

NIELSEN RATINGS

1. (X) **NFL Football: Redskins vs. Cowboys**, ABC
18.9, 17.4 million homes
2. (X) **Miss America Pageant**, NBC,
18.4, 16.9 million homes
2. (2) **60 Minutes**, CBS
18.4, 16.9 million homes
4. (4) **Roseanne**, ABC
17.7, 16.3 million homes
5. (47) **Murder, She Wrote**, CBS
16.6, 15.3 million homes
6. (11) **Coach**, ABC
16.3, 15.0 million homes
7. (X) **Nurses**, NBC
16.1, 14.8 million homes
8. (X) **P.S. I Luv U**, CBS
15.7, 14.5 million homes
9. (64) **48 Hours**, CBS
15.4, 14.2 million homes
10. (50) **Married...With Children**, Fox
15.1, 13.9 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.

Who will be the king of late night?

When a king abdicates his throne, there are always pretenders and contenders who vie with each other to take his place. With Johnny Carson set to step down next year, such is the situation with late night television. But just because Jay Leno has already been named as the new host of *The Tonight Show*, he isn't necessarily the new king. There's mega-competition in late night TV now, and Leno won't have success handed to him.

First of all, let's get Rick Dees and his inane show, *Into the Night*, out of the way. The saddest thing about this show is that Dees tries really hard to be funny. He should have stuck with radio where no one could see him, 'cause, let's face it, the man looks like a chipmunk. Talk show hosts need to have some kind of distinguishing physical characteristics (like Pat Sajak didn't), but fat cheeks and protruding front teeth make one more apt to

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T.V.

laugh at the host than to laugh with him.

He rarely gets guests anywhere near the caliber of those on *Tonight* and *The Arsenio Hall Show*, and he refuses to rag on them without qualifying it with an "I'm just kidding." It's almost impossible to get by in late night without being at least occasionally confrontational, in at least a humorous way, but Rick just can't do it. He'll never replace Johnny, obviously, and the most that can be hoped for is that *Into the Night* will keep on going, preferably to the 3 a.m. time slot.

Now for the real contenders: Jay Leno, Carson's present guest host, has already been appointed to fill the C-man's shoes next year. Whether he goes all the way to become the bona fide King of Late Night remains to be seen, but he does have a few advantages.

For one, *Tonight* is already a tradition, a show with a proven formula. However, just because something works for Johnny doesn't mean it will for Jay. It was probably a good idea for

Leno not to choose a sidekick a la Ed McMahon. McMahon basically defines the word "sidekick." No matter what he does, he makes the host look good. Leno would have a tough time trying to find someone to fit the same role.

Leno is also mainstream — he has the potential to appeal to most everybody. Besides, some people are going to watch for a while after he takes over just because it's *The Tonight Show* and they've been watching it for 30 years.

If Leno doesn't replace Johnny as the new king, Arsenio Hall probably will. As everyone knows, he stole viewers galore from Carson, mostly those in the under-35 age bracket.

Arsenio's show is hot right now, but will it last? Probably so, unless he gets tired of it and decides to concentrate on doing more films with Eddie Murphy. It's hard to imagine Hall doing his high-energy show 20 years from now, but people would have thought the same about the Rolling Stones.

Hall gets some of the best guests in the business, and while he will do a great deal of fawning, he isn't afraid to poke fun at certain guests (those who can take it). His biggest drawback is that he's one of those people whom

you either hate or you love. Therefore, there are lots of people that really hate him. His show also doesn't appeal to many people over 40.

If David Letterman doesn't pull rank and jump to ABC, the biggest battle over the next few years will be between Hall and Leno.

Speaking of Dave, he'll probably never be King of Late Night unless he takes his show elsewhere. But that wouldn't be the best of ideas, as there are too many people out there who don't like his off-the-wall style of humor.

Late Night would probably fail miserably in the 11:30 p.m. time slot, unless the American viewing public is way more intelligent than I think it is. Not that his jokes aren't often stupid, but they're generally more subtle than anyone else's on TV.

Dave should stay right where he is and let Hall and Leno battle it out. He's too iconoclastic to be universally loved like Johnny.

Who's going to win the throne? Prediction: Jay Leno becomes King of Late Night (if he can stay on his motorcycle from now on) when Arsenio Hall gets a multi-billion dollar contract to do movies. Don't count Hall out, though; there's not much he can't do if he puts his mind to it.

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Cosby announces final season

The *Cosby Show*, armed with a new executive producer and new writers, starts its eighth NBC season with an engagement announcement that shocks the Huxtable household.

It will be the final season for the show, Cosby's fourth and most successful series, one that's made the former Navy corpsman, Temple University student and comedian one of the richest stars in television.

Next season, Cosby and his truncheon-sized cigar are going into game show country to co-host a new syndicated version of NBC's old *You Bet Your Life*, hosted circa 1950-1961 by that noted stogie man Groucho Marx.

Cosby already has taped several installments of the new daily series in Philadelphia, which he says will be its home base. Why Philadelphia?

"It's my hometown," he said. "And it's time Philadelphia got back on the map." There was a pause. He chuckled. "Ask me that question again, 'Why Philadelphia?'" The question was asked. "Cause there ain't no nothin' ... wrong with it," he said.

"I have other things to do," Cosby said simply, when asked why he's closing his hit family sitcom, in which he

plays an obstetrician and Phylicia Rashad plays his wife, an attorney.

He'd like to produce a new sitcom starring his TV son, Malcolm-Jamal Warner, he said. He gave no details, but puckishly added he'd also like to do a sitcom starring 4-year-old *Cosby Show* cast member Raven-Simone. "And I can't do those things doing the Huxtables every week," he said.

Cosby has been hailed for its warmth and ability to escape the traps of the usual family sitcom, in which Old Dad almost always is a boob. Its awards include the Peabody and a Humanitas prize, in addition to the usual Emmys.

But it initially was rejected by ABC when offered without a pilot or script by Cosby and colleagues Marcia Carsey and Tom Werner. Poor ABC.

The show's arrival in fall 1984 became one of the main causes of NBC's rise to first in the ratings. It is usually in the Nielsen Top Five and frequently atop the weekly ratings lists in past years.

The show probably could go on for several more years, and "still get respectable numbers," said Richard Kostyra, executive vice president of the J. Walter Thompson USA adver-

tising agency. "Unfortunately, it may no longer be able to support the cost of what NBC has to pay for it," he said, referring to the millions NBC pays Cosby and Carsey-Werner Productions in licensing fees for each season's shows.

But Kostyra said he thinks money isn't the main reason the show is ending: "I think primarily he wanted out."

Still, other stars have made vows of a final season. After that, popular demand in the form of network offers of less work and more dough have been known to make them say, "On second thought ..."

Not Cosby. "I'm telling you, this is it ... it is the last season," he said. He spoke by phone from the New York City borough of Queens, where he tapes the show.

He'd recently undergone successful minor surgery to remove a tiny glass sliver that doctors found remaining five years after a light bulb exploded near his face.

"They washed the eye (then), but didn't get it all," he said, commencing a funny, free-form discourse on eye doctors and a Waring blender. "It could have been worse," he said. "It could have gone to the heart."

Cosby's previous roles were as co-star of the successful *I Spy*, then as star of the not-so-successful *The Bill Cosby Show* and *The New Bill Cosby Show*. In the future, maybe another series?

"Three years from now, I would like, first of all, to be able to see," he drawled. "No. 2, I would like to be alive with very minor joint pains."

— Associated Press

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