

Ensemble brings a light touch to the news

WIOU

John Shea, Helen Shaver, Harris Yulin, Mariette Hartley and Dick Van Patten

Wednesday 10:00 pm
CBS (WRAL Channel 5)

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As the new TV season finally kicks in, viewers are bombarded by ads for all the new shows. It's rare to find a program, however, that lives up to its network propaganda.

But CBS' *WIOU* actually does justice to its intriguing previews. With an ensemble cast and realistic situations, the only thing to hold back *WIOU* might be the ratings.

WIOU is actually a nickname, a slam on WNDY, a television station with a dangerously competitive newsroom and a dangerously troubled financial future. Most of the characters want to be higher echelon than they are.

There's Hank Zaret (John Shea), who has been transferred to WNDY after he put ratings before journalism at a New York station. He has high hopes of getting WNDY out of its

THE RATINGS

- — miss it
- — watch it and rag on it
- — if nothing better is on
- — watch it
- — invite people over

BILLY STOCKARD

T.V.

WIOU status.

Hank's old flame, Kelby Robinson (Helen Shaver), who's been at the station for years, wants to be co-anchor. She'll get her chance.

There's also Neal Frazier (Harris Yulin), a womanizer who puts his hand on Kelby's leg during a newscast one time too many. Kelby returns the favor by reaching over and grabbing Neal's overactive crotch.

"I'll let go if you let go," she tells Neal and a million viewers.

Liz McVay (Mariette Hartley) serves as an executive producer who has hopes of getting Hank's job one day. Yet another TV veteran, Dick Van Patten (*Eight is Enough*), plays Floyd Graham, a weatherman who takes special pains to please older viewers.

There are also two ambitious contenders for the co-anchor desk: Eddie Bock (Phil Morris), a black go-getter whose vanity Liz finds offensive, and Taylor Young, played by Kate McNeil. Taylor appreciates Neal's sexual advances and tells him, "My only weakness is older men." This one won't mind where Neal puts his hands.

The co-anchor position opens up when longtime anchor Curtis Warden drops dead during Hank's first night on the set. Here is our first glimpse of *WIOU*'s black humor. Eddie has to get the news copy out of Curtis' hand in time to read it on the air. As Eddie reads, Hank's head bobs up and down while he applies CPR.

"I'm Eddie Bock," Eddie says. "Curtis Warden has the rest of the night off."

The final stroke is a feather in the cap of director Claudia Weill: a bus drives by with the WNDY ad, "CURTIS AND NEAL: LIVE AT 6." Well, not anymore.

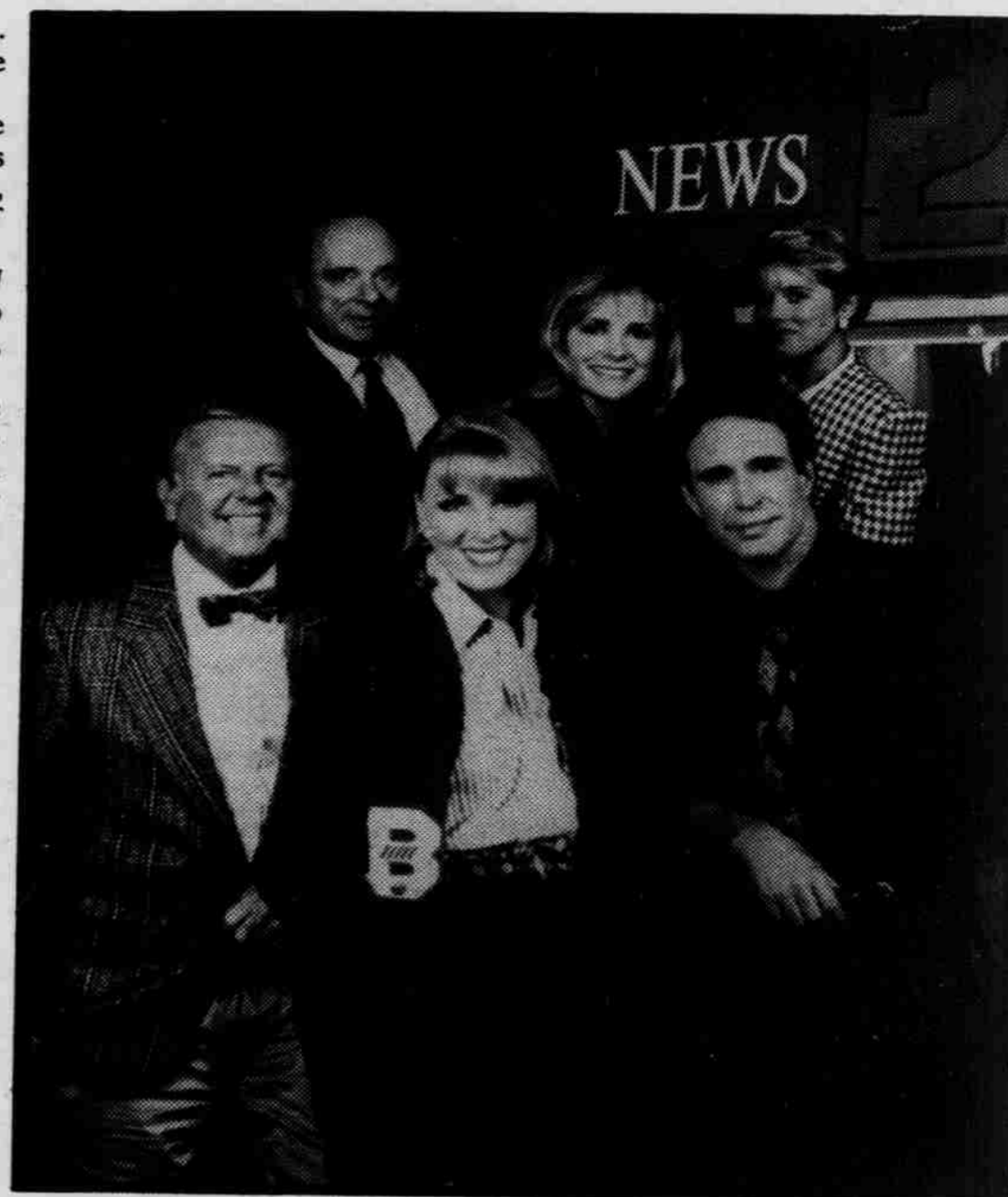
But besides the humor, *WIOU* takes viewers inside the newsroom to see not just the wheeling and dealing, but also the fine details.

We see Kelby editing a videotape to make it suitable for broadcast. We see Neal interviewing someone, much like the nightly news, but discover that the anchor talks into the reporter's earphones, and the reporter then asks the question. It's kind of like having an unseen interpreter. Not since *Broadcast News* has such a detailed analysis of the newsroom been offered as quality entertainment.

The public's right to know topped the first episode. Kelby discovered that an old friend who was about to become head of the school board had raped a girl while he was in college. She was opposed to running the story, while Hank wanted it run. The complicated decision whether "to print or not to print," or "to broadcast or not to broadcast," is an issue facing any journalist, and it's certainly relevant here.

The characters of *WIOU* are among the most believable on television. The huge cast resembles that of *L.A. Law*; maybe there are a few too many characters for such a young show. But it's hard to say who could be cut out. All make a contribution.

WIOU should have no trouble in its timeslot. It should easily beat NBC's *Hunter*, which has become lame with age, and ABC's troubled *Cop Rock*,



Meet the gang of 'WIOU'

which can't find an audience despite guidance from Steven Bochco. But what *should* happen doesn't always happen. Even the highest-quality show doesn't always last a season.

Still, *WIOU* has a sense of humor that's just the right touch for an hour-

long drama. CBS will undoubtedly bounce this one around to try and find an audience, the way it's done with *Doctor, Doctor* and *The Flash*. The network is stepping in the right direction, and, like *WIOU*, is trying to get its wayward audience back.

That's the news, and Chris is outta here

MidDay!

Monday thru Thursday, 10:00 pm
stv (Channel 11)

Chris Lemont Brown created, organized and hosted *MidDay!*, on the University's STV channel, but after establishing the show's independence, Brown will allow a new host to replace him next semester.

BRYAN TUCKER

T.V.

Brown, a senior, has decided to step down, but said he will stay with the show until he graduates.

"I want *MidDay!* to go on, and I think the best way to facilitate that is if I give up hosting and help out behind the scenes," he said.

The identity of the new host will be revealed Friday on a special *MidNight!* show in Great Hall at 10 p.m. *MidDay!* will continue next semester at its regular time on Wednesdays at noon.

Brown and the new host agree the show's style and format will stay about

the same. *MidDay!* will remain a talk show similar to *Late Night With David Letterman*, and the guests will be students from all facets of campus life.

"I want to see the show gain a strong following," the new host said. "People should come no matter who the guests are, because they will be entertained and may learn something new."

The new host has a different sound man to replace Chuck Chitwood and will also introduce a segment called "Joe or Jane Student" in which one of the guests will be picked at random from the audience.

The majority of the present staff will stay with *MidDay!*, including director Kevin Chignell and business manager Marianne Nennstiel, along with Tanya Kennedy, Christy Sellars and Amy Williams. Anyone can get involved, however. Interested persons should contact the Interact Committee of the Carolina Union Activities Board, which sponsors *MidDay!*

Ever since *MidDay!* started, the staff has worked to keep the show on an even keel between information and fun. They strive to help the au-

dience learn about campus organizations and keep them laughing at the same time. The more the show can accomplish this, the more it achieves its own individualism.

"A good foundation has been established," the new host said. "I plan to build on that by adding to the publicity and diversity of the show."

Brown said the new host will really have to love working for the show in order for it to continue maturing. Ideally, guests on *MidDay!* should cover a broad enough spectrum to represent the whole campus but still be entertaining enough to appeal to all audiences.

Brown said he can help the show most by guiding it behind the scenes, but he still will miss being the frontman. "It's not something I'm giving up easily. I've got to go out there and give it one last hurrah," he said.

The last *MidDay!* hosted by Chris Brown will be a special *MidNight!* edition on November 9. Guests will include Phil Ford, Rick Fox, Hubert Davis, Ian Williams, Jennifer Layton and the band Soul Expression.

NIELSEN RATINGS

1. (1) **Cheers**, NBC
22.4 rating, 20.9 million homes
2. (2) **60 Minutes**, CBS
21.4, 19.9 million homes
3. (3) **The Cosby Show**, NBC
20.2, 18.8 million homes
4. (27) **Three Men and a Baby**, NBC
19.9, 18.5 million homes
5. (6) **Designing Women**, CBS
19.1, 17.8 million homes
5. (4) **Roseanne**, ABC
19.1, 17.8 million homes
7. (18) **Murder, She Wrote**, CBS
18.8, 17.5 million homes
7. (8) **America's Funniest Home Videos**, ABC
18.8, 17.5 million homes
9. (7) **Murphy Brown**, CBS
18.7, 17.4 million homes
10. (10) **America's Funniest People**, ABC
18.0, 16.8 million homes
11. (12) **Unsolved Mysteries**, NBC
16.9, 15.7 million homes
12. (16) **In the Heat of the Night**, NBC
16.6, 15.5 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.

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