

Unusual airings: 1984 & the Cable

Danny F. was about to put a light bulb coated with vaseline up Sami M.'s ass when my television screen went blank. The program was "Mr. Fixit" and it was broadcast on both Teleprompter and Sterling cable televisions' Public Access Channel "C" last Sunday night, February 4, an evening which will certainly go down in the annals of television firsts. At 11 o'clock on that fateful night, video artist Anton Perich presented a series of his videotapes and for the ensuing hour they must have been really confused at the cable broadcast station, for Perich isn't making videotapes about what people think of the war ending or how senior citizens are being treated. His subject matter is right out of the backroom of Max's Kansas City, as is his cast—Donna Jordan, Pat Ast, Danny F., Susan Blond, Tinkerbelle, Hy Manhattan, and Pat Cleveland were among the stars.

Until Sunday it was possible for just about anyone who's into making alternative television via half-inch video equipment to take their productions to any of the cable television systems in New York and have them aired on specially set up Public Access channels. Then Perich's tapes were shown.

The first half of Perich's hour began with a fashion show modeled by Pat Cleveland and Donna Jordan. Then a young woman and a dog dancing together came on the screen. She was kissing and hugging the dog and the dog was warming up to the possibilities involved when the segment ended. Next poet Hy Manhattan read one of his poems while his muse, Rachel, slowly took her clothes off, feeling herself up, squeezing her breasts, and generally having a good time. Net

exactly "All in the Family" but, unquestionably a major tv breakthrough in the making. Deciding to get into the act, Hy started fondling Rachel's breasts. Then the tape was cut-off. Obviously someone at the cable station woke up. The picture and the sound stopped, replaced for about 10 minutes by the Public Access ID sign. When the programming resumed Hy and Rachel were nowhere in sight. Instead Donna Jordan and Pat Ast were playing in a beauty parlor. Donna lifted the sheet she had covering her body to expose her breasts, but before the cable people could do anything, the scene shifted to a very '30s looking woman dancing in a spotlight.

Then came the main attraction. "Mr. Fixit" is the story of a husband and wife (Danny F. and Susan Blond) who call in a tv repairman (Sami Melange) to fix two of the five tv sets they have littering their apartment since the wife is going to be on "Hollywood Squares" and doesn't want to miss it while hubby wants to watch the Super Bowl. In the course of his service call, the repairman is persuaded to take off his clothes so they can be washed, is sprayed with deodorant, and admits to having hemorrhoids. The vaselined light bulb is announced as a "cure" for hemorrhoids, and the repairman is just lying down on his stomach and spreading his legs when the program shut down again. Another five minute wait and then the tape was resumed to show a final few minutes, with no nudity, of "Mr. Fixit."

Next came Perich's "coming attractions" for his videotape to be broadcast next week. A program called "The Price of the Party" starring Taylor Mead and Candy Darling. Candy was wearing see-through and looking very silicone while Taylor, his pants down around his ankles and holding his private parts, was his usual marvelous self, singing and leering at the camera. It looked like a show not to be missed.

The cable announcer's voice came back on. "We'll be presenting another videotape by Anton Perich next week at this time," he said in a rather

bemused fashion, then there was a pause and he added, "Maybe." Silence again, then he continued, "Certain segments of this tape were deleted on purpose. There was no time to edit it." Another pause. "What a way to end the night!" he added, "This is Teleprompter Cable TV wishing you a good night . . . and, ah, pleasant dreams."

Anton Perich's tapes were certainly a marvelous clash of medium and message. Is cable going to succumb to middle-class values for middle-class viewers or is Public Access television going to be just that—if you have something to say, no matter how bizarre, you can say it. Perich has raised the question and if this tv event is pursued to its logical conclusion we have all the makings of a landmark case which would make "Deep Throat" look small time. The answer may come on Sunday night at 11 when "The Price of the Party" is scheduled for broadcast. In the great tradition of television, to find out what happens, we'll have to tune in next week . . .

—Richard Robinson