

By REX POLIER

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THE CURIOUS STANDARDS used by TV networks in evaluating whether certain controversial guests should or should not appear on talk shows is interestingly analyzed in the current issue of *Variety*, the show business trade paper.

Case in point in columnist Bill Greeley's dissertation is ABC's reaction toward proposed appearances on the Dick Cavett Show by Angela Davis and author Clifford Irving, who is currently awaiting imprisonment for fraud and conspiracy.

The network insisted that Miss Davis' proposed appearance be buffered by conservative columnist and author William F. Buckley Jr., in addition to host Cavett.

Miss Davis, whom Greeley points out was "unanimously declared innocent of murder conspiracy charges by a jury trial," declined to appear on the show under such conditions.

AT ABOUT the same time, Cavett, "under extraordinarily pliant terms," as Greeley sees it, taped a 90-minute interview with author Irving which has not yet been shown. Apparently there were no stipulations by the network as to whether the convicted author should be buffered by some counterbalancing force — perhaps a voice weighted in favor of morality or the Ten Commandments.

Moreover, Cavett agreed to hold the interview until mid-September, when the book giving Irving's account of the Howard Hughes literary swindle for which he was convicted will be published.

A number of other talk shows have already taped an Irving interview and are holding it for airing in connection with the book's publication. Johnny Carson is anxious to do a split-screen interview with Irving in New York but he wants to air it immediately, which the book publisher is unwilling to do.

Mike Douglas reportedly would go to New York to tape an interview with Irving, the *Variety* piece claims. Irving is confined to New York, Flor-

ida, and Connecticut by court decree while awaiting his prison term, which begins August 28.

GREELEY COMMENTS that insofar as the Cavett show, the Davis-Irving matter presents one of the medium's "diabolical equations: Cavett plus ultra-conservative Buckley equals two . . . but Cavett plus ultra-left Davis (must) equal three."

He credits the welcome mat for Irving thusly: "Why not? The Irving affair is high and devious melodrama, with sexual overtones — the stuff prime-time TV action adventure dreams of being made of." (I would add to that the fact that just plain old immorality with a little glamor wrapped around it is also more acceptable any day than that involving the morality or immorality of politics.)

Greeley points out that the print medium has been just as thirsty for details about L'affaire Irving as TV, and has made all sorts of frantic efforts and concessions. True, but the matter of Miss Davis and Irving in relation to the Cavett show poses an entirely different matter. It involves the standards and circumstances under which figures in the news are permitted exposure on this most powerful medium.

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**If Irving Can Solo on TV,
Why Not Angela Davis?**