

The second television channel: The challenge

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On January 1, 1982, TV2 and TV3 will hit the air in what could easily become known in future as the most important mass communications event in the South Africa of the nineteen eighties, or even the twentieth century itself. TV2 and TV3 will initially share one channel, air time being equally divided between the two services; each, therefore, contributing 13 and a half hours to an initial total air time of 27 hours per week.

TV2 will transmit its programmes in two of the Nguni languages — Zulu and Xhosa. TV3, on the other hand, will render its services in the Sotho languages, South Sotho, North Sotho and Tswana.

On D-day, January 1, 1982, five transmitters — one each in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town, Alverstone and Port Elizabeth — will carry

second channel programmes to a potential audience of 2 000 000, mainly urban dwellers. During the course of 1982 more transmitters will be added to this network, eventually bringing about, towards the end of that year, a total of 18 transmitters covering a mainly urban area audience of 4,5 to 5 million potential viewers.

That is the one side of this multi-sided story of TV2 and TV3. Looking at the second channel event from one of its other angles, it could probably justifiably be called the largest undertaking of its kind on the African continent, or in the Third World at large, for that matter, for various reasons:

- **Firstly.** Its facility network consists of a main centre comprising an 8-storey office block, including 3 larger studio production units, equipped with the most modern recording facilities presently available. This complex arose from the skeleton of old Broadcast House in Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, which was renovated and equipped in record time to meet the demands of what probably is going to be the most advanced television network in Africa.

To assist these Broadcast House facilities, a second building next to it on its Fox Street side, is at present being adapted into an office block, mainly to accommodate programme production staff.

Another venture which contributes to the facility network as a whole, is the Broadcasting Centre in Pretoria, comprising offices and studio facilities, which will mainly be used by sections of TV3 for its North Sotho and Tswana Services.

Finally, mobile O.B. units will be added to assist recording operations in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban and Port Elizabeth, each of these being equipped with the apparatus needed both to cover events even as large as sports gatherings, etc., and in which editing of recorded material will be possible

- **Secondly**, yet another angle of the TV2 and TV3 scene is its production activities. Programmes in all the acknowledged categories such as drama series, documentaries, comedy series, music and variety programmes, children's and women's programmes, travelogues, etc., are either already completed and scheduled for transmission, or in an advanced production stage, either by outside production companies commissioned by the SABC, or by TV2 and TV3's own production staff.
- **Finally**, this service will eventually be staffed by a personnel of roughly 1 000 programme and operations people, of whom only a handful of programme administrative officers will be Whites. Production wise, TV2 and TV3 are meant to be *from the people for the people, by the people*.

The aim of the second television channel with all these commodities is mainly to entertain its audiences; and within the scope of this basic function, it will also endeavour to inform and educate. It will, therefore, be a window on the world, in the broadest sense of the word.

It intends to bring the world at large to its viewers. As such TV2 and TV3 will be and intend being an enriching and entertaining experience. Programme content will always aim at reflecting the international scene in all its complexity.

Therefore, locally produced drama and comedy series will be screened, but there will also be dubbed versions of internationally produced top-ten comedy and drama series such as *The Jeffersons*, *Good Times*, *Sanford and Son* and the like. As far as music is concerned, the local jazz and pop scenes will also be covered; but so will Oscar Peterson, Satchmo, Diahann Carroll, Kenny Rogers, Gladys Knight, Mahalia Jackson, Count Basie, and others.

Local travelogues will be produced and transmitted, but so will travelogues from overseas on countries such as the United States, England and various other European countries.

The question may well be asked: *Why do TV2 and TV3 not use*

English, or Afrikaans for that matter, as its language or languages of transmission? There are quite a few answers to this one:

- South Africa is a multi-linguistic country. TV1 already broadcasts in two of those, namely English and Afrikaans. To use either of those languages, or both, would amount to duplication which can't be justified.
- An independent survey conducted very recently by Market Research Africa, using a multi-stage area probability sample of 1 371 respondents over the age of 16 years, showed that almost 90 per cent of these respondents preferred as their first choice to view TV2 and TV3 programmes in Zulu, Xhosa, Tswana, South Sotho and North Sotho. Less than 10 per cent stated English or Afrikaans as their first choice of language for these transmissions.

This is the present hardware on the second television channel. I would, however, very much like to dwell on the possible future of these television services. Before I go into what at best could be called a scenario at this stage, I would, however, prefer to state two more facts.

- **First of all:** If everything goes according to present expectations, TV2 and TV3 will divide into two separate regional services on January 1, 1983, each of these regional services transmitting 27 hours on its own accord as soon as possible after such division. This will bring about that viewers on the Reef and immediate vicinity will have a choice of three TV channels: they'll be able to view either TV1, TV2 or TV3 programmes. Viewers in the predominantly Nguni areas of the Cape, Natal and parts of the Eastern Transvaal, will have a choice of tuning to either TV1 or TV2, while those who live in the predominantly Sotho areas of the Northern and Western Transvaal and the Orange Free State will have a choice of either TV1 or TV3.
- **Secondly:** Speaking of a second television channel against the previously mentioned background, therefore, amounts to a misnomer, at least in a certain sense. The second channel set-up will at best be nothing more than an interim arrangement, awaiting the technical possibility to separate transmissions into regional services on the basis of language and area in which such language or languages apply.

The following scenario, which amounts to the challenge we face during this very decade of the eighties, is at this stage nothing more than a personal view. I am, however, aware of the fact that I share this dream with my colleagues in TV2 and TV3, Black and White.

The dream goes more or less along the following lines:

- Each of TV2 and TV3 will start its race in airtime as separate channels on the 27 hour per week per service basis as soon as

possible after January, 1983, compared to its TV1 counterpart which will probably, at that stage, broadcast twice those hours per week. But it may well happen that, at the turn of the next decade, each of TV2 and TV3 might be ahead in comparison with TV1 in airtime.

- It is quite possible to envisage a stage, within the coming decade, in which TV2 and TV3 will be the champions in every respect on the African television scene — that includes such aspects as studio facilities, personnel numbers, number of viewers and total airtime.

Teen hierdie agtergrond wat ek vir u geskets het, is die SAUK se TV2- en TV3-personeel tans besig om hulle voor te berei vir 1 Januarie 1982. In die poging om voor te wees met programproduksie en derhalwe programme wat gereed is vir verdere skedulering en uitsending in die toekoms nadat met uitsendings begin is op 1 Januarie, werk ons in 'n sekere opsig met 'n belangrike agterstand. Ons bevind ons naamlik in dié posisie dat ons, om goeie redes, nie altyd seker kan wees *hoe* ons bestemmings op sekere programme en sekere benaderings wat in die aanbod daarvan gevolg word sal reageer nie.

Die uitdaging hier, in 'n baie vroeë stadium van produksie en voorbereiding reeds, was om in die afwesigheid van 'n bestaande, altyd vergelykbare bestemming lukraakwerkswyses in produksie so ver moontlik te beperk. Ons moes kon eksperimenteer en ons eksperimente kon toets, sodat ons met groter sekerheid kon voortbou op die reaksie op sodanige eksperimentering. Enkele jare gelede reeds, in 'n stadium toe TV2 en TV3 se D-dag nog onseker was, het die senior personeel van hierdie dienste kykgroepe saamgestel wat uit alle lae van die teikenbestemming bestaan het. Van die vroegste produksies is aan hierdie groepe vertoon en sodanige kyksessies is opgevolg met die geleentheid om die kykers tot in die fynste besonderhede hul sê te laat sê. Hierdie resultate is dan later noukeurig geëvalueer en sekere kykpatrone wat sigself deurgaans voorgedoen het, het tot die formulering van hipoteses gelei wat meer daadwerklik met eksperimentering opgevolg kon word en opgevolg is.

Só is die eerste riglyne vir 'n soort produksiekultuur of produksiefilosofie algaande neergelê en in produksie nagevolg. Die jare het omgegaan, maar hierdie benadering het voortgeleef, met, soos dit tans lyk, uiters goeie gevolg.

Die uiteindelijke aankondiging van TV2 en TV3 sowat 2 jaar gelede, het egter momentum aan die hele program van voorbereiding verleen. Swart program- en bedryfspersoneel vir sowel film- as videowerk kon op omvattende skaal aangestel word en die SAUK se eie opleidingskurse vir hierdie mense het op gereelde grondslag plaasgevind. Tans beskik TV2 en TV3 reeds oor 'n swart program- en bedryfspersoneel van nagenoeg 500 mense en aanstellings word steeds gedoen.

Om vir u te vertel dat alles altyd voor die wind verloop, sou nie heeltemal waar wees nie.

Dat daar egter baie geleer is uit die verloop van sake in die praktyk en dat hierdie kennis van onskatbare waarde blyk te wees vir die suksesvolle begin en voortsetting van TV2 en TV3 se uitsendings, is eweneens waar.

In die opleidingsprogram vir swart TV-werkers het dit byvoorbeeld gou geblyk dat 'n stewige en gevestigde verwysingsraamwerk van beeldproduksie in die algemeen ontbreek.

In teenstelling met die swartman, het die blanke in Suid-Afrika reeds dekades gelede met die rolprent kennis gemaak en 'n eie filmvervaardigingskultuur tot stand gebring waarbinne 'n behoefte aan werkers op alle bedryfs- en produksievlakke ontstaan het. Só ontstaan die Schlesinger-groep se African Film Productions vroeg reeds en word plaaslike mense reeds in 1916 betrek by die vervaardiging van 'n Suid-Afrikaanse rolprent, *Die Voortrekkers*. Gedurende 1930 volg *Moedertjie*, die eerste rolprent met 'n Afrikaanse klankbaan waarin plaaslike kunstenaars soos Pierre de Wet, Joan du Toit en Stephanie Faure optree en waarvan Joseph Albrecht die regisseur is. Albrecht en die spelers ontvang vir hierdie bydrae meer as 'n halfeeu gelede die goue medalje van die Akademie vir Taal, Lettere en Kuns.

'n Plaaslike rolprentbedryf begin nou geleidelik ontwikkel en in 1946 word *Geboortegrond* uitgereik, waarna die bedryf momentum begin verkry. Rolprente soos *Kom Saam Vanaand*, *Hier's Ons Weer*, *Alles Sal Regkom*, *Daar Doer in die Bosveld*, *50-50*, *Satanskoraal*, *Dirkie* en andere volg en binne 'n kwessie van enkele dekades verskyn meer en meer rolprentmaatskappye op die toneel en daarmee saam name soos Jamie Uys, Tommy Meyer, Elmo de Witt, Jans Rautenbach, Emil Nofal, Jan Scholtz, ensovoorts, en word groter ko-produksies en selfs eie produksies gerig op 'n internasionale mark aangepak, soos byvoorbeeld *The Hellions*, *Dingaka*, *Beautiful People*, ensovoorts.

Die gevolge is dat al meer en meer blankes in die regie- en bedryfsaspekte van beeldproduksie betrek word. Met die koms van TV1 gedurende die helfte van die jare sewentig is daar dus reeds mense met die nodige filmkennis wat as program- en bedryfspersoneel betrek en opgelei kan word, sodat TV1 teen 'n vir die produksiemense bekende verwysingsraamwerk van stapel loop.

Dit is hierdie gevestigde beeldproduksiekultuur wat oorwegend afwesig is in die geval van TV1 en TV2. Daar is dus 'n behoefte daaraan om sowel 'n produksie-kultuur van die aard te skep, as aan opleiding van mense binne sodanige kultuur. So gesien, word die taak wat op TV2 en TV3 wag werklik van meer veeleisende aard, juis omdat groter eise aan sowel opleiding in die algemeen en indiensopleiding in die besonder gestel word.

Die implikasies van die relatiewe afwesigheid van 'n eie filmkultuur strek ook sover soos die terrein van waarneming deur die bestemming. Toe die blanke visueel 'n rolprentkultuur gevestig en ontwikkel het

waaraan die blanke bestemming deur dekades heen op voortgesette wyse blootgestel was, het die swartman oorwegend in dié opsig 'n teatermens gebly. Die visuele kultuur waaraan hý blootgestel was, was meer opvoerings, soos byvoorbeeld *uMabatha*, die Zoeloe-Macbeth, *Ipi 'Ntombi*, en ander werke van dié aard, waar hy plek-plek selfs wyer lof bekom het as die blanke op teatergebied hier te lande. *Ipi 'Ntombi* is sekerlik hier 'n uitstekende voorbeeld van die swart teaterkunstenaar se internasionale sukses.

Die feit dat die blanke hoofsaaklik 'n filmkultuur en die swartman 'n teaterkultuur gevestig het, het bepaald 'n invloed gehad op sy waarneming. Soos die Nederlandse psigoloog, Van den Bergh, opgemerk het: "Die mens sien wat hy weet".

Met reg kan gesê word dat, waar die blanke primêr in rolprentterme "sien", "sien" die Swartman op sy beurt hoofsaaklik vanuit 'n teaterkultuur. Vir televisie, en veral vir die aanwending van die medium, het dit myns insiens verreikende gevolge.

Die hele konsep van spel en veral wat in ons blanke Westerse filmterme op "oorspeel" sou neerkom, is hier ter sprake. Tweedens raak dit die tradisionale rolprentmaniere om tydsverloop aan te dui. Wisseldowe is byvoorbeeld by teater onbekend. Hierteenoor sluit die verouderde tegniek van 'uitdoof' en 'indooft', wat so 'n primêre kenmerk van die Westerse rolprentkultuur tot die jare vyftig van hierdie eeu was, beter aan by tydsverloop tussen bedrywe wat in die verhoogsituasie met 'n sakkende gordyn en gewoonlik 'n pouse aangedui word, voordat die gordyn weer lig om die gehoor 'n maand, 'n jaar of tien of meer die toekoms in te verplaas.

Die voorafgaande voorbeelde bring mee dat die swart regisseur of kameraman "anders" na die gegewe kyk wanneer hy beplan om dit vir televisie in die kan te kry. Die realiteite wat so kenmerkend van die teateropset is, slaan duidelik deur en kan dikwels vir die rolprentingestelde oog neerkom op geaffekteerde spel of redigering wat té op die man af is: einde van spraak, einde van beeld. Begin nuwe spraak, begin nuwe beeld. Tydsverloop vereis óf dialoog wat dit duidelik stel óf die buitekomentaarstem van 'n onsigbare verteller.

Só gesien, word TV2 en TV3 se hele produksie-opset 'n nuwe ontdekkingstog, indien dit gaan waarom dit móet gaan: *effektiewe kommunikasie*.

Vir die swart program- en bedryfsman is dit in 'n sin 'n herontdekking van die wiel. En die wiel moet die wa na 'n ander nuwe bestemming neem. Dit gaan dus om die ontdekking van 'n wiel wat primêr geskik is vir die behoeftes van daardie bestemming.

Dit dan is die proses wat nou agter die skerms by die televisie-sentrum aan die gang is. En die suksesvolle voltrekking van daardie proses wat ek so pas vir u probeer beskryf het, is die uitdaging wat die jare tagtig stel aan suksesvolle televisie vir die swart kyker in Suid-Afrika.