radio drama with the past. There's a natural, if incorrect, assumption that radio drama as it was produced in the 1930's and 1940's is the *only* way radio drama can be produced. (If the new wave of radio producers agree on one thing, it is the absolute necessity of timely material.)

Although the sometimes overpowering association of radio drama with the 30's and 40's can be a source of frustration, most of today's producers take considerable delight in their radio roots. At one time, radio was simply the hottest thing going; though, of course, it went through some growing pains getting there.

"When radio first began in the 1920's, it took years for it to take hold. No one understood what it was or what it was going to do. Eventually, though, it got to the point where it almost closed the movie theaters."

The speaker is Jim Jordan, and he recalls the early days of radio with unique authority. Along with his first wife Marion, Jordan became one of the first stars produced by the magic talking box. The Jordans went on to become true radio superstars with their hit series, *"Fibber McGee and Molly."* In the interests of perspective, we began our survey of radio

A different personality will host each evening of the *Sears Radio Theater:* (top left, moving clockwise) Andy Griffith hosts Comedy Night, Vincent Price hosts Mystery and Suspense Night, Cicely Tyson hosts Love and Hate Night, and Richard Widmark hosts Adventure Night.

drama's comeback attempt by paying a visit to Jim Jordan in his Beverly Hills home.

Although he symbolizes an era that many Americans do indeed recall with great nostalgia, Jordan himself is not one to live in the past. Now is his early 80's, he lives a happy, content life centered around his second wife Gretchen, and his own hobbies and activities. When he talks about radio — both as it is today and as it once was — he speaks with the amused detachment of someone who has seen it all.

We asked Mr. Jordan what the first radio programs were like. "There were no 'programs.' Guys would go out in the street and bring somebody in to talk over this thing." Jordan himself began his career during those first days as part of a singing act with his wife. Most of the programming was musical, and the idea of really speaking on the radio had yet to take hold. In the late 20's the Jordans graduated from roving minstrels (they would sometimes perform at three or four stations in one evening), to hosts of their own two hour show out of Chicago. Playing several different roles, they blended talk with music, and radio began to come into its own. One thing led to another, and they were soon involved in radio comedy in a big way with *"The Smith Family,"* and *"Smackout."* Then, in 1935, they launched the series that was to enchant the nation, *"Fibber McGee and Molly."* It ran for 17 years.

Among its many accomplishments, the show was responsible for one of the most familiar sounds of its time, the famous overstuffed closet that tumbled out to the delight of millions. Says Jordan, "We'd been looking for a gadget we could use. We tried different things, but none of them worked. One night Don Quinn wrote in the closet bit and it tickled the audience so much we said, hey, maybe we've got something here. The last thing that fell out — and I never heard anybody mention this — was a little bell that tinkled. I don't know if anybody ever noticed it."

As you listen to Jordan talk, you get a very strong sense of the magic and power of "the theater of the mind." A program is heard simultaneously by millions of people and in each and every mind it takes on a different form. Radio, like the printed word, allows the listener to be the creator.

"The whole world of *'Fibber McGee and Molly'* was a fantasy," added Jordan. "We took liberties: we were a small town; we were a suburb; we were a big city; we were anything that suited our purpose." What suited their purpose also suited America, of course, and at its peak the show claimed nearly 50 million listeners. And each week, the lucky 350 who had managed to get tickets to the show filed into the theater and watched the stage transfixed as 35 musicians, actors and technicians cast their spell on the country.

But all the power of the spell of the "theater of the mind" was broken by the video box that gave you pictures with the sound. Although radio drama stayed alive into the 50's, the handwriting was on the wall, and late in the decade it went quite literally down the "tubes." Radio drama simply ceased to be. Now, 20 years later, there seems to be a change in the air.

Syndicated Humor In 60's

One of the first signs that the public wanted more came in the 1960's when America was treated to an explosion of radio humor. The fuse was lit when deejays began using comedy drop-ins during their shows. Then the Chicago Radio Syndicate unleashed *"Chicken Man"* on an unsuspecting public and the explosion began. The "winged warrior" flapped his way into the hearts of millions and radio humor was reborn, or re-hatched, as the case may be.

If there were thoughts that Chicken Man might be a fluke, they were erased by the enormous success of the *"Superfun"* package. Produced by Noel Blanc, the package took nearly 10,000 scripts and 100 comedy actors and blended them into 3,000 shows. *"Superfun"* eventually made it into over 1,000 markets, and by the late 60's it looked like radio was leaving its darker times behind in a cloud of laughter.

Then, as it rounded the corner into the 70's, somebody stopped laughing. Apparently it wasn't the public because syndicators kept generating a wide variety of humor packages, including the sucessful *"Have a Happy Day"* from Carson-Roberts. Tremendously gifted people like Gary Owens and Alan Barzman continued to turn out funny stuff.

Executive producer Elliott Lewis (left) and producer/director Fletcher Markle of the *Sears Radio Theater.*

But somehow the product was getting harder to sell. Radio stations seemed to be tightening their belts and were less inclined to put out money for special programming.

Noel Blanc feels the change in mood was signalled by Madison Avenue. With the onset of the 70's, the agencies shifted from a creative approach to a more direct technique called positioning. It wasn't so much how imaginatively you sold the product, it was how many times you got the right image into the right minds. Radio executives became less interested in personalities of any kind — be they local or syndicated — and more interested in 'positioning' themselves at the proper place in the music spectrum.

Another factor in the diminishing popularity of radio humor was TV itself. Blanc points out that with the advent of such programs as *"Laugh In"* and *"All In The Family,"* TV began to break into new and relatively controversial and risque areas. Once again, the dreaded tube monster had reared its ugly electronic head and radio, for better or worse, again decided to lay low till the storm blew over.

Nonetheless, funny things are still being produced for radio. A prolific collection of talent called Barzman and Company is currently syndicating a very funny program called *"From Studio B"* on well over 200 stations around the country. Another company, O'Connor Creative Services, continues to syndicate much of the material generated in the 60's and early 70's, and has plans to develop its own comedy series.

However, at least for the present, syndicated radio humor is an exception to the rules of radio programming. It's either bubbling under or fizzing out, depending on your point of view.

Whatever the future holds, the humor syndicators made a crucial contribution to radio; not only did they make people laugh, they reminded us of the power of radio. Radio *can* get inside people's heads and capture their imaginations. And there is certainly no question that it's enjoyed a number of highs and lows in the process. Now, it all comes down to one big question: will the public actually *listen* to a dramatic program, be it half-an-hour or an hour, on the radio?

Opening The Door

If the gods are smiling on radio drama and 1979 is remembered as the year that it started to snowball into something big, then 1973 will be remembered as the year the ball started rolling. In that year something very significant happened for radio drama. The *"CBS Mystery Theater"* was born.

It would be inaccurate to say it took the country by storm. It didn't. What it did do was to build a steadily increasing audience that tunes in to hear contemporary radio drama. In five years the Mystery Theater has broadcast over a thousand programs, received several hundred thousand pieces of very appreciative mail, and built up a solid roster of 235 CBS stations. And it more than holds its own in the ratings.

Sears Sparks Revival

Because the advertising community is often identified as a villain in radio drama's decline, it's a particularly pleasant irony that the idea for the *"Sears Radio Theater"* originated not with its producers or writers, but with the sponsor itself. Because Sears had used radio with considerable effectiveness (the national radio advertising budget is about $15 million), John Beebee, director of Radio and Television Advertising for the firm, and Ingrid Carlson, the Radio/Special Projects Manager in the National Advertising Division, were already favorably disposed to radio as a good place to spend their advertising dollars. Much to the subsequent delight of many people, they asked themsleves the question, if radio works so well for us, why don't we sponsor a show? The only problem was that there weren't really any radio shows to sponsor, so Carlson and Beebee decided to create one. They earmarked a hefty sum of money and went searching for someone to produce the program.

The "somebody" turned out to be Elliott Lewis. Lewis was well-schooled in radio drama, having written, produced, and directed *"Suspense," "Pursuit,"* and *"Broadway Is My Beat."* Although he has considerable experience in television as well, radio remains his favorite medium.

"Radio gives out a series of impulses in the form of a story that insists that the audience create a picture in their minds of what the people and events in the story look like," he explained. "The listener is a large part of what's going on."

Lewis and company will be sending out quite a variety of impulses when their program starts rolling in February. With a million-dollar budget from Sears behind them and an excellent time slot on the CBS network in front of them, the production team has wasted no time in getting to work. Operating out of Sound Stage F at Paramount, they've gathered a solid stable of actors and decidedly contemporary scripts.

The show debuts nationwide February 5th and there will be, as they say, something for everyone. A different kind of program will be featured each weekday evening, with a continuing host for each evening.

Monday night is reserved for westerns (not, Lewis stresses, the cowboy-and-Indian type); Tuesday is for comedies, with Andy Griffith hosting and Henry Morgan making frequent appearances; Wednesday is mystery night with Vincent Price scheduled to host (Lewis is careful to state that he will try to avoid any direct competition with the *"CBS Mystery Theater"*), and Thursday gives way to romance, when the subject is "love and other things." The week will be rounded out on Friday by an adventure hosted by Richard Widmark.

In other words, the SRT will be a kind of Disneyland-of-the-airwaves, with a different world for every taste.

One interesting tidbit about SRT is that 70 per cent of its scripts are written by people under 35, a ratio that suggests a definitely contemporary orientation. And the shows will have some good advance publicity as well; Sears will be mailing schedules to its 22 million credit card customers and will promote the call letters and frequency of local stations in its newspaper advertising.

Although the SRT will differ in many ways from its predecessors in the early days of radio, it does share one thing in common with them. Nearly all the sound effects will be generated during the production sessions, with only a small fraction of the effects to be added in post-production.

Sci-Fi Serial

Over the hill in the San Fernando Valley, the ratio is roughly reversed by another production company, with the vast majority of effects being created in lengthy post-production sessions.

The series is called *"Alien Worlds,"* and as the title suggests it's a science fiction adventure. It is also one of the most dazzling displays of stereo sound effects wizardry in

Alien Worlds **music director and executive producer Tom Rounds (left) listens to a music track with conductor Richard Holmes, composer James Kirk and engineer Dick Lewzey.**

Conferring over a *World At Our Fingertips* script are (from left to right) engineer Bob Luttrell, actress Judith Doty, actress Susan Davis and production head Don Hills.

the history of radio. Produced by Watermark *("American Top 40"* and *"American Country Countdown"), "Alien Worlds"* is an attempt to take the technology of the modern recording studio and apply it to radio drama. Although the show will air on both sides of the radio band, it's likely to find its best environment on FM radio.

Lee Hansen, the show's creator and producer, is clearly hoping to take advantage of the tremendous growth in home stereo systems over the past few years, not to mention the explosion of interest in science fiction itself. If things go according to his plan, all those expensive woofers and tweeters that have been so faithfully reproducing Linda Ronstadt and Steely Dan will suddenly be booming out the dark plottings of the Marcab Confederacy and the faster-than-light passage of "Delta One" through the space-time continuum.

Although the stereo effects are impressive, Hansen and crew hope to do more than simply dazzle the listener's ear. They also hope to spark the imagination: *"Alien Worlds"* takes place in the 21st century, on the other side of an earthly cataclysm that finally brings home the insanity of nuclear war. The budget, in the $200,000 range, should more than sustain the first 13 episodes of the weekly half-hour offering.

Unlike the Sears project, *"Alien Worlds"* will not air over a network. Instead, Watermark is syndicating it directly to the stations. Cashing in on a solid record as a music program syndicator, Watermark has sold the show in 155 markets and the serial made its debut in early January. Significantly, New York, Boston, Los Angeles, Detroit, San Francisco and Chicago are included among that first wave. *"Alien Worlds"* is thus spared the fate of hovering in the hinterlands while the major markets wait and see what happens.

For the month of January, the well-known candy maker, Peter Paul/Cadbury, is acting as national sponsor and the series is offered on a barter basis. Though virtually all formats are represented among stations airing *"Alien Worlds,"* Watermark says the series is most popular among AOR outlets.

Stations tend to schedule the series Saturday and Sunday nights. "On the weekends, people are all 'TV'd' out and radio drama is more conducive," noted Marley Brant, of Watermark.

The project is being assembled with the kind of zeal that has been missing from radio for too long. When Watermark was unable to find the appropriate effect for a spaceship interior, Hansen's crew invaded an empty tanker in the L.A. harbor and recorded the desired sounds there. The music for the series comes from an original score entitled "The Alien Worlds Suite," recorded in England by the Westminster Sinfonia, a 57-piece symphony orchestra. Providing the main theme music and various mood setting pieces, the original score is believed to be the most elaborate and costly to produce in the history of dramatic radio.

Radio Soap Opera

Just to make sure that listeners' heartstrings didn't go untugged, Studiohouse Radio in Hollywood is packaging a soap opera for radio called *"The World At Our Fingertips."* If *"Alien Worlds"* is hoping to tap the science fiction boom, *"The World . . ."* is attempting to tap the tremendous growth of women's awareness. The program is aimed at a mid-day audience and vows to explore a wide range of topics ranging from rape to women in business to divorce to alchoholism. It will also be an unabashed attempt to bring all the drama and pathos of the contemporary soap opera to radio.

To strengthen the show's female appeal, producer George Gilbreath gave the head writers positions to two women, both of whom are experienced in scripting TV soaps. The show will center around the advertures of Barbara Lamont, a divorcee building a new life among "the private clubs and sprawling offices" of Los Angeles.

Studiohouse is in the process of lining up a national sponsor before syndicating the program nationally. About a quarter of the 429 stations airing the syndicator's *"Heartbeat Theater,"* a public service drama concerned with contemporary social problems, have been contacted about the new series, which is scheduled to make its debut this summer. Interest in such series is great, according to producer Gilbreath, because stations seek to diversify from music programming in innovative ways.

Gilbreath recommends stripping the radio soap at mid-day and then repeating it during the evening. "It's the old Million Dollar Movie concept that the RKO Television Stations have used so successfully for 25 years," he explained. "You get that unduplicated cume audience and then combine the numbers when selling it."

Because nothing is static in the pulsating world of 20th century electronic entertainment, radio drama may indeed be about to seek out a new niche for itself.

So keep you ears wide open in 1979. After all, hearing is believing. □□□

THE PRODUCTION OF THE MIDNIGHT SPECIAL

by Steve Barnett/Photos by Pamela Mahl

Rock and roll and television have a history of not getting along. From *Shindig* and *Hullabaloo* in the sixties to *In Concert* in the seventies, regularly-scheduled series built primarily around rock music have failed to pull the ratings necessary to stay on the air. Audience demographics have been regarded as too narrow by network programmers and the production requirements of television are often seen as too much trouble by many big names in rock music.

And yet, *The Midnight Special* is well into its sixth season on NBC, the only rock show on network television. Its time-slot is still the original 1 a.m. slot on Friday nights and the format is basically unchanged: 90-minutes of popular music, some country and jazz, but mostly rock. The reasons for the success of the program are hard to pin down, even for its co-producer, Neal Marshall.

"Who knows what the reasons are?" he said. "Following *The Tonight Show* certainly helps a show get established. Also, we went on at a time when the only competition we had was from local movies, not another network show. We had a chance to build our own audience, which is a heavy record buying audience, and now the show stands pretty much on its own."

The Midnight Special was developed by Burt Sugarman, the show's owner and executive producer, along with Stan Harris, the original producer-director.

The first episode aired on January 23, 1973, with Helen Reddy as host and Wolfman Jack as the announcer and MC. Aside from a brief time when Helen Reddy acted as permanent host, the show's concept has remained the same. A different act plays host each week to other bands and artists, usually of the same music style or

Marshall serves as the program's writer, as well as handling the actual television studio production duties. His background includes acting as associate producer of a local New York televison show and for Bobby Darin's variety series, serving as co-producer for the closed-circuit broadcast of the first Ali/Frazier fight, involvement with some game shows and, most recently, with taping concerts for Home Box Office.

Co-producer Debi Genovese is responsible for booking and coordinating the talent for the show. Her numerous contacts at record labels, at management firms, and elsewhere in the music and recording industry are invaluable to this end.

Choosing A Host

Assembling an episode of *The Midnight Special* begins with the selection of a host. This, according to Genovese, can be an involved and almost intangible art.

"We go by a lot of things," she said. "What's happening in the charts, how many records a group is selling, what their concert draw is and their personalities — the people themselves. For the hosts, it's more instinct, I think, than anything else. We had Eddie Money host, and maybe he hadn't sold that many records, but he had a great personality, and he was 'that' kind of an act."

Genovese then takes her choice to Sugarman.

"Sometimes it's really very hard to sell Burt," Genovese said. "At times he wants a lot of middle-of-the-road and sometimes he will go for the rock and roll. I have to convince him, and then go to the band's people and talk them into it."

This can involve much diplomacy because as a fringe-time program, *The Midnight Special* has a budget roughly one-third to one-half that of a comparable prime-time show. Consequently, the talent receives only union minimums for appearing. The major benefit to the artists comes from the appearance helping to promote a tour or the release of a record, or just exposure.

The Atlanta Rhythm Section, a group with a double-platinum album on the charts, was a recent choice as host. Genovese approached the group through contacts at the band's record label, Polydor.

"We wanted the band to appear because they've had a lot of success with records; but, I felt, they needed to get some more personality across to the audience and their fans, as well as enlarge their audience," said Len Epand, vice president for West Coast publicity for Polydor Records.

Often, to help convince an artist to appear, the producers of the show will schedule the telecast of an episode to coincide with the publicity campaign of the singer or band. This is usually reserved for the host of an episode, as was in the cases of Ted Nugent and Eddie Money, although accommodations have been made for other guests. In many cases, labels will even place radio or television spots promoting their act's appearance on *The Midnight Special*.

"We work together with record labels," said Genovese, "because we want it to air at the right time, too. They want it to air, usually, just after the record's out, which is what we want, so it usually works out."

"We try to create some kind of synergy," added Epand, "making a group seem like they're happening in order to get them happening."

Creating Theme Shows

Once the host for an episode has been booked, Genovese begins working on who the guest acts will be. Specific theme shows, such as '50's rock 'n roll or disco, will narrow the field.

"We really try to put together shows that make sense," said Marshall. "For instance, in the show hosted by Atlanta Rhythm Section, they'll be appearing with acts like Sea Level and Ambrosia, and we'll be putting in a salute to the Beach Boys. As a result, that show will have a very pop feel to it.

Comics were once used, but now, said Marshall, they appear very rarely. He explained, "We've found that at one o'clock in the morning, the attention span is quite limited and our policy has been to get away from comedians. It's not fair to them, and it's not good for the show."

Once an act indicates it will appear, scheduling can present problems.

Wolfman Jack tapes a segment with Sea Level at *The Midnight Special* studio in Burbank, Calif.

"Who's available when we're available?" explained Marshall. "*The Midnight Special* is just another stop on the road for most of the acts with whom we deal, and we must coordinate times and dates to make sure that they work out with the studio time we have available at NBC."

The cost of assembling a group with equipment is substantial. But if a group is on the West Coast for a tour anyway, making a stop at NBC's studios in Burbank, California, for a spot on national television becomes easier and more attractive.

Some acts, though, will make a special trip, Genovese points out, as doing *The Midnight Special* is a very important promotion. On the other hand, there are certain bands, which, for scheduling or artistic reasons, choose not to go to NBC to tape segments for the program, though Marshall and Genovese will would like to use them on the show.

Using 'Outside' Material

"We are dependent on outside material now," said Marshall, "because many bands have decided to take television production into their own hands. Rather than coming into a television studio and taping under that time pressure, they feel that if they can hire a production company to go out with them for a day or a day-and-a-half and just work on them, they will get what they like.

"For instance, on the show that Daryll Hall and John Oates hosted for us, we ran a concert piece that featured Heart. Heart's production company put it together and it was beautiful, just beautiful. My preference is to do it live in the studio whenever possible, but once in a while you get material that you look at and say, 'Jeez, we have to use that.'"

These outside films or tapes are often supplied by the band's management firm or record label. Genovese and Marshall are aware of which of these segments are available, and they consider them when assembling episodes of their program.

Honoring Famous Artists

A trademark of *The Midnight Special* are the special feature salutes to various groups and solo artists. They are now handled by Marc Robertson, who is also the second stage manager for the program. Robertson will develop questions with Marshall, and then go over them with Wolfman Jack, who will conduct the interview.

"The concept is a salute to an artist and their history," said Robertson. "We do an interview with them, and I gather outside footage and edit it together with the interview."

The artists themselves are consulted on the content of the salutes, as it is often their companies who supply the outside material edited together with the interview. At times, their representatives sit-in during the final editing.

As in the case of Gary Busey, star of *The Buddy Holly Story*, the salutes have consisted only of the interview itself. The format varies from artist-to-artist. Their placement in the show, again, depends on the theme and host of the particular episode.

The Midnight Special tapes every other week on Monday and Tuesday. Essentially one episode is taped each day.

"We try, whenever possible," said Marshall, "to have the acts who are going to be in one show tape together on the same day. It gives us a live feel, and we are really after a live feel on the show."

As soon as an act is booked, Marshall and Genovese begin the process of selecting the material to be performed.

"Most of the time," said Marshall, "we try to do what the group wants to do, but sometimes it takes going back and forth. The manager discusses the songs with Debi, she and I listen to the songs, and it's mutually worked out."

With the host act, Marshall tries to open with something instantly identifiable and usually upbeat.

A problem that can arise for Marshall and the artists is censorship. Some songs that receive popular AM radio airplay will not wash with NBC Broadcast Standards and Practices.

The line, "It's a bitch girl," in Hall and Oates song, "Rich Girl," was interpreted by the censor as referring to the girl in the song, though it is really referring to life in general. In this case the artists, with Marshall's support, refused to delete the line and Marshall had to take his case to higher executives at the network. But the decision of the censor was upheld, so the offending word was changed to "britch" in a post-production session.

Once song selection is completed, production assistant Bob Spina will type the

lyrics into script format, while Robertson, either by phone or in person, will get the set up and draw a diagram of the band's stage layout. A decision is also made, based on Robertson's information, as to which area in the studio the band will be set up for taping.

Four Stages On Set

There are four areas or stages in *The Midnight Special* studio. These are platforms about four-feet high on which the bands perform. The platforms with the most room are at the far ends of the studio and are numbered one and three. Areas two and four are smaller and are along the sides of the stage.

Area One has an art deco set built around it and is the home base for the show. It is reserved usually for the hosts of the show that week. The four-area concept was developed by the program's original art director, Roy Christopher.

All platforms are not necessarily up at one time. In fact, if an area is not required during audience taping, it will be struck for easier camera movement. The studio audience sits on the floor on vinyl mats in the center of the studio, between the different areas.

Often, scheduling dictates that a band be set up on an area platform that is smaller than they usually work with. In those cases, said Robertson, they squeeze the band a little more than usual, but try to keep the set up as close to the act's concert layout as possible.

"They're easier to shoot when they're tight," he added, "so it can be an advantage."

Two Unions Represent Artists

Pre-production covers other areas, as well. As associate producer, Loretta Strickland is responsible for assembling the production staff, riding the budget, securing facilities and coordinating the various unions. In the latter capacity, she must see that all the performers receive the proper compensation based on the applicable union scale. She also must verify the membership of the artists as well as request any waivers required for a performer.

Another consideration worked out at this point is selecting members of the host act to handle speaking chores.

"Most of the time," said Genovese, "when a group hosts, they divide it up between two or three members. It's really easy because doing that, they don't do much more talking than they probably would in concert. It's just intros, and we've found, anyway, the shorter the intros, the better."

With the material selected, a rundown sheet is prepared for each show, with each item or segment listed numerically in order of their appearance in the final edited episode. Every item — the songs, introductions, salutes and commercials — is timed as a unit and is figured into total elapsed time for the show. For example, in show #294, Daryll Hall's song, "August Day," will last 4 minutes and 26 seconds, and will bring the show at that point to a total of 34 minutes and 23 seconds.

An RCA TK-44-A camera pulls back on a Chapman Sidewinder Dolly while a hand-held TK-45-P is trained on the band.

Scripts are put together for the day's taping and will include song lyrics, as well as the introductions and promos to be read by the host act and Wolfman Jack. If, for scheduling or other reasons, a segment is to be taped for placement in another show, it will be included in the taping day's script with the different day of air noted.

"The Thursday or Friday before we go into the studio," said Strickland, "we have a production meeting with our own staff to go over everything we plan on doing."

Also at this meeting is the show's art director, Linda Allen, who actually works for a free lance firm contracted by *The Midnight Special*. That company is owned by Ed Flesh.

Simplicity is the watchword for visual appearance. An art deco set is built around the home base stage where the host act performs, but most of the other bands use their concert set up on the stages. A white disc is hung behind the act, with its name projected on it.

In the case of Daryll Hall and John Oates, a design from their album cover was also used. The white disc was hung for the initial songs, but for the later numbers, a red "tear" was hung before the black backdrop. The tear resembles a lightning bolt that appeared on the cover of their album, "Along the Red Ledge," and was visible while Hall and Oates were performing tunes from that LP.

Several other pre-production meetings are held to determine equipment needs, establish staging requirements and make final script revisions. When the equipment of guest artists arrives, the show's crew and band's roadies work together in a unique relationship.

Roadies, Stagehands Cooperate

"We are a union house," explained Marshall. "There is NABET, which covers the technical crew, and IATSE Local 33, which cover the stagehands. Now the road managers come in with a certain set-up, and they can help to a certain extent before Local 33 takes over. Rolling into our sixth year, now, we have a fairly good system worked out where the roadies and the Local 33 people kind of work hand-in-hand, together."

"As long as we work together man-for-man, there's no problem," said properties master Dave Kitzmiller. At times, he said, tempers may be short because a road crew may be in the midst of a tour and steeped with fatigue. But, added Kitzmiller, "Ninety-five per cent of the time, things work great. We explain to the guys when they come in, and we put it all together and we get a show on."

An example of the strain a crew must endure with a touring band comes with the Atlanta Rhythm Section. The act puts in about 280 nights a year on the road. On Saturday, they set up and played a concert in Los Angeles, and packed up and left Sunday morning for a gig that night in San Francisco. Then they packed up again and returned to L.A. the next day for a Monday taping of *The Midnight Special*.

Lighting on the show varies from act-to-act, depending on the style of music and the makeup of the band. Director Tom Trbovich cites an example of lighting director John Nance's work.

"Daryll Hall and John Oates are the stars, though there is a group behind them," said Trbovich. "So the band is lit so that we can see what is going on in the background with

them, and Hall and Oates are lit with white light and cut out with the follow spots.

"Now when you look at the picture, they will be pulled out of this wash that's behind them. It's subliminal; you'll see that there's a band up there, but our stars will stand out from them."

Wardrobe, unless a chromakey effect is being taped, is left pretty much up to the artists, although Strickland likes to have each member of an act made up for their appearance. Nance will fine tune his lighting while the act goes into its runthrough of the songs to be taped. This will also serve as the first audio check.

Mixing Audio

Dave Cone is in charge of the audio on *The Midnight Special,* and has been mixing sound on the program for about a season. He uses a mixing panel built eight years ago for NBC that he said was "outdated" the day it was installed, and still turns in what his producer terms "one hell of a good live mix."

When a band comes on to tape, they usually bring along their concert sound mixer, and, at times, even their record producer, to see that the sound that is recorded is to their liking.

"Somebody from the group is always up there with him [Cone]," said Marshall, "and though the group's representative cannot physically operate the equipment, because we're a union house, in most instances, we're able to satisfy the group. Basically, the problems stem from the bands wanting to play a concert, and we can't give them concert sound down in that studio.

The "sound down there" is the monitor speakers pointed toward the talent on the stage so that they can hear what they're playing and how they sound. In an electric band, it is difficult to sing a tight harmony without a good mix in the monitors. If there is feedback, or a frequency is distorting, or the instruments are audible but not the vocals, it's easy for a singer to stray off key. For this reason a good stage mix is put at a premium by most of the acts that perform on *The Midnight Special.*

While Dave Cone mixes the sound that will eventually go out over the air, Red Roe has been successfully mixing the monitors and audience speakers for *The Midnight Special* since it began. Roe works out of a tower known as "The Condo" located in the corner between areas 2 and 3. There he operates a Kustom 24-track mixing console with a four-channel output capability, feeding Kustom speakers that use Electro-Voice components.

On top of The Condo is one of the two follow spots. The other is on another tower across the stage.

"The band's guy will come up and say, 'This is what we need. We need this equalization and that,' and I'll say, 'This is what I have,' and we work it out," said Roe.

As a back-up, Cone runs a 16-track recorder along with the video tape. On track one is a sync pulse and track 16 is time code numbers.

"If a group, at their own expense," said Marshall, "wants to re-mix, we have the 16-track back-up, and of the 16-tracks, they have 14 to work with." In such a case, the group would mix down to a mono track which is transferred to the video tape.

Though rare, there have been occasions where a singer will re-dub his or her voice, because they were dissatisfied with their performance. This occurred when one artist taped the show while suffering laryngitis. "It's a little difficult, but if you've got a day in a recording studio with the state-of-the-art now, you can go in and out with no problems at all," said Cone.

On Stage Sound Equipment

Bands do occasionally want to use their own equipment. Both Cone and Roe agree this presents no problems if they are notified

Director Tom Trbovich discusses shots with associate director Ellen Brown.

in advance and as long as the band is aware that NBC technicians must run the equipment.

"Some bands are uptight about having their own stuff," said Cone. "They're just uncomfortable unless they see the same configuration. And if they've been on television before, they want the same look.

"I believe it was the Electric Light Orchestra," added Cone. "They have enough speakers to blow this building right out of here. Every time they come in, they put these enormous 12-foot high columns all around the stage, and then they have eight-by-four monitor speakers put up behind the drummer.

"And we never patch them in. I wouldn't dare to. They're never wired up, and our little Kustom Slopes are just hidden down beneath the picture. But that's their look."

Power Levels Create Problems

"Doing a television show is different from doing a rock concert," said Tim Quealy, NBC unit manager for the show. "Loud noise levels don't make it here. We don't need that volume, first of all; and second, the cameras are so delicate that if they get high-level vibration like that in the air, you can actually see it in the picture."

He continued, "It's called microphonics. They're lines and look like transmission problems or sun spots if you see them at home. Consequently, we have to ask them to turn it down."

Miking presents its own problems as well, but based in the same area, levels.

"Most of the music groups that come through this show are rock and roll," explained Cone. "They're used to playing large halls and, therefore, they're using to running full bore through every amp they've got. The biggest problem in miking is trying to find a mike that will give you good, true reproduction and still be dead enough so that it won't pick up a lot of ambient noise."

The Miking Routine

Cone said that though the Shure 58 is not his favorite microphone, he finds it ideal for *The Midnight Special.*

"So we reached a compromise, and find the 58s very, very good for this show," he said. "They brought in a few other types, we've tried them, and keep going right back to the 58s. Never beat 'em yet."

Most of the audio pick ups on electric instruments are taken directly from the instruments themselves, bypassing the amplifiers on stage.

"We just put a little box between the amp and their ax [guitar]," explained Cone. "They plug into that box and then into the amp. Then they can do anything they want with that [stage] speaker; play it as loud as they want, but we get pure sound."

If the musician wants to air the sound that comes out of the stage amplifier/speaker combination, the loudspeaker is miked as well as a direct feed taken. Cone uses Shure SM 57s to mike loudspeakers.

"The only difference between that and a 58 is that the 58 has a big windscreen for the vocal," he explained.

"The best way to pick up an acoustic guitar, at this time anyway, is by using a sensitive omni mike that's tilted toward the high end. We usually wind up with an Electro-Voice RE15 about three-inches away from that hole and you get that actual acoustic sound. It's not particularly directional, but it's very good for picking up a broad spectrum. On any acoustic instrument you want to get as much of the harmonics as you can.

"On acoustic pianos, we've found by trial and error, that the best way to pick them up is to leave a crack of a half-an-inch or inch under the lid, never close it totally, and take a Sennheiser 211, a good, sensitive omni mike, and put it right over the third hole of the harp. That's counting from the left. We put a piece of sponge in and tip the mike down just a touch, not too much. It picks up all the harmonics off the inside of the lid. But if you close the lid, you go instant tub."

Cone concluded, "Bands may use electronic pickups, but we've had electronic problems with them. So even when they come in with pickups, we mike it anyway."

For miking drum kits, Cone uses Shure 57s more because he has them, than for any other reasons. He puts one or two on the tom-toms, one on the kick drum (if it's an open front kick drum, the mike is placed a few inches inside the enclosure); one overhead covering the cymbals; and one about an inch from the snare that usually picks up the high hat cymbal as well. He would recommend using E-V RE20s or

RE10s if available.

The Midnight Special avoids having artists do lip sync to their songs, for, as Marshall puts it, "You lose that live feeling." Singers and groups do, however, come in with tracks of pre-recorded music that they will sing live with, or play with as the case may be.

"Often, it's because they couldn't get the whole group here," said Cone, "or if the singer doesn't have a group."

Remote RF [radio frequency] microphones are not used on the show because of interference problems, but many electric guitarists do use RF devices instead of running a cable between the electric guitar and stage amplifier. For electric guitars, Cone simply makes hook-ups between the amp and the unit on the stage amplifier for a direct feed.

Cone, despite the praise accorded to him by other staff members, sees little change in audio's continued stepchild status in television.

"In television audio," he said, "you know you've done a good job when everybody says, 'That's a wrap,' and walk out that door and never speak to you. When they know your name, you've been in trouble. They never pay attention until something goes wrong."

Head mixer Dave Cone works the console for the final mix while producer Neal Marshall (standing left) discusses audio with representatives of two bands. Artists often have their road mixers in the booth with Cone, though only Cone is permitted to operate the equipment.

Planning Camera Shots

During the audio check while the act is running through its number, Trbovich watches the band from in front of the platform. With him are associate director Ellen Brown; technical director Bob Holmes; production assistant Janja Vujovich, and Strickland.

Vujovich, with a stop watch, checks the length of each tune, while Brown counts the bars in the song and notes the length of the different vocal spots, instrumental solos, who came in at what point and where the emphasis shifts during performance. Trbovich plans camera shots and angles, paying particular attention to Brown's notes. Vujovich advises Trbovich and Marshall if a song is not coming in at its proper length.

As the show is timed out so tightly in advance, basic time requirements must be adhered to in taping whenever possible. If a song comes up longer than originally planned, the artist is asked to trim the number, usually by eliminating or shortening solo spots.

While on the floor, Trbovich talks to the performers about the staging and discusses the shots with his camera personnel. He then goes back up into the booth to do camera blocking while the act repeats the song.

Trbovich's background includes a stint as a page at ABC, and being a production manager, stage manager, and associate director "on everything in the world." He got his directorial debut working Manhattan Transfer's summer variety show, and has worked almost every type of program since, including Home Box Office concerts. There he did, among others, Bette Midler's special.

Brown and Trbovich work closely to get the best camera shots of performers.

"I have a script," said Brown, "and I watch to see who's doing what, who's playing, who's singing, and I get the bar counts. In the booth, I feed Tommy what's coming up so he can get the cameras ready to go with what they're doing.

"With big groups with a lot of people," she said, "it's really hard to tell who's doing what when . . . and a lot of jazz groups don't do the same thing twice. They'll rehearse it one way and each time they do it, it's different. It's jazz."

Camera personnel on *The Midnight Special* are varied in age, sex and musical persuasion, but most enjoy the show. The only real complaint is the music levels, so they wear full coverage head sets.

The show uses three RCA TK 44-A cameras. One is on a pedestal positioned in the center of the studio when an audience is present. A Chapman Sidewinder dolly and crane is used to mount another. The third is on a Chapman Zeus crane. Also used are two hand-held RCA TK 45-P cameras. Different filters are often used to create rainbow and star effects.

Aiming For 'A Live Feeling'

Trbovich enjoys using the hand-held's either on the stage or down in the audience. They give the show more of a "live feeling," he said. Unlike a live concert, though, bands will often repeat a song to get a good take.

"We do re-takes about 40 per cent of the time; we want the groups to be happy when they leave," explained Trbovich. "So if audio's happy and the band's happy with what they did musically, then that's a buy. Those are the reasons we do re-takes, and it all depends on how much pre-time we have for Dave Cone to get his levels set."

Trbovich does miss covering live concerts at times.

"You're more controlled here in the studio," he explained, "but I think you lose a lot. You lose the enthusiasm of the people. You lose the enthusiasm of the performers. I'd love to go out and shoot a house with 15,000 people in it. Something happens there that you can't ever do here.

"Also, you're doing, essentially, a *live* show when you do that and everybody is up for it. That's what television should really be. If we did this show live, it would be a better show, and I can't tell you where, in what areas it would be better, but it would just give you that excitement, that electricity that doesn't happen on tape.

"I would say the main reason the show is done in the studio is dollars. To go to the Forum [a large Los Angeles area arena] and shoot the show, with only one stage and one act, you're looking at probably around $80,000. We have talked about it, though, and it may happen."

The afternoon of a typical production day

progresses as the acts, who for scheduling reasons cannot perform before the live audience, rehearse and tape. The other groups will rehearse and do camera blocking for their evening performances.

"The difference between doing *The Midnight Special* and playing the Santa Monica Civic is the cameras," noted Marshall. "Becoming camera aware takes a little training. Since we don't have a great deal of time, we try to get them to feel as much of a concert atmosphere as possible and then we'll cover what goes on."

Taping Short Spots

Toward the end of the day's taping, the host band or artist will record a series of introductions and announcements that will be dropped into the show during editing.

When the act calls it a wrap, Wolfman Jack comes on stage, and, with one camera going, tapes a series of announcements, promotions, introductions, and station breaks that will be used in episodes that have already been taped or are not yet in the can.

"In the last 10 or 11 months," said Marshall, "we've attempted to get more live integration of Wolfman into the show, him with the different bands. He's got an unusual amount of credibility, as he goes way back to the early days of rock and roll."

If the word is applicable, Wolfman Jack adds a sense of stability to the program, as he is the only continuing member of the cast.

"I think my major function on the show," offers Wolfman, "is tying it all together. The whole concept of the program is a different artist every week — seeing these people that play the music we like to hear — host the show. That's the whole idea behind it with me just tying it all together."

In re-running episodes of the show, the order of appearance of the artists may be changed or even the line-up itself. Marshall uses the Wolfman Jack spots to fill in the gaps resulting from such changes. This is also the case in the compilation episodes of the *The Midnight Special*, such as the anniversary show or the Million Seller Show. Any segments that are re-run require clearance with the various performers unions, and Strickland handles that, as well as clearances needed for any of the salutes.

Modest Post-Production

Post-production on the show is simple and takes only six to eight hours, including preparing the salute, if any.

The various segments are put together along with any others that were taped earlier or supplied from outside sources. Applause is laid down in segments where there was no audience and in transitions. No further audio enhancing or sweetening is done. The finished tape is turned over to Quealy and NBC to be aired.

Musicians' Viewpoint

The artists themselves, on whom all this attention is focused, have mixed feelings about appearing on television. Chuck

Red Roe mixes the audience and stage monitor sound on a Kustom 24-track console in "the Condo," a tower overlooking the stage.

Leavell is the leader and keyboard player for the band, Sea Level.

"I've done a bit of television before," he explained. "When I was 14 or 15 years old, I was in a band called 'The Misfits.' That was in Alabama, and we used to have our own TV show. It was funny, man, because we just were a copy band. We did Beatle songs and Johnny B. Good, and stuff like that. But it was good to get exposed to it, because it got rid of all the nervousness later."

Leavell also made television appearances on *In Concert* when he played with the Allman Brothers Band.

"The problem you run into with real professional network television is that they run on such a tight time schedule," he noted. "They really punch a clock, man, and you have to do things their way. They have their own unions, and when you want to set up your equipment the way that you're used to doing and it doesn't comply with their standards, you're out of luck.

"It's a drag to have to contend with that sort of thing, but I do enjoy it. I enjoy television. It's a whole different medium, and I'd like to get into it more." □□□

THE WASHINGTON CONNECTION — *Continued from page 4*

including data related to advertising rates and determinants thereof. The very same information is crucial for the Commission's understanding of the economic issues at stake in its Children's Inquiry.

So, once again, the Commission is turning out reams of paper and asking tons of questions. The provision of answers to those questions by the industry and the public will cost not an insignificant amount of money.

Therefore, while the President seeks to hold down inflation the Commission is issuing Notices and data requests that not only will cost the public and industry money for attorneys, economists, researches on children's television, advertising specialists, etc., but at the same time, is spending tax dollars to retain consultants and independent contractors to provide it with, in most instances, the very same information.

Enormous Consequences

Forgetting for a moment the immediate costs of such regulatory ventures, the potential long-term cost to the public and American economy of the possible rule changes under study would be enormous. For example, if the FCC were to reduce or ban (do not be deceived by the term "reduced" since the proponents of the reduction actually seek a total ban on such ads) advertising on children's commercials, there would be a "domino effect" throughout the commercial broadcasting system. Reduction in commercials would take millions of dollars out of the commercial broadcast industry and hence have a negative impact on the quality and quantity of children's television programs; be anti-competitive since smaller and newer advertisers would have to pay higher costs for the same commercial; add to an increase in prices for previously advertised products due to lack of consumer familiarity; and also, have a severe economic impact on independent television stations since approximately 30 to 40 per cent of their revenues come from children's television program revenues.

The impact to our economy of some of the children's advertising proposals considered by the FCC would be severe. It is estimated that between $145 and $238 million of revenue is produced from children's television advertising. If that is eliminated or severely reduced, someone will feel the pain. The ripple effect on advertisers, agencies, broadcasters, children's programming, the creative community and ultimately to the public, would not be small. The effect on children, parents, manufacturers and retailers would be significant since children's advertising has positive benefits for all.

So, on the one hand Big Brother says, "Hold the Line;" on the other he says, "Give Us More Information No Matter What the Cost." Doesn't it seem more logical for the FCC to suspend its Children's Inquiry until *BOTH:* 1) its own study, research and contracted studies have been completed and a report issued, and, 2) its Network Inquiry has been completed so that it will understand all of the economic ramifications of its policies on networking and children's television advertising to the public and the industry?

Logic would seem to dictate that result. However, who has ever said that when you deal with Big Brother you deal with Logic? □□□

TEST SIGNAL GENERATOR PREVENTS TELEVISION CROSS-FEEDS

A new device for television studios and mobile units that originates identified signals to prevent cross-feeds is being introduced by QSI Systems, Inc., of West Newton, Massachusetts.

The QSI CB 8000 Color Bar Identifier is a color bar and character generator combined with an

audio signal source to originate an identified television source from any location. Compact, it is ideal for mobile units, studios or operations centers integrating many color sources. For microwave transmission, the unit provides a final system check and identifies microwave links in compliance with FCC regulations.

The 19 x 1¾ x 9-inch rack mountable QSI CB 8000 has a standard ASCII character generator with on board programming and a 600 ohm balanced +18 dBm 400 Hz audio tone generator with mike input. The video signal is standard 525/60 NTSC color sync with bars generated in accordance with EIA-RS-189 specifications. All solid state, the unit operates on 100 VAC at 1.0 amps.

The QSI CB 8000 Color Bar Identifier is priced at $1,595.00. Literature is available on request.

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(617) 969-7118

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STEREO RELIGIOUS MUSIC SERIES AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC SERVICE USE

"Music in the Reformation Tradition," a series of 10 half-hour stereo programs featuring the choral works of Lutheran composers, is being made available as a public service by the Lutheran Church in America. The series is designed specifically for classical music stereo radio outlets. Performances are by The Heritage, a Philadelphia area choir formed in late 1975 to mark Lutheran participation in the settling of early colonies in the new world.

Howard W. Coleman, associate director of LCA's Department of Press, Radio and TV, describes the purpose and format of the new series: "We taped all of the recording sessions of the group with high quality stereo equipment — even though we had no immediate use for the stereo form in our monaural production. The format of *Music in the Reformation Tradition* focuses on the music. I ask the music director of The Heritage choir an occasional question, based on what I think the listener might want to know; he responds with some of the background of the composer, the style, the voicings — in other words, the distinctive quality of the musical subject."

Dr. Robert Bornemann, music director of the choir, continues: "Each program will have a definite theme: settings of psalms by six composers, for example; also the traditional 'Good Christian Men, Rejoice' as scored in different centuries. A very special program is 'A Little Advent Music,' a 20-minute treatment of the Advent story by the 20th century German composer Hugo Distler."

The *Music in the Reformation Tradition* series will be available without charge to stereo radio outlets on a one-to-a-market basis. Contact Howard W. Coleman at:

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231 MADISON AVENUE
NEW YORK, NY 10016

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TEAC/TASCAM MASTERING DECK — 35-2

TEAC/Tascam Series is debuting the 35-2, a new mastering deck with optional dbx, a rugged transport system and an electronics package that includes full logic with motion sensing, up-front bias and EQ controls, and a separate ¼-track playback head to complement the ½-track record/play head. The suggested retail price is $1,000.00.

The reliable transport system, evolved from TEAC Japan's years of engineering data

processing and computer processing units, features a DC-servo capstan motor, eddy current induction reel motors with tension-servo, a feather-touch logic control system with motion-sensing direct mode changes, four high-density permaflux heads for 2-track record/play and 4-track play, pitch control for accurate tuning of the tape speed, punch-in recording facility, cueing and editing, and flip-up head cover for easy editing and maintenance. The unit is boxed in rosewood.

On the electronics side, the 35-2 features optional plug-in dbx noise reduction cards, six-step bias selector and variable REC EQ control for precise matching of the deck to various tapes, 3-position monitor switch for source/cal/ouput, independent left and right level controls for input and output, and wide excursion VU with LED peak indicators.

The separate transport and electronics design reportedly allow more flexibility in installation.

The 35-2 accepts 10½ and 7-inch reels, has a wow and flutter of 0.03% at 15 ips, overall frequency response of 40 to 22,000 Hz at 15 ips, signal-to-noise ratio of 100 dB with dbx, overall harmonic distortion of 0.6% at normal operating level, and stereo channel separation of 50 dB/1,000 Hz. The unit measures 18-13/16" x 16½" x 10½" and weighs 72¾ pounds.

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The Spectra Sound 1000B graphic equalizer incorporates the latest in Bi-FET circuit technology. Wide bandwidth, low noise (-100

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NEW "LIGHT PALETTE" MEMORY SYSTEM ALLOWS SIX SIMULTANEOUS, SEPARATELY TIMED LIGHTING ACTIONS IN A SINGLE CUE

A new lighting control memory system, allows lighting designers to program six simultaneous, separately timed lighting actions in a single cue.

The six parts of the cue need not start or end at the same time, but all are activated with a single button. They may be up fades or down fades with separate times, delayed fades, or individual fades and a range in speed from instant on-off actions to very slow fades.

Besides this remarkable capability, the new system, Light Palette, provides another unique advantage, according to its manufacturer. It can eliminate the need for writing cue sheets, thus saving hours of writing time. Two built-in display screens display all the information for any cue, as well as the complete running cue sheet and actual stage intensities. The operator has access to any cue in the memory at any time during, or prior to,

the performance, and has full manual over-ride control of all automatic functions.

Light Palette has the capacity to control up to 512 dimmers. It also can electronically patch the dimmers into any convenient number of control channels for ease of operation. The patching is accomplished from the control console and can be quickly changed for each show.

The Light Palette has a built-in disc which records all performance information for library storage, but data is stored in, and played back from, solid state memory.

The Light Palette is available for demonstration at any Strand Century office. Also available is a full color illustrated brochure on the system.

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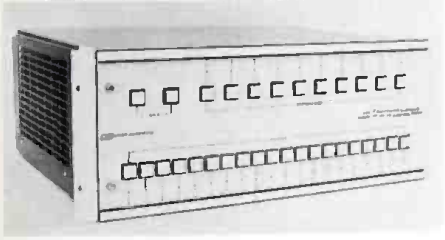
ELMWOOD PARK, NJ 07407
(201) 791-7000

Circle No. 18 on Product Info. Card.

UTAH SCIENTIFIC INTRODUCES COMPACT ROUTING SWITCHERS

Utah Scientific has introduced its new CAV-7 series of compact audio and video routing switchers. These new switchers utilize the same circuit cards and perform to the same broadcast specifications as the firm's larger AVS-1 series switchers. They are packaged in a 7-inch rack mount chassis and are available in seven basic configurations for video-only, audio-only,



audio/video, and tally voltage switching. Maximum matrix sizes are 20 x 10 audio/video, 50 x 10 video or audio-only, and 20 x 20 video or audio-only.

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PERSONAL COMPUTERS EXPAND INTO BROADCASTING

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