

entertainment

Fender exploits jail term



St. Elmo's fire

Connie Mims is vocalist and keyboard woman for St. Elmo's Fire, the blues-rock band that performed Thursday evening at the Grove. Behind her is vocalist and bass guitar player Keith Grimwood.

Battalion photo by Clay Cockrill

Reruns lead way in Nielson race

NEW YORK — CBS took eight of the first 11 places to dominate the weekly Nielsen ratings of television viewing. The first 20 spots in the ratings were held by re-run shows and the other three by the three networks' "news magazines" — CBS' 60 Minutes in 8th place, ABC's 20-20 in a tie for 14th place, and NBC's Prime Time Sunday in a tie for 19th place.

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Repeats and more repeats

TV summer fare not too good

By JOAN HANAUE  
UPI Television Writer  
NEW YORK — The gas shortage may force Americans to spend their vacations at home — but they certainly won't find a summer festival on the television screen.

Television always has worked on the theory that success bears repeating. Since summer audiences traditionally are smaller than the crowds huddled in front of the flickering blue light of the winter tube, summer network schedules produce more repeats than a cucumber sandwich.

But summer also used to be the time to try new formats in limited run series, and all three networks made their annual effort at bringing vaudeville back from the dead by reviving the variety format.

All that has changed. Now spring is try-out time. In a peculiar twist, the new fast-ball competitiveness of the network ratings race for nine months of the year has made June, July and August a sea of reruns, leftover episodes from cancelled series and a few pilots that didn't make it onto the regular schedule for the 1979-80 season. For a change of pace, there are movies (also mostly reruns) and news magazine shows.

Occasionally, a network will throw in the odd special at the last moment, but for the most part the summer schedules are dogs.

CBS, at least, is the pick of the litter, assuming the audience is in the mood for comedy. For some reason, hot weather is supposed to hone the funnybone.

On Aug. 1 the format temporarily goes to an hour with "Getting There," which sounds like "Love Boat" on wheels about a couple who run a coast-to-coast car delivery service. The comedy centers around three subplots and the cast is above summer programming levels, with George S. Irving and Brett Sommers starring, and Norman Fell, Cathryn Damon, Hermione Baddeley and Imogene Coca in guest spots.

The final offering on July 25 goes back to half-hour sitcom, with Ken Berry as pediatrician Dr. Charlie Featherstone, whose wife has gone back to school and left him — in all

too familiar bachelor father format — to bring up their two daughters. The household is dominated by a black housekeeper, who takes orders only from God. The show, originally titled "Alphabet Soup," now is named "Featherstone's Nest."

A pair of limited run halfhour comedies take over the 8-9 p.m. Wednesday spot Aug. 8-29 on CBS, and these might find a future as mid-season replacements.

"Dorothy" will bow in at 8 p.m., starring Dorothy Loudon as the music and drama teacher of a stuffy eastern girls school, where she finds herself more in tune with the students than headmaster Russell Nype.

This sounds like a fine-tuned version of "Ladies of Larrabee," an NBC reject from the Hollywood pilot fac-

ories. It also stars Linda Manz, described as a tough New York City kid who brings culture shock to academe.

Graduating to college for the 8:30-9 p.m. (Eastern) time slot, CBS presents "Hayden Hall," with Bill Macy (Bea Arthur's husband, Walter, on "Maude") as the new president of an Ivy League university. The show comes from Norman Lear's Tandem Production and CBS hopes it will give Macy scope to succeed in going it alone.

Other CBS shows include Miss Universe on July 19, 9-11 p.m. (Eastern time) and a two-part CBS Reports scheduled for July 21, 10-11 p.m., and July 24, 8-9 p.m., both Eastern time. The show will be on black America.

On NBC, summer programs in-

clude an Aug. 25 NFL pre-season rematch of the Super Bowl teams, Pittsburgh Steelers vs. Dallas Cowboys, at 9 p.m.

Otherwise programing runs to repeats and unused portions of shows such as "The Runaways," "Lifelines" and "Project UFO" that were knocked off the air before they had a chance to air every episode already in the can.

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. — When Chicago country star Freddy Fender was busted for possession of "two sticks" of marijuana in 1961, he just about threw in the towel. Things had been looking good for Fender. His music was starting to get some important attention in the '60s. But the marijuana conviction and jail threatened to wipe it all away. After his release, instead of forgetting about the three years he spent behind bars in Louisiana's Angola and DeQuincy penitentiaries, the Texan candidly admits: "I exploited it." "You might as well," he says. "It is something to be proud of but people are very interested in knowing how I got up on my feet." Sitting in an air-conditioned hotel room, an unbuttoned shirt revealing his brown beer-belly, Fender thinks back to the time when his curly black hair wasn't greying. "I couldn't have gone any lower than I was when I was confined for three years. But then I went up. It gives people hope, a sense of admiration. I think that's why it helped. It helped me a lot." Things didn't automatically change for the better when Fender got out of prison. After eight long years playing beer joints, Fender ended up in the office of Cajun promoter Huey Meaux, another ex-con, and convinced him to sign a contract for a \$50 advance. Although Meaux had produced and promoted more than 35 good records, he was looked down upon because of his prison stretch for conspiracy under the Mann Act for illegally transporting an underage female from Texas to Tennessee for the purpose of entertaining announcements at a Nashville disc-jockey convention. "How come you want a contract with me? Nobody wants to do anything with me since I got out of the pen," Meaux asked Fender. "I don't know about your history but I know you've been in the pen and you know what we're talking about," Fender told him. Meaux tried Fender singing old-timey Cajun reggae, but nobody noticed. Meaux tried Fender shouting Texas-Mex rock, but again, nothing was heard except strained vocal chords. "This one's country," Meaux said. A few months later, "Before the Next Heartdrop Falls" was a number one hit, he said, and the Mexican-American singer became a country-western star. "I'd always thought I was real cool. Pachuco dude with all this long hair, sideburns, chain hanging from my pocket," the ex-mechanic and migrant worker says. "I was a San Benito city slicker and the United States here I come to find out I'm Freddy Fender, country-western singer." Fender's soulful, pitiful, whining voice and Meaux' hustling resulted in Fender's biggest hit, "Wasted Days and Wasted Nights." The two Texas hustlers say their friendship made them successful, able to hang with backbreaking work, faith and plenty of time. "We fight like two cats and dogs in isolation," Freddy and I got a thing going in 1969. 99.9 percent of the producing manager acts don't have a friend. We know what both sides of the sident's face are like — what it's like to have a daddy that can't read and write. "What it's like to work in the fields." The pair have just finished a new U.S. album, "Texas Balladeer," but they are not predicting "number one." Meaux does say, "This may be the strongest album Freddy has ever recorded."