

## Nobody is taking the U's lightly any more—the V's are alerted to get more aggressive

made a reputation for the U in the market. As an added repercussion, an independent competitor has just invested more than a million dollars to upgrade the area of programing that originally made it successful in the later afternoon time periods but which, just prior to the U's entrance, it was allowing to fade.

Nobody is taking the U's lightly any more. All the V's are alerted to get more aggressive. It happened over a short period of time and it's going to happen in other markets, too.

The same changes that reshaped radio are coming to television. That's not to say that CBS or NBC or ABC are going out of business, but things are going to be different. Fifteen years ago, who was aware and sharp enough to think that Gordon McLendon and Todd Storz would come along and knock the tar out of the network O&O radio stations with 5 kw and 15-man organizations? Who are the Storz and McLendons of the future in television? They haven't been heard from yet, but probably they'll be the people who will supply the programing that so far remains unsighted on the horizon.

For programing is the real key to UHF's future. And when the feature films run out and sports wear thin and there's little else of value available to justify high costs, programing answers will have to be found. They will be. The new breed of UHF operator is convinced that all programing doesn't have to be done by Robert Montgomery and 90,000 guys on a studio lot at Fox.

The new stations are all trying to build a franchise and acceptable programing is one of the cornerstones. Indeed, some look beyond mere acceptability, they want the spectacular—like bullfights with no blood spared, something that will hypo set sales and draw attention to themselves. They don't care how many ASPCA protests come in just so their call letters get bandied about. The striving in every instance is for a way to viability, a means to hang on until set penetration increases and the competitive odds are more equal.

The turns and twists that are being taken in the pursuit of programing identities are sometimes frantic, often ingenious and nearly always smack of improvisation. There are ethnic stations and ones that emphasize sports almost to the exclusion of everything else and feature movie stations and even "art" movie ones. It's reported that one UHF applicant in the Southwest hopes to take to the air soon with an all-news format and another yet-to-be-born U, this one in the South, may show little else other than country and western music programs. As an example of classic resourcefulness,

twice a week, WTAJ-TV Marion, Inc., programs still pictures of new-born local babies and has it sponsored by a clothing retailer.

The point is that many of these stations have to get on the air because the FCC is on their backs pressing for action. They see nothing available in the film area at a realistic price, certainly nothing extraordinary enough to make anybody watch them. Some of the feature and syndicated film peddlers expect the U to start off paying the same rate as a V in the market without regard to circulation differences. The problem becomes how to give viewers a good reason to watch the new station in town without going broke paying for that reason.

### ONE MAN'S MONEY

This is how much capital investment one new UHF group operator—D. H. Overmyer Communications Co.—thinks is needed to come on the air as a first-class citizen. The object is to put together a good technical package, one that's equal in quality to any network station in the country and capable of producing a top-notch picture in the home. "It's not a gold-plated Cadillac," observes consulting engineer Rodney Chipp, "but it isn't a Studebaker, either. It's more like an Oldsmobile." The estimated capital costs for putting a lower-priced, economy model station on the air: \$350,000.

Station Cost	Price
Sub-system	
1. 30 kw transmitter	\$203,546
50 gain antenna line	100,000
tower	35,000
	<b>110,000</b>
	<b>\$448,546</b>
2. 3 studio cameras (monochrome)	50,000
3. Film equipment (color capability)	104,329
4. Tape equipment	150,250
5. Audio equipment	12,500
6. Master control (preset memory capability for 10 events)	63,000
	<b>\$380,079</b>
7. Microwave (station lines and remote)	31,656
8. Lighting	11,334
9. Editing-preview	3,780
10. News film	4,040
11. Test equipment	3,500
12. Mobile unit (custom-built)	7,500
	<b>\$61,810</b>
13. Transmitter building (2,500 sq. ft.)	35,000
14. Land improvement	10,000
15. Installation materials	3,500
16. Transmitter installation	3,500
17. Studio installation (one 40' x 60'; another smaller for newscasts)	8,000
18. Contingency and miscellaneous	10,000
	<b>\$70,000</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$960,435</b>

One of the obvious places to cut a corner is daytime. If they could, some U's wouldn't go on until sunset and the majority of them, it seems, have abandoned these early time periods without much of an attempt at combativeness. WHS-TV Boston is a commercial station but it doesn't sell its time until school lets out each afternoon. It produces ETV programs until 3 p.m.

"Why should I fool around with product that costs money to divide a pie that's very small?" asks one new operator. Instead, many U's don't begin broadcasting until about three in the afternoon and even then they program meaningless things just for the sake of doing something.

Where the pressure from the commission to activate a CP is particularly intense yet the current chances for acceptance in that market particularly bleak, a U—not willing to lose what someday is likely to be a valuable franchise—may write off a year or two of operation and just go through the motions of programing throughout the day.

Says an operator who faces just such a dilemma: "We'll run *Industry on Parade* backwards every night, do a lot of public service stuff. We'd rather it be almost unknown that we were there. We have to be realistic and write it off for a year as a loss factor, but we can't afford to let the franchise go."

The leader—maybe the lifeline—for many new U's is sports. It's what the new stations hang their promotional hats on, what makes people tune in and get to know the station. It's the most common denominator.

WKBD-TV, the Kaiser station in Detroit, went on the air last January with a format that actually was *The Wide, Wide World of Sports* every night of the week. Sports, the station found, could be done for an efficient economic rate (the station went out and did its own sports remotes using three crews, three vehicles, with three men to a crew and vehicle.) Sports could also make waves in a market which may have been somewhat denied that fare with the three affiliates reserving much of their time for network programing and the independent V, because it's licensed to Canada and is subject to that country's rules, restricted in its freedom of remote coverage and program and sponsor choice. Detroit Red Wing hockey, as illustration, had not been shown regularly in the market for years since the network stations couldn't clear the necessary time and the Canadian outlet—CKLW-TV Windsor, Ont.—has to untangle red tape when it crosses the border with its remote trucks.

Thanks to the new UHF and its all-sports format, one major manufacturer