



YEAR IN TELEVISION

1999 recycles old material while bringing new ideas to the slate

BY JULIA RECINDUS
The Battalion

Although viewers are presented with hundreds of channels to choose from, few TV shows of 1999 strayed from tried-and-true formulas.

This may have been because innovative shows lavished with critical praise, such as Fox's "Action", did not draw viewers.

Hit shows focus on teen woes

What millions of viewers did tune in to see last year were the clique of teen dramas. These popular, addictive shows, including "Party of Five" and "Dawson's Creek," were joined by "Popular" and spin-offs such as "Time of Your

Life," which captivated their viewers by sucking them into the throes of white, middle-class teenager's woes.

Networks seem to have caught on to the fact that creating programs aimed at teens is smart because not only do teens have money to burn, which makes these shows attractive to advertisers, but these programs seem to have long-lasting shelf lives, as shown by the staying power of "Beverly Hills, 90210."

Old ideas, new twist

One genre that has made a startling comeback is the quiz show. Led by ABC's "Who Wants to be a Millionaire?," hosted by Regis Philbin, a slew of copycat shows have followed including CBS's "Winning Lines" and Fox's "Greed."

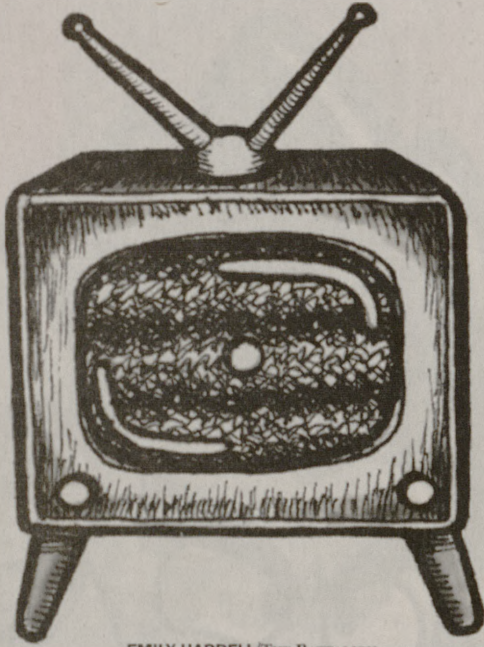
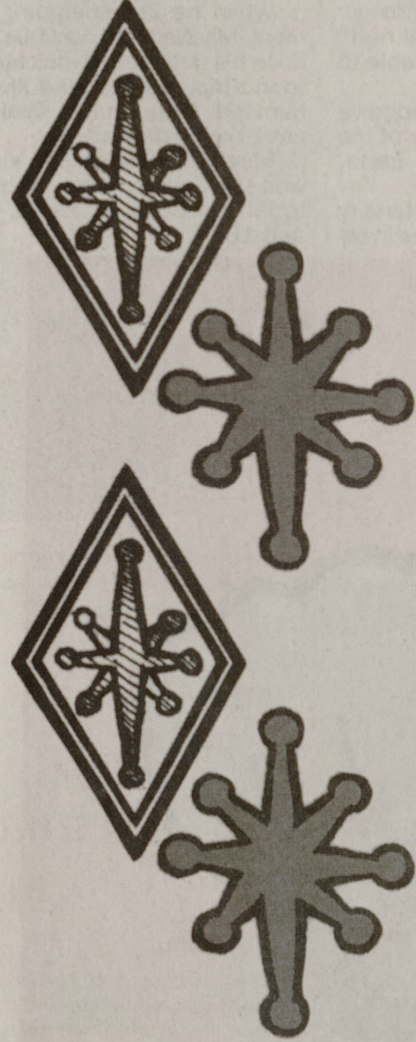
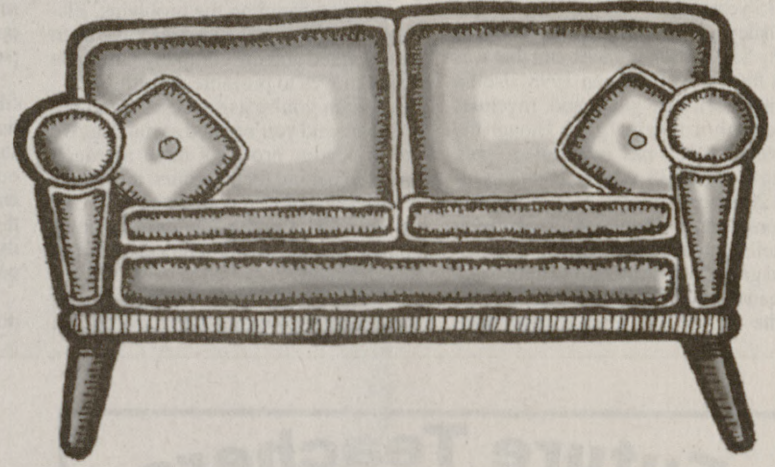
Boys will be boys

The producers of "Candid Camera" probably never imagined what Tom Green, host of "The Tom Green Show," would do with the simple premise of taping people's reactions to outlandish situations.

Green, along with his co-host, Glen, resorts to juvenile tactics to get a laugh, such as interviewing people with a microphone topped with animal excrement, invading strangers' homes in the wee hours of the morning for a member of his crew to take a shower and having his parents wake up to find an obscene statue on their front lawn.

Comedy Central's "The Man Show" took the idea behind ABC's "Politically Incorrect" one step further by allowing hosts Jimmy Kimmel and Adam Carolla to not only share their politically incorrect thoughts, but also bring these thoughts to life as they watch girls jumping on trampolines.

Kimmel explained that the duo also found inspiration in daytime feminist programs, such as "Oprah."



EMILY HARRELL/THE BATTALION

"It's almost like the women have come together to yammer as a community on television," Kimmel said in an interview with *The Battalion*.

"There's so many shows that are just women yammering all day. Like "The View" — my wife had it on this morning — and all these "Oprah" and talk shows that are all targeted to women. And they're all very insidious because they are anti-man; they just pretend that they're not. We are a show for men, and we make no bones about it."

Shows of a different nature

Though Jacques Cousteau's name is synonymous with nature shows, "The Crocodile Hunter" is nothing like Cousteau's sedate program — for "The Crocodile Hunter," danger is the name of the game.

Steve Erwin and his wife, Terry, take viewers into the wilderness as he wrestles crocodiles, handles snakes and chases lizards.

With a child-like enthusiasm and a heavy Australian accent, Steve enlightens viewers

about the "beauties" he encounters. In the wild kingdom of nature shows, this one brings the audience as close to the action as one can get.

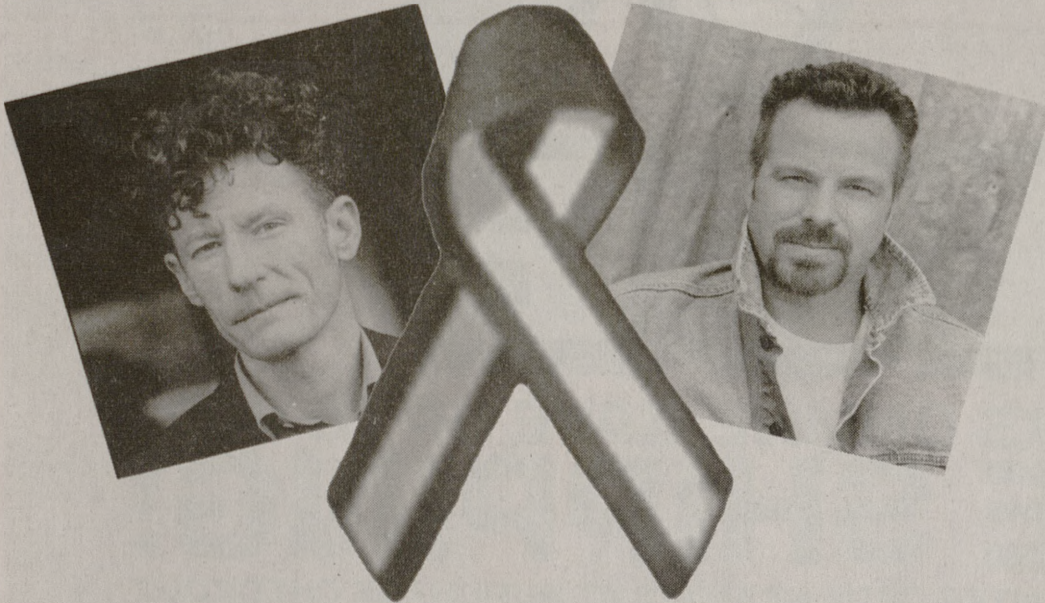
Viewers accompany Steve on his zany adventures and feel the excitement of being a part of his expeditions as he cheats death at every turn.

Much like "Crocodile Hunter" took Jacques Cousteau's concept to a new level, "The Simpsons" creator Matt Groening has given the premise of the '60s cartoon "The Jetsons" a new twist with his view of the future in "Futurama," providing a witty, darker counterpart for "The Simpsons."

As for the year ahead, Fox is once again on a mad dash to prevent its newest critical darling, "Malcolm in the Middle," from becoming the next "Action" by running the show twice a week and creating commercials that quote several prominent newspapers and magazines harping about the show.

But ultimately, it will be up to viewers to decide if any innovations will take place in the medium that deserves a bad reputation.

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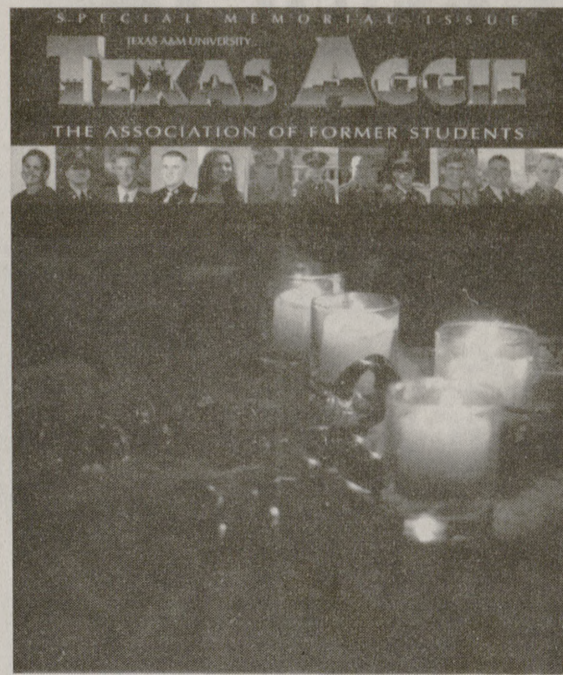
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