

A SNAP SHOT OF AUSTRALIAN AND IMPORTED PROGRAMMING

By the end of the century Australian programs will make up 100 per cent of prime time was the prediction made by Bruce Gyngell, Executive Chairman of the Nine Network at the Centre for Media and Telecommunication Law and Policy's Seminar on Australian content at the end of October 1993.

As a way of exploring this possibility, we have looked at the breakdown of Australian to imported programming to take a base-line reading, a sort of snapshot of 1992, which will allow us to measure how far we will travel during the 1990s.

This article is based on the three Sydney commercial television stations, ATN, TCN and TEN for the calendar year 1992, during the hours of 6 a.m.-midnight (Table 1) as well as prime time 6 p.m.-10 p.m. (Table 2).

DRAMA

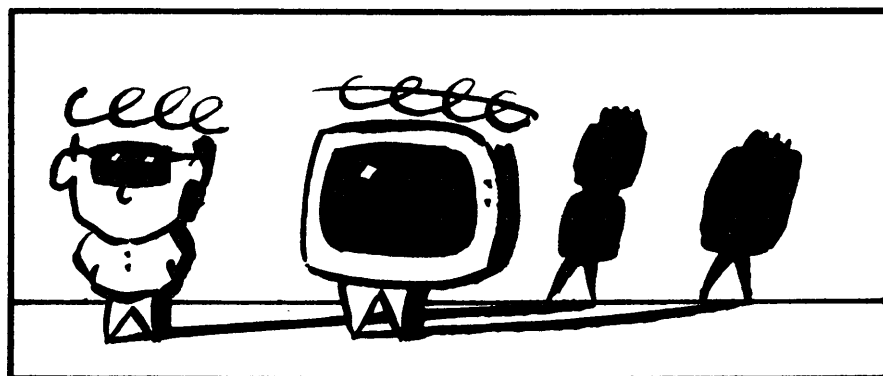
Overseas programs far outnumber Australian in the drama category (which includes repeats). Drama programs make up just over 53 per cent of programs broadcast in prime time and 34.7 per cent of all programs broadcast between 6 a.m. and midnight. Australian drama made up 4 per cent of all programs broadcast between 6 a.m.-midnight, compared to imported drama's 30.69 per cent share. During prime time, 13.61 per cent of programs were Australian drama compared to 39.5 per cent imported drama.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

Children's programs can be divided into several categories:

- P programs
- C classified children's programs including C Australian drama, overseas drama and non-drama C programs such as magazine and game shows
- other children's programs which include hosted programs and children's movies
- cartoons.

Stations are permitted to broadcast C programs up until 8.30 p.m. However,



children's programs are usually broadcast during the day with approximately 1 per cent being broadcast between 6 p.m.-10 p.m.

Children's programs represent 13.67 per cent of all programs broadcast between 6 a.m. and midnight with only a slightly higher percentage being Australian programs; 7.16 per cent Australian compared with 6.52 per cent overseas.

During 1992, 1.99 per cent of preschool (P classified) programs broadcast were Australian. P programs must be broadcast prior to 4.30 p.m.

The Australian content standard [TPS14 (11)] requires each station to score 170 points for C Australian drama. Even with this requirement, when looking at C programming overall, there is less Australian than overseas C classified drama programming, with 0.76 per cent Australian and 1.12 per cent from overseas.

NEWS, CURRENT AFFAIRS AND DOCUMENTARIES

During the 6 a.m.-midnight period news, current affairs and documentaries represent the third largest category of Australian programs (10.63 per cent was Australian compared with 2.62 per cent overseas). However, this group of programs forms the largest category of Australian programs in prime time: (21.46 per cent Australian compared with 2.43 per cent overseas).

Between 6 a.m.-midnight news and current affairs programs are mainly Australian — 9.99 per cent Australian (6.99 per cent news and 3 per cent current affairs) compared with 1.9 per

cent overseas (1.47 per cent news and 0.43 per cent current affairs).

Australian news and current affairs programs made up nearly 20 per cent of prime time programs. All news programs during prime time are Australian. Current affairs programs are mainly Australian and are shown predominantly in prime time, with only a small percentage from overseas (19.92 per cent Australian (9.77 per cent news and 10.15 per cent current affairs) compared with 0.51 per cent overseas (current affairs)).

Documentary programs are fairly evenly distributed between Australian and imported programs, with a slightly lower percentage being Australian programs: 6 a.m.-midnight, 0.64 per cent Australian compared with 0.73 per cent overseas; 6 p.m.-10pm, 1.54 per cent Australian compared with 1.92 per cent overseas.

INFORMATION, SPORT AND QUIZ PROGRAMS

The program categories of education, religion and information; sports programs; and, quiz, panel and game shows are dominated by Australian programs in both the period 6 a.m.-midnight and prime time. The majority of programs in these categories are shown outside prime time; only 22 per cent of Australian and 14.5 per cent of overseas programs in these categories were broadcast in prime time.

LIGHT ENTERTAINMENT

The highest percentage during

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Table: 1

| 1992 - SYDNEY: 6 a.m. - Midnight | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| PROGRAM CATEGORY | Aust hours | Aust % | OS hours | OS % | Total % |
| DRAMA | | | | | |
| Sitcoms - Series | 154.22 | 0.78 | 1760.07 | 8.91 | 9.69 |
| Serials/Series | 512.4 | 2.59 | 1793.18 | 9.07 | 11.67 |
| Mini-series | 34.17 | 0.17 | 90.78 | 0.46 | 0.63 |
| Cinema films/telemovies | 94.8 | 0.48 | 2384.12 | 12.06 | 12.54 |
| Dramatised documentary | 0 | 0.00 | 36.50 | 0.18 | 0.18 |
| Total | 795.59 | 4.03 | 6064.65 | 30.69 | 34.71 |
| CHILDREN'S | | | | | |
| Pre-school | 393.27 | 1.99 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 1.99 |
| C Australian drama | 150.27 | 0.76 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.76 |
| C Drama (other) | 1.5 | 0.00 | 220.78 | 1.12 | 1.12 |
| C Programs (non-drama) | 505.58 | 2.56 | 32.73 | 0.17 | 2.72 |
| Other children's programs | 362.02 | 1.83 | 232.47 | 1.18 | 3.01 |
| Cartoons | 1.53 | 0.00 | 801.86 | 4.06 | 4.06 |
| Total | 1414.17 | 7.16 | 1287.84 | 6.52 | 13.67 |
| NEWS, CURRENT AFFAIRS & DOCUMENTARIES | | | | | |
| News bulletins | 1382.28 | 6.99 | 290.22 | 1.47 | 8.46 |
| Current affairs | 592.18 | 3.00 | 84.28 | 0.43 | 3.42 |
| Documentaries | 127.37 | 0.64 | 144.27 | 0.73 | 1.37 |
| Total | 2101.83 | 10.63 | 518.77 | 2.62 | 13.26 |
| EDUCATION, RELIGION & INFORMATION | | | | | |
| Education | 0.05 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Religion | 151.45 | 0.77 | 2.02 | 0.01 | 0.78 |
| Information | 693.27 | 3.51 | 152.58 | 0.77 | 4.28 |
| Total | 844.77 | 4.27 | 154.6 | 0.78 | 5.06 |
| SPORTS | | | | | |
| Sports coverage | 1762 | 8.92 | 211.17 | 1.07 | 9.98 |
| Studio sports programs | 354.12 | 1.79 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 1.79 |
| Total | 2116.12 | 10.71 | 211.17 | 1.07 | 11.78 |
| QUIZ, PANEL & GAME PROGRAMS | | | | | |
| Quiz/panel/game shows | 505.95 | 2.56 | 74.20 | 0.38 | 2.94 |
| LIGHT ENTERTAINMENT | | | | | |
| Today/Tonight shows | 2062.03 | 10.43 | 748.33 | 3.79 | 14.22 |
| Variety general shows | 166.43 | 0.84 | 99.72 | 0.50 | 1.35 |
| Variety/Music shows | 70.47 | 0.36 | 20.68 | 0.10 | 0.46 |
| Music (live concerts) | 4.53 | 0.02 | 8.78 | 0.04 | 0.07 |
| Music video | 231.43 | 1.17 | 233.52 | 1.18 | 2.35 |
| Total | 2534.89 | 12.83 | 1111.03 | 5.62 | 18.45 |
| | 10313.32 | 52.18 | 9422.26 | 47.67 | 100 |

NB: Due to rounding, columns may not total exactly

6 a.m. - midnight of Australian programs is the light entertainment category with Australian programs representing 12.83 per cent of all programs compared with 5.62 per cent overseas. This category includes today/tonight

shows which are predominantly Australian. These programs are not generally broadcast during the prime time viewing period and are usually shown during the day or later at night.

CONCLUSION

During 1992, Australian drama made up 9.2 per cent of all Australian programs broadcast in Sydney during the period 6 a.m.-midnight. Overseas drama,

Table: 2

| 1992 - SYDNEY: 6 p.m. - 10 p.m. | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| PROGRAM CATEGORY | Aust hours | Aust % | OS hours | OS % | Total % |
| Drama sitcom - Series | 84.7 | 1.93 | 469.73 | 10.70 | 12.62 |
| Series/Serial | 456.52 | 10.39 | 342.18 | 7.79 | 18.19 |
| Mini-series | 22.85 | 0.52 | 47.47 | 1.08 | 1.60 |
| Cinema films/Telemovies | 33.89 | 0.77 | 849.12 | 19.33 | 20.10 |
| Dramatised documentary | 0 | 0.00 | 26.5 | 0.60 | 0.60 |
| Total | 597.96 | 13.61 | 1735 | 39.50 | 53.12 |
| CHILDREN'S | | | | | |
| C Australian drama | 5 | 0.11 | 0 | 0.00 | 0.11 |
| Other children's programs | 0 | 0.00 | 15.95 | 0.36 | 0.36 |
| Cartoons | 0 | 0.00 | 36 | 0.82 | 0.82 |
| Total | 5 | 0.11 | 51.95 | 1.18 | 1.30 |
| NEWS, CURRENT AFFAIRS & DOCUMENTARIES | | | | | |
| News bulletins | 429.07 | 9.77 | 0 | 0.00 | 9.77 |
| Current affairs | 445.83 | 10.15 | 22.5 | 0.51 | 10.66 |
| Documentaries | 67.78 | 1.54 | 84.4 | 1.92 | 3.46 |
| Total | 942.68 | 21.46 | 106.9 | 2.43 | 23.90 |
| EDUCATION, RELIGION & INFORMATION | | | | | |
| Information | 192.88 | 4.39 | 22.42 | 0.51 | 4.90 |
| SPORTS | | | | | |
| Sports coverage | 260.85 | 5.94 | 8 | 0.18 | 6.12 |
| QUIZ, PANEL & GAME PROGRAMS | | | | | |
| Quiz/Panel/Game shows | 155.53 | 3.54 | 55.7 | 1.27 | 4.81 |
| LIGHT ENTERTAINMENT | | | | | |
| Today/Tonight shows | 2.75 | 0.06 | 5.37 | 0.12 | 0.18 |
| Variety general shows | 140.3 | 3.19 | 28.85 | 0.66 | 3.85 |
| Variety/Music shows | 58 | 1.32 | 9.45 | 0.22 | 1.54 |
| Music (live concerts) | 1.5 | 0.03 | 2.98 | 0.07 | 0.10 |
| Music video | 0 | 0.00 | 0.5 | 0.01 | 0.01 |
| Total | 202.55 | 4.61 | 47.15 | 1.07 | 5.69 |
| | 2357.45 | 53.68 | 2027.12 | 46.15 | 100 |

NB: Due to rounding, columns may not total exactly.

however, is the major category of imported programs and represented 66.73 per cent of all imported programming broadcast between 6 a.m. and midnight. The Australian content standard's minimum annual requirement for first release Australian drama and C drama supports a category of programming that is dominated by imported material.

TPS14 allows for first run Australian drama programs to receive a drama score if they are broadcast within a six

hour continuous period between the hours of 5 p.m. and midnight. A minimum score of 750 drama points a year is required by each commercial television station. Consequently, three quarters (75.16 per cent) of all Australian drama was broadcast in prime time between 6 p.m.-10 p.m.

Series and serials make up the largest category of Australian drama. The largest category of imported drama,

overall and in prime time, is films and telemovies. Sitcoms are the second largest category of imported drama broadcast in prime time.

While the Australian content standard's transmission quota provides an overall safety net under Australian programming, non drama programs are predominantly Australian and make up more than 90 per cent of all Australian programming.

