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TV Today

The Bartered Bride

TONIGHT, AMERICAN viewers will have the opportunity to witness an eerie public spectacle. We will see the most disgraced President in our nation's history as he crawls back onto the medium he has vilified so often and which he has used to lie to his countrymen on so many occasions.

Can any intelligent person expect that this man will tell us the truth — as a private citizen for personal profit — which he denied us as a public servant for free?



Richard Nixon

More than 150 television stations, several hundred advertisers, and two exceedingly slippery men — Richard Nixon and David Frost — are counting on it. (7:30 to 9 p.m. tonight, Channel 5 and KYUU-FM radio at 99.7). It is the first of four such interviews which have been taped by the pair in a private home in Laguna Beach. (The Coast Guard radar at San Clemente caused too much interference at Nixon's seaside bungalow.)

KPIX will follow it with a basketball game (9 to 10:15 p.m.), the news and a commentary and analysis (11:30 p.m. to midnight).

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ONE OF THE questions on many lips has been: *What sponsor would want to have his products associated with such a questionable operation?* The following answer came from a spokesman for KPIX:

"Some advertisers have preferred not to be on the show but enough others have wanted to be a part of it to make it relatively well sold. They felt it will have one of the biggest ratings of the year." Then he added this bit of broadcast-ese:

"If it comes down to a media value, they feel it is viable because of the demographic values and the audience numbers that will be out there. They haven't questioned the environment, so to speak."

You will look a long while before you find a better definition of irresponsibility than that last paragraph. Translated, it means that a really dedicated snake-oil salesman doesn't care which one of the side shows at the carnival attracted his audience as long as the customers will pause for a moment to listen to his pitch.

"There have been pros and cons among the potential sponsors but, if anything, there are more pro advertisers than those against the show," the spokesman said. (There is still time available on all but the first show.)

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THE SERIES of interviews has been sold to individual stations on what is known as a "barter" basis — the same system that brings viewers shows like Lawrence Welk and "Hee Haw." This means that the four 90-minute shows will be fed to local stations simultaneously from a central origination with half of their commercial time already sold to national advertisers. The other half of the estimated 20 minute total commercial time is left open for the individual stations to insert their own ads.

At premium prices?

On KPIX "The Nixon Interviews" are being treated as "a special event" instead of regular programming. Therefore it can be assumed that they will fetch more money than "Maude" or "Kojak" and certainly they will be more valuable than "Lamp Unto My Feet" and "Look Up and Live." To say nothing of "Captain Kangaroo."

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IT HAS been reliably reported that the national ads in the show will cost sponsors \$125,000 per minute and gross revenues are expected to be \$2 million. Costs (including Nixon's fee of \$650,000) are expected to be \$1.5 million. In addition, the San Clemente beachboy is said to be getting ten per cent of the profits. He always was fast with a buck.