

# TELEVISION

## Nielsen Ratings

1. (1) **Roseanne**, ABC  
27.0 rating, 24.4 million homes.
2. (2) **The Cosby Show**, NBC  
25.1, 22.7 million homes.
3. (3) **Cheers**, NBC  
24.3, 22.0 million homes.
4. (4) **A Different World**, NBC  
23.4, 21.2 million homes.
5. (5) **Golden Girls**, NBC  
22.4, 20.2 million homes.
6. (6) **Murder, She Wrote**, CBS  
22.1, 20.0 million homes.
6. (6) **Empty Nest**, NBC  
21.4, 19.3 million homes.
8. (X) **Living Dolls Preview**, ABC  
20.4, 18.4 million homes.
9. (8) **Dear John**, NBC  
20.3, 18.4 million homes.
10. (11) **60 Minutes**, CBS  
20.2, 18.3 million homes.
11. (9) **Chicken Soup**, ABC  
19.6, 17.7 million homes.
12. (10) **Who's the Boss?**, ABC  
19.0, 17.2 million homes.
13. (X) **Barbara Walters Special**, ABS  
18.6, 16.8 million homes.
13. (13) **Growing Pains**, ABC  
18.6, 16.8 million homes.
15. (14) **Head of the Class**, ABC  
18.0, 16.3 million homes.

Listings include the week's ranking, with full season-to-date ranking in parentheses, rating for the week, and total homes. An "X" in parentheses denotes one-time-only presentation. A rating measures the percentage of the nation's 90.4 million TV homes.

## Turning the tables on the Big 3

### BILLY STOCKARD

t.v.

Atlanta may have burned back in the days of Scarlett O'Hara, but one Confederate seems to have forgotten to stay in the ashes. To take on the Big Three networks, it takes guts and smarts, but Ted Turner has certainly got his share of both those qualities. Since 1976, he's been fashioning a cable empire worthy of respect. Those big guys up in New York are doing more than whistling Dixie.

Starting from a "small billboard advertising company," Turner bought an unsuccessful UHF station in Atlanta in 1969. He filled the airwaves with reruns and old movies, and watched his ratings grow. In 1976, he branched out with the purchase of a Charlotte station and joined RCA's project to broadcast via satellite. WTBS was born that December, and it enjoyed a much wider broadcast range than before. Turner enjoyed having much more money, too.

In 1982, Turner told Jon Denny of *American Film* that he was just trying to give the viewers an alternative to the trash the major networks were spitting out. "People watch those [network] shows, but people take cocaine, too. That doesn't make it right."

Instead of trying to cram all of his ideas into one channel, Turner has

created several to fill specific markets. For example, the Cable News Network has been receiving more and more attention with its continuous news coverage. This format is much different from the Big Three, who ignore the needs of businesses by scheduling news in little chunks during the day with longer programs at night.

Scott Ticer of *Business Weekly* reports that CNN is emerging "as a global powerhouse in breaking news of world events." Turner has plans to expand his news service overseas, making it accessible in Europe, among other places. CNN's audience reached new heights this year, particularly with its coverage of the Chinese pro-democracy movement. It's come a long way from its humble beginnings in 1980.

Then of course, there's Superstation TBS. Coasting in on a tide of *Gilligan's Island* and *Alice* reruns, Ticer says "TBS is now the most-watched basic cable channel in the country." Turner created a strong market for this channel by offering an alternative to daytime soap operas with car-

toons and syndicated reruns. TBS' music video program, *NightTracks*, also captured a large part of the video audience when videos first became popular and has sustained the program. TBS is the only basic cable channel in many parts of the country that offers videos on Friday and Saturday nights.

Turner's latest project, Turner Network Television, "qualifies as the most successful launch in cable history," according to Ticer. Turner has big plans for this TV newborn, both as a showcase for old MGM flicks and for some new material. He also wants to include the Goodwill Games, "an international sports competition" Turner created in 1986.

All this, combined with the Headline News Channel, make up 31% of all basic-cable viewing. That's impressive, but what's more, the Turner Group has become a real contender against network television. The Big Three have more to worry about from Turner than from Fox, PBS, or possibly even HBO.

However, the road to success hasn't been smooth. It seems that Turner sometimes bites off more than he can chew. After a disastrous takeover attempt of CBS in 1986, the entrepreneur's money belt went down quite a few notches.

Not knowing when to quit, Turner

decided to try to buy MGM instead. It took the combined effort of 31 cable executives to bail him out of the hole he dug for himself with that purchase. John Malone, head of Telecommunications, told Ticer, "The cable industry felt he [Turner] was far too important to let that happen."

Turner paid the price for greed in lost autonomy, however. The cable executives who helped him are now filling seven out of 15 seats on the Board of Directors. Ticer heard from one director that "Ted doesn't like the fact that he's not in total control."

But whatever his ups and downs, Turner has established a solid niche for his group of cable channels. Of course, he will be the first to congratulate himself. In an interview with *American Film*'s Jon Denny, he proclaimed himself a visionary "If Christopher Columbus had a southern accent, then I'd be the man," Turner said.

Atlanta has claimed *Gone With the Wind*, *Designing Women*, and the *Braves*, so why not Ted Turner? He may be brash, overconfident, and big-mouthed, but he's also rich as all get-out. It's taken a lot of *Brady Bunches* and *Andy Griffiths* to get there, but Turner's finally found the road to success.

## General College, an orgy of mayhem and intrigue

**G**eneral College is back on the air, and, boy, things are really taking off. Check it out.

First of all, rumors about Alex's double, Raven Kelly, have inspired all the local wenches to find out the truth. Priscilla got Trip drunk, assuming that he knew the truth about Alex and hoping he'd tell. Surprise — it worked. Now Priscilla knows about Alex's "alter-ego" Raven and is bound to use the info to her advantage.

When Kyle was being released from the hospital, he told Meg that he'd like to keep seeing her, but not as a counselor. ... "like a date ..." Well, as love blooms for some it dies for others. Billy helped little brother Chaz to decide that Tara has been changed by her older Davenport sisters and she deserves the boot. Plus we saw Violet turning tricks, I mean tables, at the Double D; Ken is bound to find out.

OK, all that's really great, but here's the big happenings.

Anne Burns went to Student Health to see a doctor about the headaches she's been having ever since she smacked her head and lost part of her memory. She saw detective Hooper there, followed him into a room and stumbled across the comatose Trevor.

Relieved that he wasn't dead (they kind of used to date, remember) Anne suddenly remembered everything that

### BRYAN BURNS

soaps

happened the night Trevor was shot and was all set to make a citizen's arrest on Tessa. But the detective had a better idea, so Anne is going to fake her amnesia and go along with Tessa, while he tracks down Jason and Courtney.

Speaking of Jason and Courtney, Grandma figured out who they were and Jason went back to school to see his brother, but who cares about that. When Jason returned to the farm, Courtney was real glad to see him, and they finally did the do (that means have sex).

Of course, from the bedroom we went to a montage of all the good times the couple has shared (playing in the barn, running around the quad, kissing in the Pit), then we cut back to some shower action. Those silly fugitives of the law. Anyway, they're cleared and should be returning to Chapel Hill soon.

This episode of *General College* ended with sort of a mystery scene. Some strange young man (Sage??) was having a terrible nightmare with lots of rain and wind, when his mother woke him and told that his grandfather had died.

Just one episode and the new sea-



Laura Brown (Tara Davenport) and Shawn von Schreiber (Trisha Davenport) rehearse a scene

DTH/Evan Ellis

son is already full of new twists. Let's watch next week to find out who Priscilla tells about Alex/Raven, if Anne can keep up the act with Tessa, if Tessa falls for Anne's act, if Kyle

and Meg can relate outside of the hospital, whether Jason and Courtney ever return to Chapel Hill, and who the hell Sage is and what that eerie dream was all about?

Tune into *General College* every Monday through Thursday on Student Television (Cable Channel 11) at 11 p.m., right after *Off the Cuff* and *Campus Profile*.