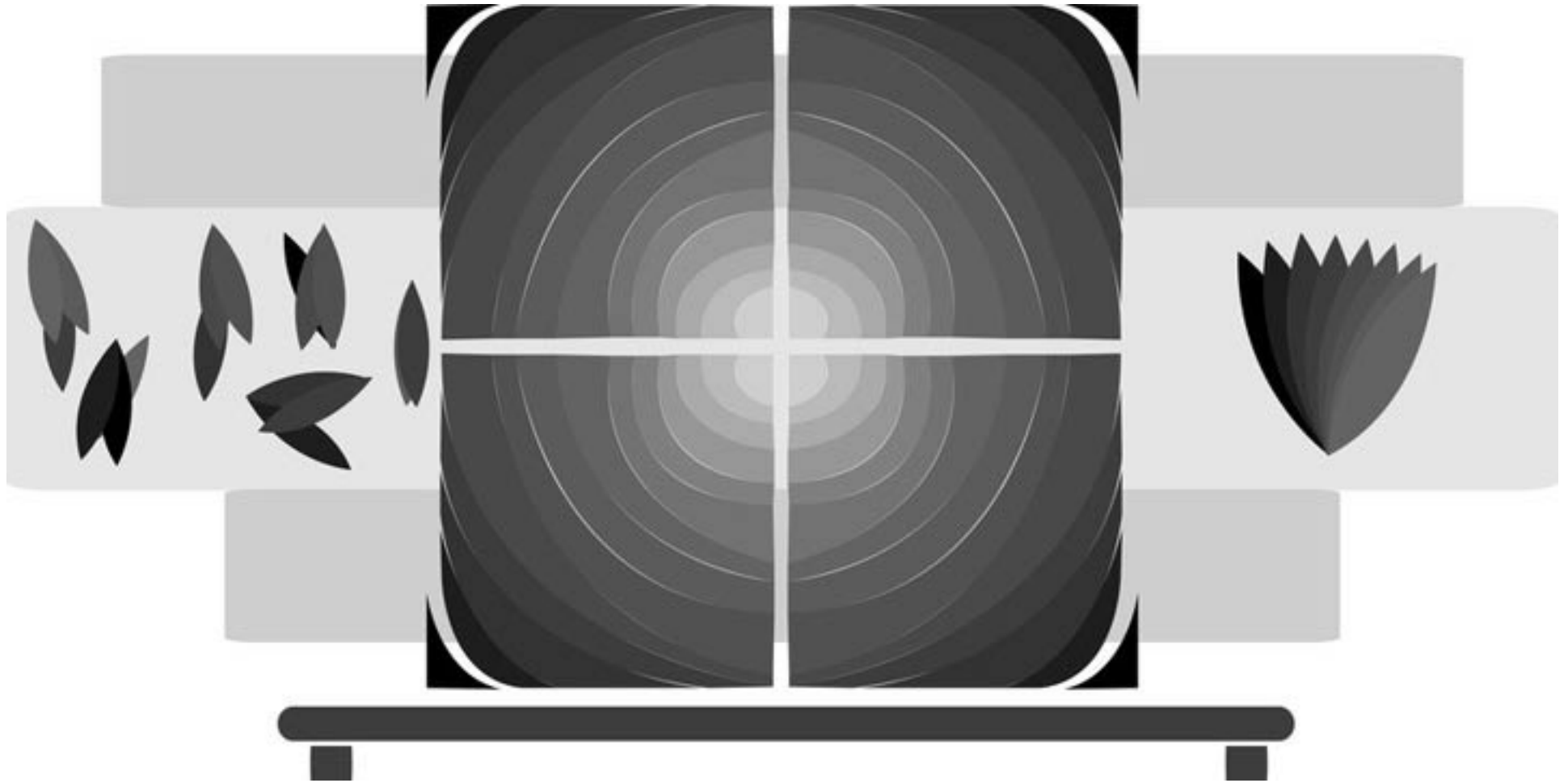


# *The Drink Tank Issue 132*



*Why Television Won't Let Me Play*



Yes, that above there is one of my incredibly simple scribbles from a notepad I had with me while I was taping an Oral History at work. It's 1/3 Macintosh, 1/3 old TV and 1/3 old radio set. I coloured it with Photoshop. This may be one of the very first pieces of Garcia Fan Art. You may use this as an excuse to nominate me for FAAn or Hugo Awards as Best Fan Artist. That is all.

It's a sad state of affairs that everyone can't get work in the field of television. Darren Star, Aaron Sorkin, Bill Lawrence, Kevin Williamson, what do those guys have that I don't? I'll

tell you what: multi-year deals with major networks (OK, and talent at storytelling, but still!). I've always wanted to work in TV and this episode is a little about my strange mind towards the subject, ideas that I think would work (but will never be bought) and a tale of my little bit of air-time.

So, ladies and gents, let's return you to your regularly scheduled programming.

### ***Why I Have Always Wanted to Work in TV***

I ran into Johanna Mead at Westercon and she explained that Dr. Who made her want to work in TV ever since she was a little girl. I have three similar things in my life that have made me want to work in TV. The first was a broadcast network, the second was a cable network and the third was a show on PBS.

When I was young, oh so much younger than today, I was obsessed with ABC TV. Channel 7 and Channel 11 in the Bay Area at the time. It was the station with Monday Night Football and That's Incredible and Those Amazing Animals and Ripley's Believe it or Not with Jack and Holly Palance on Sundays. It was the network for Chris. In many ways, the two of us grew up together. While ABC had been around since the 1940s, it really never became too much of a force until the 1970s, right when I was born. In

the late 70s, when I can remember watching TV, they had shows that were brilliant, even to a 4 or 5 year old (probably especially to a four or five year old!). There was Three's Company, the funniest show on TV. I started to understand humor because of Three's Company. There was Mork & Mindy with Robin Williams as an Alien in a show that was so brilliantly played for us young ones. There was Laverne & Shirley, Police Squad, Happy Days, Soap, Taxi, Benson and a dozen funny shows for all! And there was Charlie's Angels. That was enough for me to take notice. I guess I haven't changed that much in 30 years.

When the early 1980s hit, there was so much more. ABC had great comedies and TJ Hooker and The Fall Guy and more. I usually stayed up until 10, though I got to stay up 'til 11 some nights. In the mid-1980s we got Growing Pains, Max Headroom and Sledgehammer and Head of the Class and more. While NBC was the dominant network with The Cosby Show and Night Court and LA Law, which was one of my faves, it wasn't ABC to me.

As I grew older, it seemed ABC's shows got smarter. Hooperman, a great drama-comedy starring the late John Ritter, was added. There was Slap Maxwell and then, while I was in Junior High, a series that changed my life and started making television

visually and symbolically interesting: Twin Peaks. That was the same time that ABC gave us great TV movies and mini-series like Wild Palms and IT. There was a lot of more grown-up television. ABC in 1991 looked a lot like ABC did in 2004, which is both a curse and a blessing. There was even a Sword & Sorcery show called Covington Cross with Ione Skye! It was a great time to be a fan.

As time went on, I watched ABC for smart drams in the 1990s and silly comedies that were far more post-modern. There was SportsNight, both the sexiest and funniest and most subtle comedy in the history of TV. There was The Drew Carey Show, which was the opening for Whose Line Is It Anyway in the US. There was Roseanne and Home Improvement. There was Spin City and It's Like, You Know and so many other shows that came and went at various intervals. Dramas were smarter and kept improving through the years leading up to the ABC three of 2004 and 2005: Grey's Anatomy, LOST and Desperate Housewives.

On the other hand, when I was a kid, I loved Showtime. I would hunker down in front of the TV on a Saturday morning and watch bad movies. They made no effort to put adult fare on at night so you might get a boob or two (like in Trading Places) as early as 7am. On Friday nights, they showed



Shelley Duvall's Fairy Tale Theatre. They had big stars like Robin Williams, Mick Jagger, Jeff Bridges, Terri Garr and others doing traditional fairy tales. It was wonderful and many of the people who directed the episodes were big names like Francis Ford Coppola and Tim Burton. It was a wonderful show and when they released them on DVD, I was so happy I got to share them with Evelyn. She loved Thumbelina.

There was a show called Brothers that was hugely important to my concept of comedy. Brothers was one of the first gay-themed TV series. Yes, there were gay characters on TV before, but Brothers had it as a major theme for the show, and though it was often played for laughs, there was a poignancy to the way they went

about it. The first television episode dealing with AIDS was on the show, even before And The Band Played On appeared on TV. It was the kind of comedy that we've seen much more of in recent years and one that I still appreciate when I watch on old tapes.

There were others like the Gary Shandling Show that would later move to Fox. It was a channel and everything felt right about it. Now HBO gets all the attention, but Showtime was doing regular series in the early 1980s and making them very good.

Around these parts while I was in high school, you had to watch Sunday Nights on KTEH. That was science fiction night. A whole bunch of shows from the late 80s and early 90s were there. You could see Red Dwarf and Dr. Who and Blake 7 and Star Cops and so many more. But most importantly, you could see The Prisoner. If any single show had a major effect on what I think good television is, it's Twin Peaks, but if there's any show that made me realize that I really love TV, it's The Prisoner. No series ever captured the sense of out-there-ness like The Prisoner. The way The Village is presented, the way that the characters talk, the way that the thing is shot are all the perfect way to get across a sense of disconnection that you almost never find in television. I watched every episode, bought the VHS tapes, then lost them

and had to rent them at the rate of 2 a week from VideoSmith in Boston. I loved it so much. That is how you tell a story: by making sure that every part fits and the feel of the whole is equal to any of the individual parts. I still watch it and am amazed at how good it is.

All of these things made me want to work in TV. I used to dream of creating shows and having big stars in them. I've never really stopped doing that, and now I simply write them up in one blog or another or in the pages of this glorious rag. This whole issue came out of me thinking while I was bathing the other day. I'll never make it into television as fully as I would like, but I can still come up with concepts and present them to the unsuspecting masses who read *The Drink Tank!*



## *My Network*

I want to own a TV Network. Yes, I know there are all sorts of regulations, but I want a TV network that I can make into my plaything. There was Z Channel in and around LA (and a few other places) that was one of the first big Cable movie networks that was eventually turned into one guy's dream station. If I had my way, or at least a few billion dollars, I'd start a network like HBO or Showtime and create my own shows using a slightly different model than most stations. I'd set-up programming around a schedule that tailored certain shows to certain groups that have been 'programmed' to watch things at certain times. I'd make shows that were smart above all, even if they're simply brain candy. I would do it all around the clock and make it a strange, strange place.

One thing is no commercials. That makes subscriptions more important, but it could be done through show sponsorship, like in the olden days of 1950s TV, or via crawl sales. I love a good crawl. Things sometimes need to be stretched so doing Coming Attractions between shows is a good idea. Perhaps, when there are a few more minutes to kill, there'll be Three-Minute Theatre. Ask young filmmakers to make three minute films and they fill the space of time. Doing Three, Five and Ten

minute theatres would be the best way to fill up the little pieces of time.

## *Weekday Mornings*

### **12:00 am- Movies**

Really, there's nothing else that'll do in this slot. Yes, you could try to programme something that folks might make a habit of staying up for, but your numbers are going to be pretty low no matter what. Movies are a good way, especially old ones. One thing you can do is set up themes to work through and run three movies a night (or two if they're really long). Using this period like Z Channel or even Cinemax After Dark would be a great idea. That would allow for loyal viewership, even if the numbers are small. It needs a theme. Mr. Lobo and Cinema Insomnia would also work. The thing is get stuff over by 6am.

### **6am- Too Damn Early**

A morning news show. For the 6-7 hour, you get news and reviews as well as traffic. Yes, it's a short window, but most morning shows are awful and repetitive. Run it once and do a BBC News-like wrap-up towards the end. The approach I have for the show is something between *The Colbert Report* and *ABC Overnight* (which was a great show from a decade ago). Funny, but informative with a focus on real news with a slant. Not quite

the Daily or the Onion, but more like a real news show with a slight twist. Yes, I know folks think that news should be news and entertainment should be entertainment, but I think the combination of the two must happen at some point.

### **7am- The Crack of Noon**

A kids show with an attitude, and while every show seems to say that, this one has a slight difference. It's a show about a band who tours the country with a group of kids on-board. It's a School of Rock-influenced idea that shows the grown-ups learning from the kids and vice-versa. It would be a sorta Partridge Family meets Roadies. This is the time of day when most kids get up, get ready for school and watch a little TV while the parents drag a few more minutes of sleep or make breakfast.

### **7:30am- New Tales**

A Fractured Fairy Tales kind of show. Using the old Fairy Tale Theatre idea of using actual known actors, do thirty-minute episodes telling traditional fairy tales in a new way. This would be a limited series, since you could really only do 100 or so episodes before you ran out of material, but that's enough. 100 episodes is rough ½ a year, which means that you'd get 1 ½ years out of a kids attention span since after three



viewings most kids will start to tune out. If you're targeting the 5-7 market, that's just the right stretch and you could work it all.

### **8am- Too Much Talk**

A morning talk show with a revolving host. Sometimes it's politics, sometimes it's comedic. Sometimes you get TV and movie personalities, and other times you get doctors and other science types. The rotating host format makes it interesting because while most shows stick with targeting one audience with each show and playing on that audience every day, this would allow for a wider net and while ratings might vary widely, it'd give loyal viewers something to latch on to and make a habit of watching.

### **9am- Real News**

A 9am news program, straight and traditional, would fit here perfect.

Most folks are off to or at work and doing an hour of solid, BBC-style news would work here. An international focus would be tough to hold on to when ratings hit, but it would be the best thing going.

### **10am- Match Game**

That's right, you heard me. M-A-T-C-H G-A-M-E. That's the show that should never have gone away and if done properly could return to prominence. The relaunches in the 1980s and 90s were almost all bad. I'd say give the hosting duties to some little-known local weatherman and let him run the show. Panelists would certainly have to change, but having a steady three or four person team, like John Goodman, Wayne Knight, Beth Littleford and Stacy Grenrock-Woods would be awesome. I think it could work, especially in the morning with an evening version too.

### **10:30am- Liar's Club**

Another retread, admittedly, but it's one that could work. You run it like the old one, where you have to bluff what words mean and then what odd-looking objects are. The team they had back then was great and finding people who are believable would be the interesting part. I'd love to see John O'Hurley, Mo Rocca and Nicole Sullivan as regulars.

### **11am- The Failure Game**

Sort of an inverse version of Deal of the Century, Press Your Luck or The Price is Right. Three contestants try and get rid of ten thousand dollars that is put into their account. How it works is this: each one of them gets to wager their money against the others in a series of questions. For example, the category is American Presidents. Each one wagers a sum between 100 and 1000 dollars. If all three are right, all their totals are dropped by the amount they bid. If two are right and one is wrong, the one who was wrong takes all the money the other two bid. If two are wrong and one is right, they each split the total that one right person



wagered and add it to their score. If all three are wrong, all of them get the total amount wagered added to their score. After the bidding round, for every question a player got right, they can put a challenge to another player. Challenges can raise or lower or lower scores. One might be a Plinko-like game where you drop a puck and it can land in -5k, -100, +1000, +5000, -2000 to your challenger, +1000 to your challenger, Everyone gets -1000 or Every gets +1000. Another might be a game where you can trade items and you get the difference added or subtracted from your score. There are a bunch of possibilities. The person with the least money at the end wins, and if someone gets to \$0, they win a car or something like that.

### **Noon- Lost Times**

A soap opera about a group of woman in their fifties dealing with living in Hollywood with starlets and young hunks. This one is an idea that almost got taken up when Fox was looking for a network Soap package back in the mid-1990s. I remember reading about it and thinking it was a great idea for a soap.

### **1pm- The Block**

Another soap, this one working class Hispanic families mingled with middle-class Anglo families in Lake Tahoe. It's based on a play called The

Block that was poorly received and called a 'Soap Opera on the Boards' by at least one review. I thought it was riveting and taken to the screen would really work. The way One Life to Live was a solid working class soap is very similar.

### **2pm- DocuNation**

A daily hour-long hosted documentary series that might feature one doc, if it fits in the hour frame, or two or more shorter ones. This would be one of those series that would mix things up and explore film's other realms instead of just being another nature show.

### **Weekday Afterschool**

#### **3pm- Guidolon & Friends Half-Power Half-Hour**

Frank Wu's fantastic show would get a slot on the sched, no question. They know all about

#### **3:30pm- Falcons Never Die!**

This is the series that Steve Sprinkles, Jason Schachat, Justin Torres and I came up with at Cinequest in 2004. It's about a bunch of New York City kids who form a 'gang'. The gang's really just a bunch of weird kids, mostly named Johnny, save for one called Pony Boy. Then there's Mr. Johnny's Father. That's all I'll say!

### **4pm- Hour**

Hour is a show I actually once pitched to a local station. Hour is one show that has one story that runs for an hour for kids. Unlike most kids programming, it takes a topic and makes a week out of it. If it's technology, then that week has 4 narrative shows about tech and the Friday show is an hour-long kid's doc on something about tech. The tying in of the concept to a theme is important and the thread also gives kids a way to hook in and follow it through the narrative into the documentary. It's all about bringing in the next gen.

### **5pm- The Review**

It's Wait, Wait, Don't Tell Me done as a daily news quiz. It would be one of those fun shows that would appeal to smart people.

### **5:30pm- The Rotation**

While 5pm is mostly news on most local channels, the Rotation would break with that on several fronts. First, it would be a show with a crawl. The main news of the day would be in the crawl and the Rotation would be a discussion group format like The MacLaughlin Group, only focused on one topic with a panel that rotates around a moderator.

### **6pm- The Other Sports**

A sports show that wraps up the



day's news and reviews from the lesser sports world. No Basketball, Baseball, Hockey or Football, and no gymnastics, tennis, gold or such but lots of Ballroom dancing, Sumo, field hockey, lacrosse, darts, curling, pool, etc. The idea is to create a daily show like ESPN 8: The Ocho from Dodgeball. These sports all have popular followings.

### **6:30pm- Card Sharps**

This is like Card Sharks, except you are each given a Poker Hand instead of doing the higher-lower thing and every time you get one of the survey questions right, you get to pick a card to toss or stay. I think it would be a very good way to go with the idea.

### **7pm- Match Game PM**

That's right, PM y'all!

### **7:30pm- Music, Music, Music!**

The showcase of live music. Half an hour of concert footage from a different group or singer every week. Vault stuff would work as would new stuff.

## **Weekend Mornings**

### **12am- Cinema Insomnia**

Yes, this would be a horror host show featuring Mr. Lobo. It's already in existence and doing pretty well. Fast and cheap TV!

### **2am- Movies**

Just six hours of movies. Themes and such like the regular over-night shift

### **8am- The Animation House**

A two hour rotation of old and new cartoons based around the format of the old USA Cartoon Express. Kids still love old cartoons, and finding old series cheap can always be done. This would be an attempt to bring back the old days of second-rate cartoons filling Saturday mornings.

### **10am- Capture the Flag**

A reality show for kids. Every ten weeks, a new group of kids come up and try to 'Capture' a flag by winning a series of challenges. An on-going game show for kids with one kid being bumped every week by the winners. Survivor meets Double Dare!

### **11am- Midday Movie**

A kid-friendly film shown with a host segment or two.

## *Saturday Afternoons*

### **1pm- Sports Cavalcade**

The Wide World of Sports revisited. Sometimes a major sport, like baseball, hockey, tennis, gymnastics, basketball, ice skating or the like, and sometimes it's build up to a major boxing match that's going on later in the night, or Olympic trials or golf, or rugby or some other national sport outside the US. Would probably mostly be a compilation show with snippets from various events, though.

### **4pm- Wrestling**

When I was growing up, there was always studio wrestling from Atlanta starting at 4 on TBS. I'd bring that tradition back. No fancy wrestling in a major arena, but a small, maybe 100 people studio with wrestlers and interviews and squashes of schlubs by big name wrestlers and such. This is what's missing from wrestling. Everyone tries to go so slick that they don't do the basics anymore. Of course, it would probably lose money, but it's my station!

### **6pm- The Week In Review**

A weekly news review with analysis. Yes, you gotta do a little of this kind of thing. I think a good news review is way better than regular news.

## *Sunday Afternoons*

### **1pm- Sports Cavalcade**

Yeah, do it twice a week, but you'll be mixing up the sports, so it's probably the way to go. More likely, it'll be one show with a bunch of little sports and the other with one long game or something.

### **4pm- SuperShow**

Take Sabado Gigante and add Real People with a splash of That's Incredible and you've got the idea behind this one. A group of hosts go and do bits in and out of the Studio and there are singers, dancers, interviews, mini-game shows, stunts, magic and more. A super-spinning, three hour variety show.

## *The Prime Time Schedules*

### **Monday Night**

#### **8pm- The Last Graduation**

Science Fiction is my thing and here's a series that takes a traditional nihilistic look at the world. The year is 2103 and there've been three massive, world-wide epidemics that have brought the world's population down to less than 2 billion. The pollution and other destruction we've brought onto the planet has gotten so bad that there's already been 50% die-off in



the number of plants and a 60% die off in the number of animal species. Humans are obviously dying off and a plan is established to send 50k people onto a generation ship, another 25k onto a moonbase and a final 25k into a specially sealed underwater complex that will be unreachable for 500 years. At that point, all will return and try and repopulate the earth under more reasonable guidelines.

The only problem is they've got to pick the people to go.

Every human in the organized world is tested and rated and those between 15 and 25 are allowed to apply for inclusion. Several 'colleges' are set up to train all the potentials for a year, then force them to compete for a place on one of the three projects. There are colleges all over the world, each getting



to send a limited number to the ship, base and station. The series would focus on the young folks who were competing and their interactions, love lives, feuds and so on.

The first season would be the training year. The second would be the competition. The third would focus on the generation ship's first few years at space and then a twist at the season's end. The fourth would focus on the moon base and showing what led up to the twist by the mid-season, and then we get the combination episodes. Then for season five, we jump forward to the day when the Generation ship returns to Earth and what they find. Season six is on Earth and so on.

I think it's an intelligent kind of show and one that allows for all sorts of strange fun. Plus, it can be a teen drama. I'm thinking Buffy meets Starship Troopers meets LOST.

### **9pm- Fight**

Monday Night RAW and Nitro have trained folks to expect combat sports on Monday nights. It's a good place to put Fight: another sports compilation show, though this one will take either a Sumo, MMA, Pro Wrestling, amateur wrestling, or martial arts card and show it all night. The concept is to change between them and show a full card, not a bouncing back and forth thing. It's a good idea.

### **11pm- The Mick Foley Show**

Wrestler/Author Mick Foley deserves a talk show and making it a late night show would be brilliant. Guest, music, etc with the great Mick as the host. What could be better?

### **Tuesday Night**

#### **8pm- The Working Class**

A sketch comedy show. Put together a bunch of comedians who are



straight out of college and make a tv series out of skits and sketches.

#### **8:30pm- The Noise**

A sitcom about a group of musicians who aren't the best in the world trying to make it. They have the minor advantage that one of them owns the largest radio network in the world thanks to his father giving it to him on his death bed. Part Wide-Eyed Dreamer comedy, part office comedy. It would be strange.

#### **9pm- Lessons in Greed**

A reality show that pits one person or family against another. Here's how it works. Each team is given some amount of dollars that they are allowed to budget...for the other team. For one month, they get to live off the money they are allocated, but at the end of the month, they get to keep the money they didn't give to the other team. It's one of those 'I'm gonna make you pay things' since the teams will make their budgets every two weeks, one will go week one, three and five, the other for week 2, 4 and 6. Payback and revenge and watching people compete to hold on to as much as they can without giving away too much money and at the same time allowing us to watch as folks deal with having almost nothing. Good "My life's not that bad' viewing.

### **10pm- *Mother of Invention***

A drama about a think-tank trying to compete in the real world. This one will be the most like *Grey's Anatomy*. It's the combination of smart people with hormones dealing with their working world while also trying to have a love life in a world that gives them almost anything but time. Pressure and conflict and sex and stuff. I've always pictured Ronnie Cox as the lead with Hope Davis, Oliver Platt, Dennis Rodman, Sean Biggerstaff (Oliver Woods from the *Harry Potter* movies), Shia LaBeouf, Kristen Wiig, and John Cho. That'd be a good cast indeed.

### **11pm- *The Mick Foley Show***

Again, he's great!

### ***Wednesday Night***

### **8pm- *Just This Side of the Border***

OK, I'll admit it, it's a complete rip-off of *Fawlty Towers*, but it's dying to get made. A small resort hotel in the Sub-San Diego Wine Country (Calexico or Mexicali depending on what side of the street you're on) and the owners are a pair of brothers played by Jason Biggs (*American Pie*) and Jason Schwartzman (*Rushmore*). They both have girl friends (Marla Sokoloff and Jennifer Garner) and they're both trying to run the place right, but



they're both clueless morons. Add a house staff of comedy types, rotating tourists and you've got a sit com!

### **8:30pm- *Carry-boy***

A Mob delivery boy is brought more and more into a life of crime while still trying to maintain a sense of respectability and honor. Not quite

a comedy, not quite a drama. A thirty minute dramedy like *Hooperman*. I loved that show.

### **9pm- *The Town Crier***

A newspaper comedy of sorts. A local paper is bought out and they have to fight for their lives by putting out the top-selling paper in town,

beating the big city guys. Everyone on the paper tries their little stunts and plays to make it happen. It would play more like Ocean's 11 in that you get to see the scheme played out and know it works, but not know how they get it that way until it's finished.

### **9:30pm- *The Magic Hour***

This is one that I actually pitched and even did a little development on during college. The Magic Hour is a show at the House of Mysteries (formerly the House of Mystery, but DC Comics sued) that features a student from the Southern California Magic College student (often called a party magic college). The show would revolve around those students and the show and the minor problem that having no real magic talent would present to being a working magician. This was an idea that got terribly close at one time to happening on a very small scale.

### **10pm- *Stationed***

A war show. There haven't been a lot of those in recent years (Tour of Duty and China Beach were two of the last major ones) and it would focus on a squadron trying to deal with being stationed long-term in a hostile country. There's a lot of potential there for drama and looking at current, and near-term past, events. A show that would be gritty and political and



probably violent. I think it could work.

### **11pm- *The Mick Foley Show***

You know you'd watch...though maybe not admit it!

## ***Thursday Night***

### **8pm- *The Dance***

A comedy about dancers and salesmen. What? I mean that there's a deal struck where a dance school is bought by a local car dealership and they both have to co-exist and try and make money. It's a fish-out-of-water comedy and an office comedy all at the same time. I saw a treatment for it in the late 1990s.

### **8:30pm- *Dan***

Dan is the guy we all know and love. He's a coked out freak with a

heart of gold and a trusting nature. Dan is then put into recovery house and has to deal with all the issues of that along with the fact that he just discovered that he's a father of a three year old. This was originally developed by a TV writer named Sam Sullivan in the 1980s but was rejected all over the place. It ended up being made into a short film and it was pretty good. It would make a great 30 minute drama, but any further and it would be too depressing.

### **9pm- *Device***

This is the show that I once pitched at a meeting with some local TV folks and it got a positive response. The show is really way too complex for regular TV. The Device in question is a group of men and women who are trying to bring down the Government. Think a group V for Vendetta. The matter is they've been infiltrated and the pilot features the first of their attacks bringing brought down through actions from one of their own, though they can't tell who. They then go through with the planning of their second plot knowing that the mole is still in the group and having no idea who it is. This would be a two season show with the end of the first revealing who the mole was and the second being the mole working against the team as they prepare the next big target. This one would have worked

really well in 2003 (when I pitched it) but 24 sorta made it feel like a retreat. It would require a lot of patience and the fact that it focused on a terrorist faction preparing mayhem would be a problem.



### **10pm- The Ex-Pats**

My favourite current concept. The basic premise is Melrose Place meets Tales of the City for the BBC set. A former British Diplomat, and Stephen Fry would be perfect, who is still deeply connected and favoured buys an apartment complex in San Francisco for Ex-patriot Brits in trouble to settle into. An American subleases one of the apartments after

his best friend returns to the UK and there's the girl he wants (who I see as Billie Piper) and the girl he has forced upon him (who I see as an aggressive Amy Winehouse) and there's the guy who writes comics (I picture Steve Cougan) and the married couple (Gina McKee and John Borrowman) and others live in this weird world. It's supposed to be both trashy and uplifting as there are these folks who are far away, almost all of them running from something or someone, living in one place and trying to make it. I love the concept and I think there's so much that could be done with it as a showcase acting show.

### **11pm- The Mick Foley Show**

Because you really will wanna see it!

### **Friday Night**

#### **8pm- The Life Story**

Basically a mini-season show. 5 or 6 episode arcs explaining the life story of a character that influences the next character whose life story we see. We watch as the world collapses into one another and the show is really about the connections. It's a premise that has been tried on European TV, but never too successfully.

#### **8:30pm- On Stage**

An opera, play, comedy set or

concert. These used to do well, but that was when folks thought that TV could lead to art and not just industry. I think this would be an interesting kind of show.

### **11pm- The Mick Foley Show**

Because kids can stay up late on Friday!

### **Saturday Night**

#### **8pm- Roller Derby**

It's been needing a comeback for years, and even with all the failed attempts, it just takes finding the one right star and the one right station to make it work!

#### **9:30pm- Back to Black**

A show about the age we live in. A man is trying to get ahead by trading up for things like the dude who wanted to trade the paperclip for the house. The only problem is everyone is out to screw him. The guy manipulates, lies, and dodges to make things happen, but no matter how far ahead he gets, he almost always ends up back to one.

#### **10pm- Chasing Shadows**

A reality show based on the board game Scotland Yard and the TV Show/Video Game Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego. A bunch of people are released in a city trying to catch up to a single individual who they don't

know anything about at first. They find and are given clues and must chase the person around the world... on their own dime! It's a show about resourcefulness and cunning.

### **11pm- On the Air with Art Bell**

Strange TV happenings based on his call-in show.

## ***Sunday Night***

### **8pm- The Girl in the Next Cube**

A love drama about a guy who is secretly in love with a girl in his office and he can't tell her for one reason or another...but not the same guy every week. We see that there are webs built of people crushing on each other and the ways in which they interact and little things happen and large failures happen too. It's a tangled web kind of comedy with shifting PoV.

### **9pm- The Actor**

A con man show about an actor who turns to identity theft and impersonation as a way to make his living. He's chased by the cops. It's the Fugitive and that one show about the Imposter all rolled into one. The actor would have to be someone who could be both over the top and completely forgettable. It would be a real actor's role. The show would actually focus on the chase and the Actor playing with the cops just to prove he can.

### **10pm- Latin Quarter**

It's a show about 1960s Vegas and a hotel called The Latin Quarter. Featuring the Mob, the Rat Pack, high rollers and such, it's far more like The Sopranos than like Las Vegas.

### **11pm- Interns**

Washington DC interns live dark and twisted lives. This would be a series detailing the ways in which they interact with each other and the real power in the country. Sex, drugs, politics and all of it would be underplayed from what really goes on (I should know, I was one of them!) and the central storyline for each season would be new ways in which someone would cross the line. The most adult show on the sched.

Now, there's no way all the shows can succeed, in fact probably only one a night. There have been seasons where everything new bombed, and that's the sign of a failing network. ABC had a year like that. Midseason as a new season is also a great idea.

That's what I want to see. I know it'll never happen, but I'll keep trying to make some of it happen, even if it's just one of those shows. Hell, if someone reads this and decides to steal the idea and not give me credit, perfect! I don't have to do anything and I'll get to see it on TV.



### ***Excerpts from Things I Heard While Pitching and Developing TV Shows by Judith Morel***

These are things that were actually said during sessions I was in on. I hope these show why I'm not in the business anymore.

- I hate the Jew. Can we make him Irish?
- You've got to make it all sing. Why can't the black guy be the strong character, like the janitor who muses pointedly?
- Where's the sexiness? Can't we have some sex?
- When he turns on his partner, can we make him redeemable?
- There's a problem with the title. People won't understand Poetic Justice. Can we just go with Justice?
- Lady, you're pretty, so why make such an ugly show?
- No more smart comedies. Just give us dick-and-fart jokes from now on.

**Letter Graded Mail**  
**sent to [garcia@computerhistory.org](mailto:garcia@computerhistory.org)**  
**by my gentle readers**

**If there was ever a Lloyd Penney-style LoC not done by Lloyd Penney, it is this multi-issue LoC from The UK's own Claire Brialey!!!**

Dear Chris,

Well, I see it's been more than three months since I wrote to you, in which time you've published a dozen issues of *The Drink Tank* and several other titles besides, which meant that I slipped behind and then stayed there. Now, having had my fannish energy recharged again by our trip to Australia, I'm attempting to catch up with all the fan activity I haven't been doing since my post-Corflu bout of energy and free time was sapped by work. I understand it's traditional to send you an article about Kurt Vonnegut but since I know little of his work beyond what I've recently read in *The Drink Tank* you'll have to make do with a letter instead.

**It is always a pleasure to feature the words of the finest crafter of words living on those islands across the big water...**

I do know what caused my initial hesitation in responding: it was #122 in which you handicapped the Hugos. I thought this was a very interesting issue and something really worth



doing (and something which only a frequently published fanzine is really in a position to do), and I had some immediate reactions which I was about to note down, polish up, and send off to you, but I found myself incapable of either responding to or ignoring what you'd said about us and specifically about me and so I dithered, and Time Passed. Now doesn't really seem to time to respond in detail to all of your analysis or to share my own hopes and opinions about those of the categories I feel qualified to comment on – although that, too, may be a time distortion effect of your publication schedule, since I guess that voting hasn't even closed yet; still, in *Drink Tank* terms at least I think the conversation has moved on until the results are out – but I remain unable to churlishly ignore your comments about us! I should say that I entirely agree with you that *Banana Wings* will not win a Hugo because it's not online (although I don't think that's the only reason), but that's never seemed to us to be anything like a good enough incentive

to change our publishing approach. I also agree that *Plokta* is most likely to extend its winning streak; but it's with no disrespect intended to the Cabal, or to you or Guy Lillian, that I say that I think the most fitting and well-deserved result would be for *Science-Fiction Five-Yearly* to win. As for me... I wasn't at all surprised that I fell off the list of Official Fan Writer Hugo Losers this year and I don't think anyone else should have been either; I've always felt like the outsider in the Hugo 'fan writer' category which, as I've discussed at far too great a length in *BW*, is defined very widely indeed. Good luck to everyone nominated; being an awards geek myself, I look forward to being able to compare the final voting outcomes in all the categories with your analysis...

**It would be a good thing to have *Banana Wings* on the web (if only so folks like me who happen to come across it might be turned towards the love). I think SFFY has a chance, and not because any of the others are lacking, but because of the legacy of Lee Hoffman. I'll never win one of those things (and I'm not bitter, though I must admit a Hugo would make a delightful bookend) but I have to say that there's no bad choice in any of the fan categories this year.**

I'm not going to comment on every issue since then, really I'm not;

I am no Lloyd Penney or John Purcell, nor even Ted White. But having read the letter columns in #123, #127 and #130 I felt I should check whether you believe in Derek Pickles yet. (Clap your hands if you believe...)

***It is an obvious hoax being played on the hoaxer. I totally understand. I am shocked at how far back this hoax goes as I picked up an issue of Trap Door from 1994 that had an LoC from Derek Pickles which was obviously planted by Mark to keep this ruse on-going.***

In reading #124 I found myself wondering again about the whole concept of Worldcons, never mind the perfect Worldcon. I think a proper response to all the issues you raise would result in a letter on this subject alone rather longer than your original extended article, and for the sake of my blood pressure I try to limit the amount of time I spend thinking about Worldcons and what they are for. But we spent some time discussing related issues towards the end of our recent Australian holiday, and I do agree with you that regular and frequent communications (with supporters, members, and volunteers) are vital. It probably won't surprise you to learn that my perfect Worldcon, subject to certain conditions, is in Australia – and that's not just because it means it's a very long way away from being in the UK. I like Australian Worldcons



because I like Australian fans, and indeed Australia as a place to visit, and because although I like the international experience of a Worldcon I don't like conventions to be so enormous that I can't find anyone or anything; the distance means that Australian Worldcons are always a bit smaller than North American or even European ones. The conditions I mentioned, though, are that I want to know that the fan community hosting any Worldcon (whether that's a national or regional community) really want to do it, and also that there are enough people from that community with competence and relevant experience actively involved to both manage the workloads and ensure that the convention really reflects the feel of the fandom hosting it. I have strong hopes for Melbourne in 2010 so I do hope that a majority of Australian fans are enthusiastic too.

***I love Australian Fen myself, which is why dropping ANZAPA***

***was so hard. I think an Australian WorldCon is awesome, but I doubt I'll ever get to go to one because of the cost.***

I am in awe of Lloyd Penney's 200 cons in 25 years; my recent attempt to establish my own total made it about 120 in 20. I am also in awe of Dave Langford's almost multimedia report of the 2007 Eastercon in Chester (#126), despite his attempts to misdirect the reader with self-deprecating comments about being unable to produce photographs. I understand that Dave already has one or two awards for fan writing, but I am swayed towards giving him another for his alternate history James Bacon, 'the staid and conservative voice of moderation'.

***I can't be sure, but I think I've been to about 30 or so in the last 7 years, though to 10 in the last year and a half. I gotta say that I love Dave Langford's piece in The Drink Tank.***

And on the subject of voices, my eyebrows raised somewhat when I read in the letter column of #127 John Purcell's admission '...whenever I get *Banana Wings* or *Prolapse* in the mail, or read some Brit-zine on the web – like *Motorway Dreamer* or *Plokta*, for example – I tend to read them with a bit of an upper-class twit of the year accent rolling through my head.' Well, I shall leave it to potential class warriors

John Hall and the Plokta Cabal to fight their own battles on that one, but I venture to remind Mr Purcell that he has recently met and conversed with both of us and Peter Weston, and if that's not enough to banish any suggestion of upper class tones then I don't know what is. (I'll attempt to sidestep the 'twit' charge and see if I get away with it.) I understand from various US acquaintances that my everyday south-east-England accent is nonetheless impenetrable, or at best presumed to be Australian. This may be why I find that the longer I spend talking to anyone with a different accent to my own the more likely I am to undertake a chameleon-like slide into their inflexion, coupled with rapid adoption of local vocabulary, in a combination of politeness and a feeble desire to make myself understood.

The only exceptions to this are most British regional accents, which make me sound more and more south-east-England for reasons I can't quite comprehend but which I imagine would make my mother proud.

OK, I've just re-read that paragraph. Maybe I do rather write in an English accent...

**That's what I've been telling you!!!**

I was going to welcome you to the cadre of Fans Who Have Edited James Bacon but then I read 'Derek Meets David' in #129 and realise you're sitting on both sides of that fence.



Clearly the next step is for you to write something for James to publish.

**Derek and David are both great editors. If you read SF/SF, you'll realise that I almost sound like I know how to write. Certainly better than I do in this rag here. Editing James hasn't been that tough at all. The first one he sent my way, for last year's This Were WorldCons, was a bit intensive, but the last one was great. I hope he'll send another one for the coming issue...**

I'm doubly regretful as well as delighted to have read John Hertz's

tribute to Lee Hoffman in #131. On a selfish and superficial level, I regret not being able to publish it myself. Much more significantly, it makes me regret all the more not having met or, generally, been able to know Lee. Nonetheless I am delighted to have read it, to have learned a little more about her, and to know that a good number of other people will have shared in that experience through the dual publication of John's piece here and in his own *Vanamonde*. And to end almost where I began, I note that you have, in recent issues, published material by your fellow Fan Writer Hugo nominees Steven Silver, Dave Langford, and now John Hertz. Will you get John Scalzi in the next month or two and complete the set...?

**I sent Scalzi a note asking, but he's never gotten back. I'll probably end up taking a bit from his Blog and asking if I can rerun it. Then again, I could just scan one of his books, OCR it and post it to eFanzines.com. I'm fairly certain that would get me sued.**

Best wishes as ever,

Claire

**It's always great to hear from ya and I'm hoping that you'll write again. Maybe we can set up a time table. How about the next LoC coming through in October. It would make a wonderful birthday gift, I think!**