

TV-RADIO

Entering the Lists

For the better part of the winter, television's big three—CBS, NBC and ABC—immerse their best brains in their respective think tanks, perfecting strategies for the fall's battle of the ratings. Day after day, programming staffers closet themselves in guarded conference rooms and stare at large multicolored boards showing the competition's tentative schedules—as pieced together by their elaborate spy system. "These meetings," says Marc Golden, CBS's director of program development (and a former CIA agent), "have all the internal dynamics of a crucible." Out of this furnace pops the networks' newly forged fall format for prime time—the crucial three and a half hours each night of the week on which corporate profits can ride to new heights or skid into the red.

But for all the pain and paranoia, each network has a basic philosophy on programming. At CBS (which last year ended neck and neck with NBC for top spot in the industry's Nielsen charts) the name of the game is bloc planning—that is, putting programs that project the same mood back to back. "We would never isolate a program of one type," says programming head Michael Dann. CBS's Saturday night schedule is a case in point. To catch the eye of the Saturday night stay-at-home, CBS will offer a harmonious trio of half-hour situation comedies—"My Three Sons," "Green Acres" and "Petticoat Junction."

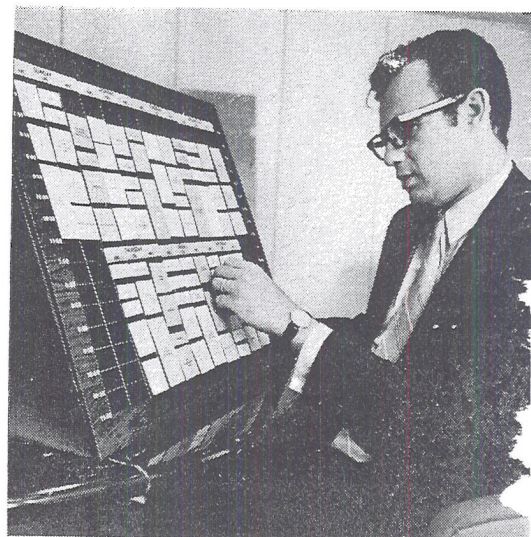
At NBC, however, the philosophy has generally emphasized specials (a term that has come to mean any single-shot production) and the excitement and variety that result from dropping them in to the regular schedule. This season, NBC has loaded its line-up with 100 such offerings—ranging from an ambitious rendering of Dickens's "David Copperfield" to an hour of Herb Alpert

hoopla. As for ABC, innovation has always been the byword—and this season the network is going all out. Under the direction of president Elton Rule—recently installed to reverse the network's poor rating posture—ABC has revamped virtually its entire schedule.

Most secure of the big three, CBS has added only five new shows to its fall repertoire, but the network has juggled its schedule so that each night's line-up differs from last year. Behind the juggling is the CBS tradition of parceling out new shows one to a night. Sunday, however, became an unexpected exception because of the Smothers brothers' celebrated clash with the network brass. Replacing the smothered brothers is the brand-new "Leslie Uggams Show" which, along with an earlier new entry—"To Rome, With Love"—will buttress the 22-year-old Ed Sullivan fest. ("Rome" was placed in its time slot to offer the audience an alternative to the children's shows on the other networks—Walt Disney on NBC and ABC's "Land of the Giants.")

Smart Moves: Although CBS "expects to win laurels in every area," the network comes up strongest on Wednesday through Saturday nights. The network's most highly touted entry is the "Jim Nabors Hour" (Thursday, 8 p.m., EST), a brand-new variety program that will compete with NBC's "Ironside" and ABC's popular "That Girl" and "Bewitched." Leading into the new Nabors show is "Family Affair," which was moved over from another night in keeping with CBS's principle of scheduling new shows next to strong old ones.

In several time slots during the coming season, NBC plans to meet CBS's strength head-on. Three brand-new NBC shows are slated to slug it out *mano a mano* with three CBS top draws ("Then Came Bronson" challenges "Hawaii Five-O"; the "Andy Williams Show" vies



Newsweek—Robert R. McElroy

ABC's Pompadur at the big board

with "The Jackie Gleason Show," and "The Bold Ones" hopes to outdraw "Mission: Impossible"). Some CBS officials sneer at NBC's ploy as a "tactical mistake," but NBC's Herbert S. Schlosser, vice president in charge of programming, maintains: "You go against strength with more strength." Another NBC power play pits the new "Bill Cosby Show" against the venerable Ed Sullivan hour.

Changes: Hoping for an advantage, ABC waited until both CBS and NBC had announced their line-ups before revealing its own schedule. "The other two networks were in such hot competition with each other," says Martin Pompadur, ABC's director of programming, "that they totally discounted us." The delayed announcement gave ABC at least one late starter: when NBC's line-up did not include "The Ghost and Mrs. Muir," ABC quickly bought the half-hour comedy and pitted it against CBS's proven winner, "Family Affair" (on Thursday, 7:30 p.m., EST). Although "Ghost" was less than a smash last season, ABC is convinced it can be salvaged. "NBC missed the boat," says one ABC executive. "They had too much romance in it. We're going to put more comedy in it."

ABC's cleanest schedule sweep is Monday night with nothing but new shows. Taking up its first one and a half hours are two 45-minute programs—"The Music Scene" and "The New People"—both of which hope to lure the under-30 audience away from NBC's front runner, "Laugh-In." Filling out the evening for ABC are two new sex-oriented programs—"The Survivors" (a Harold Robbins novel written for television), starring George Hamilton, Lana Turner and Kevin McCarthy, and "Love, American Style." "It's unconventional, it may fall flat on its face, but we at least try to do something different," says Pompadur in a not-so-subtle swipe at CBS's tried-and-true Monday fare—featuring "Gunsmoke," "Here's Lucy" and the "Doris Day Show." Along with its accent on youth ("Mod Squad," "Flying Nun" and "Tom



Locked into their time slots: NBC's Cosby, CBS's Nabors, ABC's 'Survivors'