

CABLE LOG

Pay-cables breathe easy sans Premiere

by ANN FERRAR

If you're a subscriber to either HBO, Showtime or the Movie Channel, you may have noticed a greater amount of film encores and/or unfamiliar titles in your program guide lately.

For the last several months, four major film studios have been withholding their movies from these pay-cable networks. Columbia Pictures, Paramount, 20th Century Fox and MCA combined forces with Getty Oil to form their own pay-cable channel, called Premiere, intended to commence operations this past Jan. 2nd. The main drawing card behind Premiere was an agreement giving it a nine-month exclusive jump on choice films produced by its four film partners.

HBO, Showtime and the Movie Channel, whose schedules are comprised mainly of feature films, went to court against Premiere and won a temporary injunction against it. Each of these pay rivals filed affidavits stating in one way or another that Premiere's nine-month exclusivity stipulation would destroy their ability to compete effectively.

Premiere never did get off the ground on Jan. 2nd, because on New Year's Eve, a Federal court judge issued a permanent injunction against it, based on the antitrust violations of price fixing and group boycotting.

Premiere, which feels it needs the nine-month exclusivity condition to stay afloat in the same waters as HBO, plans to appeal the decision. The fledgling network has acknowledged, however, that it will probably fold if the decision still stands.

Stay tuned to this column for the outcome of the appeal.

HBO scoops Disney

Home Box Office, which was, incidentally, accused by

Premiere of having a monopoly on product from certain film studios, recently signed an exclusive contract with Walt Disney Productions to show selected Disney programs and movies. HBO experimented with a separate, family-oriented channel once before, and is obviously aiming for a family audience again. The package of Disney features began playing on HBO Jan. 5th in the 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. (EST) time slot.

Among the animated cartoons, adventure movies and other special Disney acquisitions planned for this year are: "Chip'n'Dale," "Emil and the Detective," "Donald Duck Quacks Up" and "Prince and the Pauper." Feature films set for prime-time showing are "Cat from Outer Space," "Return from Witch Mountain," "Mary Poppins" and "The Black Hole."

Showtime goes country

Meanwhile, over at the Showtime ranch, movies still remain the No. 1 attraction, but the network hasn't neglected its commitment to specials, particularly those featuring country & western stars. Since the bulk of Showtime's subscribers live in rural areas, the service has always been strong on country concerts. Loretta Lynn, often called the "first lady of country," will appear Feb 3rd in her own special, aptly titled "Loretta."

Movie Channel movies

Some highlights coming up on the Movie Channel in February include Cheech and Chong's comedy "Up in Smoke," Stanley Kubrick's science fiction epic "2001: A Space Odyssey," "Being There," starring Peter Sellers, and "Gilda Live," which includes excerpts from Radner's Broadway stage show.

ASK ME ABOUT TV

By VAL CAREW

RELAX — Please tell me if Jackson, who was on "The White Shadow" with Ken Howard, is dead. If so, how did he die? — K.J., Oxnard, Calif.

The character of Jackson is dead, killed in a liquor store hold-up during last season's shows. But Eric Kilpatrick, who played Jackson, is very much alive. Because some of the actors on the series were outgrowing their roles, several characters were graduated. But because violence is a part of today's life, the Jackson character met a violent death.

MARK'S SPOT — Please help me. I think Mark Shera is an absolute doll. I know he hasn't been on TV since "S.W.A.T.," but I would really love to write him, but don't know his address. — Jinene Wachter, Chicago, Ill.

You're going to be angry

with yourself, because Mark has been on TV since "S.W.A.T." He went into "Barnaby Jones" and was active in the series during its last few seasons. The series is no longer in production, but try writing him in care of "Barnaby Jones," CBS, Television City, CA 90036. Write "please forward" on it. Good luck.

GETTING TO THE ROOT OF IT — Some time ago I wrote asking you to send me a picture of Brooke from "All My Children," as I want to have my hair cut like hers. I also wanted to know the name of her hair style. Please send me the picture. — Sharyn Landis, Boardman, Ohio.

We don't have pictures to send out. Your best bet is to write Julia Barr, who plays Brooke, and ask her to send you the name of her hair style and a photo. The show originates from New York, so

write her in care of "All My Children," ABC, 1330 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10019. Good luck with your new Brooke look.

ISLAND TIME — I have some "Gilligan's Island" questions. What was Gilligan's first name? Also the first name of Mr. Howell and the professor's name? — Phillip Laven, Wayland, Mass.

Gilligan, like Quincy and Columbo, didn't have a first name. The other two were Thurston Howell III (his wife was Lovey) and Professor Roy Henkley. You didn't ask, but the actress was Ginger Grant, the store clerk was Mary Ann Summers and the skipper was Jonas Grumby. Probably knew those, didn't you?

OLD SHOW — I have seen a show called "Alias Smith and Jones" and have often wondered why Pete Duel and Rog-

er Davis keep taking turns playing Smith. I have heard that something happened to Duel. If so, what? Was the show canceled and then later put back on to fill empty time slots? — Victoria Jung, Surrey, B.C.

When the series first came on ABC in January 1971, Ben Murphy played Jones, and Duel was Smith. Then Duel shot himself, and after his death Roger Davis assumed the role of Smith. The series was canceled in 1973. What you are seeing are syndicated reruns, and obviously they are not being shown consecutively. Davis, by the way, was married to Jaclyn ("Charlie's Angels") Smith at the time he did the series.

(Do you have a question about TV? Drop us a line in care of Newspaper Enterprise Assn., 200 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10166.)

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TV TANGLE

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ANSWER: JOAN KINGS