

'Married' stays on air despite viewer protests

By WINSTON LLOYD
Staff Writer

"Good morning, students, and welcome to History of the State 163, section two. The syllabus will be handed out tomorrow, once it has been edited by the administration."

A few more students enter the lecture hall. Their I.D.'s checked against a computer list, they are allowed to take their seats.

"So today we will jump right into the glorious story of the modern enlightenment. The Reawakening of Morality, if you will. Can anyone tell me what was the impetus for this great society?"

"Was it the removal of 'Doonesbury' to the editorial page?"

"No, but that is a good example of the incubating morality of the early 1980s."

"How about the banning of Twain?"

"You would mean the infamous Huckleberry Finn..."

Gasps rise from the intent crowd as if they had been told Mao was less than a genius.

"No. That was an isolated incident. It was only removed from the dangerous reach of our children in the mid-1990s when Congress finally responded to the

pressure of the People's Front for the Cleansing of Society. Now, can anyone tell me about the beginnings of this group?"

"Wasn't it General Secretary Rakolta's cultural revolutionary organization?"

"Very good. I'm glad they still teach a little history in the undergraduate program. Now, I'm going to tell you exactly why Ms. Rakolta first rose to prominence."

Uniformed guards close all the doors in the lecture hall, while the students take deep breaths in anticipation. Over the stage, a television screen lowers and the professor moves his podium out of the way.

"Your backgrounds have all been cleared, your training as Officers of the State will now begin. Before our pleasant news and ballet format of television appeared, private enterprises were allowed to broadcast anything they pleased. They did not program responsibly."

The students exchange looks of bewilderment. A light falls across the screen and the students are enthralled.

There's a domestic scene. A man sits with his son and daughter. Al Bundy says to his children, "You

can't go because he has a bumper sticker that says 'Don't come a knockin' if you see this van a rockin'."

Daughter Kelly: "That could be taken a lot of different ways."

Son Bud: "And so could you, Kelly."

A neighbor enters. "I'm really upset with your wife."

"Kill her," responds Al, and it seems he means it.

The audience reacts first by laughing; then with horror. Ms. Rakolta's face appears on the screen in an interview. She is discussing her objections to "Married... With Children." The students stand and their applause begins to fill the subconscious of "thirtysomething" producer Ed Zwick. As the noise spills into his conscious mind, he awakens from the hellish nightmare.

There is no Big Brother watching him. He can see no portrait of Marx or Hitler on the walls of his bedroom. "What am I thinking," he says aloud. "There's no censorship here. This is America."

Thanks to the personal letters written by Michigan housewife, mother of four and probable Wolverine basketball fan Terry

Rakolta, McDonald's and Proctor & Gamble have removed their ads from Fox's "Married... With Children." It seems she was offended. Not that she is a prude (she admits to watching "L.A. Law"), but her objection is to the accessibility of such a show to her young children. It airs Sundays at 8:30 on the Fox Network, Channel 22. Yeah, right. Like anyone watches Fox.

I don't expect a revolution on the order of the fun they had in St. Petersburg in 1917, but the network and the sponsors should also consider the show's regular 19 million viewers when a Terry Rakolta writes in. The network says there is no danger of creative changes in the show, and it won't be moved. Although a 9 p.m. time slot would be compatible with the sexual innuendo of the critically acclaimed "Cheers" (Thursday) and "Night Court" (Wednesday), Fox need not worry about luring back sponsors by moving the show. Ad time is sold out for the season.

As well it should be. Shows often are kept on regardless of low overall ratings if they are strong in a particular demographic group. Even though "Married... With Children" is 54th out of 81 (a bad ranking), it ranks sixth among

males aged 18-34. That's after heavyweights "Roseanne" (no pun intended), "Cheers," "A Different World," "The Cosby Show" and "The Wonder Years" — a group that is a perfect target for such sponsors as Nissan. What age do you think is prime time to buy a sporty import? Or Levi's jeans?

The people will decide. If we tire of the vulgarity and shock value of "Married," it will be gone. But the writers are giving us a funny show. While "Roseanne" seems to be the opposite of "Cosby," "Married" is more the Anti-Cosby. When the Bundys are mean to each other, they mean it. The Conners are only kidding.

The Bundys are scum and the audience can see it. But they are funny scum. Whether Al's anniversary present to Peg is for him to "slam dunk" her (between television shows), or whether he wants his children to "prove to your mom you don't have to have food to eat good," we are entertained. And isn't that the point of television, besides informing, of course.

So if Geraldo can stay on, and at 4:00 p.m. no less, then "Married... With Children" can stay too. Joe Bob would say "check it out."

Hypnotist fails to deliver at Comedy Zone

By PAUL STEWART
Staff Writer

"You can tell you're an angry driver," said comedian John Kiernan, "when you've learned how to tap out the word 'a-----' on your brake lights."

Kiernan, a regular at Rodney Dangerfield's comedy club in New York, performed as the opening act to hypnotist Richard De La Font Sunday night at the Comedy

Zone in the Omni Europa Hotel.

Having the demeanor of a hyperactive rodent, Kiernan opened his show by badgering members of the audience. Doing that for about five minutes, Kiernan then turned to his material and fired 30 minutes' worth of one-liners at the crowd of about 80. Though some of his material was rather routine, he was able to hold his own, as

evidenced by the laughter of the audience.

Something that was not routine, though, was his skit on the life of a squirrel. What normally would have been imitation seemed like emulation because of Kiernan's 220-volt personality. Still, he was able to pull it off.

This was not done so easily by Kiernan's successor, headlining hypnotist Richard De La Font.

Opening with the basic chitchat with his audience, this Sonny Bono look-alike's attempt at humor fell flat (much like the real Sonny Bono's). And his trouble had just begun.

After he had finished his introductory monologue, De La Font asked for volunteers from the audience. He received nine.

If a person does not want to be hypnotized or is not serious enough, he/she cannot be hypnotized. This was De La Font's overwhelming problem that night.

Of the nine selected, seven had to return. Seven more were chosen and six had to return. Etc., etc. etc. By the time De La Font had become satisfied with his participants, there were only three remaining and he had gone through about one-fourth of the audience with no one else willing to volunteer. More than 30 minutes had elapsed.

His second problem was that his participants were unusually reticent. Looking like extras from "Night of the Living Dead," they

initially sat there and answered his questions with monosyllabic answers and little emotion. Fortunately for him, his audience was patient as he prodded the participants for responses.

Finally, after about 40 minutes from the start, he got the ball rolling. Still, some of the best laughs of the night were unintentional.

For example, De La Font told one of his participants that his feet were stuck to the floor. He then told him that his rear end was missing and that it was in the audience. Forgetting that he had told the participant his feet were stuck, he told him to run into the audience to retrieve his behind. The participant nearly fell on his face trying to comply.

The highlight of the evening was created by De La Font with the same participant. This guy was a live one. Still under the hypnotic trance, he did a strip tease, taking his shirt off and accepting dollar bills in his pants from females in the audience. When he was awakened from the trance, the look of absolute embarrassment on his face as he stood shirtless in front of the audience was worth the ticket price to the show.

If you are like me, and living the poverty-stricken existence of a college student, the two-dollar (discounted for students) charge was well worth it. After all, how much is a good laugh worth?

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