

Opposing viewpoint. KWGN-TV Denver was just about deserted at 2 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 7, except for the engineers running the tape of *Don Kirshner's Rock Concert*, when a woman walked into the master control room. She said something like, "You're not going to show this," and started to pull video tape off the VTR. The technicians called police, who came and took her to a hospital where she is under observation. The show went on after a loss of about three minutes of tape.

launch the nine-hour miniseries, *The Captains and the Kings* (Thursday, 9-11 p.m.), which will then be played off in the weekly *Best Sellers* time period (Thursday, 10-11 p.m.).

Two other returning NBC series will double their lengths to hypo audience interest: *Sanford and Son* (Friday, 8-8:30 p.m.) starts with a 60-minute segment shot in Hawaii, and *Police Woman* makes its new-season debut with a two-hour show (Tuesday, Sept. 28, 9-11 p.m.).

NBC's theatrical movie line-up is dominated by the two-part telecast of "Gone With the Wind" early in November, but right off the bat two big disaster movies will take dead aim at the Nielsens: "Earthquake," which will be telecast in two parts on separate Sundays (Sept. 26 and Oct. 3), and "Airport '75" (slated for Monday, Sept. 20). Other early movies include "Big Jake" (John Wayne), "Breakout" (Charles Bronson) and the made-for-TV "Dawn: Portrait of a Teen-Age Runaway."

Multipart made-for-TV movies on which Irwin Segelstein is high include "Sibyl" (Sally Field as a woman whose personality contains more than a dozen different identities) and "The Moneychangers," a six-and-a-half-hour film based on Arthur Hailey's best-seller.

With a weekly *Big Event* time slot (Sunday, 9:30-11 p.m.) to fill, NBC has special projects coming out of its ears—everything from a four-hour celebrity-filled salute to NBC's 50th anniversary to a three-hour wallow in nostalgia based on the "Life Goes to the Movies" coffee-table volume.

■ **Front-loading, hypoing, cross-pollinating, counterprogramming:** These kinds of gimmicks will dominate the prime-time schedules for the first few weeks of the season. But all three programing heads—Mr. Silverman at ABC, Mr. Segelstein at NBC and Bud Grant, CBS's vice president for programing—say the network that will end up in first place when the dust settles will be the one that has the most popular regularly scheduled series, the programs that win their time periods week in and week out.

For example, Mr. Grant says CBS's best new series is *Delvecchio* (Sunday, 10-11 p.m.), starring a young character actor, Judd Hirsch, who plays a big-city detective

with a law degree. But the show is up against the last hour of the *ABC Sunday Movie* and against the last hour of NBC's *Big Event*. So Mr. Grant's strategy is to "whet people's appetites" by previewing *Delvecchio* on Thursday, Sept. 9 (9-10 p.m.), against weak competition and then riding out the expected low Sunday ratings for a few weeks until ABC's movies begin to thin out and NBC's events start diminishing in bigness.

Conversely, Mr. Grant says he won't feel at all squeamish about giving a quick hook to a series that is neither an artistic success nor a winner in the Nielsens. Waiting in the wings at CBS and ready for full-time duty as early as October are Lorimar Productions' hard-action hour, *Hunter* (title still tentative), starring James Franciscus and Linda Evans as undercover agents involved in *Mission: Impossible*-type assignments; CBS's in-house production *The Andros Targets* (Bob Sweeney is executive producer), which follows the fortunes of an investigative reporter for a newspaper like the *New York Times* (it's based on the career of *Timesman* Nicholas Gage); *Mad's House*, a half-hour sitcom from Paramount Pictures Television starring Maureen Stapleton as the proprietress of a boarding house filled with crackbrained tenants, and a half-hour variety show featuring the Jackson Five (which had a disappointing summer tryout; the new version will focus on the three most talented Jacksons, Michael, Randy and Janet, Mr. Grant says).

Mr. Segelstein says he's not going to flex a quick trigger finger this fall. Because of all the front-loading, "I don't contemplate fast cancellations," he says. But, he adds, "I'm ready for all contingencies." Three sitcoms are available for instant placement on the schedule, should they be needed, he says: *The MacLean Stevenson Show* (a Monty Hall production), about the tribulations of a family man who tries early retirement; *Sirota's Court*, from Universal Pictures Television, starring Michael Constantine (*Room 222*) as a night-court judge, and Aaron Ruben's *CPO Sharkey*, with Don Rickles as a Sgt. Bilko-type chief petty officer.

Fred Silverman's inclination is also, he says, to give a series a chance to find its audience before yanking it. But "we've got the projects to choose from, to meet any and all of our programing needs," he adds. His rundown includes Bud Yorkin's *What's Happening*, a sitcom about black high-school students, which is scoring big ratings in its summer tryout so far; a *Happy Days* spinoff focusing on the Fonz's love, Pinky Truscadero; and three other sitcom spinoffs featuring Lt. Fish from Danny Arnold's *Barney Miller*; Horshack from Jimmie Komack's *Welcome Back, Kotter* and Epstein from that same series. Two hot prospects for ABC in the 60-minute form include Lorimar's *Eight Is Enough* (a newspaperman with eight children) and Ed Friendly Productions' *The Young Pioneers*, about post-Civil War homesteading out West by a young married couple.

MCA gets into novels-for-TV act via syndication

It may produce at least one miniseries along the lines of 'Rich Man'; may do more; 19 stations, including three network affiliates, are backing

A consortium of television stations—16 independents and three network affiliates—and MCA TV are two-thirds of the way toward a decision to produce one or more miniseries for first-run, prime-time broadcast. Should it come to pass, it would mark the most ambitious effort to date to produce "quality" entertainment off the networks.

Those stations already aboard account for 40% of U.S. TV homes. In dollar terms, they would produce two-thirds of the revenues needed to support such a series. How many additional stations would be needed to bring the list to par would, of course, depend on their market sizes.

These miniseries, said Lou Friedland, the president of MCA TV, "will be budgeted to deliver the type of casting" and "the production quality" of a *Rich Man*, *Poor Man*, Universal's novel-for-television that scored huge national Nielsens on ABC-TV last winter and fetched big prices when MCA sold it to the ABC-owned stations earlier this month.

The charter 19 stations have already committed themselves to put up substantial sums of money for what could end up as television adaptations of two best-selling novels that MCA's Universal Pictures Television would turn into a pair of six-hour made-for-TV movies, according to various sources familiar with the negotiations.

The independent stations most active in this project, which MCA has dubbed "Operation Prime Time," are WPIX(TV) New York, KCOP(TV) Los Angeles, WGN-TV Chicago, KTVU(TV) San Francisco and KSTW-TV Seattle. The three network-affiliated stations included among the first 19 signees are WIICTV Pittsburgh (an NBC affiliate), WDAF-TV Kansas City (NBC) and WPRI-TV Providence, R.I. (CBS).

"In today's climate, we won't have any trouble getting advertisers," says Levitt Pope, the president of WPIX.

It still hasn't been worked out yet, the sources say, whether the stations will try to get national sponsors to buy chunks of the two series, or whether the stations will get to sell all the minutes to local or national-spot advertisers in each individual market.

Also, Mr. Friedland says MCA hasn't decided yet which novels are to be used in Operation Prime Time. But if all goes according to schedule, he adds, the first program in the project could make it on the air as early as May 1977.

By running it in May, the consortium