

HBO: Brand Management and Subscriber Aggregation: 1972-2007

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Abstract

The thesis offers a revised institutional history of US cable network Home Box Office that expands on its under-examined identity as a monthly subscriber service from 1972 to 1994. This is used to better explain extensive discussions of HBO's rebranding from 1995 to 2007 around high-quality original content and experimentation with new media platforms. The first half of the thesis particularly expands on HBO's origins and early identity as part of publisher Time Inc. from 1972 to 1988, before examining how this affected the network's programming strategies as part of global conglomerate Time Warner from 1989 to 1994. Within this, evidence of ongoing processes for aggregating subscribers, or packaging multiple entertainment attractions around stable production cycles, are identified as defining HBO's promotion of general monthly value over rivals.

Arguing that these specific exhibition and production strategies are glossed over in existing HBO scholarship as a result of an over-valuing of post-1995 examples of 'quality' television, their ongoing importance to the network's contemporary management of its brand across media platforms is mapped over distinctions from rivals to 2007. Suggesting much longer institutional continuities and influences for understanding HBO's success, the thesis outlines the development and influence of these strategies through a critical chronology of the network's history. In doing so, the thesis aligns with trends for rigorous media histories that consider the origins, long-term precedent and cyclical institutional strategies that govern contemporary industry practices.

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Contents

Abstract	2
Table of Contents	3
Acknowledgements	4
Introduction	5 - 40
Chapter One: 1972-1979	.....	41 - 66
Chapter Two: 1980-1988	.....	67 - 111
Chapter Three: 1989-1994	.....	112 - 149
Chapter Four: 1995-1999	.....	150 - 197
Chapter Five: 2000-2002	.....	198 - 232
Chapter Six: 2003-2007	233 - 279
Conclusion	280 - 289
Works Cited	290 – 334
Filmography	335 - 377

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Introduction

Home Box Office's success as a leading US cable network and global brand is undisputed. First achieving distinction as a subscription channel with uncut movies, sports and entertainment programming, in the mid-1990s HBO re-branded itself around very high-quality films and miniseries such as *The Sopranos* (1999-2007), *Sex and the City* (1998-2004), *The Wire* (2002-2008) and *Band of Brothers* (2001). Reflecting contemporary demands for managing television brands across digital broadcast and cable markets, HBO and its slogan 'It's Not TV' has carried quality associations across television, DVDs and the internet.

Most accounts explain HBO's success as the result of a process of institutional reinvention. This involved a gradual transition from an innovative cable 'movie channel that simply exhibited Hollywood features into a cultural phenomenon' (Anderson 2008: 34). Histories broadly cite a move away from an eclectic range of programs as part of a 'utility brand' subscription service in the 1972 to 1994 period to the branding strength of quality series from 1995. This is subsequently used as the starting point for debating the complexity of individual HBO programs and the extent to which a 'not TV' quality identity illustrates wider cultural tensions over corporate marketing. In this way, HBO's ongoing management of branded content across new media platforms has been used to define ongoing interest in the network as the 'prototypical media corporation of the 21st century' (Edgerton 2008a: 18).

My thesis however aims to provide an alternative history of HBO. Returning to HBO's development from 1972 to 1994, I argue that hitherto overlooked influences from Time Inc. helped shape distinctions over rivals as a monthly subscriber service beyond 'utility brand' accounts. As a result, HBO's increasing attempts to produce high-quality programs and to manage its band name across digital markets from the 1990s to the 2000s can be recontextualised as protecting a core subscriber identity. Used to better explain innovations in series such as *The Sopranos*, this account is designed to caution against uses of HBO as a prototype for industry change. Contextualised as part of the need for more rigorous institutional histories to better understand contemporary industrial strategies, the thesis therefore offers to deepen standard discussions of HBO as a network and brand.

Literature Review

Initial histories of HBO aimed to contextualise its identity as a film-driven cable subscription service from the 1970s to the mid-1990s that added to the diversification and consolidation of the post-war media industries. These histories were produced from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, and began with an anecdotal overview of HBO's success from 1972 to 1988 by journalist George Mair (1988). In the early 1990s HBO was more specifically contextualised as a case study for media historians studying post-war overlaps between Hollywood, broadcasting and cable television (Hilmes 1990; Gomery 1992; Hillier 1992; Schatz 1993; Wasko 1994). This has also been echoed by later histories of the film industry by David Cook (2000), Stephen Prince (2002) and others.

More recent scholarship on HBO, produced from approximately 2002, has however significantly built on these early accounts. Focusing on HBO's 1995 rebranding around quality programming, this work generally considers the network as a leading case study for televisual innovation. The most common approach here has been to analyse HBO programs as examples of 'quality' television, notably represented by anthologies on *The Sopranos* (Lavery ed 2002; 2006), as well as *Sex and the City* (McCabe, Akass eds 2004), *Six Feet Under* (McCabe, Akass eds 2005), and *Deadwood* (Lavery ed 2006). A wide range of individual articles and book chapters have also been produced on these and other key series.

These anthologies mix close series analysis with historical overviews of HBO's brand identity (Rogers et al 2002; Rogers et al 2006). Outlining how marginal original programming experiments from the 1970s to the early 1990s were translated into a stronger brand identity for HBO, this is focused through the success of key series like *The Sopranos* and *Sex and the City*. Some added depth has been provided for earlier HBO programming experiments by Megan Mullen (2003),¹ who includes the network as part of a more general history of the cable industry and its programming reliance on specialist exhibition from 1946 to 1995. Article-length discussions of HBO's pre-1995 programming by Karen Backstein (2001) and David Andrews (2007) also identify some limited precedents for later success.

¹ For an abridged and revised version, see Megan Mullen (2008) *Television in the Multichannel Age: A Brief History of Cable Television*, London: Wiley-Blackwell.

Catherine Johnson (2007) also uses HBO as a case study for television branding in the 1990s and 2000s. Other scholars such as Deborah Jaramillo (2002) have extended analysis of HBO's brand identity to wider questions over corporate ownership. HBO has been used in this way to debate exchanges between quality and niche economies for anthologies on American quality television (McCabe, Akass eds 2007), and in the cable industry (Banet-Weiser, Freitas, Chris eds 2007). These debates also inform more general uses of HBO as a cutting-edge example as to how the television industry has adjusted to demands for exceptional delivery and content for digital markets in the 2000s (Lotz 2007a; Caldwell 2003; 2004; 2006).

Responses to HBO's success reached a peak in 2008 with two comprehensive anthologies on the network in *The Essential HBO Reader* (Edgerton, Jones eds 2008) and *It's Not TV: Watching HBO in the Post-Television Era* (Leverette, Buckley, Ott eds 2008). Tying together trends toward quality television studies, branding, political economic critique, cable history, and overviews of changes to the television industry, Edgerton and Jones' collection is the broader in historical scope. Linking institutional overviews (Edgerton 2008a; Edgerton, Jones) with branding histories (Anderson 2008), it contains brief summaries of network comedies (Haggins, Lotz 2008), films (Heller 2008), documentaries (Mascaro 2008; Murray 2008), chat shows (Jones 2008a), sports (Miller, Kim 2008) and erotica (Jones 2008b).

Directly building on or complementing previous notes by Mair (1988) Hilmes (1990), Mullen (2003), Backstein, Andrews (2007) and Rogers et al (2002) on HBO's early history, *The Essential HBO Reader* provides the most comprehensive survey to date of the network's development from 1972 to 1995 and beyond. It also includes case studies of the Robert Altman-directed *Tanner '88* (Morreale) and *The Larry Sanders Show* (1992-1998) (Plasketes 2008) as exceptional pre-1995 programming.

By comparison, *It's Not TV* primarily focuses on post-1995 HBO, while including similarly broad original programming and branding histories (Santo 2008; Leverette 2008b; Williamson 2008; Kelso 2008). The scope of these collections has resulted in a significant reduction in the amount of published work on HBO's history and broader network identity in the past three years. The most notable of these has been a 2009 monograph on *The Sopranos* by Dana Polan.

that mixes trends for close analysis of quality series with broader institutional overviews drawn from existing accounts. First analysing how these accounts generate a collective history of HBO, from early exhibition success to later questions over quality television and media branding, it is then possible to identify some crucial gaps and opportunities for revising our understanding of the network's success.

Hilmes (1990), Gomery (1992) and Wasko's (1994) initial studies of HBO built on scholarly trends in industrial film history. Responding to perceived gaps in histories of the American film industry, early research by Tino Balio and Douglas Gomery examined the development of the Hollywood studio system. Focusing on the ways in which a small group of studios came to dominate production, exhibition and distribution of American film from the 1910s to the 1940s, they looked to industry trade papers, economic theory and other archival sources to explain systemic changes. Later work aimed to refine an understanding of the industrial and institutional contexts of early cinema, studios and its effect on a classical mode of production.²

In 1985 Gomery and Robert Allen published *Film History: Theory and Practice* which attempted to set historical studies into a collective research program. Suggesting that archive-led research could tie together theoretical and textual accounts into detailed industrial and institutional studies, they propose a methodology where understanding 'how that system operates and how it has changed over time means understanding not only the workings of those individual parts but their interaction as well' (Allen; Gomery 1985: v). By the 1990s this research program expanded to examine how Hollywood changed in the postwar era, and increasingly focused on the relationship between film and other media.

In this context, Hilmes (1990) examines an ongoing process of interdependence between the film industry and other media, from radio to television. Hilmes (1990) explores how from the late 1940s to the 1950s the studios began to increasingly produce for television, while cross-promoting and selling back-catalogues of films by the 1960s. Key to this was the role of syndication, or domestic and international sale of libraries of television programming, with the potential for continued re-licensing of popular series.

² See David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson and Janet Staiger (1985) *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960*, London: Routledge, Douglas Gomery (1986) *The Hollywood Studio System*, Basington: MacMillan, and Thomas Schatz (1989) *The Genius of the System: Hollywood film-making in the studio era*, London: Simon & Schuster,

Other accounts from this period cite how the rise of NBC, CBS and ABC as nationally-distributed and advertising-supported networks grew from roots in radio to assume dominance of commercial US television by the end of the 1950s. Notable archival histories and anthologies by William Boddy (1990a), Christopher Anderson (1994) and Tino Balio (1990a ed) consider how this success depended on more formal interactions between Hollywood, television and the wider media industries. Schatz and Perren later described this process as one of ‘vital interdependence’ (Schatz, Perren 2004: 511). In this context, new histories of film exhibition by Gomery (1992) added discussions of how non-theatrical outlets provided new forms of stability for recycling film and other media within the home.

These histories drew on existing research into television exhibition as producing an everyday ‘flow’ of programming, repeatedly rerun and segmented by advertising. Tied to cultural shifts in mass audiences, consumer marketing and national identity, studies had predominantly focused on sociological and ideological factors. Interdependent media histories thus looked to create broader accounts of industrial change and continuity, building on archival histories of broadcasting (Barnouw 1970; 1975; 1978).

Accounts of the relationship between film and broadcasting also aligned with efforts to periodise changes in post-war, or ‘New’ Hollywood, towards more aggressive marketing, cross-promotion, merchandising and specialist audiences.³ While the details of these post-war changes can be returned to in more depth in Chapter One, this broadly saw studios target new degrees of stability by diversifying media ownership, while investing in new technologies. Compensation for the loss of mass audiences also came through specialist forms of distribution and exhibition.

Histories of the period also cite the success by the mid-1970s of the production of blockbuster features such as *Jaws* (Spielberg 1975) as cross-promoted franchises, which came against further diversification into specialist theatrical distribution and exhibition (Schatz 1993; Wyatt 1994). Technological innovations in satellite-delivered

³ The precise periodisation of the ‘New’ Hollywood has been extensively debated, and aside from direct uses, I will rely on post-war’ and ‘contemporary Hollywood’ within the thesis for clarity. Specific sources and debates will also be noted across chapters in defining what ‘contemporary’ meant at any one time in the post-war era.

cable television during the 1970s consequently overlapped with these shifts by adding a specialist distribution and exhibition infrastructure to broadcasting. HBO's innovation as a commercial-free film channel was initially used here by historians as a key case study for cable's success in competing with and extending broadcast and conglomerate interests during these periods.

Mair's (1988) and Hilmes' (1990) histories contextualise HBO within a cable industry that began as a wired and microwave-delivered re-transmission service for broadcast signals. Government regulation that aimed to protect broadcast interests restricted both advertising-supported cable and experiments in subscription services, which had received some support from studios before their integration with broadcasting interests. In the late 1960s, government plans to diversify broadcasting improved licenses for cable, and produced longer-term systems.

For Mair (1988) and Hilmes (1990), HBO began as an offshoot of a Manhattan cable system owned by Charles Dolan in the late 1960s. Publishing giant Time Inc. bought into the service as a limited provider of uncut movies and sports to East Coast regions. This initially struggled, before taking a risk on becoming the first satellite-delivered cable network in 1975. Driven by uncut films, live boxing and some original programs, HBO's success provided the impetus for other cable start-ups, including media mogul Ted Turner's TNT, and film channel rival Showtime, owned by broadcast syndicator Viacom. Cable systems organised here into subscription services, or pay cable channels, and basic, advertising-supported channels.

By the end of the 1980s HBO competed, and eventually came to compromises with Hollywood over exhibition rights to high-profile recent film releases, while setting up spin-off film channel Cinemax to compete with Showtime and other subscription services. HBO also continued to program some live sports and a limited range of original programming, but was primarily marketed through uncut film exhibition. With cable expanding through popular specialist, or niche advertising-supported channels such as CNN, MTV and Nickelodeon, home entertainment markets significantly expanded during this period through video technology.

In this way HBO first achieved distinction and scholarly attention through its innovations in technology and exhibition. For scholars such as Schatz (1993) and

Wasko (1994), the network played a key role in Hollywood's increasing reliance on consolidated ownership to sell content across various media platforms and opportunities for merchandising. Tied into broader trends for media interdependence by Hilmes (1990), and outlined in Mair's (1988) case through a more straightforward overview of key decisions and competition, HBO remains a default example for scholars of film industry changes from the 1970s. Growing competition for distinction however emerged in the early 1990s as HBO became part of Time Warner, and the industry aligned with wider trends for brand management, setting up a second wave of studies on the network in the 2000s.

Adam Arvidsson argues that branding increased in importance in the 1990s as a way of stabilizing a global economy driven by 'informational capitalism' (Arvidsson 2007: 8). In this way, traditional production and marketing strategies became more complex in attempting to create strong emotional bonds between consumers and branded products. On a corporate level this involves creating a 'unitary design and a common value structure' (Arvidsson 2007: 19) across multiple branded products, platforms, promotional campaigns and tie-ins. Monitored through their perception and socio-cultural use by consumers, from subscription feedback to loyalty cards, and word-of-mouth promotion, the end-goal becomes to generate an easily identifiable and reproducible identity.

For Arvidsson, this process encourages identification and ritualistic uses by audiences with a standardized product, where the 'value of a product brand increases in so far as it can encourage the repetition of a predictable form of affective pattern' (Arvidsson 2007: 19). In this way, the process of brand management becomes defined by the organization and regulation of 'relations between the brand and its customers' (Arvidsson 2007: 10), through coordination of 'pre-structured platforms' (Arvidsson 2007: 25).

From this material and affective exchange, immaterial economic value such as the pricing of similarly-manufactured products can be made tangible through a highly controlled commercial identity and its circulation through social practices. Cultural and sociological approaches to branding have consequently considered how brands gain their value by negotiating corporate design with expectations of audience response and

their insertion into specific lifestyle associations, establishing consistent visibility within everyday life.⁴

Paul Grainge has notably explored how this more aggressive form of branding became the ‘organizing principle...within the (new) media economy of Hollywood’ (Grainge 2008: 15) in the 1990s and 2000s. While noting how Hollywood had previously targeted consumer loyalty through studio logos, star marketing, and previously discussed expansions of franchising and merchandising from the 1970s, by the 1990s ‘it had become an especially powerful imperative for both new and established media companies’ (Grainge qtd Johnson 2007: 20).

This imperative was driven by the further global consolidation and deregulation of the media industries, which included News Corp’s acquisition of 20th Century Fox in 1985, the merger of Time Inc. and Warner Communications in 1989, and the removal of cross-ownership laws for television networks and film studios in the mid-1990s. The latter, coupled with wider deregulation of telecommunications and the rise of the internet, saw mergers between Disney and ABC, and Westinghouse and CBS in 1995 and 1996 reinforce industry interdependence. In this context, by 1995 conglomerates looked towards brand loyalty to exceptional franchises, merchandise, public outlets such as theme parks, television channels, programs and cross-promotion, or ‘synergy’ across multiple traditional and new media platforms.

By ‘bringing together promotional synergy with ruthless assertion of intellectual property rights’ (Grainge 2008: 49), conglomerates use familiar brands as a way of ‘tapping into volatile and differentiated global markets while, at the same time, connecting and recycling content across multiple media platforms’ (Grainge 2008: 52). Echoing Arvidsson’s discussion of branding as a material and affective process, Grainge discusses how various forms of ‘corporate authorship’ (Grainge 2008: 10) look to provide a smooth exchange between formats, and their production and adaptation to cultural and social values.

For the latter, theaters, theme parks and other exhibition sites help enhance the circulation of branded content, with Grainge arguing that ‘the organization of content or

⁴ For more on the sociological and cultural implications of branding as an affective process, see Adam Arvidsson (2006) *Brands: Meaning and Value*, London: Routledge. Also see Celia Lury (2003) *Brands: The Logos of the Global Economy*, London: Routledge

space' is '*made to mean* in the lived practices of everyday life' (Grainge 2008: 171) through a process of 'assimilation, adaptation and discursive reworking' (Grainge 2008: 169) to global and local contexts. Moreover, Grainge suggests that a rhetoric of branding helps define corporate identities through unique brand-names, enabling differentiation within conglomerates (Grainge 2008: 134).

Contemporary branding practices can also be specified in the latter from the wide impact of blockbusters and major franchises to more specialist, or niche branding. Michael Curtin has argued that conglomerates increasingly targeted economies of scale by the 1990s, owning a range of divisions that began to market themselves to mass and niche audiences (Curtin 1996: 191). Widening distribution and exhibition channels here enabled profitable negotiations and crossovers between audiences for exclusivity and accessibility. A key example of this process has been a series of overlaps between Hollywood and American independent cinema, converting previously marginal forms into a highly marketable brand of 'indie' film in the 1990s and 2000s.

Scholars such as Justin Wyatt (1998) Alisa Perren (2001), Geoff King (2005) and Michael Newman (2011) have outlined the success here of major independent studios such as Miramax and New Line, as well as studio specialty divisions, in promoting a range of more experimental art-films and more commercial releases across theatrical and ancillary markets.⁵ The importance of 'indie' branding can be returned to in relation to HBO in later chapters, but formed a more general complement to the television industry's adjustment to niche demographics and turns towards more aggressive brand management by the mid-1990s.

HBO's relationship to these trends can be initially viewed within discussions of quality television, network distinction and cable programming from the 1970s to the 1980s, before setting up more specific television branding influences from broadcast network FOX in the early 1990s. In 1984 Jane Feuer, Paul Kerr and Tise Vahamagi produced *MTM: Quality Television*, a response to demographic changes and programming distinction in broadcast television since the 1970s. Federal regulation at

⁵ For overviews of American independent cinema, see Justin Wyatt and Chris Holmlund eds (2005) *Contemporary American Independent Film: From the Margins to the Mainstream*, London: Routledge, Geoff King (2005) *American Independent Cinema*, London: IB Tauris, and Yannis Tzioumakis (2006) *American Independent Cinema: An Introduction*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

the end of the 1960s that aimed to break up a broadcast network monopoly over programming had led to experiments in more aggressively targeting upscale, or ‘quality’ demographics by advertisers.

Feuer, Kerr and Vahimagi outline the particular success of independent producer Mary Tyler Moore Productions in developing sitcoms such as *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (CBS 1971-1979) that combined familiar sitcom formats with richer characterization and topical relevancy. Joined by other sitcoms such as Tandem Productions’ *All in the Family* (CBS, 1971-1979), these were followed in the 1980s by award-winning serial dramas, including MTM’s *Hill Street Blues* (NBC 1981-1987), *St. Elsewhere* (NBC, 1982-1988), and *LA Law* (NBC, 1986-1994).

MTM: Quality Television viewed these earlier series as inviting closer institutional analysis over more typical television studies’ focus on mass broadcasting flow, combining textual and thematic analysis of MTM’s production style. In doing so, arguments could be made for analysing key series or producers as generating significant complexity within the medium, building on a limited history of aesthetic studies of television programming.⁶ Key questions also however emerged over the cultural exchange between networks, advertisers, producers and audiences for ‘quality’ as a term loaded with both exclusive associations, and productive differentiation for conservative mass broadcasting interests.

By the 1990s approaches to quality television combined overviews of production trends (Thompson 1997), and more focused single series studies. Positioning dramas such as David Lynch’s *Twin Peaks* (ABC, 1990-1991) (Lavery, Hague, Cartwright eds 1995) as negotiating the restrictions of broadcast television, some collections also looked to tie series into reception trends for ‘cult’ fandom.⁷ Moreover, while quality television studies remained fixed on key series, other scholars began to expand general discussions of network and program distinction by the mid-1990s.

This was notably led by John Caldwell, who argues that broadcast television underwent significant change in the 1980s around forms of ‘televisuality’ (Caldwell

⁶ These were notably promoted by television scholars such as Horace Newcomb. See Horace Newcomb (1974) *TV: The Most Popular Art*, Garden City: Anchor Press for an early example.

⁷ See Henry Jenkins (1992) *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*, New York; London: Routledge

1995: vi) as a way of differentiating channels against competition from cable and video. With new technology enabling networks and producers to experiment with more elaborately designed channel and program formats, Caldwell (1995) suggests that excessive style became standard practice for the industry, framed through discourses of technology and authorship.

In terms of cable, Mullen's (2003) history shares a focus on how networks relied on elaborate packaging strategies to distinguish themselves and build niche audiences. She primarily outlines how basic cable channels such as MTV and Nickelodeon adapted to their reliance on heavily rerun programming through stylish on-air identities, logos and creative scheduling of marathons and themed programming (Mullen 2003: 23). By contrast, Mullen notes how HBO and to a lesser extent rival Showtime distinguished themselves through exclusive film exhibition, and an early promotion of some distinctive original programming as a form of added value for subscribers (Mullen 2003: 147).

Contemporary studies of HBO's programming development from the 1970s to the 1980s generally focus on its marginal status, discussing its limited overlaps with quality television trends and a reliance on gratuitous content within an eclectically packaged service. This began with live sports and boxing, as well as stand-up comedy and variety specials in the 1970s. Toby Miller and Linda Kim (2008) view uncut boxing as an early example of HBO's niche distinction through adult-oriented content, a point also made by Leverette (2008b). Haggins and Lotz (2008) by comparison cite HBO's promotion of stand-up specials from 1976 as offering crucial precedent for the network in adapting parallel trends in quality broadcast comedy (Haggins, Lotz 2008: 154).

This negotiation between precedents for later quality television and explicit subscriber freedoms, underpins overviews of HBO's original programming experiments in the 1980s. Represented by a range of series, films, documentaries and other specials as complement to film programming, these have been briefly discussed within existing accounts. In terms of setting up some links with quality programming, Haggins and Lotz (2008) use satirical sketch shows such as *Not Necessarily the News* (1983-1991) as building on success with stand-up comedy specials as an alternative outlet for comedians. Santo also notes some success with family programming such as *Fraggle Rock* (1983-1987) in promoting quality appeals (Santo 2008: 19-22).

This is similarly extended by Morreale to collaboration in 1988 with director Robert Altman on the political miniseries *Tanner '88*, highlighting the potential of creative freedoms for producers. Mullen (2003), Al Auster (2000), Dana Heller (2008) and Christopher Anderson (2008) have also discussed HBO's pioneering promotion of regular original cable films, beginning with 1983 biopic *The Terry Fox Story* (Thomas). Organised around banners 'HBO Premiere Films' (1983-1986), 'HBO Pictures' (1986-1999) and 'HBO Showcase' (1986-1996), overviews primarily focus on a mix of prestige, adult-themed films and lower-cost genre pictures.

Despite some limited successes in the 1980s, Rogers et al however suggest that HBO became predominantly associated with low-brow, 'adult-oriented' programming (Rogers et al 2002: 50-51) under CEO Michael Fuchs by the middle of the decade. Represented by the production of low-cost, explicit sitcoms such as *Ist & Ten* (1984-1991), and suspense anthology *The Hitchhiker* (1983-1987), further tensions between innovation and sensational material have been identified by Thomas Mascaro (2008) and Susan Murray (2008) within early documentary programming.

Developed by executive Sheila Nevins from 1979 as a staple of monthly subscription packages, these ranged from educational specials to more lurid documentaries, primarily organised from 1984 under the monthly series *America Undercover*, while also appearing on sister channel Cinemax. Mascaro suggests that HBO established a niche for itself with a blend of 'traditional, independent documentaries with a point of view and the showcasing of subjects that verge on exploitation' (Mascaro 2008: 249). Sustaining quality value within sensational tactics, some notable exceptions were provided by award-winning prestige specials *Down and Out in America* (Grant 1986) and *Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam* (Courutie 1988) by the end of the decade. The role of HBO's original programming as occasionally distinctive but more often marginal additions to film scheduling has been more broadly contextualised here within the monthly subscription format's eclectic appeal.

Edgerton defines HBO's primary identity in the 1970s and 1980s as a 'utility brand' (Edgerton 2008a: 7). This was associated with convenient, uncut films as a subscription service. Rogers et al (2002: 47) and Lotz (2007b: 218) suggest here that

HBO and its subscription rivals generally worked around early demands to provide a broad range of specialist programming, building enough general value to encourage monthly renewals. This substituted for any specific reputation or need to generate quality programming. For Anderson, this lacked broadcast and cable network's reliance on ratings and scheduling consistency (Anderson 2008a: 32), instead encouraging 'occasional, rather than habitual viewing' patterns (Anderson 2008a: 30) as a luxury service.

Some remarks have however been made on how this 'utility' service might have produced more consistent programming patterns. Within early uses of HBO as a case study for film exhibition, Gomery identifies more general trends for the scheduling of themed marathons and seasons of films on television during the 1980s (Gomery 1992: 268). Mullen's more comprehensive study of cable programming echoes this by suggesting that HBO placed an early emphasis on scheduling marathons in the mid-1970s (Mullen 2003: 108-109). Andrews has also noted how subscriber services generated an early flexibility for the heavy rotation of programs by re-packaging shorter, featurette program segments into feature-length specials (Andrews 2007: 321).

However, these histories of original programming share a consensus that original programming was at best eclectic and easily condensed into a few key case studies. Little distinction is made between HBO and rival Showtime in this respect, other than the latter producing less originals as a smaller network. Edgerton (2008: 1-5) notes these as sharing trends for adult-themed broadcast formats, producing both some distinctive sitcoms (*It's Garry Shandling's Show*, 1986-1990) and more conventional, low-cost adult fare (*Brothers*, 1984-1989). Dana Polan even goes so far as to simply group subscription cable programming distinction in the 1980s as a mixture of 'sex, cinema and sports' (Polan 2009: 188) in terms of consistent quality.

An emphasis is therefore placed on demands by the 1990s for HBO to respond to competition for branding distinction by improving the quality of its original programming, supported by diversification of its brand into new markets. These are typically related to the influence of broadcast network FOX in the early 1990s on promoting more aggressive forms of branding. Created from the acquisition of 20th Century Fox by News Corp in 1985, Alisa Perren (2004a) positions FOX's growth to 1995 as significant for the consolidating industry.

Working around regulations on broadcasting cross-ownership as an independent chain of stations supplied by a film studio, FOX worked to generate an identity for itself as a niche alternative to the three broadcast networks. This involved programming a limited number of niche series, tied together through a strong on-air look that aimed to establish affective loyalty from 18-34 audiences as a hip, stylish, but accessible alternative to rivals. From 1989 this identity was given a more tangible focus through the success of animated comedy *The Simpsons* (1989-), later reinforced through series such as *Beverly Hills 90210* (1990-2000) and *The X-Files* (1993-2002).

Perren argues that having established brand loyalty to the network as a niche destination, FOX's production partner 20th Century Fox were able to distribute and merchandise individual hit series worldwide as 'niche-targeting entertainment franchises' (Perren 2004a: 241). The particular success of *The X-Files* also saw it follow *Twin Peaks* as a single-series anthology citing both its industrial innovations and wider negotiation as a global cult property (Lavery ed 1996). FOX's niche distinctions from broadcasting in coordinating network promotions, programming and merchandising of individual shows consequently offered a model for television branding in the 1990s.

Catherine Johnson (2007) has refined this process into ongoing trends for television branding through networks and programs. Johnson suggests that the 'branding of television networks enables them to compete effectively in an increasingly crowded marketplace by creating strong, distinctive and loyal relationships with viewers' (Johnson 2007: 7). Achieved through an intensification in the use of on-screen logos, slogans and programming compatibility (Johnson 2007: 9) to generate everyday loyalty, this can be viewed as providing a platform for more flexible program branding. Sold across multiple channels and other media outlets, Johnson suggests that these program brands share film franchises' ability to generate affective loyalty to iconic properties, while enabling focused opportunities for synergy within conglomerates (Johnson 2007: 7).

Following the repeal of studio and network cross-ownership, conglomerates emulated FOX by creating niche networks the WB and UPN,⁸ with the former also

⁸ For more on UPN and the WB, see Kelly Cole (2005) 'From homeboys to girl power: media mergers, emerging networks, and 1990s television' (dissertation): University of Madison-

finding success with niche franchise *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (WB/UPN, 1996-2003). While older broadcast networks also looked to enhance their network brands and co-owned programming, HBO and cable's relationship to these changes has been discussed as undergoing significant expansion from 1989 to 1994, thus setting up further changes from 1995.

With the 1989 creation of Time Warner typically used as a turning point in HBO's branding history, Haggins and Lotz identify the early 1990s as an 'emergent period' (Haggins, Lotz 2008: 162) for HBO as an original programmer. This was most notably led by the success of sitcoms *Dream On* (1990-1996) and *The Larry Sanders Show*, as well as horror comedy anthology *Tales from the Crypt* (1989-1996). *The Larry Sanders Show* has been particularly used as a landmark for HBO programming by Plasketes and Williamson in *The Essential HBO Reader* and *It's Not TV*, mixing higher production values with adult-themed comedy to satirise broadcast television and attract quality demographics.

Avi Santo suggests here that new series programming emulated the success of FOX by developing a brand of 'para-television' which 'purposely relies on mimicking and tweaking existing and recognisable TV forms' through "edgier" but not radically different fare' (Santo 2008: 26). This was also supported by diversification into original productions for broadcast television from 1990, international film subscription services, and investments in basic cable network The Comedy Channel, later rebranded as Comedy Central.

Attempts to extend the HBO brand can be tied here to further comparisons between leading cable channels and FOX. Of these, Viacom's youth-marketed Nickelodeon has received a comparable level of attention to HBO in terms of its innovations in cable branding and programming. This has primarily been represented by anthology *Nickelodeon Nation* (Hendershot ed 2004), which combines institutional overviews and case studies of programs and reception, and a monograph by Sarah Banet-Weiser (2007) on the network's relationship to youth citizenship.

Wisconsin. For a cultural studies and genre-rooted approach to teenage demographics, representation and resistance in the late 1990s, see Glyn Davis and Kay Dickinson eds (2004) *Teen TV: Genre, Consumption and Identity*, London: BFI, and Sharon Marie Ross and Louisa Ellen Stein eds (2008) *Teen Television: Essays on Programming and Fandom*, North Carolina: McFarland & Co.

Within *Nickelodeon Nation*, Norma Pecora (2004) and Kevin Sandler (2004) argue that Nickelodeon built from a stable schedule of reruns and creative exhibition in the 1980s to define itself in the early 1990s through exceptional program brands such as *Rugrats* (1991-2004). Sandler compares Nickelodeon's exporting of network and program brands as similar in scope to Disney (Sandler 2004: 52), while linking the channel's success to wider trends within fellow Viacom network MTV to increased production of niche series such as *Beavis & Butthead* (1993-1997).

HBO's use of originals to strengthen its brand has also been developed by Auster (2000), Heller (2008) and Anderson (2008) for original film production. Raising budgets and attracting star-names to productions with provocative subject matter, award-winning films such as *The Josephine Baker Story* (Gibson 1991) and *And the Band Played On* (Spottsiwoode 1993) added further distinction. Jones (2008a) also cites the adaptation of late-night chat show formats to the network in this period, notably represented by *Dennis Miller Live* (1994-2002). However, Rogers et al (2002) and others cite an ongoing negotiation of explicit content over quality experimentation.

Jeffery Jones identifies HBO's success in this period with late-night erotic newsmagazines such as *Real Sex* (1990-) (Jones 2008b: 274). For David Andrews (2007) and Karen Backstein (2001), modifying soft-core erotic programming also became a key tactic for Showtime in the early 1990s, most notably through series such as *The Red Shoe Diaries* (1992-1999). Combining adult material with higher production values and a greater emphasis on narrative, they identify trends for widening low-brow appeal towards a 'middlebrow feminization' (Andrews 2007: 314) for wider audiences. In this context, Anderson emphasises that despite some advances, HBO was still primarily associated with film exhibition rather than quality original programming by the mid-1990s (Anderson 2008: 32).

A significant rebranding of the network through the latter from 1995 is consequently used across accounts as a 'tipping point' (Edgerton, Jones 2008: 316) for better defining branding loyalty after subscriber declines in the early 1990s, while setting up a basis for wider program merchandising. Rogers et al (2002), Edgerton, Jones (2008) and Anderson (2008) build this around a management reshuffle at the network that saw CEO Michael Fuchs replaced by Jeffrey Bewkes, and executive Chris

Albrecht promoted to head of programming. Rogers et al suggest that HBO shifted away from an eclectic monthly service towards establishing identification and loyalty through enormous investment in weekly, creator-led quality series alongside regular exhibition of films, sports and other programming (Rogers et al 2002: 53).

Led by prison drama *Oz* (1997-2003) and followed by *Sex and the City* from 1998, the particular success of *The Sopranos* is used here to suggest a conversion of explicit content into quality television trends for cinematic production values and complex narratives, boosted by larger than average budgets and creative freedoms for producers (Rogers et al 2002: 52-53). Extensive responses to HBO as quality television view this adaptation process as specialising previous primetime format trends around a more exclusively marketed brand, and can be discussed in more detail later in the thesis.

Edgerton suggests that the impact of *The Sopranos* in 1999 represented a

‘transitional moment in American television, when cable and satellite channels rather than the traditional broadcast networks became the first place to look for breakout programming’ (Edgerton 2008a: 10).

The extension of quality television trends to branding network distinction has consequently been used to outline HBO’s identification with award-winning series in the 2000s as a ‘gold standard’ (Edgerton 2008a: 17) for the industry. From comedies such as *Curb Your Enthusiasm* (2000-) and *Entourage* (2004-) to dramas such as *The Wire* and *Deadwood*, HBO also achieved prestige for original miniseries such as *Band of Brothers* and *Angels in America* (Nichols 2003).

With original films re-structured around the higher-quality banner ‘HBO Films’^{uu}, and documentary production continuing to mix prestige specials such as Spike Lee’s *When the Levees Broke* (2006) within a broad range of original programming, Edgerton and Jones identify a ‘HBO after-effect’ (Edgerton, Jones 2008: 320) on other networks. Increasing demands for subscription and basic cable channels and broadcasters to distinguish themselves through original programming saw more aggressive innovations by Showtime (*The L Word*, 2004- ; *Dexter*, 2006-), basic cable network FX (*The Shield*, 2002-2008; *Nip/Tuck*, 2003-2010), and more recently AMC (*Mad Men*, 2007-).

Competition for prestige has also been joined by a broad range of niche programming across cable brands, running from adult-themed animation (*South Park*, 1997-) and political satire (*The Daily Show*, 1996 -) on Comedy Central, to other basic networks' focus on more traditional broadcast procedurals (*Monk*, USA Network, 2002-2010). Broadcasters also looked to extend quality trends for serial, socially-relevant dramas (*The West Wing*, NBC, 1999-2006), as well as more adult-themed primetime soaps (*Desperate Housewives*, ABC, 2004), elaborate action-adventure and fantasy series (*24*, FOX, 2001-2010; *Lost*, ABC, 2004-2010), and stylish procedurals such as *CSI* (CBS, 2000-). At the same time, competition for ratings and brand distinction for networks saw broadcasters and cable channels find success with unscripted reality programming and game-show formats such as *American Idol* (FOX, 2002-), while continuing to rely on more traditional formats.

The contemporary use of quality and other niche programming to brand networks and attract key demographics has been widely focused through HBO as a leading case study for negotiating cultural distinction for television. Anderson suggests that HBO's ongoing 'not TV' niche marketing relies on building an exclusive set of value associations around subscriptions, structured through positive critical reception and aggressive promotional campaigns focusing on aesthetic distinctions and awards (Anderson 2008: 38). Catherine Johnson has examined here how the slogan 'It's Not TV: It's HBO,' supported by on-air idents that fade from television static to the HBO logo, engages audiences in an ironic mix of cultural distinction and familiar televisual pleasure (Johnson 2007: 10-11).

In this way, HBO works to position itself as an essential brand, where a regular subscription could provide audiences with an exclusive cultural experience. This process of differentiation achieves an affective exchange between a clearly defined set of programs and a wider appeal to 'values that it imagines its audience will share' (Johnson 2007: 11). Johnson ties this marketing of popular culture and exclusivity to middlebrow trends in the 1990s for 'high pop'. Identified by Jim Collins (2002), 'high pop' emerged from post-war cultural shifts in the US around blurring consumption of high and low-brow cultural forms. By encouraging the movement of the 'popular into the world of legitimate high culture' (Johnson 2007: 10), from pop-art to art-house

cinema, Johnson (2007) identifies how cultural forms merged wide populist appeal with exclusivity and taste to create lucrative, conglomerate-owned niche markets.

HBO's creation of an exclusive brand identity is therefore tied to an intensification of previous quality television trends for negotiating accessibility and distinctive associations, where HBO became 'something more than television, more than mass culture, while providing it paradoxically through television, as television' (Johnson 2007: 10). Negotiating televisual distinction as part of broader popular culture has informed both ongoing aesthetic and cultural discussions of quality television,⁹ as well as debates over how far the medium has been transformed by technology in the 2000s.

With DVD distribution, TiVo time-shifting, high-definition exhibition and broadband internet streaming complicating a stable definition of television alongside international co-productions and merchandising, Amanda Lotz has described the industry as undergoing a 'post-network' transition (Lotz 2007a: 7) in this period. Understood through a multiplication of options from traditional network advertising, production, distribution and exhibition, the mobility of what Lotz describes as 'phenomenal content' (Lotz 2007a: 37) has led to recurring questions over the future of television as a specific medium within new forms of delivery and reception (Spigel, Olsson eds 2004; Turner, Tay eds 2009).

Henry Jenkins describes the latter as a 'convergence culture,' with audiences attuned to interacting with media properties across platforms (Jenkins 2008: 1-24). This has led to extensive interest in how successful film and television franchises have intensified trans-media storytelling and marketing to engage a range of audiences. Moreover, the need to reinforce brand loyalty has encouraged increased reliance on ephemeral, ancillary materials such as website content, making-of segments and DVD bonus features to reinforce interaction with properties and platforms.¹⁰

⁹ See Mark Jancovich and James Lyons eds (2003) *Quality Popular Television: Cult TV, the Industry and Fans*, London: BFI. Broader debates and synopsis of key programming strategies, individual quality series and fan cultures from this era can also be found in Michael Hammond and Luzy Mazdons eds (2005) *The Contemporary Television Series*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

¹⁰ Used as a term by Marsha Kinder to discuss the complex interaction between cult audiences and niche media franchises (1991), 'trans-media entertainment' was significantly developed by Henry Jenkins (2006; 2008). Case studies of trans-media strategies for contemporary blockbusters can be found in Kristin Thompson's analysis of *The Lord of the Rings* franchise

Edgerton suggests that HBO's extension and management of its brand into video, basic cable and international cable markets from the 1980s to the 1990s established a base for wider innovations in the 2000s (Edgerton 2008a: 1-10). For Lotz, the network's promotion of quality was easily translated into cutting-edge digital exhibition (Lotz 2007a: 76) and lucrative sale of premium content to non-subscribers through global syndication, DVD and internet distribution. Moreover, HBO looked to widen its reputation for quality programming through partnerships for theatrical distribution with conglomerate-owned specialty distributors (Carolyn Anderson 2008; Heller 2008, Perren 2004b).

In this context, Edgerton and Jones describe HBO as a 'creative change agent' (Edgerton, Jones 2008: 327), pioneering new technologies through subscriptions to a quality brand. This is typically used to present HBO as a crucial prototype for television practices for managing content across old and new platforms by the end of the decade. Polan suggests here that HBO took on significant value as a 'laboratory' (Polan 2009: 189) for Time Warner in the 1990s and 2000s, using its exclusive identity and a vertically integrated control of its brand to take risks on niche content and new forms of delivery. This became particularly crucial for the conglomerate after a problematic merger with internet provider AOL in 2001, reinforcing the need for brand loyalty and selective synergy (Grainge 2008: 131).

Accounts therefore suggest a future identity for HBO shaped by 'resilient refashioning' (Polan 2009: 189) through risk on distinctive programs and the extension of the brand into new digital markets to retain exclusivity. Rogers et al (2006: 25) and Polan (2009: 186) suggest here that as new niche markets open up and subscriber growth slows, the HBO network will become less significant compared to brand management through high-quality programs. As a result, while Kelso and others note a 'first priority' (Kelso 2008: 60) or 'foundational' (Edgerton, Jones 2008: 322) demands to serve US subscribers, Johnson suggests that HBO's individual program brands now

(Jackson 2001-2003) (Kristin Thompson (2007) *The Frodo Franchise*, Berkeley: University of California Press,). More broadly, Jonathan Gray's (2010) *Show Sold Separately* (New York: New York University Press) offers a concise overview of conglomerate and independent practices for ancillary 'para-texts' and their relationship to consumption. Also see Paul Grainge (2011) *Ephemeral Media: Transitory Screen Culture from Television to YouTube*, London: Palgrave MacMillan

overshadow their older network contexts as widely distributed digital content (Johnson 2007: 11). Described by Edgerton as the ‘prototypical media corporation of the 21st century’ (Edgerton 2008a: 18), predictions have consequently been made for HBO’s continued reinvention for an ‘era of unparalleled media change’ (Edgerton 2008a: 17).

This innovation has however been used to form broader criticisms of HBO as one element in the wider corporate economy of Time Warner. For cultural studies and communications scholars such as Toby Miller, Robert McChesney and Ben Bagdikian, the global media industries represent anti-competitive, exploitative and un-democratic institutions, with branding as one way of obscuring more cynical practices of ownership. The branding relationship between top-down corporate management and audiences is viewed here as a highly unbalanced loyalty, eradicating genuine difference in favour of superficially-defined niche markets.¹¹ In this context, extensive criticism has been produced of branding pioneers such as Disney and its monopoly over family markets.¹² Other approaches however include efforts to view conglomerate Hollywood as part of wider negotiations over national and global identities, often disrupting suggestions of homogeneity within audience resistance and local cultural differences.¹³

Within this approach, HBO has been used to demonstrate some of the corporate logic and problematic negotiations over exclusivity and niche television branding. In terms of the former, Deborah Jaramillo has argued that HBO’s rebrand helped Time Warner to reinforce cross-ownership of broadcast and cable networks in the late 1990s, using ‘not TV’ to promote illusory ideas of competition (Jaramillo 2002: 73). This has been developed by McCabe and Akass (2007), who suggest that HBO downplayed the success of its explicit content by emphasising quality, and exploited a crossover gap in the broadcast market for adult-themed drama.

¹¹ See Toby Miller, Nitin Govil, John McMurria, Richard Maxwell eds (2001) *Global Hollywood*, London: BFI, and Toby Miller, Nitin Govil, John McMurria, Richard Maxwell, Ting Wang eds (2005) *Global Hollywood 2*, London: BFI. Also see Robert McChesney and John Nerone (1999) *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, and Ben Bagdikian (2004) *The New Media Monopoly*, Boston: Beacon Press.

¹² See Eric Smoodin, ed (1994) *Disney Discourse: Producing the Magic Kingdom*, London: Routledge, Martin McQuillan and Eleanor Byrne (1999) *Deconstructing Disney*, London: Pluto Press, and Janet Wasko (2001) *Understanding Disney: The Manufacture of Fantasy*, Cambridge: Polity

¹³ See Charles Acland (2003) *Screen Traffic: Movies, Multiplexes, and Global Culture*, Durham: Duke University Press, Aida Hozic (2001) *Hollywood: Space, Power, and Fantasy in the American Economy*, New York: Cornell University Press.

Leverette (2008b) shares this argument, suggesting that a continued use of boxing and erotica provides lucrative value for HBO and Time Warner, despite low visibility compared to hit series. For Miller and Kim, the particular exploitation of fighters and licensing rights for boxing represents an ongoing abuse of market share, illustrating HBO's identity as the 'loyal wing of a clinical, cynical, secretive multinational corporation' that 'bizarrely identifies itself with quality and progressive politics through CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) rhetoric' (Miller, Kim 2008: 231).

Others have gone on to use HBO's brand identification with exclusivity as drawing audiences into a form of 'capitalisable middlebrow activity' (Polan 2007: 266), with subscriptions conferring a sense of cultural superiority. For Anderson, this is akin to a gated community, enforcing economic differences over content to regulate the meaning of quality for television (Anderson 2008: 37). Anderson also ties this into wider theories of the blurred relationship between cultural and economic distinction in the late 20th century made by Pierre Bourdieu, with social status measured by conspicuous consumption (Anderson 2008: 26).

This has been developed by Toby Miller in his 2007 monograph *Cultural citizenship: cosmopolitanism, consumerism, and television in a neoliberal age*, where he links exclusive brand relationships for television networks to cultural stratification. With distinction measured by cosmopolitan spending patterns, Miller has argued that this reinforces neoliberal economies of self-interest and diversity through competition, limiting more democratic media participation (Miller 2007: 1-26).¹⁴ HBO's complicity in this exchange has also been taken up here by Kalyinka Martinez, who cites the network's creation of a HBO Latino channel in 2000 as pandering to a 'pan-ethnic' (Martinez 2007: 203) sense of diversity.

The latter approach to exploring niche television brands as negotiating relationships between corporate values and diverse audiences has been widely rehearsed across television, communications and cultural studies. Sarah Banet-Weiser's

¹⁴ For more on the history of niche branding and its effect on consumption patterns, see Joseph Turow (1997) *Breaking Up America: Advertisers and the New Media World*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, and Joseph Turow (2008) *Niche Envy: Marketing Discrimination in the Digital Age*, Massachusetts; MIT Press.

monograph on Nickelodeon focuses on affective exchanges between promotions, programming and audience engagement with civic values, and argues that the network tends to reproduce a ‘residual notion of political citizenship with marketing’ (Banet-Weiser 2007b: 240). Others have criticised the anti-competitive nature of MTV’s dominance of youth markets (Banks 1998), while *Cable Visions*’ features multiple case studies that consider how cable brands fall short in genuinely serving niche audiences.¹⁵

Taken together, HBO’s success has invited multiple approaches. The early use of the network as a case study for cable exhibition by film and media scholars in the late 1980s and early 1990s was built on in the early 2000s by close analysis of quality programs and institutional overviews. Supported by overviews of branding as cultural and economic practice, HBO’s ongoing use as a case study for successful brand management of an exclusive identity across media has underpinned more general questions over television’s adaptation and reinvention around converged technology and markets. Future suggestions of HBO’s cutting-edge influence through key programs and brand extensions have also been tempered by debates over corporate marketing and the politics of exclusivity for audiences.

In this respect, scholarly interest in debating quality programming and branding innovation by HBO had arguably reached near-saturation point by the publication of *The Essential HBO Reader* and *It’s Not TV* by 2008. Despite this extensive coverage, there are however important gaps in scholarship on the network that need to be addressed. These can be primarily identified through the level of historical detail used to contextualise HBO’s development and the institutional processes that inform its exceptional brand management. Particularly missing here has been a comprehensive account of HBO’s history as a subscription service and programmer from 1972 to 1994, and awareness of how contemporary branding success drew from and continues to be influenced by these origins beyond ongoing reinvention.

¹⁵ See for example Beretta E. Shomade-Smith (2007) ‘Target Market Black: BET and the Branding of African-America,’ in *Cable Visions: Television Beyond Broadcasting*, Sarah Banet-Weiser, Cynthia Chris, and Anthony Freitas eds, New York: New York University Press, 177-194, as well as Anthony Freitas (2007) ‘Gay Programming, Gay Publics: Public and Private Tensions in Lesbian and Gay Cable Channels’ in *Cable Visions: Television Beyond Broadcasting*, Sarah Banet-Weiser, Cynthia Chris, and Anthony Freitas eds, New York: New York University Press, 304-329 Others discuss the token marketing to teen and ethnic identities of FOX, the WB and UPN (Cole 2005), and the exclusive white urban associations of NBC’s ‘Must See TV’ block (San Martin 2003).

A 'New Archive' for HBO

In 2010 Shayne Pepper argued that there still lacks a 'historical turn' for archive-led studies of HBO in terms of understanding the network's origins and early development. He identifies how early anecdotal accounts by Mair (1988), and uses as a case study by Hilmes (1990) and others have only been partially expanded by later accounts to frame a contemporary interest in quality programs and dynamic brand management since the mid-1990s. In this way, while Polan identifies *The Essential HBO Reader* as the most 'analytic' (Polan 2009: 218) history of HBO to date, the collection still relies on sketching out a 'utility brand' to reinventing content brand overview within hyperbole for an 'era of unparalleled media change' (Edgerton 2008a: 17).

One explanation for this could be that most institutional histories of HBO still function as introductions, or general context for close analysis of individual series as accessible to multi-disciplinary interpretation. Moreover, while article-length studies by Johnson (2007) or Jaramillo (2002) of HBO as a case study for network and program branding identify key issues and practices, they compensate for scope by engaging in general debates about media convergence and corporate power. This has arguably led to a reliance on increasingly brief introductions to the network's history. As well as Polan's 'cinema, sports and sex' (Polan 2009: 188) gloss, a good example of this came in a 2010 online post by media scholar Jason Mittell (Feb 9 2010) that sets up a landmark syllabus on *The Wire* as quality television.

Mittell outlines a crucial shift from pre-1995 HBO as a 'fairly lowbrow channel catering to prurient interests' to a 'creator-centred' brand based around quality content. The summing up of HBO's first twenty-five years as 'fairly lowbrow,' or effectively limited by 'utility brand' practices, illustrates an ongoing lack of interest in early network history over post-1995 quality programming and brand management. Marc Leverette's introduction to *It's Not TV* perhaps best embodies this approach, focusing on 'one HBO, one at a particular time and place, one marked by a specific group of series, one existing in a specific cultural zeitgeist' (Leverette 2008a: 7).

This compression of institutional histories and general branding debates to explore key series within a 'cultural zeitgeist' has also become the default option for the

ongoing publication of anthologies and monographs studying other distinctive examples of contemporary television.¹⁶ Similar restrictions can be found in the more critical studies of brand relationships between networks, programs and audiences taken by collections such as Hendershot's *Nickelodeon Nation* and *Cable Visions*. The value of these approaches is arguably in their accessibility, negotiating questions over the future of television and engagement between audiences, brands and ownership within familiar program examples. Moreover, this allows for wide-ranging studies of individual programs as innovative media franchises beyond single network contexts, an approach taken to series such as *Lost* (Pearson ed 2009).

As Pepper (2010) highlights though, one of the limitations of this approach is that institutional specificity or general perspectives on contemporary innovations tends to become marginalised. This is an understandable sacrifice in terms of commercial appeal for publication, with extensive, chronological and archival histories providing vital, but more specialist value in examining more subtle differences in context and precedent. Taking up this approach for HBO is however arguably crucial to avoiding the repetition of historical glosses and oversights as starting contexts for analysis, particularly given the network's extensive use as a case study.

In this way, Pepper (2010) calls for contributions to a 'new archive' of HBO studies can be tied to recent attempts by film, television and media scholars to re-emphasise the need for revised histories of contemporary institutions and industry practices. Some of these, most notably Mullen (2003) and Perren's (2004a) histories of cable and FOX, have already been discussed as developing the interdependent media histories of Gomery and Hilmes into the 2000s. Hilmes has also continued to promote the benefits of broadcasting histories to shape institutional and cultural change through archival research, producing anthology *NBC: America's Network* in 2008. These can also be viewed though against a series of dissertations and monographs on major institutions, branding and media convergence by emerging scholars since 2005.

In the former, key attempts to historicise contemporary branding through institutions or properties that span multiple media have included Avi Santo's (2006)

¹⁶ As a sample of recent publications, see Janet McCabe and Kim Akass eds (2006) *Reading Desperate Housewives: Beyond the White Picket Fence*, London: IB Tauris, Gary Edgerton (2010) *Mad Men: Dream Come True TV*, London: IB Tauris, and Roz Kaveney and Jennifer Stoy eds (2011) *Nip/Tuck: Television That Gets Under Your Skin*, London: IB Tauris.

examination of the licensing of the Lone Ranger and Green Hornet brands by independent producer George S. Trendle from the 1930s to the 1960s. Setting precedent for ‘business strategies that stressed malleability on the one hand and historical continuity on the other’ (Santo 2006: 18), Santo looks to a more cyclical management of a ‘generalizable and repeatable formula’ (Santo 2006: 49) within changing cultural contexts (Santo 2006: 61). This approach can also be aligned with a recent dissertation by Jason Scott (2010) into the management of newspaper syndicate characters into films and other media from 1913 to 1950 as offering extensive precedent for current franchising tactics.

New scholarship has similarly promoted ongoing re-assessment of the history of key institutions to better contextualise their current branding success across media platforms. This has most notably included revisionist approaches to Disney, from studies of early merchandising and family audiences in the 1930s by Nicholas Sammond (2005) to Jason Sperb’s (2010) history of the controversial feature *Song of the South* (Foster, Jackson 1946). Moreover, a forthcoming history of Disney by Christopher Pallant (2011) aims to revise generalisations over the studio’s feature film output and brand identity through a rigorous critical chronology.

On a wider level, the need for archive-led historical research into precedent for current industry practices has been proposed by the edited collection *Convergence Media History* (Staiger, Hake eds 2009). This has in turn overlapped with recent efforts to widen the historical scope of new media strategies, which has notably included histories of industrial repetition by Derek Kompare (2005), and recurring caution by John Caldwell (2003; 2004; 2006; 2008) over losing sight of the durability of old media practices for understanding contemporary branding and specific institutions. Moreover, Alisa Perren and Jennifer Holt’s co-edited primer *Media Industries: History, Theory and Method* (2009) recently called for more ‘specific textual and industrial histories of film and television’ (Perren, Holt 10) that complement the more general focus of political economic criticism and cultural studies.

In this way, while Pepper’s (2010) own thesis proposes a more specific comparative study of AIDS-focused HBO and public broadcast television, my own contribution to this ‘new archive’ is more comprehensive in scope. Returning to the neglected 1972 to 1994 period, I aim to rethink HBO’s origins and evolution as a

subscription service, challenging ‘utility brand’ accounts through more specific network practices for packaging audiences and building a production infrastructure. From this base, it is possible to identify how these long-term practices inform and complicate more general accounts of HBO’s brand management across multiple markets from 1995. Moving beyond the reliance on quality programs and industry-leading reinvention to analyse a more pragmatic, and historically-rooted set of network practices for offsetting risk, this can be better used to specify HBO’s past and ongoing success.

From Utility Brand to Subscription Aggregator: Rethinking HBO from 1972 to 2007

As previously noted, attention to HBO’s identity as a subscription service has been limited, tending to note eclectic branding value at best within a wide range of film and entertainment programming. Aside from a few brief notes on scheduling by Gomery (1992) and Andrews (2007), this also lacks the kind of detailed analysis of basic cable exhibition made by Mullen (2003). Moreover, little is made of distinctions in packaging programming from Showtime, with Polan’s ‘cinema, sports and sex’ (Polan 2009: 188) gloss running across both networks. The turn after 1995 towards weekly series as embodying brand value consequently cites outside influences from FOX (Santo 2008: 27), and the general function of logos and slogans to denote ‘not TV’ distinction discussed by Johnson (2007).

Notes on ‘foundational’ demands for satisfying subscribers by Edgerton, Jones (2008) and Kelso (2008) also acknowledge older strategies but do not go into depth, instead falling back on the innovative value of multi-platform content (Rogers et al 2006; Polan 2009). My primary interest is therefore to re-examine these ‘foundational’ programming efforts to build consistency around the subscriber service from 1972 to 1994 as more complex and distinct from surrounding strategies than existing histories suggest. This can first be achieved in Chapters One to Three by returning to HBO’s origins as part of publisher Time Inc from 1972 to 1988, and its influence on adjusting to a new identity as part of Time Warner from 1989 to 1994.

While Mair notes some links between the company’s success with magazines such as *Time* and *Life* and marketing a subscriber service (Mair 1988: 12), these can be significantly expanded by considering how HBO’s subscription practices and early

identity developed through Time's established quality brand. This crucially overlooked connection can also be tied to some recent historical scholarship on the links between publishing and cable. Evidence for this comes from Curtis Prendergast and Geoffrey Colvin's *The World of Time* (1986) an exhaustive official history of the publisher from 1960 to 1980 that has been overlooked by previous scholars.

The book offers precedent for how Time's investment in pay cable adapted publishing strengths for programming and marketing subscription packages, while providing evidence of multiple personnel crossovers and contextualisation of HBO within the company's close-knit identity. Key in this respect is Time's problematic relationship to wider interdependent trends as a quality publishing brand, with a drive for exclusivity and continuity with a quality publishing brand better defining HBO against the origins of cable rivals.

Chapter One of my thesis, covering 1972-1979, will expand on these links to suggest longer-term institutional links between HBO and Time. It will also argue that these influences shaped the development of the early subscription service into a stable monthly format, dictated by overall value rather than individual programs. In addition, Time's influence over programming choices and marketing can be viewed within negotiations over HBO's place within its quality identity, re-contextualising notes in existing histories on the adaptation of broadcast influences. Attention to these influences can be used to expand on some recent notes on the publishing industry's impact on the origins of cable television and continuing industrial practices.

Amanda Lotz has proposed some precedent for the contemporary television industry through its variation on an older

“publishing” model, which features a segmented mass market and the dialectic of the hit and catalogue,’ along with the purchase of individualised objects - in this case, particular episodes of television shows’ (Lotz 2007a: 34)

Within this model, Lotz argues that ‘the magazine industry - with its era of mass distribution earlier in the century - may provide the most relevant point of comparison’ (Lotz 2007a: 36) for cable's more specialist origins. Lotz (2007a) also builds here on

suggestions by Joseph Turow that cable's promotion of niche formats shared continuities with demographic segmentation of publishing imprints and magazines during the 1970s and 1980s (Turow 1997: 91).

Broader connections between publishing strategies, cable and contemporary media industry practice have been made through Kompare's (2005) previously noted history of 'industrialised repetition'. This can be understood through a history of negotiations between exceptional content and the offsetting of risk through exhibition and packaging formats. Kompare (2005) suggests that 19th and early 20th century literary and music publishing established conventions for recycling copyrighted properties and libraries while aggregating audiences through mass and niche outlets, as well as subscription services. In this way,

'the publisher (and increasingly, the editor) assumed the role of the manager of a cultural factory, treating works more for their fit into the firm's (and the industry's) 'list,' 'catalog,' or identity, rather than their individual virtues' (Kompare 2005: 7)

From this publishing logic, Kompare (2005) suggests that 20th century media industries turned from ephemeral film exhibition and radio broadcasting towards reliance on aggregating audiences around content archives. For television, broadcasting's aggregation of new and rerun programming offered the 'perfect incarnation of stability in an otherwise unpredictable programming game' (Kompare 2005: 69).

Kompare goes on to argue that more specialist cable and broadcast exhibition during the 1980s and 1990s extended this cyclical relationship, with cable particularly generating 'distinctive repetition, whereby repetition does not only reign; it is refined and focused' (Kompare 2005: 171). For Kompare, publishing links were resumed in the 2000s through DVD distribution as adapting 'television, and its repetition into a tangible form' (Kompare 2005: 214) able to act like the 'back catalog of a record label: as a collection of fixed recordings that can be easily reconfigured and repeated' (Kompare 2005: 214).

Time's influence on HBO as a subscription service can be connected to this publishing precedent, with further significance for understanding how the network

evolved during the 1980s. Chapter Two, examining HBO from 1980 to 1988, will again draw on more extensive archival sources and programming examples than previous histories to consider Time and HBO's exclusive relationship to trends for media interdependence. Arguing that HBO continued to work within Time's promotion of quality and more populist material, I will outline how a wide selection of series, film, documentary and other programming were packaged into distinct exhibition cycles and a stabilising production infrastructure.

Proposing a model of subscriber aggregation, where a range of demographics could be cross-promoted to enhance specialist and wider subscription value, connections can be made with the wider growth of cable network branding in the period made by Mullen (2003) and others. A combination of institutional exclusivity and distinctive exhibition can be used here to again emphasise clearer degrees of difference from rivals such as Showtime, while incorporating discussions of Cinemax. A more systemic approach to programming a monthly subscription package through aggregate strategies can therefore be re-emphasised by the end of the decade over eclectic program glosses and the need to shift away from 'utility' value towards quality series.

From Chapter Three onwards, I will examine how these Time-era influences and subscriber aggregation underpinned growing adjustments to contemporary brand management across platforms as part of Time Warner. First analysing the aftermath of the Time Warner deal from 1989 to 1994, this will discuss how HBO both adapted to industry trends for network and program branding, while retaining a focus on aggregating audiences within stable exhibition and production cycles. Having presented a more comprehensive history of HBO from 1972 to 1994, the second half of the thesis will explore how well-established practices for subscriber aggregation played an overlooked role in discussions of the network's wider brand management through hit programs.

Chapter Four, focusing on the crucial rebrand period of 1995 to 1999, will argue that HBO's success depended on intensifying existing subscriber strategies and institutional exclusivity through an adapted executive structure, rather than significantly reinventing itself within quality television and FOX trends. Looking to better contextualise discussions over quality television adaptation and moves towards wider brand management within long-term cycles, HBO's associations with middlebrow

tensions within the television industry can also be re-focused through key production overlaps with New York independent cinema.

A stronger sense of subscriber aggregation through exhibition and production cycles within a stable infrastructure will be extended in Chapter Five to better inform discussions of HBO's consolidation of its quality programming brand through hit series from 2000 to 2002. Moreover, an emphasis on HBO as a pioneering television network for managing branded content across new digital platforms and global distribution beyond the subscriber service can be re-oriented around adaptations to older economies and some further tensions over institutional exclusivity from rivals.

Finally, Chapter Six will consider how HBO's uses as a prototype for 'post-network' changes and turns away from the subscriber service instead generated further degrees of subscriber aggregation to offset series losses. Some key tensions can also be identified over HBO's adaptation to broadband markets beyond subscriptions, using the finale of *The Sopranos* and breaks with the network's exceptionally long-term management structure as a provisional cutting-off point. With these tensions briefly extended in the Conclusion to HBO's history from 2007 to 2011, the importance of continuities from the Time-era and practices for subscriber aggregation can be used to better contextualise cyclical rates of industry change and institutional distinctions beyond existing glosses.

Re-contextualising accounts of contemporary brand management and quality television programming can again be used to support historical arguments for significant institutional and industrial continuities in the 1990s and 2000s. On a broader level, Janet Wasko suggests that as Hollywood and conglomerates adapted to new media technologies in the early 2000s, companies looked to produce variations on the 'same overall strategies as in the past' (Wasko 2002: 205). Linked here to Kompare's (2005) model of cyclical repetition through exploiting exceptional content and maintaining key aggregate packaging sites and services, the ongoing importance of the latter to regulating the flow of branded content has been promoted by John Caldwell.

On the one hand, Caldwell views trends towards more aggressive branding in the 1990s and 2000s as producing 'flexible semiotic capital' (Caldwell 2004: 70) through exceptional content across platforms. Providing distinctive personalities for

individual brands, interaction with franchises and key television programs could encourage strong affective relationships and rationalise economic risks. However, Caldwell also emphasises branding negotiations between older network and exhibition strategies for aggregate platforms. Discussing adjustments to new digital markets for television networks and producers, Caldwell suggests that

‘TV continued with its tried and proven success at programming, production, and marketing, even as it simultaneously invested in an array of start-ups and new technologies that could - if successful - ultimately cripple television’ (Caldwell 2004: 46)

Interaction between old and new media strategies is periodised by Caldwell as part of a ‘second shift’ transition within the media industries during the early 2000s. Negotiating both aggregate platforms as extensions of older broadcast and niche network stability with cross-promotion of branded content, Caldwell proposes a model of both ‘cyclical’ and ‘tangential’ strategies for circulating and maintaining leading platforms for conglomerates (Caldwell 2003: 136).

This can also be linked to Charles Acland’s discussion of the role played by exhibition spaces such as theatres, theme parks and television channels for consistently aggregating content (Acland 2003: 120-121), structuring audience access to an ‘immediate archive of texts’ (Acland 2003: 152). As previously noted by Grainge (2008), these spaces provide crucial examples of branding’s integration with everyday life, and deserve fuller attention within more specific institutional contexts.

It is also important to note here that while Lotz’s ‘post-network’ overview focuses on the mobility of television and program brands, she acknowledges how ‘networks and channels have remained important sites of program aggregation, operating with distinctive identities that help viewers find content of interest’ (Lotz 2007a: 16). Lotz also links her argument to wider new media theories by Christopher Anderson (II) for structuring the flow of digital media content. Anderson (II) proposes an industry model of a ‘Long Tail’, where companies build more long-term value by owning a wide range of niche content rather than major hits, negotiated through digital ‘rights aggregators’ (Anderson (II) 2006: 149).

Whether as old media channels, exhibitors or television channels and radio stations, or websites, search engines and digital music players, these aggregators continue to provide loyalty to leading packaging formats. Returning to Arvidsson's (2007) outline of brand management as an exchange between top-down formatting of products and wider outlets for generating ritualistic consumption, studying these aggregate spaces provides insight how multiple niche and wider audiences are coordinated around cyclical exhibition patterns.

Studying HBO as a subscription service growing out of Time's exclusive brand therefore provides opportunities to rethink the wider management of brand value in the 1990s and 2000s through longer-term strengths as an aggregator from publishing roots. Able to adapt and combine licensing of exceptional content with the stability and extension of repetitive exhibition and production cycles into new forms of digital packaging, historical discussions of a 'utility brand' to content brand can be revised towards a much stronger awareness of how the 1972 to 1994 era significantly informs extensive scholarly attention to post-1995 success.

On one hand, the value of this research is to better understand institutional and industrial continuities through extensive archival research, building off trends for revisionist media histories. Some caution over scope and the use of archives can however be made. Michele Hilmes (2009) has suggested that while single studies of television networks are valuable, they also have to negotiate excessive programming and archival sources, particularly if official records are not available. As a result, while Hilmes' *NBC: America's Network* benefited from access to the broadcaster's archive to focus primary resources, these opportunities do not currently apply to HBO, and encourages alternative strategies.

The closest methodological and structural model for my thesis comes from Perren's (2004a) history of FOX as a critical chronology of a network's programming and brand strategies, developed through trade journal, newspaper and magazine research within overviews of the 'patterns and processes of the media industries' (Perren 2004a: 21). Mullen's (2003) history of cable programming shares a similar focus on archive-led industrial history, but within a broader scope. Other dissertation studies of contemporary networks, notably Kelly Cole's 2005 history of the WB and

UPN, also share a more restricted contemporary focus on key programming and marketing strategies from the 1990s to the 2000s.

With HBO unlikely to open its confidential archives for some time, a current reliance on industry press, primary documents such as the programs themselves and marketing materials alongside existing histories therefore draws on these accounts' reliance on trade papers. My primary research developed chronological chapters from *Variety* and *The Hollywood Reporter*, as well as newspapers, overlooked institutional histories of Time, online archived HBO on-air promotions, magazine advertisements, and a broad selection of programming than previous histories. The particular reliance on trade papers to piece together a critical chronology can however produce problems, with Perren acknowledging that articles and interviews tend to combine self-promotion with a short-sighted approach to historical precedent (Perren 2004a: 16-17). Like Perren, my research into trade papers placed an emphasis on 'cross-checking data whenever possible' (Perren 2004a: 16) over an extended period of time.

In this context, my thesis aims to provide a more comprehensive history of HBO, but one that maps out the development of particular strategies to inform wider debates. More specifically, by focusing on subscriber aggregation as a longer-term practice, more specific contributions can be made to general discussions of brand management taken by existing accounts. When dealing with the process of brand management, my focus is again on top-down strategies for coordinating and extending consistent format value against ongoing demands for distinction and subscriber satisfaction.

If contemporary brand management can be understood as an overall coordination of value between audiences and a brand across media in the 1990s and 2000s, my study of HBO's subscriber aggregation looks to better understand the roots and ongoing network processes that structure this value through exhibition formats and production cycles. While others identify this value through limited case studies and generalising discussions of quality marketing and corporate differentiation within Time Warner, I focus on the stability of the overall subscriber service and its extension of a Time Inc. corporate culture that provided an exception to interdependent trends in the 1970s and 1980s.

In this way, existing debates over the wider cultural and sociological relationships between HBO as a quality brand and its audiences can be refined. My interest is therefore less in the general dynamics of network and audience branding, with its related theories of affective exchange, than in defining HBO's specific institutional relationship to them over an extended period of time. Focusing on subscriber aggregation allows us to better refine the strategies that go into branding a network and programs, while viewing this as part of variations on longer-term trends for format management around packaging and licensing of branded content.

My intention is again to align with institutional histories that provide clearer contexts for interpretation and criticism. Wasko's promotion of the need for a 'base for further studies which may then incorporate these other factors' (Wasko 1994: 20) provides perhaps the clearest rationale for this approach. As a result, the thesis does not aim to provide a sustained critique, or theories over the more general cultural role of HBO's exclusive brand identity and its meaning for audiences. These kinds of approaches are already well-represented in existing studies of the network. Instead, attention to aversion of risk, cyclical adaptations of formats and production cycles offer a clearer sense of how Lotz has describes as the 'quotidian practices' (Lotz 2007a: 33) of individual and general institutional practices.

Grainge provides some further rationale for this approach, aligning with Charles Acland in promoting a 'bid for precision' (Acland qtd Grainge 2008: 7) for industry histories where

'rather than condemn or be unduly fatalistic about the commodified relations that shape contemporary social life, it is necessary, instead to examine the historically specific conjectures in which interests and meanings are brought into being and actively negotiated' (Grainge 2008: 8)

The thesis therefore aims to provide a more comprehensive context for understanding HBO's success, with a particular focus on the under-explored history of the network as part of Time Inc. from 1972 to 1989, and the immediate effects of the Time Warner merger in the early 1990s. Continuities for aggregating subscribers, building from publishing influences, provide long-term anchors for ongoing brand management. By

taking a longer-term perspective than accounts of HBO that over-value mid-1990s change and hit programs, key institutional negotiations over aggregating audiences can be developed within stable industrial practices.

Chapter One: 1972-1979

Launching in November 1972 to 365 subscribers in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, a satellite expansion in 1975 helped HBO and owner Time Inc. to contribute to an accelerated interdependence between broadcasting and Hollywood. As a subscription service primarily offering uncut films, alongside sports and some entertainment programming, HBO acted an ‘agitator’ (Rogers et al 2002: 49) for cable’s legitimacy as a new television market. This innovation as an outlet has been used to discuss some limited options over original programming, providing precedent through stand-up comedy and boxing for a later, middlebrow brand identity. However, most accounts acknowledge the limitations of a ‘utility brand’ (Edgerton 2008: 7) service promoting general value over hit programs, establishing an eclectic programming identity.

This chapter aims to significantly rethink this history by expanding on Time’s overlooked influence as a publisher with a problematic relationship to industrial interdependence. Analysing how Time provided extensive precedent for marketing and managing a subscriber service, as well as format and brand legitimization, HBO’s origins can be rethought in the context of recent links between publishing and cable through an aggregate exhibition format. This understanding of HBO as a subscription aggregator can be used to shape further continuities within exclusive Time ownership into the 1980s. First exploring how HBO’s origins have been set within post-war trends for media interdependence, Time’s influence can be mapped over regional experiments from 1972 to 1974, the satellite boom of 1975 to 1977, and further expansion to market leadership from 1978 to 1980.

1946-1954

The development of cable and pay cable came within previously noted trends for competition, adaptation and interdependence between broadcasting and Hollywood. Early forms of interdependence, developing from radio tensions and Hollywood cross-promotion from the 1920s and 1930s, saw studios adjusting to the loss of theatrical ownership and a fragmenting overseas market after the 1947 Paramount decrees extend

ties to television station ownership and programming (Anderson 2004: 229).¹⁷ Initial conflicts however developed around antitrust criticism of studio cross-ownership (Balio 1990a: 21) and the radio and manufacturing power of RCA and CBS, reproducing NBC and CBS networks linked by owned stations and affiliates, as well as the smaller-scale NBC-offshoot ABC by 1950 and a range of independents.

Television's first decade saw programming strategies expand towards a national audience with sponsored and advertising agency packaged, independent and live production from New York. This was joined by experimentation in drama, educational and variety formats. At the same time, CBS adapted successful radio serial and soap opera formats in building affiliate and sponsor support (Boddy 1990b: 65), most notably through quiz shows and experiments with filmed sitcoms (Boddy 1990b: 75). Smaller networks and independent stations struggled to compete with NBC and CBS' early dominance, advertising revenue and station ownership in leading markets.¹⁸

As the networks began to consolidate a national reach by the mid 1950s, cable television emerged in the late 1940s as CATV (Community Antenna Television), a primarily amateur-run wired and microwave re-transmission service for signals in areas with poor reception. For Mullen, this effectively extended broadcasting's dominance (Mullen 2003: 20-63). By contrast, Hollywood's early resistance to broadcast television encouraged experimentation in creating a competitive alternative with forms of pay television in the late 1940s and early 1950s (Hilmes 1990: 116-139). Examples ranged from delivering packages of uncut programs to subscribers homes to 'theatre television' retransmitting feature films.¹⁹ However, with continuing FCC (Federal Communications

¹⁷ For histories of the immediate effects of post-war Hollywood into the early 1950s, see Denise Mann (2008) *Hollywood Independents: The Postwar Talent Takeover*, Durham: Duke University Press. For a more general survey of major trends, see Thomas Schatz (1999) *Boom and Bust: American Cinema in the 1940s*, California: California University Press, particularly 285-444. For early attempted interventions into television, see Christopher Anderson (2004) 'Television and Hollywood in the 1940s' in *Hollywood: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies: Volume I: Historical dimensions: the development of the American film industry*, ed. Thomas Schatz, London; New York: Routledge, 227-254. Hollywood's failed integration and programming and promotional overlaps with radio can be found in Hilmes (1990), 7-115.

¹⁸ For a more detailed analysis of institutional and programming changes in early television, see William Boddy (1990a) *Fifties Television: The Industry and its Critics*, Urbana: Illinois University Press, For more recent close analysis of individual network practices, see Michele Hilmes ed (2007) *NBC: America's Network*, Berkley: University of California Press.

¹⁹ Notable early systems included Oklahoma's Telemovies, which employed first-run films and a monthly fees (Mullen 2003: 49), Paramount subsidiary Phonevision (1964), which also relied

Commission) limitations on commercial launches,²⁰ attempts at innovation declined from 1955 as the three-network system expanded and the Hollywood studios significantly adjusted their relationship to broadcasting.

1955-1965

While the early years of broadcast television partly relied on the novelty of live programming, its second decade produced a boom in Hollywood production and lucrative syndication practices that resulted in an era of ‘mutual interdependence, and economic symbiosis’ (Litman 1990: 141). With marginal independent producers having predominantly supplied low-cost material to local stations to fill scheduling hours from the late 1940s (Anderson 2004: 227-254), primetime precedent for off-network syndication was achieved by the independent, but Hollywood-rooted production of filmed sitcoms such as *I Love Lucy* (CBS, 1951-1957) by the mid 1950s. The broader appeal of telefilm syndication for diversification had also hit a landmark in 1954 with a deal between third-place network ABC and Disney for *Disneyland* (1954-2008) an anthology series cross-promoting the studio’s newly opened theme park and film archive.

The Disney deal’s significance demonstrated the early value of branding through television, with broadcast promotion helping to coordinate the studio’s output with theme parks and merchandising (Anderson 1994). Television also became an attractive site for distributing studio film libraries, beginning with independent distributors and expanding to the major studios by the mid-1950s. Regular exhibition of pre-1948 titles and later box office successes and studio classics by the early 1960s consequently helped television become the ‘principal means by which most Americans watched their Hollywood film favourites’ (Gomery 1992: 246).

on packages of Hollywood films (Mullen 2003: 53-54), and MSO TelePrompter, which ran ‘theater television’ and CCTV boxing from local theaters and venues.

²⁰ The success of over-the-air broadcast television also produced tensions over ‘free’ against ‘pay’ television through market populism and the elitist and ‘gated community’ exclusivity and divisions offered by subscription media. See John McMurria (2007) ‘A Taste of Class: Pay-TV and the Commodification of Television in Postwar America’ in *Cable Visions: Television Beyond Broadcasting*, Sarah Banet-Weiser, Cynthia Chris, and Anthony Freitas eds, New York: New York University Press, 44-65

At the same time, distribution revenues were joined to increasing turns to Hollywood production of syndication-ready telefilm series. This aligned with shifts from network sponsorship to magazine-style spot advertising. Licensing half-hour comedy and hour-long drama formats became crucial to establishing popularity for later sales to network affiliates, independent stations and worldwide markets. While coming under fire by the early 1960s for a conservative reliance on formulaic programming and least-objectionable-content, a broadcast distribution and exhibition oligopoly dependent on shared investments in Hollywood production, syndication and advertising revenue defined the ‘classic’ network era (Litman 1990: 115; Anderson 1994).²¹

Telefilm syndication and Disney cross-promotion reflected broader trends towards horizontal integration of copyright ownership and adaptation for the studios by the mid-1960s. Mann identifies the growing importance of talent agency packaging for independent producers and studio distribution as working with television and radio to establish greater cross-media links for a ‘New’ Hollywood (Mann 2008: 1-29). Adapting studio-era audience differentiation towards more specific mass and niche demographics, increased investments in the music industry joined to the promotion of new theatrical technologies to distinguish higher-budget productions.

Specialised drive-in, art-film and exploitation, or ‘grind-house’ theatrical circuits also looked to specialise film exhibition as new independent distributors emerged (Balio 1990a: 26-30; Doherty 1988; Hall, Neale 2010: 159-186). While not ‘new’ in sense of building on earlier radio cross-promotional, character, star licensing and media adaptation precedents (Hilmes 1990; Wood 2010; Santo 2006), new levels of audience differentiation, cross-promotion and consolidation of rights saw horizontally integrated practices partially solve the loss of vertical integration.²²

²¹ For surveys of 1960s American television and programming trends, see Lynn Spigel and Michael Curtin eds (1997) *The Revolution Wasn't Televised*, Lynn Spigel and Michael Curtin eds, London: Routledge, and Janet Staiger (2000) *Blockbuster TV: Must-see Sitcoms in the Network Era*, New York: New York University Press.. The most comprehensive overview of Hollywood's integration with broadcast television by the end of the 1950s can be found in Anderson (1994).

²² For more on the first stages of Hollywood's more aggressive audience differentiation, see Mann (2008); on youth audiences see Thomas Doherty (1988) *Teenagers and Teenpics*, Boston: Unwin and Hyman. For more on music industry cross-promotion, see Jeff Smith (1998) *The Sounds of Commerce: Marketing Popular Film Music*, New York: Columbia University Press. For more general trends in 1950s American cinema, television and technology, see Peter Lev (2003) *The Fifties: Transforming the Screen, 1950-1959*, California, California University Press. For studies in wide theatrical releases and exhibition spectacle from 1956-1970, see

1966-1974

Trends for advanced diversification hit obstacles in the mid 1960s as rising costs, television license fees, and changing demographics tested expansion (Hall, Neale 188). Studio stability was tested by a recession in the late 1960s that saw key majors absorbed into larger conglomerates mixing entertainment and non-entertainment assets. With Gulf & Western's purchase of Paramount establishing precedent in 1966, insurance company Transamerica followed by acquiring United Artists (1967), while Warner Brothers and MGM were absorbed by the Kinney National Company and entrepreneur Kirk Kerkorian by 1969.

Conglomerates gained studios with heavy debts but investment potential for back-catalogues of features, television production and Hollywood real estate. In doing so, the potential to establish value from film libraries for television and cross-promotion of branded media properties was developed for the 1970s. The film industry also however attempted to respond to the rise of a high-spending baby boomer audience and social and political unrest. Financing a wave of art-film influenced and socially progressive pictures, the 'Hollywood Renaissance' exploited censorship changes to lure audiences back to theatres.²³ However, by 1974 studio confidence in expanding aggressively promoted features was re-orienting production towards broader-targeting features and partial investment in specialised distribution. While this blockbuster-led boom will be returned to later in the chapter, demographic shifts and targeted marketing also crossed into broadcasting during the period.

With FCC regulations establishing public service alternative PBS in 1967 and the Financial Syndication and Prime Time Access rulings in 1970 and 1971, the major three networks lost lucrative syndication shares. The regulations also restricted the amount of network programming in primetime station schedules to encourage

Sheldon Hall and Steve Neale (2010) *Epic, Spectacles and Blockbusters*, Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 2010, 159-186.

²³ For a general summary of the Hollywood Renaissance in the wider context of debates over a 'New Hollywood' and contemporary practices, see Geoff King (2002) 'New Hollywood, Version 1: The Hollywood Renaissance' in *New Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction*, London: IB Tauris, 11-48, and David Cook (2000) *Lost Illusions: American Cinema in the Shadow of Watergate and Vietnam, 1970-1979*, California: California University Press. Jim Hillier's (1992) *The New Hollywood* (London: Studio Vista) also provides key industrial analysis of ownership, production and technology, as well as analysis of key filmmakers and institutions.

independent producers. While aiming to break up a broadcast television monopoly, the first years of the rulings instead produced mixed results. Independent syndicators and Hollywood studios more often fed scheduling gaps with broadly-targeting programming, low-cost game and chat shows, while widening markets for reruns. In terms of the latter, the divestment of CBS' syndication arm as Viacom in 1971 contributed to major studio dominance in off-network and first-run syndication alongside a range of independent producers and distributors.

However, a more open market also encouraged calculated risks on more specifically targeting 'quality' demographics in primetime. This responded to advertiser demands for networks to re-attract the 'audience of young consumers, aged 18-34, that television had lost in the 1960s' (Feuer 1984: 7). Feuer et al's (1984) study of MTM and the parallel success of Norman Lear's Tandem Productions and Fox-produced sitcom *M*A*S*H* (CBS, 1972-1983) saw variations on popular sitcom formats. Moving between the more explicitly directed social commentary of Tandem (*All in the Family*) and the character-led pathos of workplace-family led comedies from MTM (*The Mary Tyler Moore Show*), quality television's blend of accessibility and distinction helped CBS to considerable ratings and demographic prestige by mid-decade.²⁴

These changes also crossed into the development of the made-for-television movie as a flexible mass and niche-oriented format. Gomery (1987; 1992) and Gitlin (1984) identify the growth of the format by the mid-1960s as a response to a shortage of theatrical films and production licensing disputes. The compromise became the commissioning of low-budget, B-level productions from studios and independents for first-run and later domestic and international syndication. By the early 1970s the format established successful cycles for critical prestige and crossover appeals, beginning to 'tackle social issues of race and sex in a controversial yet noncontroversial way' (Gomery 1987: 216). Limited diversification around a reinforcement of broadcast and Hollywood interdependence was joined by the mid-1970s by breakthroughs in cable and pay cable.

²⁴ Feuer et al's (1984) history of MTM and some of the cultural implications of 'quality' television for distinction can also be complemented by Robert J. Thompson's (1997) *Television's Second Golden Age: From 'Hill Street Blues' to 'ER'*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997.

In 1965 and 1966 the FCC initially supported broadcast pressure over MSO pirating of syndicated material, producing a First and Second Report and Order into Cable Television that limited duplication and entry into the top one-hundred station markets. In this way, while Mullen notes some limited efforts to offer additional program services, regulation and costs effectively limited cable to being ‘little more than a retransmission medium for broadcast programming’ (Mullen 2003: 62). However, from 1968 to 1974 wider broadcasting reform targeted cable as a potential ‘force for social change’ (Mullen 2008: 85), encouraging the relaxation of franchise ownership to improve distribution infrastructure while mandating locally produced programming to compete with stations.²⁵

Regulation encouraged a combination of local innovation and gradual intensification of broadcast dependence against high production costs. Enhanced by a 1972 Report and Order that reduced localism and relaxed importing of distant signals, consolidating MSOs (Multiple System Operators) by 1975 however faced ‘very little incentive to offer anything but the cheapest, most readily available, and most popular types of programming’ (Mullen 2008: 92). This dependence was reinforced in 1974 by conglomerate investment in cable distribution and new channels, with Warner Communications establishing a Warner Cable division in 1974.

By contrast, pay cable and pay television offered eclectic but increasingly attractive options for competing with advertising-supported broadcasting for selling varied individual and collective packages to homes. For Mullen, subscription services in the 1950s and 1960s became a ‘laboratory of sorts for alternative programming strategies’ (Mullen 2003: 47). This ranged from further experiments in theatre television (Mullen 2003: 49) to success in transmitting live sports, most notably boxing, and a selection of films, syndicated material, regional cultural events and children’s programming to local areas (Mullen 2003: 55). However, without access to popular broadcast programming and restricted to experimental services, Mullen suggests that ‘as elaborate and promising as the various pay-TV schemes were during the 1950s and 1960s, they never amounted to more than curiosities’ (Mullen 2003: 58). Moreover, with broadcast and independent stations retaining daily film and sports programming as

²⁵ For more on policy decisions during the ‘Blue Sky’ era, see Thomas Streeter (1996) *Selling the Air: A Critique of the Policy of Commercial Broadcasting in the United States*, Chicago: Chicago University Press.

scheduling staples (Gomery 1992: 250), options beyond entrenched broadcast interests again remained limited.

Opportunities to develop a long-term future for pay television were enhanced by a 1968 Fourth Report and Order by the FCC that agreed commercial licenses for subscription services. However, this retained limits on films between two and ten years old, broadcast sports events, series-type programming, and instituted a 90% cap on sports and film programming (Mullen 2008: 107). While protecting existing distribution and broadcast exhibition interests, by 1972 approximately forty-five regional services delivering varied cable, broadcast packages and PPV programming to homes and MSOs were available nationwide (Edgerton 2008a: 1).²⁶

Existing accounts of HBO's origins build from these contexts to discuss limited success as a regional experiment between 1972 and 1974, before a risk on satellite distribution in 1975 transformed cable's potential. While reviewing these histories, it is possible to re-examine HBO's early development and the risk taken on satellite expansion through more specific precedent and influences from Time Inc. as a publisher with a problematic relationship to industrial changes.

'This is HBO, the Home Box Office': 1972-1974

Mair's history traces HBO origins to cable MSO owner Charles Dolan's mid-1960s acquisition of a Manhattan system franchise. Time Inc. invested in the venture through audio-visual subsidiary Time-Life, before increasing investment as the venture suffered construction costs (Mair 1988: 4). Building from pay cable experimentation with uncut films and sports on Sterling Cable, Mullen notes how Dolan proposed a pay venture as The Green Channel to Time between 1970 and 1971 (Mullen 2003: 106). This was re-named as Home Box Office in 1972 and organised around an executive team including Dolan, Frank Randolph, sports-caster Marty Glickman, Time marketer Tony Thompson and lawyer Gerald Levin (Mair 1988: 5).

²⁶ These notably included pay per systems such as Channel 100 in Los Angeles, the Star Channel, TheatreVisioN in New York, and the Home Theatre Network in California (Mullen 2008: 107), which drew on the 1960s success of film and sports events, as well as the Z Channel in Los Angeles, a service transmitting art-house and foreign features to the local area. For more on the Z Channel's turbulent history, see the documentary *Z Channel: A Magnificent Obsession* (Cassavetes 2004).

Mair identifies initial deals with cable operators for incentive partnerships for distribution and marketing, while securing live sports coverage from Madison Square Garden, and some older film titles from Universal's library (Mair 1988: 7). With pay cable restrictions in place in Manhattan, HBO instead launched as a monthly fee microwave service to 325 viewers in the Pennsylvania town of Wilkes-Barre on November 8th. However, from 1973 to 1974 the fledgling serviced struggled to build long-term appeal.

In March 1973 Time expanded its share in Sterling to 66%, installing Levin as president (Mair 1988: 20). The priority became to reduce churn, or subscribers signing up and cancelling the channel. Early systems had begun to organise around a basic cable selection of channels (typically broadcast and independent stations and some local programming) for a single fee, and per-channel subscriptions, typically between \$8 to \$12 dollars for a premium service as an addition to existing packages. However, problems developed around HBO's distribution of a service to operators that could retain subscribers beyond the novelty of a limited range of R-rated, commercial-free and convenient distinctions from broadcast stations and local movie theatres. Surveying spikes and declines in Wilkes-Barre and neighbouring Pennsylvania townships, Mair explains slow growth through poor marketing by still primarily local engineers (Mair 1988: 14-15).

Unstable subscriber numbers, fluctuating from 12,500 to 8,323 on fourteen affiliate systems (Mair 1988: 14; Mullen 2003: 106) produced a \$1 million loss for the service's first year (Mair 1988: 26). Moreover, despite relaxed transmission after the 1972 Report and Order, Sterling Cable's struggles led Time to briefly attempt to sell both HBO and Sterling to Warner Communications for \$20 million. Time also reduced stakes in East Coast MSO ATC and broadcast station assets. Failing due to franchising restrictions, HBO instead moved to fully incorporate HBO and Sterling, renamed Manhattan Cable in September. Mair points here to a trust by key executives in cable and pay cable's potential (Mair 1988: 20-21).

Optimism for HBO's future grew during 1974, with an aggressive marketing push by Levin helping the service to reach 15,000 subscribers in the spring (Mair 1988: 15). This expanded to four states and thirty-six microwave linked systems by the end of the year (Mullen 2003: 206). Explanations for HBO's growing success suggest

improved marketing relationships with operators (Mair 1988: 15), a commitment to acquiring wider microwave affiliates (Mullen 2003: 88), and an increased programming focus on sports to compensate for limited Hollywood supply. During its early months, HBO had run a four hour schedule of two films a night and a sporting event from Madison Square Garden (Miller, Kim 2008: 217), before expanding to between four and seven and a half daily hours in 1973 and 1974 of heavily rotated titles.

Problems remained though in breaking Hollywood and broadcast resistance to licensing high-profile films to pay cable. With output primarily restricted to B movie and older, obscure titles, HBO and Time had launched a court injunction against the 1968 regulations in 1973. Turning instead to local sports to build an exclusive identity in Pennsylvania and the East Coast, Mair discusses Levin's success in acquiring baseball and ice hockey rights from local stations (Mair 1988: 16). This also expanded to a low-cost range of specialist sports such as gymnastics, wrestling and surfing (Miller, Kim 2008: 217). Covering approximately two hundred and fifty sports a year by 1975, Miller and Kim suggest that supplementing limited film titles allowed sports to become 'an important means of establishing the station's difference' (Miller, Kim 2008: 217).²⁷

In addition, a focus on regular boxing coverage from January 1973 built on earlier pay cable experiments to become one of HBO's "trademark" programming niches' (Mullen 2003: 108). Working around the 90% cap on film and sports programming, HBO also experimented with taping New York and Pennsylvania entertainment specials. This began in March 1973 with coverage of the Pennsylvania Polka Festival, as well as roller derbies and cow fairs. In terms of wider promotional campaigns, Mair notes the success of Levin in exploiting a gas shortage to promote more programming and 'free' samples on weekends for systems under the slogan 'Gasless Saturdays and Sundays' (Mair 1988: 16-17).

As a result, while Charles Dolan had noted in 1972 how HBO might eventually become an original rights holder and distributor able to sell 'television programs worldwide to any public that signals in specific demands to us,' the immediate priority was to enhance local value. Dolan described this as 'meeting the retail program needs of

²⁷ In this respect Miller and Kim suggest that regional HBO was 'rather like half of a conventional comprehensive TV service' (Miller, Kim 2008: 217) in its transmission of films and sporting events.

the region we are attempting to serve in 1972-1973' (Dolan qtd Mullen 2003: 107). While plans were already in place by the end of 1974 for investing in satellite distribution, it is possible here to pause and rethink these early years through Time's influence.

'Another form of Journalism': Time Inc. and Pay Cable

Time Inc. had launched in 1920s New York as a close-knit journalistic group initially focused around the weekly newsmagazine *Time* (1923-). Rooted in the oversight of editor-in-chief and later CEO Henry Luce, the company achieved enormous success by creating a distinctive identity as a 'family business' relying on long-term management stability (Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 6). This promoted quality control in producing upscale journalism with a personality-driven entertainment style for subscription and retail distribution. By the end of the 1930s Time had broadened its publishing label with the weekly photo-journalism focused *Life* (1936).²⁸ Prendergast and Colvin's (1986) history of Time from 1960 to 1980 however suggests that in the post-war era Time faced increasing challenges against falling magazine circulation. Notably helping to produce *Sports Illustrated* in 1954, the publisher looked towards segmenting its titles into 'class vs. mass' appeals (Prendergast, Colvin 1986: 54).

Leadership from 1960 under CEO Andrew Heiskell added new lifestyle titles such as *Fortune*, while raising political and celebrity coverage in *Time* by 1972 (Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 388). By contrast, *Life* could not survive falling circulation, and was closed the same year. New strategies in the period looked to global publishing and media cross-promotion, but experienced some recurring tensions over collaboration and exclusivity. In the post-war era Time established a range of international editions, but struggled to translate the US brand for a 'difficult to define audience' (Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 86). The publisher's protection of its close-knit 'Time culture' also created resistance to mergers with larger syndicates in the early 1970s (Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 208). International problems were later solved as the publisher rebranded its unsuccessful *Time Atlantic* title as *Time Europe*. Coordinated more closely with the

²⁸ For detailed histories of Time Inc. up to 1960, see Robert T. Elson (1968) *Time Inc.: The Intimate History of a publishing enterprise, Volume One: 1923-1941*, New York: Atheneum, and Robert T. Elson (1973) *Time Inc.: The intimate history of a publishing enterprise, Volume Two: 1941-1960*, New York: Atheneum

New York office, this extended to *Time Asia*, finding success by reproducing the ‘American ‘feel’’ (Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 379) of the US magazine.

Demands for diversification without sacrificing corporate autonomy also affected ventures into audio-visual media. Time had diversified the magazine brand as early as the 1930s, entering into radio and theatrical deals to produce *March of Time* newsreels. In doing so they created an early form of synergy by ‘utilising the by-product of Time Inc. pictorial and print journalism, and the creative talents around the magazines’ (Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 135). From the early 1950s Time also began to purchase broadcast radio and television stations in the US and overseas, and created the Time-Life Broadcast division in 1961 to handle television interests. Moreover, Time consolidated publishing strengths by entering into book distribution and mail-order catalogues. This built off subscription strengths, re-issuing titles from magazine back-catalogues, while reinforcing Time’s quality brand associations (Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 69).

However, attempted investments in broadcast television and film struggled to find consistent success. On the one hand, the early 1960s saw *Life* act as a base for producing syndicated pilots and documentaries as stand-alone embodiments of Time journalistic quality. This most notably included commissioning filmmaker and former *Life* photo-journalist Robert Drew’s feature-length special *Primary* in 1961. Using 16mm handheld cameras to record the Kennedy election, Drew’s team adapted elements from European neo-realism in establishing a landmark in verite documentary style for an emerging Direct Cinema movement.

Taking an apolitical role for observing, rather than explaining issues, Gomery and Allen note how ‘by exposing social problems without explicitly commenting on them, verite documentaries leave solutions to problems outside the film’ (Gomery, Allen 1985: 236-237). They suggest that the ‘the advocacy of a single program of change is not the filmmaker’s task; it is enough to reveal the ‘truth’ of a social situation to the viewer’ (Gomery, Allen 1985: 234). Arguably extending *Time* and *Life*’s philosophy of personality-led news and everyday opinion into a stand-alone format, supplying the documentary to Time-owned stations and a deal with ABC reflected a brief push for more public affairs programming in the early 1960s (Gomery, Allen

1985: 227). From 1963 however attempts to maintain crossovers with verite Vietnam specials struggled to find buyers (Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 137).²⁹

By 1968 *Life's* photojournalism format again acted as the basis for producing one hour documentaries, but failed to find support (Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 383-384). Other alternatives included Time-Life Books collaborating with MGM on adapting NBC specials from its educational imprint, as well as a transatlantic deal with the BBC to export book publishing tie-ins (Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 384-385). However, the 'profusion of uncoordinated efforts' (Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 384) for individual specials and clashes with producers and sponsors by the early 1970s led to a cut-back in station ownership and production (Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 273).

Collaborative problems also extended to investments in studio production. Time pulled out of early shares in United Artists and MGM by 1975 (Prendergast Colvin 1986: 214). An alternative effort to enter into film production and distribution then resulted in the creation of Time-Life Films in 1969. This aimed to coordinate with *Life* and the BBC, but again suffered losses by 1972 (Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 388). For Prendergast and Colvin (1986), Time's struggles to achieve consistency in its non-publishing efforts reflected difficulties in sacrificing a close-knit editorial culture. Early cable investments consequently provided opportunities to enter into a relatively new market, and were encouraged by Time-Life division head Barry Zorthian's interest in new technologies (Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 269-270).

Investments in HBO by 1973, after cutting back on broadcast stations and cable distribution, arguably provided an ideal site to reinforce publishing and subscription strengths. Prendergast and Colvin suggest here that pay cable's similarity to magazine publishing and book-of-the-month distribution as 'dependent on subscriber acceptance' (Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 139) appealed to Time. As a result, a potential future in 'supplying programs for pay-TV was more in Time Inc.'s line, another form of journalism' (Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 140). While distinct from print journalism, Time's experience in marketing a quality subscriber package helped to offset risks in the prototypical HBO from 1973 to 1974.

²⁹ Drew had worked as a *Life* photojournalist, with initial documentaries distributed to Time Inc. broadcast stations. Stephen Mamber suggests that *Life* provided a template for Direct Cinema as a 'pictorial counterpart of the journalistic human-interest story, although they were often accompanied by lengthy stories' (Mamber 1974: 116-117).

Although sports and boxing had been used to market earlier subscription systems, Levin's turn towards door-to-door promotion of the quality of the subscription package from 1973 (Mair 1988: 12) was enhanced by personnel transfers from *Sports Illustrated*. Prior to Levin's promotion, the magazine's publisher J. Richard Munro briefly took control of the channel (Mair 1988: 8), while in late 1973 its marketer Bill Myers helped coordinate the successful push through 1974 (Mair 1988: 15). A gradual focus on diverse sports programming by 1974 can be tied here to *Sports Illustrated* crossovers, providing a basis for targeting the same younger male audiences.

Adaptations of publishing precedent and subscription strategies can therefore be used to revise Time's role in beginning to transform HBO from experiment to a more lucrative future. This can be more broadly linked to Kompare's (2005) history of 'industrialized repetition' from publishing, as well as notes by Lotz (2007a) on early cable influences. Again, Kompare argues that publishing provided a basis for later media industry reliance on negotiating distinctive content into linked subscription, retail and rental formats. This offered some precedent for how broadcast television and other non-theatrical sites could add to the circulation of film and other media archives, while encouraging the exploitation of copyrighted libraries by the early 1970s (Kompare 2005: 55; 84).

For Lotz, this extended relationships between magazines and subscription cable, relying on marketing niche formats similar to 'other niche media such as magazines' (Lotz 2007a: 41). Arguing that magazine publishing provided perhaps 'the most relevant point of comparison' (Lotz 2007a: 36), Time's influence on HBO was arguably much stronger than has so far been suggested in existing histories. The ideal meeting of Time's quality brand, desire for exclusivity and adaptation of subscription tactics to cable would continue from 1975 to 1977 as HBO became a national success.

'Programming to Subscribers of Widely Different Tastes': 1975-1977

Despite the successful subscriber rises of 1974, breaking 100,000 in April 1975, HBO still lost \$4 million for Time that year (Mair 1988: 26), with only 13% of US households carrying cable (Wasko 1994: 72). Faced with the prospect of becoming another one of Mullen's 'historical curiosities,' from late 1974 Time agreed to a

proposal by Levin to acquire space on RCA's newly launched Satcom 1 communications satellite. At \$7.5 million, the decision represented a significant risk for the publisher (Mullen 2003: 107), but one backed by trust in cable's future offered to transform the network's reach.

Investing in the exclusive rights to the Muhammad Ali and George Foreman 'Thrilla in Manila' boxing bout, the satellite re-launch of HBO on September 30th almost singlehandedly transformed the network and cable's future. Producing 287,199 subscribers by the end of the year, this represented a 500% growth on 1974 (Mair 1988: 26). While still unprofitable by the end of 1975, HBO's successful re-launch signalled for Mullen the 'definitive arrival of cable television's modern era' driven by 'deregulation and technological innovation that would help bring new programming outlets to television audiences' (Mullen 2008: 114).

This was soon followed by the 1976 Copyright Act, relaxing retransmission and boosting nationwide franchising and system construction alongside falling satellite costs (Mullen 2008: 116-117). The latter presented opportunities for further calculated risk, with Ted Turner up-linking his independent Atlanta station WTCG (later rebranded as WTBS) to become America's first 'superstation'. However, Mullen notes that satellite distribution ultimately reinforced dependence on recycling the 'conservative programming practices' (Mullen 2003: 112) of broadcasting. Here WTBS relied on off-network reruns, Hollywood theatrical films, cartoons and live sports to establish a regular schedule of familiar programming. Moreover, cable's potential to extend Hollywood interests saw Warner Communications establish a QUBE programming division in 1977 to supply new channels to its Warner Cable systems.

Powered by this rapidly expanding cable market, HBO reached 500,000 subscribers by June 1976 (Mullen 2008: 116-117). National carriage was accelerated by acquiring pay cable supplier Telemation (*Variety* June 30 1976) and re-acquiring MSO ATC. This helped generate a first profit by October 1977, while eclipsing magazine revenues as cable distribution coordinated with nationwide brand marketing (Mair 31). The foundational appeal of pay cable for uncut, commercial-free film programming had experienced a crucial landmark in March 1977 as the US Court of Appeals overturned the FCC's 1968 restrictions.

This enabled broader film licensing and series-type production (Harris Mar 30 1977) while retaining some local blackout provisions on sports (Mullen 2003: 98). In this context, pay cable was positioned to ‘replace broadcast television as Hollywood’s first television exhibition window’ (Mullen 2003: 98) by the end of the decade. Edgerton suggests that HBO’s success in this period would consequently be ‘linked primarily to its function of providing Hollywood motion pictures to cable viewers in the comfort of their own homes’ (Mullen 2008a: 7) alongside the added value of sports and limited specials.

HBO’s role as an exclusive new exhibition window for Hollywood film added to merchandising tactics by 1975. The success of *Jaws* in promoting blockbuster features through theatrical box office revenue and suitability for cross-promotion with tie-ins, merchandise and later sequels provided a template that was continued by the success of *Star Wars* (George Lucas) 1977. Cable offered to provisionally extend ancillary revenues for studio distribution, and was provisionally joined from 1975 by the patenting of commercial videotape by electronics manufacturers Sony and Betamax and VCR players. However, with studio caution remaining over the copyright infringement posed by the technology, VCR use had reached just under 2% of the population by the end of 1977 (Wasser 2001: 79-80).³⁰

Optimism over cable also faced tensions over cable replacing broadcasting as a first-run television window for Hollywood (Gomery 1992: 264). New competitors emerged in the mid-1970s to challenge HBO, including Viacom’s initially microwave-delivered service Showtime from 1976. With Time establishing a Video Group in 1976 to coordinate HBO and cable distribution, efforts were made to stabilise management and reach licensing deals with the studios. Promoting Levin to chairman and CEO and Nick Nicholas to president and chief operations officer, the latter looked to hire from within the magazine division.

This most notably included appointing *Time*’s Austin Furst as vice-president of programming (Mair 1988: 29). The new set-up struggled to negotiate exclusivity over

³⁰ For a brief summary of Hollywood business practices in the mid 1970s, see Thomas Schatz (1993) ‘The New Hollywood’, in *Film Theory: Goes to the Movies*, Jim Collins, Ava Preacher Collins, Hilary Radner eds, London: Routledge, 8-36. For a more recent update, see Thomas Schatz (2009) ‘The Studio System and Conglomerate Hollywood’ in *The Contemporary Hollywood Film Industry*, Paul McDonald and Janet Wasko eds, 13-42. For a longer survey of 1970s Hollywood, see Cook (2000)

recent Hollywood films, and instead compromised on buying packages of older titles (Engelman Sep 28 1977) against longer-term broadcast, syndication and theatrical deals (Michie May 25 1977). By 1977 HBO faced demands for diversifying supply, with Furst agreeing a pre-buy agreement with Columbia for exclusive rights to future titles in exchange for co-financing (Mullen 2003: 108). In 1977 Time also acquired a stake in independent production company Talent Associates in an attempt to boost theatrical distribution (Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 390).

In this context, Furst looked to widen HBO's programming offerings. By the September 1975 satellite launch this had included extending sports coverage to non-exclusive Wimbledon tennis coverage, and deals with syndicators. This included building on Time's existing relationship with the BBC in October 1975 to import the serials *The Pallisers* (1974) *David Copperfield* (1974) and *Heidi* (1974) (Mullen 2008: 108; Mullen 2003: 206). Targeting prestige programming also led here to the acquisition of rerun rights to cancelled CBS drama *Beacon Hill* (1975) an unsuccessful variation on quality programming. Mullen identifies the syndication deals as showing early promise for cable as an alternative outlet for quality and more specialist programming (Mullen 2003: 108), with Shayne Pepper (2010) also noting influences from PBS's public service success with British shows.

More specific Time influences however developed as HBO's national visibility increased, encouraging further weekend previews of special programs (Mullen 2003: 108-109). A November 1977 *Variety* survey had identified the average HBO subscriber as a younger, affluent adult male with higher income and education than the average broadcast viewer, as well as an early media adopter (*Variety* Nov 16 1977). Programming strategies however looked to both market HBO as an upscale destination while widening the service's audience appeals. Here Furst crucially turned to magazine influences for measuring subscriber feedback for experiments, introducing Total Subscriber Satisfaction Reports (TSS) from *Time* in 1976. Offering demographic breakdowns of the monthly service (Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 503), TSS represented a partial solution to the advantages and problems of the subscriber model.

For current histories, HBO's commercial-free rotation of uncut programs provided an alternative to broadcasting's aggregate flow of ratings and reruns, but also carried limitations. Rogers et al suggests that for pay cable, the 'monthly appeal of the

brand plays on the overall quality of a package of content' (Rogers et al 2002: 47), while Gomery argues that value 'was determined not by ratings for a single program but by the general appeal and satisfaction level for the month as a whole' (Gomery 1992: 268). In this way, the 'utility' brand argument taken by Edgerton and Jones (2008) implies HBO in this period as an outlet for a range of programs that did not require overall consistency, but relied on providing enough of a range to encourage the renewal of subscriptions. For Anderson, this model lacked the consistency of broadcast scheduling, where HBO's

'monthly program schedule serves the administrative schedule of corporate billing cycles, but as a means of organising time it coincides with few other social activities. With its movies scattered throughout the month, HBO's schedule bore no meaningful relationship to the experience of time in the lives of most Americans' (Anderson 2008: 32)

TSS arguably offers a way into rethinking some of this eclectic value. Drawing on magazine and subscription precedent for measuring non-linear sampling and re-sampling of a monthly service, reports offered to break down demographic trends and measure aggregate audience satisfaction. This could be used to identify potential compatibility between viewing and re-viewing patterns, improving the month-to-month decision to alter the format mix of the monthly selection of titles.³¹

While breaking with network-era conventions of flow, the early subscriber service can again be tied to magazine precedent, encouraging loyalty to a stable format containing a range of stable attractions. Subscriber format management in this case could encourage brand consistency through a specialist exhibition format, providing an infrastructure for offsetting the risk of adding new programs that could appeal to a variety of subscribers. From 1976 to 1977 experiments to find formats that could attract the ideal upscale male subscriber noted in the *Variety* survey, while retaining appeals to an expanding audience can be demonstrated by the production of comedy and variety specials. Moreover, further Time influences can be mapped over existing discussions of

³¹ For example, an early TSS report indicated that of 450,000 subscribers, more than 85% viewed *Gone with the Wind* (Fleming 1939) multiple times, while 57% watched a Bette Midler special, and 26% the CBS *Beacon Hill* episodes (*Variety* Jul 28 1976).

stand-up as precedent for later HBO shows and the balancing of a middlebrow brand identity.

‘Distinctive and Important Programming’: Experiments with Stand-up Comedy: 1975-1977

On December 31st 1975 HBO had experimented with taping stand-up comedian Robert Klein’s uncut live act. Its success led Furst’s predecessor as head of programming Harlan Kleiman to license independent production of twelve specials as *On Location*. This represented a monthly series of specials recording live comedy performances on campuses and nightclubs across America. In 1976 Furst developed a second year of specials, and hired young talent agent Michael Fuchs to produce the series. In 1976 and 1977 Furst and Fuchs also extended the ‘on location’ format to *Standing Room Only*, a showcase for variety acts and musical performances.³² With strong TSS scores, the specials complemented ‘box office’ special events, while providing the network with a more exclusive library of original programming.

For Haggins and Lotz, *On Location* provided precedent for later HBO programming by offering performers freedom from broadcast restrictions (Haggins, Lotz 2008: 154). These restrictions had been foregrounded by the 1975-1976 primetime season, encouraging more family-oriented shows, and investment in internationally co-produced miniseries such as *Roots* (1977) for gaining prestige (Gomery 1992: 25).³³ More adult-oriented broadcast comedy however shifted in significant ways towards late-night success, and was defined by NBC’s *Saturday Night Live* (1975-) to shift into late-night slots. A New York-produced sketch comedy featuring a range of alternative comics, *SNL* highlighted the popularity of more provocative and politically progressive

³² Early specials included performances by Rodney Dangerfield, Mort Sahl, Myra Cohen, Phyllis Diller, Henry Youngman, David Brenner, Freddie Prinze and Joey Bishop (*Variety* Mar 10 1976: 45-56), as well as younger, more provocative acts such as Steve Martin and Richard Pryor (Haggins, Lotz 169). The first *Standing Room Only* special was April 17th 1977’s *This Was Burlesque*. Other, somewhat incongruous specials included magic acts, state fairs and Bette Midler’s nightclub act.

³³ For more on broadcasting’s uneasy relationship to more permissive content, see Elana Levine (2007) *Wallowing in Sex: The New Sexual Culture of 1970s American Television*, Durham: Duke University Press

comedians since the 1960s. However, it faced compromises with network NBC over what Jeffrey Miller describes as the ‘standards of A.C. Nielsen’ (Miller 2007: 205).³⁴

HBO’s *On Location* consequently offered a window for the ‘unadulterated comic persona of comedians that had not been or could not be easily translated for network television’ (Haggins, Lotz 2008: 153). This included the biting political satire of George Carlin, and his 1977 special *George Carlin at USC*. Railing against broadcast censorship and a court injunction against his comedy, for Haggins and Lotz HBO granted Carlin a platform for his ‘incisive and humorous observations about language, social and political practices’ (Haggins, Lotz 2008: 154). In this way, *On Location* provided ‘distinctive and important programming’ (Haggins, Lotz 2008: 151) for the early network.

However, it has also been criticised as an example of early middlebrow tendencies between quality marketing and explicit content. Leverette aligns Carlin’s explicit freedoms with boxing here as promoting a ‘motherfucker’ attitude to broadcasting within an exclusive domestic service (Leverette 2008b: 133). Attempts to incorporate sensational material into a subscription setting also extended here to *Standing Room Only*’s promotion of burlesque and lounge act performances. However, *On Location* and the success of adult content in a subscription channel setting can be more specifically linked into Time concerns over exhibition. This in turn crossed over into new magazine ventures for the publisher.

Time’s intervention in exhibition notably included vetoing plans by Kleiman to add X-rated films to the service in 1976, setting a limit on R-rated titles that continues today (Greeley July 14 1976).³⁵ The publisher also demonstrated caution in promoting *Carlin at USC*. The special’s premiere featured a five minute introduction by former *Life* journalist Shana Alexander, who contextualises HBO’s promotion of ‘contemporary comedy’ as being sensitive to the service’s expanding mandate to provide ‘programming to subscribers of widely different tastes.’ Alexander and a pre-show interview with Carlin worked in this way to deflect criticism of shock value by

³⁴ For more on the development of *Saturday Night Live* and its influence on Hollywood comedy, see Jim Whalley (2010) ‘*Saturday Night Live*,’ *Hollywood Comedy, and American Culture*, London: Palgrave Macmillan

³⁵ Later positioned by Kleiman as a response to the commercial success of X-rated films in adult theaters, the programmer ruefully admitted that ‘some of us would have liked to have experimented with it’ (Kleiman qtd Greeley Jul 14 1976).

arguing that explicit language primarily enhanced ‘ideas and characters’ alongside an ‘element of reality.’ The special also included on-screen flashing messages warning viewers of its most explicit content.³⁶

Carlin at USC’s framing arguably looked to contextualise comedy within Time’s upscale brand identity, and own history of middlebrow variation between personality-led topical reporting. This extended to shifts in the 1960s and early 1970s towards more provocative content within *Sports Illustrated* and other titles as Time negotiated ‘class vs. mass’ marketing. In 1974 the publisher had launched *People*, a magazine focusing on celebrity, lifestyle and current affairs that differentiated itself from other Time titles through more sensational content.

People represented a response to demographic pressure on the publishing industry to establish formats with ‘distinctive personalities for themselves that sought out smaller slices of the market’ (Turow 1997: 79) while retaining general appeal. In this context, *People* was joined in the period by less-successful efforts by Time to focus on lifestyle and the entertainment industry for a younger boomer generation, from personal finance magazine *Money* to short-lived experiment *View*, a mix of film and television journalism (Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 323).

Marketing on broadcasting television, *People* pushed the Time brand to new limits. Promotion and format design was orchestrated by executive Tony Cox, who focused on highlighting ‘provocative pictures’ (Mair 1988: 32) while reassuring Time’s fears over differentiating from tabloids and the success of Playboy during the early 1970s (Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 425). In mid-1976 Cox transferred to HBO, becoming head of affiliate relations and cable operators, with responsibility for promoting the subscription package to operators and viewers (Mair 1988: 32). Cox’s move arguably signalled efforts to adapt *People*’s broadly appealing but upscale identity to the new service.

With Prendergast and Colvin noting how developing a ‘distinctive, consistent style was so important to the magazine’s success’ (Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 436), Mair suggests that Cox’s new role at HBO was ‘not unlike what he had done at *People*’

³⁶ The special and its introduction can be accessed at <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-5746642675625898216#>. Last Accessed: Dec 30th, 2010

(Mair 1988: 32). In this way, promotion and negotiation of *On Location* within Time's caution over mass appeal and exclusivity can be used to develop much longer-term contexts for early middlebrow discussions of HBO's brand identity.³⁷ Again, these crossovers provide crucially overlooked influences on HBO's early identity, with Time continuing to provide key distinctions from rivals between 1978 and 1979.

'Home Box Office from Time-Life': 1978-1979

By 1980 the US cable audience had reached 17.7 million, almost doubling from 1975 (Mullen 2003: 128). MSO consolidation had particularly driven new ventures and conglomerate investment in distribution and new channels. Notable examples here included Warner Communications' 1979 merging of its Warner Cable and QUBE ventures with American Express. This spun-off channels such as Nickelodeon for national distribution. Moreover, an investment by Getty Oil helped launch ESPN as a 24 all-sports channel, with other channels including politics news-channel C-SPAN. United Artists, Columbia and Universal also invested in MSO Cablevision, and new channel the USA Network as a sports and rerun service. Mullen suggests that this investment established cable as a lucrative outlet for recycling programming for the 1980s, where the 'goal of almost all of the cable networks launched in the late 1970s was to draw large numbers of viewers in the fastest and cheapest way possible' (Mullen 2003: 126).

Continuing to drive cable's national awareness, HBO had reached 4 million subscribers and was available in every US state by 1980 (Mair 33). With revenues spiking alongside the expansion of ATC cable distribution, Nicholas was promoted to the Video Group in late 1977, and replaced by James Heyworth as president (Mair 1988: 32). Tensions over film licensing however increased, with the MPPA launching an antitrust suit against HBO's perceived monopoly by 1978 (*Variety* Dec 28 1977). As Hilmes notes, despite pay cable's lucrative potential, HBO's early market leadership granted Time significant bargaining power (Hilmes 1990: 175). With the publisher perceived as an upstart in the film and television business, clashes and studio boycotts had developed by the end of the decade (*Variety* Oct 31 1979). Still dependent on

³⁷ Further crossovers between *People* and television included syndicated pilot *People Cover Story*, which focused on the New York celebrity and disco scene (Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 390).

Hollywood film for marketing subscriber value, HBO instead pursued more pre-buys (*Variety* Nov 21 1979) and deals with independent producers (*Variety* Oct 10 1979).

A need for distinction came against improved competition, with Viacom's satellite up-linking of Showtime 1978 and a merger with MSO TelePrompeter one million subscribers by the end of the decade (*Variety* May 23 1979). With other studio majors also experimenting in new subscription systems, Warner Amex made an aggressive move to expand a stake in the Star Channel. This was rebranded as The Movie Channel to become the first 24-hour film channel in 1979.³⁸ While HBO and Time's clashes with Hollywood intensified from 1980, between 1978 and 1980 the network looked to reinforce market leadership by adding new programming formats that again drew from the publisher's strengths.

Expanding to an average twelve hour daily schedule by 1978, original programming management was streamlined as Furst returned to Time and Fuchs was promoted. New development staff was also added, including former broadcast executive Iris Dugow and young program director Frank Biondi. Fuchs looked towards increasing the range of original programming, while re-focusing sports coverage under newly appointed executive Seth Abraham as a HBO Sports division. Cutting back on broad coverage to promote exclusive boxing, Wimbledon rights and some college sports (Miller, Kim 2008: 223), Abraham also launched sports highlights and commentary series *Inside the NFL* (American football) (1977-2008) and *Race for the Pennant* (baseball) (1978-1992). Compensating for the costs of rights, the series helped establish a stable mix of exclusive, typically bi-monthly boxing bouts and low-cost topical commentary by the end of the decade.

By comparison, Fuchs focused on reinforcing TSS support for 'on location' specials while exploring new pre-buy licensing options for increasing control over production. In the former, this included diversifying *On Location* to a series focusing on older comedians (Haggins, Lotz 2008: 154), while *Standing Room Only* moved towards promoting higher-profile music specials and events by 1979. Future plans included licensing Broadway and off-Broadway shows, with Fuchs noting how subscribers were now 'accustomed to receiving 'on location' entertainment events from us' (Fuchs qtd Hummler Aug 9 1978). Fuchs and Dugow also attempted to increase HBO's marketing

³⁸ These included MGM/UA and 20th Century Fox's Hollywood Home Theatre.

value to family audiences, acquiring first-run rights to Disney and Henson Company specials. The latter had established a significant presence in the syndication market with the internationally co-produced *The Muppet Show* (syndicated, 1976-1981) and strengthened HBO's ties to independent producers (*Variety* Jul 19 1978).

Reliance on independents and co-financing also negotiated resistance from Hollywood unions over pay cable compensation (Michie Feb 28 1979). Fuchs instead turned to compromises, investing in a broad deal between Universal and independent stations for rights to action feature film *Condominium* (Hayers 1980). Dubbed 'Operation Prime Time,' Fuchs justified the deal as an example of the 'substantial development for solid product' for pay cable (Fuchs qtd *Variety* Oct 10 1979). In the same period this also included attempts to broaden stand-up comedy success by financing pilots from independent producers.

This most notably included a deal with National Lampoon for feature-length special *Disco Beaver from Outer Space* (White) in February 1979. Built around adult-themed cable and local television parodies, emulating *SNL* and contemporary theatrical releases such as *The Kentucky Fried Movie* (Landis 1977), *Disco Beaver* was dismissed by *Variety* as an 'amiable shambles' (Feb 28 1979). It was however joined by continued efforts to license suitable independent pilots, including *Sit-com* (1979), a reflexive satire of broadcast television that was eventually picked up by PBS (Shales Sep 2 1979). Other experiments included adding a range of short segments to fill time between movies, including celebrity interviews, making-of-segments, shorts and subscriber feedback reports.

More significant experiments would however develop in 1979 around documentary programming. In March Fuchs hired young producer Sheila Nevins to commission or license approximately forty or so specials to enhance subscription value. With a background in New York documentary filmmaking, public television and broadcasting, Nevins explored PBS-styled educational specials (*The Great Consumer Rip-Off*), but gained wider attention for November's six-part series *Time Was*.³⁹ Hosted

³⁹ Nevins had worked as a host for educational television (1964-69), and gained experience as a producer at New York's Channel 13, where she assisted station documentary head Alvin Perlmutter with award-winning weekly PBS documentary *An American Family* (Raymond and Raymond, 1973). In the late 1970s Nevins then briefly worked on CBS News (1977) and ABC's *20/20* (1978 -) news-magazine before joining HBO (Mascaro 2008: 241-243).

by Dick Cavett, the series chronicles 20th century history through stock footage and video effects (Shales Nov 10 1979). With Sunday prime-time premieres promoted around the slogan ‘Home Box Office leads pay television into the 80s’ (*Variety* Nov 7 1979), *Time Was* represented a statement of intent for producing more quality programming for the new decade. The series can be again contextualised through Time connections.

From *March of Time* newsreel precedent and occasional archive re-issues, to *Life* photo-journalism, the re-launch of the latter as a glossy monthly led *The Washington Post* to reflect on how *Time Was* has ‘the superficial appeal and aura of authority that - appropriately enough - characterised *Life* magazine during its lifetime as a weekly’ (Shales Nov 10 1979). Drawing on Time’s middlebrow mix of prestige and ‘superficial appeal’ also offered HBO a key point of distinction from chief rival Showtime by 1980. On the one hand, Showtime emulated HBO with non-exclusive film titles, and by the end of the decade had experimented with stand-up and variety specials, as well as Broadway plays. However, Showtime also pushed towards an early focus on erotic programming. This included a co-production deal with *Playboy* (*Variety* May 23 1979), as well as running more explicit R-rated films in late-night slots.

The latter distinction arguably contrasted with Time’s effort to regulate HBO’s more explicit content as both a market leader and extension of a quality publishing identity. With Showtime emerging from Viacom’s broadcast syndication empire, defined by network reruns and cheaply produced genre and chat show programming, key early differences emerged between the two services. The importance of associating HBO with Time was reinforced here by the midnight sign-off slogan ‘Home Box Office from Time-Life’ as an explicit statement of quality. For archival website the TVArk, the slogan worked to carefully link the ‘newborn HBO with the trusted Time-Life magazine brands.’⁴⁰

Conclusion

By the end of 1979 HBO had become ‘the engine that was pulling cable’ (Brown qtd Edgerton 2008a: 4), overlapping as both an innovator and an ‘agitator’ (Rogers et al

⁴⁰ Catalogued examples of HBO’s early promotions and brand design can be found at archival website TV Ark. <http://www2.tv-ark.org.uk/International/uscable/hbo.html>. Last Accessed: Jul 8th, 2010.

2002: 49) for a changing media market. This innovation can however be re-contextualised through extensive Time precedent for subscriber strategies and influences as a quality publishing brand. Offering a basis for offsetting risk on the service, and a later point of legitimisation and distinction from rivals, this can also be used to support Kompare (2005) and Lotz's (2007a) links between publishing and niche cable.

Discussing the transformation of HBO into a landmark cable network, system operator Les Read suggested that 'the Time-Life people were magazine people, and they knew the word subscription. They sold a service like a magazine' (Brown qtd *Electronic Media* Oct 28 2002). These more specific connections can also be used to provisionally rethink dismissals of 'utility brand' programming around TSS reports and Time influence over format compatibility. Moreover, uses of stand-up comedy to demonstrate early middlebrow branding tensions over quality formats and explicit content can be placed within Time's own 'class vs. mass' appeals.

By re-examining HBO's origins, this chapter has therefore aimed to revise a well-established history, while setting up a more specific perspective on the network as a subscriber service within Time publishing precedent. The benefits of this foundation, particularly for understanding HBO as part of an exclusive 'Time culture' can then be used to re-contextualise and add depth to HBO's expansion during the 1980s as a leading outlet and promoter of upscale value around a package of original programming.

Chapter Two: 1980-1989

From 1980 to 1988 HBO and cable continued to play a key role in tightening media interdependence. Existing histories discuss how HBO contributed to trends for technological resistance and compromise against video exclusivity, raising demands to diversify its brand and produce more original programming. While Mullen discusses how cable channels primarily offered lucrative outlets for reruns and distinctive exhibition formats, analysis of HBO's original programming experiments identify further middlebrow negotiations over quality and explicit content. Restrictions as a 'utility' subscriber service are also retained as key to setting up the network's later re-brand.

This chapter aims to develop a better understanding of HBO as a subscriber service in relation to Time's stubborn exclusivity. Considering how licensed and original programming emerged within the promotion of aggregate subscriber value, HBO can be linked into trends for industrial stability through distinctive cable exhibition. Moreover, a settling production infrastructure can be identified as key to distinction over rivals. Beginning with a peak in pay cable growth from 1980 to 1983, discussions of adult programming experiments from 1984 to 1985 can be revised, before analysing how subscriber strategies evolved between 1986 and 1988.

'Pay-TV, I believe, will become the greatest entertainment medium of all': 1980-1983

By 1983 HBO reached 13.5 million subscribers, held a 62% share of the pay cable market (Brown Sep 29 1983) and generated \$500 million a year in revenues for Time alongside ATC distribution profits (Schwartz Sep 15 1982). Market share was also consolidated by the 1980 launch of Cinemax, a 24 hour all-film channel. By 1982 HBO had also expanded to a full daily schedule against competition from rivals. With Viacom buying out TelePrompeter's stake in Showtime in 1982 (*New York Times* Aug 24 1982), HBO's chief rival merged with Warner-Amex's The Movie Channel in late 1983 to establish an 8 million subscriber base. Moreover, as the multiple regional experiments of the 1970s faded away, broadcast-supported arts and cultural channels such as Bravo (1980) and The Entertainment Channel (1980), as well as branded

services the Playboy Channel (1982) and The Disney Channel (1983) complicated a national satellite market.

Growth was tied here to further deregulation of broadcasting and cable by the Reagan administration FCC and commissioner Mark Fowler from 1981. This primarily relaxed media cross-ownership, increasing the value of film and broadcast libraries for distribution (Kompore 2005: 148; Holt 2003: 13). Consolidated ownership enhanced trends for re-packaging familiar programming or specialising in low-cost programs (Mullen 2003: 131). Between 1980 and 1983 this produced Ted Turner's 24-hour news channel CNN (1980), Warner-Amex's music video-themed MTV (1981) and broadcasting-developed cultural channels (ABC-ARTS (1980), CBS-Cable (1981)).

For Hollywood, cable markets encouraged further horizontal integration and development of widely exploited branded content. However, this faced some transitional problems during the period. A 1981 acquisition of Fox by oil magnate Marvin Davis and Columbia by Coca-Cola in 1982 produced limited cross-promotional opportunities (Prince 2002: 9). Warner Communications also suffered major losses in video games (Clurman 1992: 119). By 1983 the studios instead re-focused on film and television, or 'filmed entertainment,' tied to global distribution, cable ownership, music licensing, merchandising and entry into a growing video market (Balio 1998: 62-63). For the latter, while only 3.2% of US households owned VCRs by 1981 (Wasser 2001: 91), the resolution of copyright disputes saw most of the major studios open distribution arms. This in turn competed with a boom in independents acquiring library rights and co-financing low-budget titles.

HBO and Time's combination of pioneering success and distinction from these trends however continued. In 1980 Video Group chairman Richard Munro became CEO, with Levin promoted to his former position alongside Nicholas and Heyworth (Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 559). Nicholas recommended streamlining the already close-knit corporate structure. This involved divesting foreign broadcast stations, papers and forestry productions to focus on 'two main areas of interest, information and entertainment, through two main lines of business, publishing and video' (Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 567). The effect was to retain Time's relative autonomy from more interdependent rivals, with Mullen noting how 'by 1980 Time already was more vertically integrated than any of the Hollywood studios had been since the 1948 consent

decree' (Mullen 2003: 109). In this context, the publisher worked to preserve its editorial culture's 'deep devotion to quality' (Munro qtd Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 569) and integrated New York management structure (Clurman 1992: 20-21).

HBO's relationship to this culture was mixed. On the one hand, Prendergast and Colvin note an 'inherent rivalry' (Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 509-510) between print and cable. Mair goes so far as to describe HBO's outstripping of magazine profits as producing 'internal warfare' (Mair 1988: 180), with the Magazine Group independently producing a disastrous *TV-Cable Week* as an electronic competitor to *TV Guide* (Mair 1988: 66-71). However, while acknowledging clashes, Nicholas and Levin also encouraged overall continuity between HBO and Time traditions (Clurman 1992: 69). Ranging from editorial influences, to an exclusive approach to Hollywood, HBO's programming and marketing continued to operate within the publisher's negotiation of 'the narrow line between supermarket sleaze and clever mass appeal' (Clurman 1992: 37).

In this way, Turow has identified how Time and other magazine publishers faced challenges in the early 1980s around demographic shifts from a 'shrinking broad middle class to upscale audiences' (Turow 1997: 57). This comprised of the older baby boomer and the younger 'yuppie' professional class, who had provided the affluent base for the 'cable generation' of the mid-1970s. However, by 1982 Heyworth emphasised how the 'HBO profile household' represented a 'younger family with children and higher than average income and education' (Heyworth qtd Scott June 5 1982). A wider reach consequently encouraged a mix of programming to encourage subscriber value across the service.

As a result, while Edgerton notes how HBO began to develop brand distinction in this period by situating 'itself squarely in the content-development, not the transmission, business' (Edgerton 2008a: 7), strategies arguably looked towards a compatible exhibition logic. For movie exhibition, Prince describes how clashes with Hollywood over exclusivity produced a series of 'cable wars between HBO and the studios' (Prince 2002: xviii). Late 1970s tensions over exclusive rights reached breaking point here as the studios attempted to combat HBO's monopoly by creating their own subscription network in Premiere. A joint venture between Universal/MCA, Fox, Paramount, Columbia and Getty Oil, the service targeted first-run exclusivity.

However, the plan was quickly derailed by antitrust charges against vertical integration and cross-ownership (Mair 1988: 47-50; Hilmes 1990: 177).

The Premiere case did little to improve Time's relationship to Hollywood interdependence. Clurman argues that the publisher 'wanted to remain independent and didn't cotton to Hollywood's ways' (Clurman 1992: 147), while Levin admitted that the New York office were 'always ambivalent and schizoid' (Levin qtd Clurman 1992: 147) over studio partnerships. One solution was to increase pre-buys, while emphasising exclusive quality control over the selection of titles for subscribers. This began in 1981 as Furst, now head of Time-Life Films, chose to remove ties to Talent Associates (Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 392). He later sold the company's film and television library to Columbia. Furst also notably acquired video rights to the library to strengthen new venture Vestron as an independent distributor for the home video market (Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 393).

Later that year Biondi brokered a deal with Columbia for limited exclusivity, which included an expanded pre-buy strategy for prestige pictures. Investments ranged from 1981's *On Golden Pond* (Rydell) to 1982's *Tootsie* (Pollack) and *Sophie's Choice* (Pakula). Prince has suggested here that 'by investing in production and by providing a guarantee for outside investors, HBO was playing the industry's own game' (Prince 2002: 27). In 1982 and 1983 financing was extended to studio Orion (Harmetz Feb 10 1982) and publicly listed company Silver Screen (Lindsey June 12 1983). These ambitions culminated at the end of 1982 through a partnership with Columbia and CBS for Tri-Star Pictures, a new mini-major exchanging joint financing for exclusive rights (*United Press International* Nov 30 1982).

Although Tri-Star strengthened ties between cable and Hollywood, the studio provided HBO with stronger control over a future selection of consistent titles. Levin suggested here that by negotiating exclusive pay cable rights between majors and independents, HBO could become a 'new style merchant bank' (Levin qtd Mair 1988: 103). Having become the largest single financier of motion pictures in the world after just ten years (Balio 1990b: 265), tensions remained over HBO's status as the 'King Kong of Hollywood' (Mair 1988: 104). Mair further described this as a 'symbiotic relationship of mutual parasites' (Mair 1988: xiv) rather than the closer interdependence of rivals.

By February 1983 Biondi's successful brokering of the 'merchant bank' vision led to his promotion to CEO and chairman of the network. This bypassed the more experienced Fuchs, while Heyworth, Nicholas and Levin all received further internal promotions. Fuchs' compensation was leadership of a new Entertainment Group focused on developing exclusive programming. Tony Cox also expanded his marketing success in the late 1970s to a newly created Network Group (Cuff Feb 15 1983). The latter looked to exploit Time's shares in the cable market by investing in the USA Network.

However, the Tri-Star deal and HBO's stubborn relationship to Hollywood collaboration produced a backlash by the end of 1983. The previously noted deal between Warner-Amex and Viacom to merge Showtime and The Movie Channel aimed to narrow HBO's monopoly (Prince 2002: 29). This was followed by a four-year exclusive deal with Paramount (*Miami Herald* Dec 19 1983). Faced with a disputed supply of film titles, HBO were left to re-promote the exclusivity of other programming. While some attention has been paid to how original programs distinguished channels in the early 1980s, it is possible to rethink their broader role for HBO as an aggregate-marketed subscriber service.

By the early 1980s it had become increasingly difficult to tell pay cable movie services apart. With subscribers frequently signing up to multiple services (Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 507-508), film exhibition on other cable channels and broadcast stations challenged distinction (Gomery 1992: 269). In this way, while uncut films differentiated pay cable, Gomery suggests that the 'real test was whether the customers kept on writing their monthly checks' (Gomery 1992: 268). Satisfying this demand was heightened by 24 hour channel formats, and HBO's creation of Cinemax as a sister channel in 1980. Primarily marketed to male 18-34 demographics (Mair 1988: 53), Cinemax reached 1 million subscribers by 1981. Adapting to 24 hour programming consequently saw HBO, Cinemax and other pay services overlap with basic cable trends.

During the early 1980s, basic cable channels looked to enhance their identities beyond being 'conduits for recycled entertainment programming' (Wasko 1994: 111). Early innovators such as CNN and MTV found success in their niche marketing, or

‘narrowcasting,’ by producing channel formats that could package variation within a ‘continuous flow of uniform programming’ (Kinder 1987: 235). This involved presenters, channel IDs, bumpers (end of program adverts), marathon scheduling and theme blocks. A compatible range of programming differentiated and linked by these segments offered specialist exhibition brands that encouraged loyalty beyond single programs. This offered distinction from the broader line-up of programming on broadcast networks, and could be sold to advertisers as attracting niche demographics.

For Mullen, niche exhibition on a channel-wide scale had its roots in broadcast stations’ creative packaging of reruns and old movies (Mullen 2003: 108-109). In this way, Kompare suggests that cable offered a more specialised example of these aggregate exhibition strengths for packaging entertainment libraries. He describes cable channels as examples of ‘distinctive repetition’ (Kompare 2005: 171), defined by ‘extensive framing and branding techniques’ (Kompare 2005: 197). By 1983 MTV in particular was able to exploit its dynamic on-air mix of music videos, promotional segments and advertising to help Warner Bros. promote soundtracks and feature films for youth audiences (Prince 2002: 133-135).

Turow has linked cable’s success to further magazine precedent, linking specialist magazines and advertisers to loyalty through ‘layout and general approach to content’ (Turow 1997: 91). This concept of a ‘general approach’ to marketing cable channel formats, understood through Time’s influence on HBO’s subscriber strategies, can be used to discuss how pay cable adapted some of these strategies. On the one hand, the lack of advertising, and heavy rotation of film titles differentiated subscription formats from basic cable. However, narrowcasting strategies were experimented with across the scheduling of films and other programming.

Cinemax became a test site for these strategies. The channel scheduled more film titles a month (85 to HBO’s 50) (Cook 2000: 415) while programming more experimental, explicit and art-house films to compete with TCM and RCA’s The Entertainment Channel (Mair 58). This extended to programming to younger adult audiences in the evening, as well as daily blocks of films to women and children in the afternoon and morning. These were also aggregated as themed marathons and smaller blocks of films (Black May 19 1980), strategies also taken by The Movie Channel.

Cinemax's success helped justify HBO's expansion to 24 hour scheduling by January 1982, with Showtime having already increased its airtime (*Variety* Sep 9 1981).

HBO and Showtime's variation on these tactics reflected challenges for catering to a broader range of demographics. While adding more film titles to fill time (*Variety* Sep 9 1981), both services promoted themed blocks catering to audiences across the subscriber base. An emphasis was also placed on younger male audiences in primetime and late-night slots. In this context, HBO chief scheduler David Baldwin developed familiar primetime blocks of action films on Mondays, horror on Tuesdays, and boxing and action films on Fridays.

This was followed by major weekend premieres and entertainment specials on Saturdays, and prestige films and specials on Sundays (Rothenberg Sep 15 1982). By contrast, Showtime's late 1970s commitment to more adult programming worked around a comparatively smaller subscriber base. One of the ways in which the network looked for distinction was by running more explicit films under the late-night block 'Showtime After Dark' by 1983, as well as more R-rated films in general in primetime. However, general distinction came more clearly through the programming of sports, original specials and other programming.

In terms of the monthly schedule, basic distinctions were drawn between the daily rotation of feature-length specials (one hour to 90 minutes and beyond) with flexible, shorter (less than an hour to half hour) featurette specials and series. Experiments were also made with music videos, 'making of' trailers, animation and short films. HBO also extended TSS scoring to on-air marketing segments, viewer feedback and preview material that repeatedly tied together the compatibility of monthly programming.

Fuchs has suggested that an ideal 'movie sensibility' shaped the packaging of feature and featurette blocks, producing a compatible cycle of day-to-day programming (Fuchs qtd *Electronic Media* Oct 28 2002). David Andrews has more generally noted here that for pay cable scheduling, 'feature and featurette are fundamentally analogous.' This could allow 'individual featurettes' to be 'lumped with others, creating a feature-length unit consisting of two, three, four, or even five units' while retaining flexibility as 'self-sufficient parts' (Andrews 2007: 321).

Viewed against cable exhibition formats, an emphasis on broader upscale and more specialist demographics was emphasised by HBO. Fuchs suggested here that ‘we are a broad appeal service with some narrowcasting elements’ (Fuchs qtd Schwartz Sep 15 1982). In this context, Fuchs had earlier noted how

‘I want HBO to be the most commercially successful service - but the way to do it is not to make each show homogenised. It is to try and hit as many elements of the viewership as possible without diluting the show’ (Fuchs qtd Jory Apr 16 1981)

A clearer structure for building monthly and longer-term subscriber value from ‘scattered’ discussions of the ‘utility’ brand can be proposed here through efforts to distinguish and link together the monthly package.

This can be tied into Lotz’s (2007b) argument that as subscriber services expanded, they aimed to ‘provide as many viewers as possible with adequate reason to keep paying their monthly fees’ without overly appealing to one segment of that audience. As a result, ‘viewers find some aspect of such value - ideally something unavailable on advertiser-supported networks - so that they maintain their subscription’ (Lotz 2007b: 218). Developing this aggregate compatibility consequently saw original programs be shaped by broader monthly marketing. Previous work on HBO’s programming, described by Mullen as ‘both lavish and prolific when compared with its premium and basic counterparts’ (Mullen 2003: 147) can be revised here around this logic. Moreover, greater specificity can be added to discussions of branding precedent for middlebrow tensions between quality programming and exploitation.

By 1982 original programming still remained a ‘drop in the bucket’ (Mair 1988: 43) compared to film rotation, representing only 90 of 460 annual first-run titles (Scott June 5 1982). Similarly, although ‘box office’ marketing by operators drew on boxing specials, some packaging issues emerged in the latter. While Miller and Kim note how their popularity with subscribers led HBO towards becoming a ‘virtual boxing monopsonist’ (Miller, Kim 2008: 228) in identifying brand leadership, Mair suggests that the handful of live events mixed easily marketable impact with management issues over unpredictability of injuries and brief fights (Mair 1988: 43).

Similarly, with half hour segments *Inside the NFL* and *Race for the Pennant* complemented by compilations of live and sporting tour footage as featurette filler, the challenge became to find a broader set of original program formats offering ‘something that hadn’t been seen before, something no one else could show them’ (Mair 1988: 107). Developing originals as a regular part of monthly service marketing led here to \$60 million of an approximate \$250-\$270 million programming budget being invested in new productions and acquisitions by 1983 (Bedell Apr 3 1983). Fuchs had previously acknowledged how ‘if we’re going to establish a character in this business, it’s got to be through original programming’ (Fuchs qtd Jory Apr 16 1981).

How this would work depended on both promoting exclusive specials while building monthly value around TSS-scoring and other subscriber feedback from cable operators to establish a more general compatibility. By 1981 Levin had already acknowledged how a multi-year investment in original programs could refine a ‘high attitudinal response from viewers’ (Levin qtd Scott Aug 15 1981). Adding to this value was also discussed by Levin as responding to the non-linear viewing patterns of pay cable.

He suggests that adapting the service to different forms of ‘repetition, seeing bits and pieces of a show, watching the same scenes under different personal circumstances or moods, familiarise the viewer with the characters and plot in new dimensions’. Moreover, he suggests that rerunning specials ‘8, 10 or 12 times’ a month could ‘establish the same sort of dynamics’ as film rotation (Levin qtd Scott Aug 15 1981). This ambition led to the somewhat ambitious prediction by Levin that ‘pay-TV, I believe, will become the greatest entertainment medium of all’ (Levin qtd Scott Aug 15 1981).

Achieving this increase in original programs saw gradual refinements to the young executive structure into 1982, with Fuchs and Dugow handling series and Nevins documentaries. In late 1981 Jane Deknatel was appointed to head up a provisional original film unit, which by 1983 overlapped with Tri-Star and wider ‘merchant bank’ experiments. By 1983 Nevins left the network to raise her family, with Bridget Potter arriving to work under Fuchs’ Entertainment Group to coordinate programming. This

most notably included responsibility for licensing and producing series, documentaries and comedy and variety specials.

Moreover, provisional plans by 1983 to expand Cinemax's film service to originals led to enhanced programming duties for executive Lee de Boer. With Fuchs overseeing management of programming ventures alongside Potter's day-to-day operations, management from New York and Los Angeles offered focused development. This also overlapped from 1980 to 1983 with Biondi's theatrical film brokering, as well as some recurring problems over exclusivity when dealing with producers. At the same time, notable contrasts developed between Showtime's original programming experiments as part of Viacom, with HBO increasingly promoting exclusivity through monthly exhibition compatibility.

'Not the Public Airwaves': Documentaries and the 'New Explicitness' of Cable: 1980-1983

This began by extending documentaries' successful introduction in 1979 for adding diverse value. Formats also drew on Time influences and wider documentary trends to shape a range of appeals. Producing or acquiring approximately forty low-budget new specials a year by 1982 (Jory Apr 13 1982), Nevins' division initially countered Showtime's occasional ventures into newsmagazines (Shales Aug 17 1980) with a broad slate of titles. Provisionally building at the highest end on the prestige success of Time-influenced specials *Time Was* through sequels *Remember When* (1981) and *Yesteryear* (1982), Nevins also continued early ties to public television and non-profit organisations. Collaborations with the Consumers Union (*Consumer Reports*) and feminist publication *Ms. Magazine* for *She's Nobody's Baby* (1982), a survey of 20th century female models, then collected HBO's first Peabody award. Nevins' experiments also included licensing Australian documentary *Stepping Out: The DeBolts Grow Up* (1982).

In this context, Pepper (2010) has suggested that HBO again looked to PBS's public service model to enhance a reputation for commercial-free quality programming. However, this faced challenges for negotiating the popularity of explicit content with upscale value, reflecting some wider problems over 'arts' channels on basic cable. In the former, Fuchs suggested that

‘we are not the public airwaves. There’s no mandate here to do public service. I think we have an obligation to do interesting, different, provocative programming - original programming. We are a blockbuster movie channel, top movies like *Jaws* without commercials. We put on one-man shows featuring Robin Williams, Diana Ross, George Carlin, Richard Pryor. Pay TV is an enormously popular product and we plan to continue giving our subscribers programs of that caliber’ (Fuchs qtd Unger Jul 3 1981)

Not being the ‘public airwaves’ while targeting ‘interesting’ and ‘different’ programming led to efforts by 1982 to respond to competition for 18-34 male demographics. With Nevins arguing that ‘our basic job is to entertain’ and that ‘people feel they can get information without pain at HBO’ (qtd Jory Apr 13 1982), Mascaro suggests that for documentary programming, ‘HBO emerged in an era of individualism in which subscribers would purchase programs they wanted to consume – not because they were good for society, but because they appealed to the subscriber’ (Mascaro 2008: 249).

Difficulties in raising cable prestige through while catering to a ‘Me Generation’ were reflected by the failure of CBS-Cable, ABC-ARTS and The Entertainment Channel by 1982 in mixing live arts and entertainment programming. Mullen identifies problems in finding a ‘middle ground between lofty aspirations of delivering high culture to people’s living rooms and the realities of both industry economics and the broad television audience’s established tastes and expectations’ (Mullen 2008: 150). Connecting to debates over middlebrow sensibility, this ‘middle ground’ challenge also influenced the failure of monthly series *HBO Theatre* in 1981 and 1982. While extending the ‘on location’ format to Broadway and off-Broadway plays, low TSS scores and a poor critical reception led to cancellation.

HBO Theatre’s failure also demonstrated some emerging editorial problems with controlling formats, with efforts to oversee staging and editing causing conflicts

with producers (Shales Jul 24 1982).⁴¹ Moreover, PBS had successfully launched theatre series *American Playhouse* in 1982, while Showtime had occasionally invested in Broadway and off-Broadway specials from the early 1980s (*Broadway on Showtime*). Some alternative precedent in attracting cable audiences while retaining accessibility was demonstrated by Nickelodeon.

The channel worked in this period to promote itself as a pro-social alternative to the toy franchise-dominated syndication market, and as distinct from PBS (Pecora 2004: 16). This involved a compatible schedule of rerun animated shows from Canada and Europe, as well as a handful of originally produced game and talk shows. Supported by distinctive animated branding idents, Sandler suggests that Nickelodeon established an early brand identity as ‘goofy and messy, and at the same time sensitive and relevant’ (Sandler 2004: 49).

HBO’s attempts to produce a similar balance between quality and more sensational entertainment also sustained differences from Showtime and other pay cable rivals. Showtime’s success with adult newsmagazines encouraged experimentation by Nevins in 1980 (Shales Aug 17 1980), but faced criticism from Time (Pepper 2010). Concerns over vulgarity offset the commercial value of R-rated titles (Mair 1988: 84), as well as state protests against the Playboy Channel. In 1983 Biondi spoke out in support of HBO’s commitment to responsible use of its more adult-themed programming (Mair 1988: 83-89). Fears over a loss of operator support were also justified by TelePrompster’s sale of their share in Showtime to Viacom in 1982 as the service pursued more adult programming (Mair 1988: 58).⁴²

HBO instead experimented with a balance of verite formats, and demographic differentiation through Cinemax. From 1980 to 1983 Nevins and later Potter worked on adapting investigative formats with explicit content (*Coupling: Other Choices* 1980), as well as verite and docudrama reconstruction of New York police work in 1982 (*Decoys*:

⁴¹ HBO Theatre specials included *Vanities* (Halvorson 1981) and Neil Simon’s *Barefoot in the Park* (Medlinsky 1981), and *Separate Tables* (Schlesinger), *Wait Until Dark* (Davis) *Bus Stop* (Davis), and a lavish production of *Camelot* (Callner 1982)

⁴² Time fears over exploitation also crossed into a backlash against promotion of commercially successful but explicit Eddie Murphy standup special *Delirious* (Gowers) in 1983 (O’Connor Oct 23 1983). For more on cable’s relationship to video and theatrical soft-core programming, see David Andrews (2006) *Soft in the Middle: The Contemporary Softcore Feature in its Contexts*, Ohio: Ohio State University Press.

Police Under Cover Scott). With the latter again receiving press criticism for gratuity (O'Connor Jan 27 1982), Nevins moved to defend successful subscriber responses to being 'creative with reality' (qtd Jory Apr 13 1982). She also tested out TSS experiments with *Flashback* (1982), an occasional series that shared links with *Time Was* by reconstructing historical events through archive footage, flashbacks and interviews.

Somewhat glibly described by Fuchs as 'docutainment' (Fuchs qtd Mascaro 248), these specials arguably shared the specific middlebrow precedent set by earlier criticism of Time's 'aura of authority' (Shales Nov 10 1979). These programs also shared broadcasting turns away from 'hard news' reporting to marketable human interest stories 'which broadly survey domestic problems such as violence and crime' (Himmelstein 280-281). Building on Nevins' groundwork from 1983, Potter worked within these trends to establish longer-term formats that could regularly showcase these issues. This ranged from a sequel to PBS' 1973 award-winning and Nevins co-produced verite special *An American Family* (1983) with later rights sold to the public service broadcaster. Moreover, HBO invested in topical projects that included female violence (*When Women Kill* Grant 1983) to cancer (*One Man's Fight for Life* Scott 1983).

Attempts to stabilise practices for explicit programming without sacrificing wider upscale appeal were also partially solved by 1983 through Cinemax. As a younger-marketed complement with a less-visible association with Time, Mascaro has identified how the channel gained an identity as an 'outlet for risqué programming that could attract HBO viewers without tarnishing the HBO name' (Mascaro 2008: 45). Exploring this potential led to a commission between Potter and Nevins, now an independent producer, for bi-monthly sex newsmagazine *Eros America* (1983). Recording the sex lives of everyday Americans, *Eros*' promotion on Cinemax held multiple appeals for HBO. While *The New York Times* presented Cinemax as an example of the 'new explicitness', Potter promoted the experiment as 'exploring more mature styles of entertainment' within a Time 'accent on high quality' (Potter qtd O'Connor Nov 20 1983). By 1983 Cinemax also began to compete more aggressively with Showtime for soft core films in late night.

Using Cinemax to experiment with more specialist programming has only been briefly noted by existing histories, but became an important way of retaining trends

towards broader marketing of HBO. Mascaro and Murray's discussion of early middlebrow negotiations over content can also be again contextualised through Time's ongoing 'class vs. mass' tensions. Emphasis on quality control and exclusivity from Viacom and The Playboy Channel consequently varied responses to the 'new explicitness' of cable. Time's influence on distinctions from Showtime can also be viewed here through competition for series programming, as both networks competed for broadcast gaps in quality comedy.

'Look to the New Comedy Networks': HBO, Showtime and Packaging Pay Cable Comedy

The early 1980s saw a brief crisis in primetime comedy demographics create opportunities for pay cable to attract producers. While sitcom relevancy had suffered in the late 1970s against ratings competition and syndication issues, MTM diversified into hour-long dramas. This included newspaper-set series *Lou Grant* (CBS 1977-1982), which combined liberal politics with character-led episodic resolution (Schudson 102). The series' prestige success was however challenged by network responses to advertiser pressure over political series in primetime. Alternative options came through the transfer of MTM head Grant Tinker to NBC, where he helped identify the network with further quality dramas through police and medical procedurals *Hill Street Blues* and *St. Elsewhere*.

Relying on the signature impact of an 'ensemble cast, domesticated workplace, multiple plots in a semi-serial format, aggressive cinematic technique, and 'quality' viewer demographics' (Schatz 1987: 90), the series also negotiated politics within a post-liberal pessimism. Gitlin describes this as 'resignation coiled within the daily struggle to cope with a violent society' (Gitlin 1994: 310), mediating specific criticisms. However, with advertiser boycotts contributing to *Lou Grant*'s cancellation, primetime comedy and satire was further hit by ABC's decision to not renew Paramount sitcom *Taxi* (ABC, 1978-1982; NBC 1982-1983). ABC also cancelled Los Angeles produced sketch show *Fridays* (1980-1982), which had competed for late-night audiences with *Saturday Night Live*.

Within this climate HBO and Showtime identified gaps in the market for adapting popular formats. Former HBO programming chief Harlan Kleiman, now part

of MTM, admitted that ‘we have to be out there to participate in the pay and cable business.’ He also noted that ‘producing for cable is not economically viable yet, but it is going to be and we might as well grow with it’ (Kleiman qtd Kerr 1984: 162-163). The appeal of pay cable as an alternative market and the lack of precedent for primetime series programming however generated crucial splits between HBO and Showtime by 1983.

This began in 1982 with Dugow’s commitment to an unprecedented eighteen comedy pilots (*Variety* Apr 28 1982), followed soon after by a shock move to pick-up *Taxi* from ABC and producer Paramount. However, an offer to fully finance in exchange for exclusive rights clashed with studio-network conventions for deficit financing in exchange for lucrative syndication options. Paramount instead took the show to NBC (*Variety* May 26 1982). With HBO and Time unwilling to negotiate syndication rights and exclusivity, the parallel development of Showtime series plans highlighted alternative strategies within Viacom as a clearer example of Hollywood interdependence.

In 1982 Showtime were able to revive cancelled legal drama *The Paper Chase* (CBS, 1978-1979; Showtime 1983-1986), with Viacom’s syndication power helping to guarantee producers a broadcast season-length order of 19 episodes for later exploitation outside the pay service. This was later followed by series experiments for adapted play *Steambath* (1983) from Warner Television, run as a pilot and five episode order in 1983. Showtime’s greater syndication options within Viacom consequently affected overlapping but gradually more exclusive shifts in HBO’s comedy pilot process in 1983.

This saw Dugow license and acquired satirical sketch shows *Not Necessarily the News* and the Canadian *SCTV* (Cinemax, 1983-1984) after its cancellation on NBC. The former, developed by *Fridays*’ producers John Moffitt and Pat Lee-Tourk, built around familiar pastiche segments, mock-infomercials and news-casts recorded in New York. Haggins and Lotz note how the half hour format expanded *Saturday Night Live* and *Fridays*’ regular parodies of news reports (Haggins, Lotz 2008: 161), offering further precedent to HBO as a niche outlet for quality programming. However, *News* also provided a valuable addition to promoting aggregate comedy value across the service.

This was represented in June 1983 by the cross-promotion of the show with stand-up specials, with a *Variety* advert carrying the tagline ‘the hottest network for comedy’ (*Variety* June 22 1983). This substituted Showtime’s turn towards weekly episodes for *The Paper Chase* and investment in syndication for a reliance on broader comedy promotion, and led to *News*’ monthly segments being packaged alongside stand-up specials. By contrast, *The Paper Chase* was heavily rotated but run in more traditional weekly scheduling slots.

Being able to promote exclusive quality across the subscription package over rivals was reinforced and diversified by Cinemax’s airing of *SCTV* in late 1983. A Canadian-produced sketch show that had moved to NBC for a brief run, *SCTV*’s construction around a mock independent news station pushed for harder content and a reflexive, surreal style over *SNL*. Updating the format to a cable station and adult content, *SCTV* ran on Cinemax in November. It was also cross-promoted with *News* under the slogan ‘look to the new comedy networks’ (*Variety* Aug 24 1983). Emphasising this compatibility became crucial, as Showtime emulated HBO by importing similarly-styled Canadian sketch show *Bizarre*.

Attempts to differentiate from Showtime also produced overlaps and distinctions in children’s programming. In late 1981 HBO reached a co-production deal with Henson Productions for *Fraggle Rock* (1983-1987). An educational puppet show half-hour, *Fraggle Rock* extended Henson’s success with *The Muppet Show* (Jory Dec 15 1981). Offering HBO exclusive first-run rights in the US from 1983, wider international sales aligned with Nickelodeon’s success in importing Canadian and British children’s programming in the period (Mullen 2003: 32). By comparison, Showtime’s Viacom connections continued to affect longer-term syndication deals. This was represented by the independently-produced but Hollywood shot *Shelley Duvall’s Faerie Tale Theatre*, an anthology half hour premiering in late 1982.

While both deals reflected shared opportunities to reinforce younger demographics, Showtime retained a more uneasy investment in adult content from syndicated producers that lacked HBO’s wider compatibility. In 1982 this included late-night erotic soap opera and anthology *A New Day in Eden* (1982-1983) and *The Lone Star Bar and Grill* (1982), as well as a showcase for MGM in 1983. HBO’s series programming, anchored by comedy, instead provided a more exclusive form of

promotion. Linked into differentiation through Cinemax and collective aggregation, HBO's market leadership encouraged Time prestige in packaging exhibition. The particular success of *News* also led to efforts to develop political comedy pilots in late 1983 (*Variety* May 18 1983; O'Connor Sep 5 1983).⁴³ However, series ambitions were arguably overshadowed by a more costly investment in original film development that overlapped with wider theatrical co-productions.

'A Style of Our Own': Developing the 'HBO Premiere Film'

For Anderson (2008), Rogers et al (2002: 51) Heller (2008) and Mullen (2003), HBO's investment in feature-length cable films provided landmarks for a future brand identity. Adapting broadcast formats into provocative content and higher production values, Anderson suggests that HBO targeted an accessible series of 'topical films about social and political issues that had nearly disappeared from movie screens and commercial television' (Anderson 2008: 31). This again tied HBO into promoting middlebrow, controversially-themed but popular genres. However, closer analysis of film strategies demonstrates more specific connections across HBO's production slate and relationship to Tri-Star from 1981 to 1983.

Having created a unit in September 1981 to explore original pay cable films, newly hired executive Jane Deknatel set-up a range of pre-buy and co-financing deals with Canadian and international producers. This was described by Fuchs as aiming to enhance 'prestige and even greater bargaining power' (Fuchs qtd Mair 1988: 130). In March 1983, now rebranded as HBO Premiere Films, Deknatel announced an \$85 million budget to finance production, investing in budgets between \$3 and \$4 million per picture to license exclusive pay cable rights (*Variety* Mar 30 1983).

Aggressively pursuing cable films as a badge of distinction had been a key part of Levin's promotion of original programming in 1981. This specifically related to a mix of network film and responses to 'high concept' theatrical youth-film trends, where

⁴³ This included *Over Here, Mr. President*, commissioned through Lorimar as a half-hour sitcom satirizing the White House press corps, and was co-scripted by MTM's Bob Ellison (*Variety* May 18 1983), while *Stopwatch* provided newsmagazine pastiche from producer Barry Levinson (O'Connor Sep 5 1983).

‘in the future there will be three places for movies. First, in theatres, mostly for young people. Second, network TV films limited to two hours, and TV stories with catch-phrases for ratings and commercials, costing about \$2 million. The third is cable films which will fall somewhere in-between the two in cost, length and content - and with the added inducement of being available for the consumer when and where he wants to see them’ (Levin qtd Scott Aug 15 1981)

In 1983 Deknatel elaborated on this by announcing that HBO aimed to produce ‘feature quality films with a style of our own’ outside of Hollywood dependence. This also involved securing long-term cable rights to preserve rerun value, suggesting that

‘while a network movie is likely to be retired after it is shown twice in one year, HBO expects to run each of its movies repeatedly over a five year period. Thus, “they have to stand up”’ (Deknatel qtd Salmans Jun 26 1983)

Promoting TSS compatibility and diverse but consistent quality control to subscribers was enhanced in 1983 by on-air promotions asking ‘what is a HBO Premiere Film?’⁴⁴ Emphasising projects ‘produced especially for HBO viewers’ with Hollywood stars and genres, Levin’s ‘merchant bank’ identity was globalised to 800 pitches a month by early 1983 (*Variety* Mar 30 1983). On the one hand, the deal diversified HBO and Time’s reach beyond anything attempted with Time-Life Films. This placed HBO in the position to select and package film titles for subscribers as exclusive attractions, before later re-release in other markets. However, while pushing budgets and promoting distinction in balancing television and theatrical-scale projects, Premiere Films experienced mixed results in 1983 as HBO struggled to reconcile scale with practicalities.

This began with the premiere of *The Terry Fox Story* (Thomas 1983). Budgeted at \$3 million, the Canadian co-production focuses on a cancer-suffering athlete’s marathon, culminating in his death. Released theatrically in Canada, the deal reflected HBO’s pursuit of exclusive US rights through independent producer Robert Cooper.

⁴⁴ The promo can be found at <http://www.tv-ark.org.uk/mivana/mediaplayer.php?id=c6f706f363f6b3e054f2f31cd922e493&media=hbo-1983-insidepremieremovies&type=mp4> Last Accessed: Jul 26th 2010

Praise for a ‘believably human hero’ (Rothenberg May 20 1983) and a pessimistic ending (Shales May 21 1983) reflected a mix of made-for-television accessibility and Deknatel’s ‘style of our own’ differentiation.

Terry Fox targeted gaps in broadcast film production, with trends shifting from ‘social problems to universal menace’ (Gitlin 1994: 198) through apocalyptic nuclear docudramas such as *World War III* (Greene, Sagal 1982) and *The Day After* (Meyer 1983). Able to distinguish formats through more controversial subject matter, *Terry Fox* is used by Heller to lead HBO’s early success in adapting broadcast genres (Heller 2008: 42-43). However, the film actually provided an exception to dominant Premiere Films’ trends in 1983 for producing older-targeting melodramas.

The premieres of *Halpern and Mr. Johnson* (Rakoff) (August), *Between Friends* (Antonio) (September) and *Right of Way* (Schaefer) (November) were primarily marketed through a range of classic Hollywood stars, including Elizabeth Taylor, Bette Midler and Laurence Olivier (Hastings Sep 21 1983). Their narratives focused on inter-generational female friendship (*Between Friends*), assisted suicide (*Right of Way*) and older male friendship (*Halpern*), while drawing from literary and theatre sources.⁴⁵ Moreover, *Halpern*’s adaptation from a one-hour play aligned with attempts to build relationships with British producers from earlier Time deals. This included acquiring exclusive US rights to British miniseries *Philip Marlowe: Private Eye* (Hunt). An emphasis here on prestige melodramas can be widened however to Tri-Star’s theatrical rights, and a desire to attract older demographics.

From 1980 participation in melodramas such as *On Golden Pond* and *Sophie’s Choice* had demonstrated consistent TSS scores for the kinds of mid-level prestige dramas that consistently attracted older theatrical audiences.⁴⁶ *On Golden Pond* in particular, with its older Hollywood stars Henry Fonda and Audrey Hepburn, had been the highest rated HBO film of 1982 (Rothenberg Nov 21 1983). As a result, and while Orion and Silver Screen deals (Bedell-Smith Feb 13 1984) ensured a broader supply of

⁴⁵ *Between Friends* was co-produced with *Terry Fox*’s Robert Cooper, and partially shot in Canada. *Right of Way* secured co-financing video deals with independent Post-Newsweek Video.

⁴⁶ See Alan Nadel (2007) ‘1983: Movies and Reaganism’ in *American Cinema of the 1980s: Themes and Variations*, Stephen Prince ed, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 82-106 for more on these trends.

genre pictures, Premiere Films initially targeted an older audience base and general family appeal.

Early Tri-Star deals supported this move, with baseball drama *The Natural* (Levinson 1984) marketed to older audiences alongside further family promotions with the Henson Company for *The Muppets Take Manhattan* (Oz 1984). These developed studio investments in award-winning melodramas such as *Terms of Endearment* (Brooks 1983) and *The Big Chill* (Kasdan 1983) (Nadel 2007: 103). In this context, histories of HBO's differentiation from broadcasting and brief notes on middlebrow contexts can again be contextualised through wider trends. Moreover, cross-promotion with theatrical licensing reflected a more general trend towards reinforcing aggregate upscale audiences by the end of 1983.

Viewed through Cinemax differentiation, comedy, sports, documentary and theatrical blocks, HBO offered an increasingly stable subscriber package. Drawing on public television, quality series and prestige theatrical influences provided a clearer context for negotiating an identity for the service as both brashly commercial and suitable for Time. On and off-air promotions in 1983 supported these exhibition strengths through 'Specials' and 'HBOOriginals' thematic segments. One such special in August 1983 moves here from packaging *On Location* and *Standing Room* specials with new segments of *News*, before cross-promoting political comedy pilot *Over Here, Mr. President* with *Halpern & Mr. Johnson*, documentaries and *Consumer Reports*.⁴⁷

With network promotions and themed blocks offered packages of 'HBO Sports' and 'Movies', origins formed part of a compatible selection of titles. Direct mail and print campaigns provided to affiliate cable operators also juxtaposed selections of 'Great Movies' and 'HBOOnlys,' suggesting that 'Great Movies Are Just the Beginning.' Supported by TSS scoring, promoting subscriptions again arguably worked beyond 'utility brand' dismissals. The promotion of brand distinction through aggregate, as well as individual value consequently granted HBO an advantage over the narrower audience marketing of Showtime and the soft-core identity of Playboy. Demands for programming compatibility for HBO had also been reinforced by Showtime's deal with Paramount, as well as further competition from The Disney Channel in late 1983. In this

⁴⁷ The promotion can be accessed at the TV Ark, via <http://www.tv-ark.org.uk/mivana/mediaplayer.php?id=2ae1f91cf3891a022660b5b8a2f40811&media=hbo-1983-specials&type=mp4> Last Accessed: Jul 9th, 2010.

context, Time's push for exclusivity from industrial trends for interdependence through a quality subscription label became crucial for future distinction.

However, by June 1983 some tensions were already beginning to threaten these ambitions. This included projections of narrowing margins for Premiere Films, leading to a syndication deal with the Metromedia chain of broadcast stations that conceded the need for more broadly marketable titles (Brown Jun 27 1983). Moreover, Fuchs was already beginning to question the practicality of the internationally structured pre-buy economy for retaining HBO's demands for exclusive quality control (*Variety* June 6 1984). These problems were however overshadowed in 1984 as pay cable's rapid growth from the mid-1970s was derailed by a video boom that threatened HBO and Time's stubborn exclusivity.

'There's No Place Like HBO': 1984-1985

Between 1984 and 1985 Time's exclusive ambitions for HBO hit an unexpected peak, leading to re-stabilisation around more conservative, if still lucrative growth. In terms of wider interdependence, a 1984 Cable Act maintained deregulatory trends, while anticipation of subscription rate cap lifts from 1987 encouraged optimism for expansion (Mullen 2008: 148-149). However, growth was limited by cut-backs in cable system constructions, and threats from home satellite piracy. Investment flowed into station ownership as off-network and first-run syndication thrived, with station group Capital Cities acquiring ABC in 1985. This was notably followed by the purchase of Twentieth Century Fox by global media giant News Corp, who acquired the Metromedia station group as part of a long-term plan to establish a new broadcast network.

While the latter grew in importance from 1986, the period has been cited by Perren (2004a) as a new stage in media consolidation between film and television. Moreover, Lotz identifies the acceleration of a 'multi-channel transition' (Lotz 2007a: 8) through an increase in broadcast stations, cable channels and opportunities to cross-promote content. Cable's value as programming outlets reached new levels here in 1984 and 1985 as Viacom acquired MTV and Nickelodeon from Warner, while gaining full ownership of Showtime. Warner instead focused on gaining greater control in Warner Cable, while streamlining its filmed entertainment divisions towards global markets (Bruck 1995: 219).

Spinning off MTV Networks from 1985 into further niche channels VH1 and Nickelodeon primetime block Nick at Nite as a home for classic sitcoms, Viacom sustained trends for cable channels as aggregate sites for music and video libraries (Kompere 2005: 132). Further conglomerate investment in channels was also developed by the co-financing of female-marketed channel Lifetime in 1984 by publishing giant the Hearst Corporation. Other advertising-supported channels such as A&E and The Discovery Channel also looked to build identities through specialising in arts, film and documentary programming.

Cable's success was however challenged by a boom in video distribution. Falling costs and widening global markets transformed the video market, with two thirds of US households owning players by 1985 (Gomery 1992: 183). Outstripping cable subscriptions (Mair 1988: 91), video carried the benefit of portability for distributing new and library releases worldwide. As well as narrowing second-run home releases and direct-to-video production, Disney notably looked to reinforce and diversify its family brand. Recycling of classic films, carefully distributed from the 'Disney vault', drove up the sale of related products, with Wasko describing the studio as Hollywood's 'premier movie merchandising company' (Wasko 1994: 210). Slow-downs in cable, and video competition consequently began to challenge HBO and Time's significant market share in 1984 and 1985.

Record subscription growth at the beginning of 1984 had initially encouraged Biondi to pursue further diversification options to enhance revenue streams. This also included investing \$20 million in a national marketing campaign for HBO (*Variety* Jan 18 1984). However, ambitions began to slow as video competition, falling ratings and TSS declines (Mair 1988: 107), led Biondi to admit that 'everything is being re-examined' (Biondi qtd Brown June 10 1984). With only one million new subscribers by October (*Associated Press* Oct 17 1984) and profit margins shrinking against record spending under Biondi in 1983, the CEO and chairman was sacked and Fuchs promoted. Joseph Collins also transferred from ATC to act as president (Girard Oct 31 1984). For Mair, major staff cutbacks in November (*Washington Post* Nov 17 1984) highlighted how far HBO had under-estimated declines in subscriber growth (Mair 1988: 90).

Costly license deals and the pre-buy structure also contributed to HBO's difficulties. Reacting to the Showtime and Paramount deal, HBO entered into an inflationary exclusive pact with Columbia (Clurman 1992: 77), which culminated in spending \$35 million on first-run rights to *Ghostbusters* (Fabrikant Dec 1 1985). Competition for studio deals also increased, with Showtime entering into exclusive pacts with Universal and Disney (Gomery 1992: 265). Moreover, with Playboy entering into video distribution, Disney's expansion of its iconic brand identity was boosted by The Disney Channel's rise to become the fastest growing pay channel of 1985 (Gomery 1992: 267).

More dependent on HBO as its prize entertainment asset, Time encouraged more conservative strategies across the company. This included cut-backs in Tri-Star deals as box office figures proved disappointing, while reducing ambitious plans for distribution system ATC (Prendergast; Colvin 1986: 511). By 1985 HBO and Time's position had therefore shifted from the 'King Kong' of Hollywood towards near-crisis and isolation from conglomerate mergers (Fabrikant Dec 1 1985). New strategies included investing in a video label with British company Thorn EMI (*Associated Press* Nov 21 1984), while acquiring shares in African-American basic cable channel BET (*Washington Post* Sep 26 1984). However, while encouraging brand extensions, Munro re-emphasised how Time would work to uphold the 'Time culture,' rather than give way to merger pressures (Mair 1988: 141).

This temporary crisis saw ambitious programming plans decline between 1984 and 1985. A growing concession to broader marketing however produced a renewed effort for distinction through subscriber aggregation. Primarily, HBO reinforced exclusivity, with Seth Abraham emphasising that 'our job is to establish a signature and leave a footprint with our original programming' (Abraham qtd Rothenberg Feb 16 1985). However, existing histories suggest that Fuchs reacted to competition by marketing to 18-34 male viewers with an uneasy middlebrow combination of quality and 'adult-oriented content' (Rogers et al 2002: 50-51). However, this brief overview can be significantly revised against wider efforts to aggregate upscale audiences, while continuing to use Cinemax to differentiate demographics.

At the highest end of originals production, Premiere Films' broad structure was already being refined by the end of 1983 as Deknatel was replaced by Donald March.

Key problems remained over exclusivity and foreign control, with per-title production investment expected to rise to 60%. On his arrival March re-emphasised a ‘mini-studio’ identity focusing on ‘well-crafted, preferably upbeat projects’ (March qtd Bedell-Smith Feb 13 1984). This primarily continued to aggregate an ideal Time cross between the older 18-34 audience and prestige (29-45 years old) that had been at the core of the original unit and Tri-Star. However, and despite further ambitions for prestige in 1984, cost-cutting and further concessions to co-production produced a turn towards the short-term appeal of explicit B-movies.

On the one hand, pre-buy ambitions led to a range of internationally co-produced miniseries melodramas (*All the Rivers Run* (Amento, Miller 1983), *The Blood of Others* (Chabrol 1984), and *The Far Pavilions* (Duffell 1984)). These embodied Fuchs’ desire for ‘big-event television’ (Fuchs qtd Robertson Apr 15 1984) to promote originals as comparable in quality to theatrical premieres and live sports. *The Far Pavilions* was particularly notable here for winning HBO and cable its first *TV Guide* cover and competitive primetime ratings (*Variety* May 2 1984).⁴⁸

Moreover, June 1984’s *Sakharov* (Gold) a historical biopic focusing on Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov won broad critical and TSS praise, becoming the first original film to receive 100% satisfaction from subscribers. This led Fuchs to argue that ‘concept testing showed that viewers wanted to see stories about men against the system’ (Fuchs qtd Rothenberg June 20 1984). However, editorial control and collaboration remained an issue, with Fuchs pushing *Sakharov*’s producers for a more pessimistic ending in line with *Terry Fox* (*Variety* June 6 1984). By 1985 these editorial clashes had become common for HBO. While the pre-buy system offered choice over selection, fitting these into expectations for the subscriber service were problematic.

This was notably demonstrated by British and European co-produced historical and spy thrillers *To Catch a King* (Donner) and *The Cold Room* (Dearden), with the former described by *The Washington Post* as ‘laughably inept’ (Shales Feb 11 1984). Further low-budget thrillers *Forbidden* (Page), *Gulag* (Young) and *Fortress*

⁴⁸ Set in turn of the century Australia, *All the Rivers Run* explores a 19th century romance and historical change; *The Far Pavilions* worked with British producer Goldcrest for a romance set against Colonial India. *The Blood of Others* formed similar melodrama conventions through a WWII romance, working with Canadian and French producers and director Claude Chabrol. The HBO miniseries cut was also varied into theatrical versions for French distribution.

(Nicholson) also saw the latter's director complain over HBO's clumsy attempts to shape final cut (Yakir Sep 9 1984).⁴⁹ By 1985 HBO Premiere Films, faced with falling budgets, had become committed to financing low-budget independent productions expected to be simultaneously sold to overseas theatrical markets, other television stations and video. Problems consequently developed here between Fuchs, March and producers on explicit Western *Draw!* (Stern) while vigilante and noir thrillers *The Guardian* (Greene) and *The Glitter Dome* (Margolin) received criticism for gratuitous content (Farber Oct 18 1984; O'Connor Nov 25 1984).

These exploitation-marketed pictures provoked an uneasy success, with Fuchs admitting that ratings and operator support were strong (Bedell-Smith Jan 22 1985). Violent urban thrillers *Blackout* (Hickox) and *The Park is Mine* (Stern) subsequently did little to improve exploitation trends that year.⁵⁰ Hopes however remained for widening accessibility and prestige. Ventures into romantic comedies and historical melodramas *Finnegan Begin Again* (Micklin Silver) and *Reunion at Fairborough* (Wise) received mixed responses, while Italian co-produced miniseries *Mussolini: The Rise and Fall of Il Duce* (Negrin) was attacked by critics (O'Connor Sep 6 1985).⁵¹

By June 1984 Fuchs was increasingly sceptical about the division's future (Brown June 10 1984) and by 1985 announced a major restructuring. This involved removing March and appointing development executive Rick Bieber alongside experienced series executive Iris Dugow. Bieber re-emphasised hopes for serving both niche adult appeals while marketing wider to an 'older, more upscale audience that

⁴⁹ *To Catch a King* explores a WWII espionage plot and romance and was produced with syndicators Entertainment Partners/Gaylord Entertainment, while *The Cold Room* shares WWII connections, transferred to a contemporary supernatural mystery, working with British producers and MCEG/Sterling Entertainment (including HBO inventor Charles Dolan). *Forbidden* was shot in West Berlin with German co-financing and a \$4 million combined cable and European theatrical release, while *Gulag*, a KGB prison thriller, shared financing with US independent producer and syndicator Lorimar Telepictures. *Fortress* was co-produced with *All the Rivers Run*'s Crawford Productions for a theatrical Australian release, and focuses on an Outback kidnapping plot.

⁵⁰ *Draw!*, a Western comedy starring Kirk Douglas was criticized over gratuitous content (Jory Jul 13 1984) *The Guardian* focuses on a liberal man's clash with a corrupt security guard, while *The Glitter Dome* represents an explicit Hollywood noir thriller. *Blackout* and *The Park is Mine* focus on murder plotlines and in the latter, a Vietnam veterans' Central Park protest over rights.

⁵¹ *Finnegan Begin Again* stars Mary Tyler Moore as a schoolteacher who falls in love with a newspaperman, while *Reunion at Fairborough* reunites old lovers from WWII, and was notable for mixing UK co-production and shooting with Columbia's role in developing the project, breaking with Fuchs' push to avoid Hollywood studio dependence. Co-produced with Italian broadcaster RAI, *Mussolini* worked around earlier historical miniseries appeals, but to less productive results for HBO or Time.

enjoys soft, personal dramas and romantic comedies' (Bieber qtd Schneider Jul 28 1985). The revised Premiere Films also targeted more standardised production control, stabilising \$3.5 million budgets, and more US shooting (Schneider Jul 28 1995). This also involved re-negotiating a distribution deal with syndicator Orbis after collaborative problems with Metromedia (*Variety* Nov 13 1985).

Some alternative sources for up-scaling prestige also came from stand-alone experiments in 1984 and 1985. This most notably included working with director Robert Altman on *The Laundromat*, a low-budget adaptation of a Pulitzer-Prize winning play. Moreover, *Countdown to Looking Glass* (Barzyk 1984) a mock nuclear attack drama shared network trends for Cold War 'speculative fiction' (Hastings Oct 9 1984). While these experiments showed promise, Premiere Films' difficulties became a cautionary example to other pay networks. Showtime had made some limited inroads into original films by 1985, including the Viacom-produced network satire *The Ratings Game* (DeVito 1984) and US rights to BBC miniseries *Tender is the Night* (Knights 1985), while lacking HBO's scale.⁵²

The short-term appeal but problematic merger of quality and adult content also retained distinctions between the two networks over series programming by 1985. On the one hand, in 1984 HBO had continued to develop political comedy pilots to add to comedy aggregation (*Investigators: Crusading Reporters of the Air*). The success of *Fraggle Rock* also led to Sheila Nevins' independent development of educational series *Braingames* (1984-1985) as a staple of early primetime and daytime rotation. Ambitions still remained though to produce a distinctive weekly series. In 1984 a deal was made with young producer Ron Howard and former *Hill Street Blues* writers to develop *Maximum Security* (1985), a prison-set drama, aired in March 1985 as a six hour series.

Building on early 1980s quality television trends for pathos, ensemble serial and episodic plotting, while adding content freedoms, Dugow explained the experiment as an alternative way of adding subscriber value. This was described as a way to 'build up audience identification' with the service where 'there aren't as many movies coming out of Hollywood, and so this is a way to differentiate ourselves from other pay-television

⁵² Showtime had however emulated HBO to some extent by investing in pre-buy rights for low-budget films for wider syndication, beginning with 1982's *Falcon's Gold* (Schultz 1982) (*Variety Staff* Jun 7 2001).

services' (Dugow qtd Schneider Mar 3 1985). However, *Security's* development came against Showtime's more comprehensive investment in *Brothers* (1984-1989).

A family sitcom from Paramount marketed through a gay lead, Showtime committed to a network season-length twenty-six episodes from July 1984, adding twenty-six more episodes in May 1985. Following on from *The Paper Chase* and *Steambath* experiments, *Brothers* arguably represented a more straightforward variation on studio and syndicator cooperation by Showtime against later Viacom distribution. Here Showtime's programming head Peter Chernin noted that 'we are still a mass-market medium. We're not going to be doing Zen comedy. *Brothers* is a familiar format but a little more daring than other situation comedies' (Chernin qtd Farber May 16 1985).

Showtime's extension of Viacom syndication again clashed with HBO and Time's promotion of market leadership through exclusive compatibility and aggregate value (Farber May 16 1985). In this way, while King World acquired rights to re-package *Maximum Security* to video and syndication markets (Farber Mar 4 1985), HBO's resistance to syndication led Fuchs to reflect by July 1985 that 'we are probably out of the business of doing network-type series' (Fuchs qtd Carter Jun 21 1985).⁵³ The decision consequently led to HBO's passing on a sitcom pilot from George Carlin, with Showtime instead exploiting Viacom's syndication empire to expand series from 1986 (Schneider Aug 18 1985).

A more restricted approach to original series did however lead HBO to attempt to provide complements to HBO Sports' popularity. This began with the 1984 and 1985 development of twelve bi-weekly half hours of *Ist & Ten* (1984-1991). A low-budget, independently-produced sitcom, *Ist & Ten* focuses on a struggling American football team and their female coach. Like *News*, *Ist & Ten* promised to complement HBO Sports' coverage, NFL commentary and low-budget compilation featurettes, as well as its more specifically targeted male audience. With season plots tying into NFL training camps and play-offs, *Ist & Ten* added value to sports marketing.

⁵³ Showtime also aired 'lost' episodes of the Viacom-owned sitcom *The Honeymooners* (CBS, 1955-1956) in 1985.

Making up in some ways for a muted critical response, the wider appeal of sports-themed sitcoms was paralleled by ESPN's attempts to produce an original series in the mid-1980s (Mullen 2003: 163). Again viewing a series experiment as part of a broader aggregate logic is key to distinguishing brief notes on the series. Haggins and Lotz tie *Ist & Ten* into efforts to provide adult-themed variations on broadcast formats with copious nudity (Haggins, Lotz 2008: 162), lacking the quality influence of *News* in favour of brash marketing. This came despite Potter's somewhat tongue-in-cheek efforts to promote the series as a 'more realistic portrayal' of American football (Potter qtd Schneider Aug 4 1985).

Exploiting short-term appeals on reduced budgets also crossed into the development of the adult anthology series from late 1983. Beginning with suspense-themed Canadian co-production *The Hitchhiker*, the series represented limited runs of half hour episodes featuring a host, self-contained moral story, and a twist ending. Building on the success of syndicated anthology series for rerunning out of sequence, the show enabled flexibility in being exhibited as individual episodes and feature-length blocks in primetime and late-night slots. A reliance on soft-core nudity however led to further criticism of gratuity (O'Connor Nov 25 1984).

On the one hand, *Ist & Ten* and *The Hitchhiker* do little to contradict histories of HBO's programming in this period as sensationalistic prototypes for latter, more accessible middlebrow programming. However, it is important to reaffirm how they clashed with the network and Time's ambitions. This was most notably demonstrated by a nationwide branding campaign delivered to operators and broadcast stations in late 1984, where montages of families, children and older viewers combine under the tagline 'There's No Place Like HBO....' With later descriptions of the campaign noting how HBO 'rarely ran anything as sugar-coated and schmaltzy as this,'⁵⁴ experiments in gratuity arguably clashed with a well-established anxiety within Time to resist over-marketing to 18-34 male demographics. Again, HBO's desire to market wider upscale compatibility across the service provided more complex negotiations of a quality identity than has been discussed in existing histories.

⁵⁴ The full promotion can be found at <http://www.tv-ark.org.uk/mivana/mediaplayer.php?id=8e6c84179e7d5f0d1b0ec2cc07437edb&media=hbo-ident-1984&type=mp4> Last Accessed: Jul 26th 2010

Efforts to revamp formats were therefore already in place by 1985, from Potter's promotion of family and prestige programming with theatre-licensed series *HBO Comedy Playhouse* (1984-1985) and *HBO Family Playhouse* (1984-1985). This was followed by an attempt to adapt anthology formats by commissioning episodes of the Canadian-co-produced anthology *The Ray Bradbury Theatre* (1985-1986). Reducing R-rated content, the series won critical praise. In October 1985 this helped influence a re-working of *The Hitchhiker*, cutting back on explicit material and targeting a range of music video and European directors to enhance the series' low-budget style. Promoted as widening subscriber appeal from younger males to older 35-49 demographics, this represented a key tactic in beginning to refine existing formats (Buck Dec 24 1985).

Clearer opportunities to establish an accessible balance of quality and explicit formats came through documentaries as Potter looked to standardise production. In 1984 Potter created *America Undercover* as a regular series of specials streamlining 'docutainment' trends.⁵⁵ The series launched in April 1984 with Imre Horvath's *Murder: No Apparent Motive*, with most specials focusing on a controversial issue through multiple interview segments and reconstructions.⁵⁶

For Murray and Mascaro, *America Undercover* represented a key example of precedent for formats seeking middlebrow appeal through sensational content and an emphasis on realistic storytelling. This helped HBO to market itself against PBS and further define distinction from documentary programming on basic cable's A&E and The Discovery Channel. (Murray 2008: 246; Mascaro 2008: 243). However, the series can again be viewed within longer-term Time verite contexts, with Potter emphasising how

'we take subjects that we know are of intense, primal interest and shed storytelling light on them. Our shows are conceived of as entertainment, though they also give a tremendous amount of information' (Potter qtd Farber Jun 27 1984)

⁵⁵ Mascaro and Murray mistakenly credit the series' early success entirely to Nevins, who despite building a varied set of verite, public service and more traditional documentary appeals from 1979-1982, was away from the network between 1983-1986. Potter's absence from network histories is therefore a significant omission, considering her oversight of series, documentaries and specials during the period, a role she would continue into 1996.

⁵⁶ This included *Being Homosexual* (Clarke 1984), *Missing Persons: Four True Stories (The Nightmare of Cocaine)* (Greenberg/Fuller 1984) and *The Toxic Time Bomb* (Bell; Hassett 1984)

While early criticism of televisual verite trends as ‘little more than upper-West Side Manhattan liberal voyeurism’ (Himmelstein 1987: 288) can be linked here to Time’s ‘class vs. mass’ appeals, *America Undercover* at least offered a partial basis for improving production consistency. Working with director of documentaries Cis Wilson, Potter adapted ideas from newspapers and magazines, developed projects with predominantly New York-based filmmakers, and supervised final cut of approximately \$200 to \$300,000 budgets per project (*Variety* Aug 15 1984). By the end of 1984 Potter and Wilson had established long-term relationships with a circle of verite-influenced filmmakers, including Imre Horvath, Malcolm Clarke and Lee Grant.

Although still sharing press criticism from wider projects and producers over negotiating explicit and tabloid-style content (Farber June 27 1984),⁵⁷ by the summer the series had reached a 52% TSS rating (*Variety* Aug 15 1984) and offered a stable cycle for merging quality and explicit formats by 1985. Moreover, the popularity of specials and exclusive HBO rights provided valuable sources for long-term reruns. They also provided a basis for widening prestige experiments, including co-productions with the BBC (*The Search for Mengele* (Moser)) as a complement to regular provocative specials.⁵⁸

In 1985 this ambition was developed through Malcolm Clarke and Japhet Asher’s Vietnam veteran special *Soldiers in Hiding*. Promoted through a brief theatrical release in New York, the special was nominated for a Best Documentary Oscar. This expanded in December through *Down and Out in America* (Feury) an exploration of poverty in Reaganite America. Building on verite trends for observational realism and exploration of crisis as emotional catharsis, reviews noted how ‘statistics don’t matter here, it’s the passion that counts’ (Corry Dec 4 1985). *Down and Out*’s theatrical release saw the film receive a first Oscar for HBO in 1986. The value of awards had steadily risen during the 1980s. Cable had its own awards show, the Cable ACEs, as early as 1976, but with limited competition received little respect in mainstream circles. Oscar

⁵⁷ In the case of *The Nightmare of Cocaine*, producers complained of Wilson’s desire to add more celebrities, with the executive explaining that ‘we needed something to make the film move’ (Wilson qtd Farber Jun 27 1984).

⁵⁸ In 1985 these included *Sexual Abuse of Children: Beyond the Secret* (Lofgren), *What Sex Am I?* (Grant) and *Acts of Violence* (Horvath).

recognition consequently provided a landmark in how HBO programs could find wider audiences and reinforce exclusive values to subscribers.

The success of *America Undercover* in distinguishing audiences can also be viewed against the overlooked role of Cinemax as a more narrowly-marketed complement to HBO's upscale identity. In 1984 HBO invested \$9 million in nationwide campaigns and operator marketing of the network to younger audiences (Girard Jul 25 1984). This helped distinction from the broader targeting 'There's No Place Like HBO' spots. Potter and de Boer's aim was to make it 'more like one of the three commercial networks' (Mair 1988: 107) or basic cable's stronger narrowcast identities than HBO's exclusive appeals. From initially developing younger-targeting music and comedy specials (Beermann Mar 14 1984), Cinemax's importance grew from 1983 in establishing a niche space for producing more experimental documentary and comedy programming.⁵⁹

This included new late-night erotica specials produced with Nevins (*Eros International*) that continued Time caution over being 'spicy, but not obscene' (Potter qtd Mair 1988: 107). These boosted TSS scores for the channel by 33% (Beermann Oct 3 1984). However, a commitment to more radical comedy and video-influenced programming also produced important experimentations in new formats. Headed by former stand-up promoter Chris Albrecht from June 1985, the young executive worked with Dugow and Potter to develop a range of new specials (*Variety* June 26 1985).

Organised under the banner *Cinemax Comedy Experiments*, low-budget (\$150,000) productions showcased young comedians (Albrecht qtd Higgins 2003). These predominantly resulted in video-shot pastiches of popular broadcast genres, and included Harry Shearer's *It's Just TV* (1985). Cinemax's success with video formats was enhanced in 1985 as Potter and De Boer entered into a productive relationship with the recently created, younger-marketed British network Channel Four, and independent producer Colin Callender.

This led to the importing of cyberpunk series *Timeslip* (Patterson 1985), followed by a re-edited version of popular media satire *The Max Headroom Show*

⁵⁹ Cinemax was also tested as a first-run window for HBO Premiere Films' prestige productions through French and Canadian co-produced miniseries *Louisiana* (de Broca) in 1984.

(Jankel, Morton 1985). Cinemax's targeting of a younger-oriented narrowcast style over the broader reach of HBO therefore offered a space for experimentation. In this way the channel's emphasis on video looks and younger programming can be linked to John Caldwell's (1995) overview of 'televisuality' trends in this period for a stylish video look.

More broadly, histories of HBO from 1984 and 1985 can therefore be significantly revised towards a clearer understanding of aggregate continuities and Time exclusive distinction. Extra depth can be added here to notes by Rogers et al (2002) and others on pressure to distinguish eclectic formats through adult content as primitive versions of latter, middlebrow-aspiring series. These negotiations were arguably embodied in HBO's long-term subscriber infrastructure, and its own influence from Time's caution over 'class vs. mass' marketing. Understanding programming variations as contributions to a stabilising aggregate value of the service, differentiated crucially through Cinemax, therefore provides a clearer institutional context for these changes.

Later reflecting on these ventures, Fuchs also explained how 'inside the company, there were those that wanted us to be primarily the tits-and-ass and dirty words channel. But it was not about nudity and swear words. I felt we had to be much more' (Fuchs qtd *Electronic Media* Oct 28 2002). Taking into account these pressures, particularly against Showtime's more open promotion of adult content, provides key distinctions here from existing 'cinema, sports and sex' (Polan 2009: 188) pay cable generalisations. The importance of recognising HBO's pursuit of exclusivity through subscriber aggregation during the decade can be further demonstrated from 1986 to 1988 as the network's production cycles stabilised to improve exhibition stability.

'Let's All Get Together': 1986-1988

Time's protection of its unique market leadership came under increased pressure in the late 1980s from further consolidation. With video booming, by 1988 Prince suggests that global ancillary markets and merchandising of iconic brands had become the 'engine driving the interlinked global entertainment markets' (Prince 2002: 141). This was enhanced by a repeal of theatrical cross-ownership by 1986, encouraging a boom in studio-supported multiplex theatres in the US and overseas. Television and cable's role in these trends remained crucial. Coming after News Corp's push for broadcast stations,

electronics giant GE purchased RCA and NBC for \$6.4 billion in 1986, while entertainment conglomerate National Amusements acquired Viacom in 1988.

News Corp made some of the most significant moves of the period, linking its Metromedia stations and ownership of studio facilities and libraries to establish the FOX network (Perren 2004a). Bypassing regulations on cross-ownership as an ad-hoc set of stations, the prototypical FOX had built a small but consistent audience by 1988 by producing teenage and African-American marketed series and specials for primetime and late-night distribution (Perren 2004a: 163). While still at a provisional stage, FOX had established a foundation for further growth from 1989 (Perren 2004a: 141).

Cable's success also experienced new peaks, with 61 basic cable channels distributed nationally by 1988 (Kompere 2005: 178). With 50% of US homes receiving some form of cable or satellite service (Mesce Oct 11 1987), cable channels began to compete for primetime ratings (Stilson Jan 4 1988). A \$12 billion industry by April 1988 (Mesce Apr 30 1988), cable's strengths remained its aggregate value as specialist exhibition sites, with Mullen promoting the stability of 'a continuous stream of programming for a flat monthly fee' (Mullen 2003: 146). This value was reinforced by 1988 as Ted Turner converted the acquisition of MGM/UA's library of movie titles to set up classic film channel TNT (Mullen 2003: 137).

Meanwhile, mature cable channels looked towards attracting independent and studio producers from broadcast distribution (Kompere 2005: 144). By 1988 the USA Network (Stilson Jan 4 1988) and Lifetime (Mullen 2003: 138; Meehan, Byars 2000: 153) began to invest in off-network broadcast sitcoms. Marketed in primetime to broad upscale audiences, Mullen discusses cable's promotion of higher-profile shows as key to broadening their niche brand identities 'without alienating the core viewership' (Mullen 2003: 163). The USA Network, similar in scope to a broadcast station in its mix of sports, movies and rerun series, also began to expand ambitions towards low-budget original pilots by 1988.

In this context, Mullen has noted how channels like MTV began to adapt its exhibition format from a 'largely unsegmented sequence of music videos to a more traditionally structured television schedule' (Mullen 2003: 165). This was combined with a further emphasis on branding loyalty and compatibility through on-air idents and

hosts, as well as marathons and theme days. Particular success was found here by Nick at Nite, which became a primetime and late-night home from 1986 for Viacom-owned reruns. Re-packaged as nostalgic and ironically hip through special seasons and host commentaries, Kompare suggests that these channels reinforced exhibition logics ‘arguably greater than that of the programs themselves’ (Kompare 2005: 183).

Cable’s growing maturity also competed with broadcast efforts to retain distinctive primetime programming. Caldwell has surveyed how primetime’s turn to alternating a ‘range of visual styles with virtuosity’ (Caldwell 1995: 91) had become standard practice by the end of the decade for attracting upscale audiences and advertisers. Feuer (1995) has also suggested that broadcasters like NBC retained traditional quality dramas like legal series *LA Law*, while experimenting with more experimental shows such as *thirtysomething*. The latter, focusing on a group of upscale adults, was notable for its range of cinematic pastiches and focus on psychological crisis (Feuer 1995: 44).

In this context, pay cable faced challenges to retain subscribers while beginning to widen investments in original programming. Although a deregulated market reenergised subscriber growth by 1988, taking HBO to 15.5 million subscribers, Cinemax to 4.6 million, Showtime to 8 million and The Disney Channel 4 million (Stilson Jan 4 1988), diversification became increasingly key to success. While video had relaxed exclusivity battles, tensions remained between Showtime and HBO over long-term deals.⁶⁰ In terms of broader diversification, the appointment of former HBO CEO Frank Biondi by Viacom also encouraged the potential for more ambitious changes to Showtime for the early 1990s.

Video deals and a slowing pay cable market also saw Time and HBO consider but pursue cautious strategies for extending subscriber strengths into new markets. Reacting to further pressure on Time’s fragile independence against conglomerate takeovers (*Associated Press* Apr 29 1986), Nicholas’ dual role as head of the Video Group and Time chief operating officer looked to cut costs, and preserve editorial

⁶⁰ After HBO outbid Showtime for Paramount (Fabrikant Jul 15 1987) and secured non-exclusive pacts with Warner and MGM/UA (*Associated Press* Aug 25 1986), Showtime pushed harder to satisfy its smaller subscriber base with exclusive deals with Cannon and Disney (Fabrikant June 3 1986), Touchstone and Orion (Fabrikant Jul 15 1987) and Carolco (Stilson May 23 1988), while refusing to carry HBO’s non-exclusive titles (Mair 163).

freedoms (Bruck 1995: 256). This involved a gradual release of under-performing Tri-Star, Silver Screen and Orion investments while retaining limited pre-buy deals (Mair 1988: 160).

Making Time a ‘better buy on the stock market’ (Mair 1988: 141) consequently involved reinforcing traditional associations with exclusive quality, while complicating distribution ownership. In the latter, ATC was strengthened by a merger with MSO Group W (Mair 1988: 181), and a public listing in 1987 that helped acquire a minor share in Turner Broadcasting (Clurman 1992: 78-79). The Time Video Group also experimented with collaborations with Warner and a range of MSOs on basic cable channel Movietime, a film trailer service (Stilson Mar 14 1988). More notably, in 1987 HBO Home Video was fully incorporated into the company from earlier collaborations (*Wall Street Journal* Apr 7 1987).

For Edgerton, these deals demonstrated how HBO’s future would depend on broadening from subscriptions towards extending and managing a brand-name across platforms. He suggests that

‘being both between and a part of the television, motion picture, and home video industries, HBO was perfectly positioned to diversify into original TV and movie production, home video, and international distribution, even as these once-separate entertainment sectors were beginning to converge into one more globally expanding entertainment industry by the mid-1980s’ (Edgerton 2008a: 7)

However, Edgerton’s (2008a) use of HBO as an ideal case study for industry changes arguably underplays Time’s influence and the protection of subscriber strengths as key to retaining leadership over rivals. Ventures into video distribution were notably here compatible with the maintenance of a core subscriber model and a publishing identity.

The video market’s mix of studio-supported distribution, consolidating rental and retail chains provided a wide enough niche for HBO Home Video to promote itself as a niche label. Wasser had described how video, with its creation of potentially lucrative back-catalogue re-issues was similar to a “‘publishing” model’ (Wasser 2001: 160). Again extending subscriber strengths with book-of-the-month and other labels, the

early years of HBO Home Video more commonly packaged a wide range of titles around a single quality identity (*Home Furnishing Newsletter* Oct 21 1996). This came against the higher-costs of acquiring exclusive rights to major studio titles.

In terms of the subscription service itself, strategies from 1986 to 1988 retained aggregate strengths. Promoting value through choice and compatible line-ups of films had become staples of classic film channels like TNT, and new ventures such as AMC by 1988 (Gomery 1992: 267; Mullen 2003: 169). Gomery has also noted how broadcast stations looked to compete with cable by programming more R-rated films in late-night slots (Gomery 1992: 255). Pay cable also targeted compromises with video by encouraging subscribers to use the service to create their own ‘classic’ archives from themed seasons (Farber Mar 31 1986). However, while HBO and pay cable’s lucrative value still retained a focus on market leadership in delivering ‘uncut, uncensored, uninterrupted screenings of feature films’ (Gomery 1992: 275), original programming distinctions continued to grow in importance.

On the one hand, sports retained marketability, but faced challenges over exclusivity (Mair 163; Tedesco Apr 25 1988). Showtime had made an aggressive push into boxing promotion in 1986 (Wilner Apr 17 1986), which led to cancelled bouts and spiralling costs by 1989 (Stilson Feb 27 1989).⁶¹ A distinctive range of original programs, marketed individually and as part of a compatible package offered stable value for satisfying and extending proven subscriber cycles. By 1988 the subscriber package had extended to 6 to 20 new specials a month (Jicha Jan 11 1988), or a 60/40 split from film programming (Tedesco Apr 25 1988). HBO again looked to counter Showtime’s particular success with network-type syndicated series by highlighting the aggregate compatibility of documentary, films and other specials, while relying on Cinemax to differentiate demographics.

In this context, resistance to syndication produced limited monthly episodes of *News* and *Ist & Ten* as comedy and sports block enhancements (Stevens Jul 2 1987). This also included new *The Hitchhiker* and *The Ray Bradbury Theatre* episodes and *Philip Marlowe* specials from the UK, while losing rerun rights to *Fraggle Rock* to NBC saw a move to produce educational game show *Encyclopaedia* (1988). The latter

⁶¹ Showtime initially invested in acquiring PPV rights for boxing matches from 1987, while competing with HBO’s exclusive contract with Mike Tyson by entering into a competitive rate for Evander Holyfield (*Variety Staff* Jun 7 2001).

series also extended influences from PBS by working with the Children's Television Workshop, producers of *Sesame Street* (PBS, 1969).

By contrast, Showtime and Viacom continued to narrow its original programming range to syndication-ready series and occasional entertainment specials.⁶² This most notably included *It's Garry Shandling's Show* (1986-1990), a critically praised, independently produced blend of reflexive sitcom form and standup parody. The series was successfully cross-promoted with *Brothers* in Friday prime-time slots, and were later sold into syndication by Viacom (Stilson Jul 25 1988). *Shandling* was notably licensed to FOX as part of the 'fourth' network's experiments in marketing itself through niche programming.⁶³ In this context, Cinemax again became crucial to HBO's programming experiments, with successful formats adapted back onto the main service.

Under Albrecht, the channel developed further *Comedy Cinemax Experiments*, jazz and blues specials, as well as brief pilots for a short film series (*Cinemax Movie Experiment*) (Carmody Mar 28 1988).⁶⁴ Cinemax's more specific promotion also encouraged a brief attempt to widen demographic targeting in 1986 with Festival. A service focusing on the older upscale and family HBO subscriber with G and PG-rated films and specials (Morgan Feb 13 1986), Festival however failed to find subscriber or operator support and was folded in 1988.

Cinemax's potential to broaden HBO's appeals around proven formats and compatibility with stand-up comedy saw *On Location* specials and live charity telethons such as *Comic Relief* (1986-2002) diversify into 1987 specials *Women of the Night* and *Uptown Comedy Express*. Showcases for female and African-American comics, a younger focus also saw the creation of 1987 spin-off *HBO Comedy Hour*. This typically

⁶² Showtime would also continue to occasionally venture into one-off specials and films, including co-financing docudrama *J. Edgar Hoover* (Collins 1987), and short-form magazine programming for The Movie Channel.

⁶³ According to Perren, FOX aired new episodes a month after their Showtime first-run, with the pay network receiving a license fee. In the same period, FOX also licensed Nickelodeon original series *Family Double Dare* (1988) (Perren 2004a: 163-164).

⁶⁴ Other Cinemax experimentations included documentary *Elvis 56* (Raymond; Raymond 1987) profiling a year in the life of the singer, *Cinemax Sessions* (1986-unknown) showcasing musicians, and further *Comedy Experiments*, including *Viva Shaf Vegas* (Shearer 1986) *Ann Magnuson's Vandemonium* (Oakes, Rubnitz, Sigel 1987), and anthology parody *Really Weird Tales* (from *SCTV* producers, as well as a limited mock-chat show (*The Original Max Talking Headroom Show* White 1987).

featured a mix of stand-up recording and more experimental video segments. Haggins and Lotz touch on this diversification, noting that by the late 1980s HBO's association with cutting-edge comedy produced an 'elaborate network of stand-up series that replicated the de facto apprenticeship of the comedy club bill' (Haggins, Lotz 2008: 155). This variety arguably however went much deeper to marketing HBO's aggregate strengths alongside Cinemax.

This also crossed into *Standing Room Only's* variety approach, producing experimental video specials from 1986. From mock-documentary *Bruce Willis: The Return of Bruno* (Yukich 1987) to feature-length Don Johnson music video *Heartbeat* (Nicolella 1987), this also included Bette Midler hosted parody of low-budget access television *Mondo Beyondo* (Schlamme 1988). Aggregate compatibility between HBO and Cinemax therefore reinforced comedy value. These subscriber strengths also produced a similar coordination of documentary and film production, establishing key precedents and cycles by 1988.

For documentaries, *America Undercover* retained stable monthly appeals through long-term variations on provocative and more accessible specials. This continued to rely on a small circle of filmmakers (Schneider Mar 9 1986) to generate a consistent set of cycles.⁶⁵ In 1986 Potter was also re-joined by Nevins as director of documentaries and family programming. Notable experiments in widening prestige then included new deals with the BBC for Death Row investigation *Execution: Fourteen Days in May* (Hamann 1988). However, the special also resumed editorial tensions, with HBO and the broadcaster clashing over content and the extent to which it could specifically criticise policy (Kaplan May 22 1988).

Building stable distinctions helped compete with PBS, whose documentary series *POV* (1988-) targeted more provocative subject matter. Regular promotion of HBO specials outside the network from *Down and Out in America* also ensured wider visibility with low production costs. Moreover, continuities were made with Time trends. The publisher again responded to declining magazine circulation by expanding lifestyle editions and exposes of gun crime, generational crisis and suicide (Clurman

⁶⁵ More sensational and verite documentaries in the period included a productive relationship with filmmakers Malcolm Clarke and Joseph Angier for *Surveillance...No Place to Hide* (Angier, Clarke 1987), *Vigilante* (Clarke 1987) and *Drunk and Deadly: Do the Guilty Go Free?* (Clarke 1988).

1992: 296-297). Further 'class vs. mass' precedent was found within the film division as a settling range of genre pictures were offset by boutique New York and transatlantic experiments in new features.

In the summer of 1986 Fuchs and Potter rebranded Premiere Films as HBO Pictures, while creating smaller unit HBO Showcase. The former offered to further standardise annual production, while retaining pay cable exclusivity through a set of long-term video, foreign theatrical and syndication deals with independent distributors (Mair 161). This included Lorimar Telepictures (*Business Wire* Jul 31 1986) and ITC/PolyGram (*Wall Street Journal* Apr 15 1987). Securing average budgets (\$4 to \$5 million dollars), the deals granted HBO greater control over producing and promoting Premiere Films as a consistent monthly series. This helped produce a more stable aggregation of exclusive cycles, while beginning to test wider rights to distribute through HBO Home Video.

By comparison, Showcase extended experiments by Potter in one-off plays, docudramas and BBC deals. Described by Potter as a 'series of timely productions that will spotlight top contemporary creative talent throughout the entire entertainment spectrum' (Potter qtd O'Connor Jul 20 1986), in practice this involved a limited set of prestige specials. These typically worked with New York and transatlantic producers, as well as Broadway and off-Broadway talent. In this way, Showcase's early slate provided a complement to Premiere Films in focusing a mix of quality and broader appeals into a compatible slate.

This began in 1986 and 1987 as Premiere Films built on high-end prestige biopic trends with Canadian and British feature *Murrow* (Gold 1986). Further extended to Canadian and Israeli co-produced *Sword of Gideon* (Anderson) a docudrama exploring Mossad anti-terrorist campaigns, explicit genre thrillers (*Apology* (Bierman 1986)) were phased out for the lighter-themed action comedy *Florida Straits* (Hodge 1986)). Co-produced with *The Terry Fox Story*'s Robert Cooper as the first release under the HBO Pictures banner, some overseas rights were sold to Orion Pictures. Opportunities for Fuchs and Bieber to transition R-rated genre pictures while experimenting with older-targeted melodrama then extended to Premiere Films' *Acts of Vengeance* (Mackenzie 1986) and *As Summers Die* (Tramont 1986). Mixing a vigilante narrative with civil

rights in the former, the latter revived marketing through classic Hollywood stars (Bette Davis) for a plot focusing on racism in the Deep South.⁶⁶

From 1987 to 1988 long-term quality control ensured a gradually stable production and exhibition economy for HBO Pictures in mixing R-rated but more accessible titles with occasional prestige. This included in the former noir-styled detective thrillers (*Laguna Heat* (Langton 1987)), Westerns (*The Quick and the Dead* (Day 1987); *The Tracker* (Guillermin 1988)), and action-adventure romances (*Clinton and Nadine* (Schatzberg 1986), *The Lion of Africa* (Connor 1987); *Steal the Sky* (Hancock 1988)).

Adult-themed romantic and sporting comedies also became popular by 1988 (*Baja Oklahoma* (Roth 1988); *Dead Solid Perfect* (Roth 1988)).⁶⁷ Moreover, new variations on prestige biopics were developed. This notably included reuniting with *Murrow*'s producers for 1987's *Mandela* (Saville 1987) while winning critical praise for 1950s-set baseball drama *Long Gone* (Davidson 1987). In the same period Pictures produced biopic *The Man Who Broke a Thousand Chains* (Mann 1987), remaking a 1930s feature dealing with an escaped convict and writer fighting for civil rights during the Great Depression.

Confidence in recycling formats by 1987 extended to *Into the Homeland* (Linka Glatter 1987) a contemporary thriller framed by Bieber as an example of how 'we had been looking for a personal dramatic story set against this whole growing phenomenon of white supremacist organisations' (Bieber qtd Farber Dec 26 1987).⁶⁸ In April 1987 HBO further developed plans for production control by fully-financing *The Last*

⁶⁶ *Murrow* extended deals with *Sakharov*'s producers Brodtkin and Berger, while *Acts of Vengeance* and *As Summers Die*, both co-produced with Lorimar Telepictures mixed existing producers Frank Konigsberg and Larry Sanitsky (*The Glitter Dome*). Erotic murder-mystery *Apology* reunited with independents Peregrine Entertainment (*Blackout*), while new deals with Robert Cooper for *Florida Straits* maintained Canadian production, while director Mike Hodges had worked on *The Hitchhiker* (also Canadian co-produced). *Sword of Gideon* was co-produced between Israeli and Canadian companies.

⁶⁷ Lorimar pre-bought *The Quick and the Dead* and *Laguna Heat*, while *The Lion of Africa* expanded Israeli co-production through producer Yoram Ben-Ami, who would also help produce American and Israeli spy romance *Steal the Sky*. The ITC/PolyGram pact helped produce *The Tracker* and *Clinton and Nadine* for US shooting. *Baja Oklahoma* and *Dead Solid Perfect*, both developed within Lorimar pre-buys, shared director Bobby Roth, and mix female leads and musical comedy in the former and male-focused sports in the latter.

⁶⁸ *The Man Who Broke a Thousand Chains* again worked with Israeli producer Yoram Ben-Ami *Mandela* returned to Berger and Brodtkin's production, while *Long Gone* and *Into the Homeland* shared prestige ties for US domestic shooting through cinematographer Robert Elswit.

Innocent Man (Spottiswoode 1987), a court-room drama emphasising a lawyer's moral crisis within a broader questioning of institutional corruption. While providing appeals for video, overseas theatrical and syndication markets, as an aggregate slate HBO Pictures' provided an aggregate structure for satisfying multiple subscriber niches. By 1988 this enabled more elaborate marathons, themed blocks, and non-subscription marketing of a back-catalogue of popular features.⁶⁹

By contrast, Showcase's smaller production slate tested more experimental specials for raising prestige. This began in July 1986 with theatre adaptation *Half a Lifetime* (Petrie 1986), a filming of an off-Broadway play focusing on the generational crisis of a group of thirty-something men. Soon after, Potter extended her documentary relationship with the BBC through co-production on espionage docudrama *Yuri Nosenko* (Jackson 1986). Moreover, Showcase collaborated with Italian and Canadian producers on low-budget nuclear bunker drama *Control* (Montaldo) in February 1987. Productive ties with British producers and Channel Four developed by Cinemax also reached a new landmark in 1987, with British producer Colin Callender relocating from London to New York to act as executive producer for the series.

This led to transatlantic deals for experimental docudrama *Conspiracy: The Trial of the Chicago Eight* (Kagan 1987), targeting upscale audiences through a 1960s dissident trial. HBO Showcase also collaborated with the BBC on Israeli docudrama *The Impossible Spy* (Goddard 1987) and Thames Television for *Waldheim: A Commission of Inquiry* (1988) a docudrama mock-trial on war crimes. Showcase also strengthened its relationship to New York theatre in the period. Callender and Potter worked with David Mamet to produce daytime television satire *Lip Service* (Macy 1988), and *The Christmas Wife* (Hugh-Jones 1988), an older-targeted melodrama. Pictures and Showcase's combined value was therefore rooted in the standardising rotation of compatible niche cycles, incorporating a range of trends to differentiate and tie together the ongoing negotiation between individual quality adaptations and exploitation of 18-34 male niches.

⁶⁹ Marketing the long-term quality of the subscription brand then led to increased promotional exercises in selective re-issuing, with a festival retrospective of award-winning projects from 1983 to 1987 marking the fifth anniversary of HBO Premiere Films' launch (Farrell Oct 29 1987).

Contextualising this balance within Time's quality identity remained crucial to HBO's role within the publisher by 1988. With the company suffering further circulation issues, Mair noted that the exclusive Time brand 'was no longer living up to its press clippings' (Mair 1988: 156). From 1986 the publisher had continued to broaden the provocative content of its prestige titles while exploiting the celebrity appeals of *Sports Illustrated*, *Money* and *People*. This was complemented by efforts to mix lifestyle and quality formats through titles such as *Leisure* and *Quality* (Clurman 1992: 289), producing limited success. HBO's growing maturity as a niche differentiated but broadly upscale service therefore provided a distinct, but arguably continuous example of ongoing subscriber strengths.

Regular success with quality formats was found in the period through a return to internationally co-financed miniseries with *A Dangerous Life* (Markowitz 1987) and 1988 special *Tanner '88* (Altman). In the former, Albrecht transferred from comedy to help oversee the miniseries as an \$11.6 million Australian co-production, dramatising the Marcos political regime in the Philippines through the perspective of an American media journalist. Spread over six hours and mixing docudrama and location shooting, the special returned HBO to the kind of 'big event' programming proposed by Fuchs in 1984 for highlighting monthly value, while extending Showcase docudrama trends. By comparison, *Tanner '88* was significant for its retrospective focus by scholars as a 'landmark' for HBO's quality adaptation, but also for its overlooked contextualisation within Time trends.

Reuniting with Robert Altman and collaborating with political cartoonist Garry Trudeau, the limited series follows a fictional Presidential candidate through a mixture of fictional and real interactions. This aimed to present 'a repertoire of fictional characters' that would be 'buffeted by real events' (Trudeau qtd Niedt Feb 12 1988), satirising while remaining within reflexive pastiche (Corry Mar 15 1988). Promoted as special limited events alongside the 1988 Presidential Elections alongside later marathons, themed blocks and framing commentary by reporter Linda Ellerbee around phone-in debates and poll segments, *Tanner '88* was heavily promoted that year.

The series is regularly cited as a landmark for the future potential HBO breaking out of eclectic subscriber value to re-brand itself through creator-led specials. Jeanne Morreale suggests that Altman's authorship was able to translate subscription freedoms

into a provocative satire on news coverage (Morreale 2008: 103; 108). However, while demonstrating early signs of ‘HBO as “quality television”’ (Morreale 2008: 113) through accessible variations on popular formats, *Tanner ’88* emerged from HBO’s mature aggregate structure and Time roots.

From the verite backdrop of a presidential election of Drew Associates in the early 1960s to the early 1980s political comedies, *Tanner ’88* also complemented Showcase’s docudrama satires and provocative investigative specials (*Waldheim; Conspiracy*) in establishing proven formats. It is also important to note how despite strong internal support, subscriber response to more radically staged programming was less enthusiastic, with low TSS scores and operator feedback leading to the series’ cancellation. *Tanner ’88*’s importance but relatively minor impact on programming compatibility in 1988 can however be contrasted with more successful efforts to generate upscale prestige by drawing on long-term themed aggregation of popular formats.

This notably included a successful series of Vietnam-themed specials, linking into broader theatrical and television trends for retrospective 1960s nostalgia and more critical accounts of the war (Boozer 2007: 179-183). HBO’s specific promotion however drew on aggregate strengths, promoting a range of thematic continuities across the service’s general value. This began with a 1987 veteran-promoting live musical special and continued with *Vietnam War Story* (1987-1989), a Showcase-developed limited series of anthologies dramatising first-hand accounts of the war. In 1988 this was followed by the broadly marketed prestige documentary special *Dear Letter: Letters Home from Vietnam* (Couturie), producing an ‘emotional history of the war’ (Niedt Apr 1 1988) through archival footage, Hollywood actor narration (Freedman Apr 3 1988) and a verite-influenced ‘apolitical perspective’ (*PR Newswire* Mar 13 1988).

Moreover, in 1987 and 1988 HBO committed to a broader coordination of programming efforts to produce specials on the AIDS crisis. This promoted information specials (*AIDS: Everything You and Your Family Need to Know*), a British co-produced Showcase drama (*Intimate Contact* Hussein 1987), Australian co-produced *America Undercover* special (*Suzi’s Story* 1988) and further Showcase collaboration with playwright Harvey Fierstein for an adaptation of his Broadway play *Tidy Endings*

(Millar 1988).⁷⁰ In this respect, these cycles provide a key example of how HBO looked to reinforce and market value as a subscriber service combining niche individual and compatible appeals.

Again, looking to subscriber aggregation beyond a ‘utility brand’ gloss can be used to provide a clearer alternative to institutional logics ‘determined not by ratings for a single program but by the general appeal and satisfaction level for the month as a whole’ (Gomery 1992: 268). HBO’s coordination of this base as key to marketing itself as a leading subscription brand therefore provided an infrastructure by 1988 for developing high-quality programs. Prestige success reached a new level that year with *Dear America* winning HBO’s first Emmy (Horn Aug 25 1988).

Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to significantly add to and revise existing histories of HBO during the 1980s as an exhibition outlet with eclectic original programming that negotiated middlebrow precedent. By again focusing on HBO’s distinction as an aggregate subscriber service within exclusive Time ownership, clearer splits can be identified from more interdependent rivals within longer-term precedent. Viewed within cable’s aggregate value around format consistency, re-contextualising HBO’s identity as a subscriber service is arguably crucial to situating broader discussions of middlebrow branding precedent within a more stable exhibition context.

Time’s influence from 1972 to 1988 was therefore crucial to shaping HBO’s identity and distinctions from rivals. In this way, the gradual need identified by existing histories for HBO to eventually widen and manage its brand into new markets through original programs must take into account Time’s cautious approach to diversification. Strategies from Cinemax to HBO Home Video more often than not here worked to add value to HBO’s trusted subscription base and aggregate marketing. The importance of this approach, building security through aggregate exhibition value and stable production trends to stabilise and gradually expand subscribers, can be used to complicate HBO’s further diversification from 1989 to 1994. With Time’s merger with Warner Communications ending the publisher’s stubborn exclusivity, demands for

⁷⁰ *Tidy Endings* also boosted HBO’s prestige profile within Hollywood and New York, with collaboration from producer Rick McCallum (*Empire Strikes Back* (Kershner 1980), *Return of the Jedi* (Marquand 1983)).

managing a strong brand identity through the network and program experiments both diversified and retained a core focus on subscriber aggregation

Chapter Three: 1989-1994

Adjusting to a period of significant change as part of Time Warner, between 1989 and 1994 HBO began to more aggressively diversify its brand as the consolidating television industry widened programming options for a global market. However, key continuities were retained from the Time-era, from the fractious nature of the Time Warner merger, to varying collaborative issues and the development of aggregate subscriber tactics. In this context, discussions of how further brand precedent emerged through middle-brow negotiating programs can again be re-contextualised. Beginning with early tensions around new licensing opportunities and resistance to sacrificing the 'Time culture' from 1989 to 1991, analysis of the 1992 to 1994 period will consider subscription consistency as key to shaping a brand identity for the mid-1990s.

'Our series are really designed to satisfy a key audience': 1989-1991

On January 10th 1990 Time Inc. and Warner Communications completed a \$14 billion merger to form Time Warner, becoming the largest entertainment conglomerate in the world. Following post-News Corp trends for global consolidation (Balio 1998: 55), the merger followed some concerns over foreign investment by Sony and Matsushita's parallel takeover of Columbia and MCA/Universal in 1989 (Perren 2004a: 148-149). Becoming part of Time Warner saw HBO shift from the exclusive 'Time culture' to an asset within a conglomerate exploiting copyright across its studio, music and wider entertainment divisions.

For Michael Curtin, Time Warner epitomised 'post-Fordist' shifts in global conglomerate strategies by the 1990s. Defined by a 'double movement between the global and the local, between the mass market and the niche market' (Curtin 1996: 191), this promoted and cross-promoted a range of specialist and wider-marketed branded content for multiple markets. The value of branding and hoped-for synergy through cross-promotion intensified, with Time Warner's merchandising of blockbuster franchises such as *Batman* (Burton 1989) providing ideals for recycling copyrighted properties across media (Grainge 2008: 109-110; Meehan 1991). Cable and HBO added to this value by reinforcing leading exhibition brands, while looking towards ownership of niche programming as networks such as FOX achieved considerable success.

However, it is first important to note that the Time Warner merger produced significant internal clashes at Time from 1989 that carried over into HBO. Sold by Nicholas, Levin and Munro to the Time board in 1988 as an admission of the need to become an ‘entertainment oriented communications company’ (Clurman 1992: 151), efforts were also made to ‘preserve and protect the ‘Time culture’’ (Clurman 1992: 28). Internal reservations however grew as the publisher clashed with Warner CEO Steve Ross, while a late attempt by Paramount to derail the merger complicated Time’s investment. This saw an initial plan for a stock exchange between Time and Warner instead force an acquisition by the publisher that transferred billions of debt onto the company while benefiting the latter’s stockholders (Clurman 1992: 233). From 1989 to 1990 Time’s editorial influence was further hit by a weakened magazine market, with executives criticising turns to broader, less Time quality-controlled celebrity titles such as *Entertainment Weekly* (Clurman 1992: 272).

Moreover, Nicholas’ preservation of Time’s cautious diversification (Bruck 1995: 289-290) clashed with Ross’s desire to cut debt by exploiting branded content worldwide through as many potentially synergistic revenue streams. This included Warner Bros. theme parks and stores (Clurman 1992: 276-277), while selling shares in a newly created Time Warner Entertainment Group to Japanese multinationals Itoh and Toshiba (Clary Oct 29 1991). Containing HBO, Warner Brothers and Warner Cable, TWE was pitched as vital to the global exploitation of Time Warner assets (Clurman 1992: 316), but overlapped with some early distinctions between the overseas use of HBO’s brand-name and domestic exclusivity.

From 1990 to 1991 Time Warner moved to use HBO as the brand for a number of partnered ventures for subscription film channels in deregulated foreign cable and satellite markets (Buscombe 1990). This ranged from HBO Ole (Latin America) to HBO Hungary (Eastern Europe) as primarily regional conduits for studio titles. Contrasting with Viacom’s earlier extension of its MTV Networks franchise into Western European markets by 1991, these new channels lacked the exporting of MTV and Nickelodeon niche channel formats and programming (Balio 1998: 60).

Having lost out to Viacom and News Corp in the late 1980s for establishing a share in key Western European markets, HBO Latin American and Central European channels lacked the exclusive rights of the US market in favour of varied studio deals.

Linda McElvogue would later note here that HBO's overseas affiliates were restricted by 'essentially offering international markets a packaging service, with a brand name that is of dubious value outside the United States' (McElvogue May 2 1995). Some provisional splits consequently developed as domestic HBO looked to reinforce its exclusive subscription identity, while exploring the suitability of wider licensing of HBO-branded channels and content for Time Warner.

Fuchs had expressed caution over the merger in 1989, with Clurman suggesting that HBO experienced a 'deep resentment at no longer being king of the Time film hill' (Clurman 1992: 214). He would later enter into long-term feuds with Warner Bros. heads Robert Daly and Terry Semel, producing expanded but cautious collaboration between the two divisions. Attempts by HBO to extend internal control into US theatrical distribution (Clurman 1992: 199) and favourable deals over Warner license fees (Bruck 1995: 285) produced compromises here on a limited theatrical co-venture with the studio (Cinema Plus) for independently acquired titles and global distribution of HBO Home Video under the Warner brand.⁷¹ In this respect, new programming opportunities for the US cable market and original programming adjusted to new extensions from 1989 to 1991, but looked to protect the exclusivity of the core service.

For Perren, the success of FOX by 1991 in aggregating niche audiences and exploiting program brands worldwide was having a significant effect on the television industry. Weakened by a recessionary advertising and broader economic climate, NBC, CBS and ABC had struggled to sustain growth (Perren 2004a: 214-215), leading to cost-cutting of expensive primetime differentiated production (Caldwell 1995: 285). Still by-passing Fin-Syn restrictions on cross-ownership as an ad-hoc station group rather than a network, FOX worked to market a distinct brand across its on-air identity and programming formats. By 1989 this included programming blocks of low-cost, provocative reality series such as *America's Most Wanted* (FOX, 1988-) before investing in Fox-produced network series for attracting key demographics.

From 1989 Perren suggests that FOX began to increase promotion as a 'youthful alternative to the so-called stodgy networks' (Perren 2004a: 198). This branding promise was embodied by the breakout success of animated series *The Simpsons* by the

⁷¹ Titles included *Switch* (Edwards 1991) *Don't Tell Mom the Babysitter's Dead* (Herek 1991) and *Mom and Dad Save the World* (Beeman 1992).

1990-1991 season, and to a lesser extent African-American comedy (*In Living Color* 1990-1994) and teen soaps (*Beverly Hills 90210* 1990-2000). With Twentieth Century Fox also produced a block of FOX Kids programming for affiliates, the FOX brand offered a consistent range of hip, distinctively produced series that looked to build loyalty with 18-34 audiences. For Perren, the next stage in FOX's branding was to syndicate and merchandise hit shows through News Corp's global media empire (Perren 2004a: 188).

By 1991 this was defined by *The Simpsons* as a lucrative example of television's potential for 'niche-targeted entertainment franchises' (Perren 2004a: 241). The importance here of niche branding for conglomerates, extending specialist shares in key markets while retaining the potential for crossover accessibility, has been defined by Curtin as a standardised co-option of previously specialist audiences, where 'the oppositional has become more commercially viable, and, in some measure, more closely tied to the mainstream' (Curtin 1996: 197). For Turow, this reflected a wider marketing push to establish brand loyalty for alternative music, television and other media for an 18-25 'Generation X' raised on a broad diet of video, cable and multiplex film.

FOX's branding success also aligned with a booming basic cable sector (Fabrikant Feb 6 1989). Success was notably found by Nickelodeon, who looked to diversify its brand through the production of original series under new head programmer Geraldine Laybourne from 1989 to 1991. Laybourne developed Nicktoons here as a block of three carefully crafted animated series (*Rugrats*, *Doug* (1991-1999), *Ren & Stimpy* (1991-1996). Designed to diversify but collectively aggregate loyalty for 'every age group of its young audience' (Mullen 2003: 148), Nicktoons provided a clear package for branding overseas Nickelodeon channels. Moreover, it provided distinctive content for merchandising and licensing series rights across Viacom divisions (Simensky 2004: 93).

This was also to an extent emulated by MTV's narrowcast music channel format's gradual diversification, expanded to limited 'signature' programs by 1991 with animated segments (*Liquid Television* 1991-1994) alongside more specific rotation of demographic-targeted and themed music video formats. Cable and FOX consequently offered potentially lucrative television models built around consistently branded

channels and the merchandising potential of break-out hit series. However, HBO and pay cable experienced broader difficulties in the period.

While HBO and Cinemax began 1989 with 23 million joint subscribers (Stilson Mar 20 1989), Time Warner-consolidated carriage through Warner Cable did not immediately translate into expanded revenues. Pay cable audience erosion reached 8% in 1990 (Mink Sep 19 1990) and experienced 1% decline by the end of 1991 (Layne Mar 5 1992). Moreover, although a proposed merger between Showtime and leading MSO TCI fell apart by the end of 1990 (Oberlander Dec 24 1990), TCI went on to launch its own cut-price classic film service Encore in 1991 (*Associated Press* Feb 21 1991). This competed with The Movie Channel, Cinemax and basic cable classic film-focused AMC and TNT (Gomery 1992: 173). HBO's solution was to re-affirm the value of subscriptions, while looking to extend its brand into new channels and programming areas.

In terms of the former, ventures included further distinguishing the high-impact popularity of HBO Sports' live boxing coverage by investing with Warner in Pay-per-View service TVKO (Sandomir Apr 19 1991) as competition to Showtime's Event Television service. While having struggled to replace cable subscriptions and the convenience of video in the 1980s, PPV remained a viable option for boosting revenues for operators and channels. For Clurman, HBO played a key role in Levin's broader ambitions to expand cable channels through Warner digital cable by adding to subscriber values (Clurman 1992: 320).

By 1991 this focused on experiments in 'multiplexing' the HBO satellite feed to limited systems, creating HBO2 and 3 channels that time-shifted the flagship service without adding extra content or costs (*PR Newswire* May 8 1991). Improving exhibition options were also implemented the introduction of limited Spanish language track option *Selecciones* in 1989 (Joseph Jan 16 1989). With strong early subscriber response to extended convenience, if not perhaps choice (Layne Oct 23 1991), investments in Warner Cable digital interactivity (Wollenberg Mar 7 1991) joined to external industry plans to scale-out competitive digital broadcast satellite systems (DBS) as a high-quality distribution system for branded channels and PPV programming (Halonen May 14 1990).

Adding value to subscriptions contributed to more aggressive branding campaigns, with HBO launching a \$50 million ‘Simply the Best’ campaign in 1989 that promoted a high-quality range of exclusive programming. Edgerton cites the campaign as a step towards HBO’s re-identification with original programming, accelerating the

‘lengthy and expensive process of changing the overall impression of HBO from that of a first-run movie service to that of a premium network that produces and presents the most innovative original programming on television along with its usual lineup of feature films’ (Edgerton 2008a: 10)

Other histories of this period support this process by noting ventures into basic cable and broadcast network original programming (Mullen 2003; Santo 2008; Haggins, Lotz 2008) as a way of merging eclectic precedent into accessible formats, while noting further middlebrow tensions over exclusivity. However, HBO’s experiments can arguably be re-examined as mixing some problems with extending the brand beyond the subscriber service, while retaining the value of aggregate monthly exhibition.

In terms of significantly enhancing a presence in basic cable, in 1989 HBO attempted to improve on the failure of Festival by launching the advertiser-supported network The Comedy Channel. The venture however generated tensions over quality control, collaboration and competition with more interdependent rivals. Conceived along the lines of Cinemax as an 18-34 narrowcast service focusing on a 24 all-comedy schedule, a small division was established from the New York offices for a November launch. Targeting a recycled mix of older HBO standup specials, comedy films and experimental video segments (Ziegler Jan 23 1989), The Comedy Channel narrowcast format provisionally aligned with contemporary cable programming trends, but would also draw from and feed comedy aggregation for developing subscriber value by 1991.

For Mullen (2003), basic cable’s distinctive repetition had matured by the early 1990s around more structured hosts, marathons and themed formats, developing a rotation of into ‘particular themes under which these segments are meant to cohere, as in comedy showcases, music video blocks, home shopping programs, and so on’ (Mullen 2003: 175). The Comedy Channel epitomised these trends by producing low-cost pastiche formats hosted by young comedians, including the Jon Stewart-hosted

Short Attention Span Theatre (1989-1994) hosted film commentaries such as *Mystery Science Theatre 3000* (1988-1996) and broader entertainment and news parodies. However, while innovating as a programmer, by 1990 the network had struggled to find audience or operator support, and faced competition for market share from Viacom's rival comedy network HA! in April 1990.

Relying on a library of Viacom-owned sitcoms, HA! effectively split the market for cable operators. This led Fuchs to admit defeat for HBO's ambitious venture by the end of the year (Greenstein Dec 24 1990). An eventual compromise was however reached, with the two channels merged into Comedy Central, divided between reruns and experimental comedy segments. HBO's investment returned to a 50/50 split.⁷² In this way, while Mullen views The Comedy Channel as a landmark in HBO's promotion of more original programming (Mullen 2003: 146), the venture also highlighted difficulties in retaining subscription value with partners.

With Cinemax gradually reducing its original comedy and video programming by 1988 to return to an all-film and late-night erotica package, The Comedy Channel arguably looked to extend programming identification and cross-promote HBO subscriptions. By the end of 1988 Cinemax's influence on HBO had led to new variations on the rotated comedy package, particularly for expanding regular late-night first-run and rerun formats. Commissioning late-night Canadian sketch show *Kids in the Hall* (1988-1994) in late 1988 as a more provocative regular series, adjusting formats towards more explicit content (*HBO One Night Stand* 1989) and media pastiche (*HBO Comedy Hour*) also translated into experimental shorts, winning a Best Short Subject Oscar in 1989 for the psychiatry-themed satire *The Appointments of Dennis Jennings* (Parisot 1988).

Moreover, *Not Necessarily the News* was revamped in 1989 through occasional live studio specials with younger comedians (Mahoney May 22 1989). Direct segment crossovers further developed through a 1991 pilot for pastiche talk show *Night Rap*. In this respect, The Comedy Channel allowed for further testing of new formats, while

⁷² This also extended to a continued deal with Warner Bros. and other partners in cable network Movietime. Re-branded in 1990 as E!, the network complemented the publishing venture into weekly celebrity news, providing low-cost segments and talk. In 1991 E! also adapted video bite programming with *Talk Soup* (1991-2002), cited by Mullen (2003: 182) as adapting ironic recombination into talk show clips and hosts.

adding value to development of programming for late-night blocks on the core service. Its failure however demonstrated a problematic fit between subscription and basic-cable programming, with Fuchs admitting that Comedy Central presented a venture with 'less philosophy tied to the programming' (Fuchs qtd Greenstein Dec 24 1990). HBO instead turned to spinning-off The Comedy Channel's HBO Downtown Productions studio as a boutique Manhattan arm for lower-budget comedy projects in May 1991. Effectively continuing Cinemax and The Comedy Channel's promotion of smaller-scale projects, the move reflected wider experiments in diversifying HBO towards greater investment in network-type comedy and anthologies for wider syndication and attempted cross-promotion with other Time Warner and studio divisions.

In 1990 HBO created HBO Independent Productions (HIP) under the direction of Chris Albrecht to build on comedy programming and respond to FOX's growing success with more niche-oriented primetime series. An early commission for the boutique division included *Roc* (1991-1994), an African-American sitcom produced for FOX. While HIP's impact can be discussed in more detail from 1992, ventures into studio commissions and syndication saw parallel developments from 1989 to 1991 around more conciliatory deals and adaptation of Showtime success. This notably helped produce sitcom *Dream On* and horror comedy anthology *Tales from the Crypt*.

Developed by Albrecht with MCA/Universal and executive producer John Landis, *Dream On* originated with the studio's desire to recycle its library of 1950 and 1960s television clips. Structured as a half hour sitcom around the romantic, family and professional life of Manhattan book editor Martin Tupper (Brian Benben), the clips are used as inserts to ironically frame more conventional studio-bound multi-camera shooting on the Universal lot. Incorporating standard appeals for R-rated content, and particularly female nudity, the series' marketing in the summer of 1990 as a 'sexy new comedy for grown ups' (Marin Jul 6 1990) for Sunday nights encouraged a longer season order for 1991. In some ways *Dream On* can be viewed as a concession to Showtime's success with participation in studio syndication around adapted broadcast formats. This followed a decline in production for *News* and *Ist & Ten* specials, with the completion of the latter in 1991 leading to an attempt to sell the show into syndication with Western International (Mahoney Jan 7 1991).

Haggins and Lotz support this by using *Dream On* as the beginning of an “emergent” period for HBO original series production’ (Haggins, Lotz 2008: 163), where network-type shows could enhance channel distinction and be sold in non-subscription markets. In this context, Santo has used *Dream On* and *HIP* as examples of how HBO could emulate FOX in promoting branded series as ‘para-television, which purposely relies on mimicking and tweaking existing and recognisable TV forms’ (Santo 2008: 19) through “‘edgier’ but not radically different fare’ (Santo 2008: 26). Again, this middlebrow concession overlapped with wider trends, but can be re-contextualised through the longer-term process of comedy aggregation for offsetting extensions of subscription exclusivity.

Primarily, the MCA clip format was originally developed for a *Cinemax Comedy Experiment* special (Albrecht qtd Higgins 2003), while Mullen also links the series’ ironic inserts to basic cable ‘video bite’ strategies’ (Mullen 2003: 171) via The Comedy Channel. Moreover, the marketing of gratuity through broadcast satire can be linked to both *News*’ pastiche format, and Cinemax’s success during the 1980s with 18-34 marketed comedy series. *Dream On*’s higher budgets, and boomer-oriented sitcom plotlines arguably saw the format adapted for HBO’s wider profile, suitable for marketing in primetime. Finding this more flexible participation in studio strategies, while looking to preserve subscriber continuities was also demonstrated by the success of horror anthology series *Tales from the Crypt* from 1989.

By the 1988-1989 season the flexible appeal of the anthology format was revived from series cutbacks in 1987, with the success of Showcase’s *Vietnam War Story* leading Potter to suggest that the ‘adult anthology series is something we feel is tailor-made for us, because they can’t be done elsewhere on TV’ (Potter qtd Roush Aug 17 1989). Developing *Tales from the Crypt* also enhanced options for studio syndication, working from a pitch by producers Joel Silver, Richard Donner and Walter Hill for a series based on a cult 1950s line of controversial horror comics.

Offering a window for a pre-sold package, HBO’s involvement formed part of a broader range of studio, syndication and franchising rights. Talent agency CAA packaged the show, while MCA/Universal helped fund a pilot in exchange for foreign theatrical copyright and Warner Brothers acquired partial foreign syndication ownership. This left HBO to cover deficit costs alongside the show’s producers’ options

on domestic syndication, theatrical adaptation and merchandising (Eller Oct 16 1992). Grouped under the limited company Tales from the Crypt Holdings, the series represented a potentially long-term niche franchise, with HBO acting as a pay cable window for selling the show across different markets.

A three-part pilot was therefore developed with options for re-editing as a feature for theatrical and overseas distribution in June 1989, before adding new episodes in 1990 and 1991. Adapting the source material's structure of a host, moral story and twist ending within a darkly comic tone, B-level production on the Warner Bros. lot for \$800-900,000 budgets over six to eight day shoots (Roush Jun 9 1989) established subscriber support for limited runs and network rotation by 1991. The development and gradual extension of the show's popularity in some ways represented an ideal compromise for HBO's experimentation within Time Warner, allowing participation in wider revenues but again preserving exclusive first-run exhibition and production influences.

For the latter, the series' cult appeal and short production schedules helped attract Hollywood talent agencies in packaging episodes as directing and acting side-lines for easily marketable actors and musicians.⁷³ This also enabled some compatibility with HBO's standup relationships, with early episodes showcasing regular collaborators such as Don Rickles and Bobcat Goldthwaite ('The Ventriloquist's Dummy' 2.10) and Robert Wuhl ('Dig That Cat...He's Real Gone' 1.03). Moreover, drawing on a cult 1950s franchise enabled continuity for older boomer audiences alongside *Dream On*'s ironic use of old film and television clips.

Options for repackaging both series as niche but cross-promoted specials for primetime distinction or rotation around late-night scheduling can also be used to further criticise Anderson's (2008) 'scattered' subscription model. Santo has extended this criticism, arguing that 'even successful series like *Dream On* were simply used as lead-ins to HBO's principle product, feature films' (Santo 2008: 27). Similarly, Rogers et al suggest that irregularly scheduled production of *Tales from the Crypt* led to the 'format, like the stand-up comedy showcase' as 'problematic for branding' where 'the

⁷³ This included eclectic shifts from Arnold Schwarzenegger's directorial debut ('The Switch' 2.02), to Kirk Douglas starring episodes ('Yellow' 3.14). Iggy Pop also appeared in rock promoter-themed 'For Cryin' Out Loud' (2.08).

quality and tone of the episodes are somewhat erratic, failing to deliver that is consistency for a strong brand identity' (Rogers et al 2002: 52).

However, both formats can be re-contextualised within aggregate subscriber cycles. This ranged from *Dream On*'s packaging with comedy specials to *Crypt*'s crossover comedy appeals and value for regular repackaging within Andrews' (2007) feature and featurette flexibility for HBO's commercial-free 'movie sensibility' rotation. Both shows were run as Saturday and Sunday night feature specials, with *Crypt* rotating from three-part feature-length specials to Tuesday and Wednesday night primetime episodes (10pm) in 1990 and 1991. Widening to midweek and Sunday night primetime helped generate individual niche value and consistent format rotation through the month. *Dream On* collected 4.3 million viewers for its second season premiere (Carter Jul 15 1991), while *Crypt* improved on its film lead-in by 50% (O'Connor June 26 1991) and beat CBS, NBC and ABC for its Saturday night feature-length premiere (*Hollywood Reporter* Sep 25 1991).

In addition, the crossover packaging of the series in mixing 18-34 and broader upscale appeals for primetime value was extended in 1991 to overlooked comedy series experiment *Sessions*. Developed as a half hour limited series with Billy Crystal and production company Castle Rock, producers of NBC's increasingly successful sitcom *Seinfeld* (1990-1998) the limited series' focus on a character's neuroses through interviews with a psychiatrist generated strong ratings in Sunday primetime (Carter Oct 9 1991). As a result, while conceding some ground to Showtime's greater involvement in syndication, experiments retained compatibility with subscriber cycles. This caution notably came against Showtime's problems during the period in finding a new sitcom to replace *Brothers* and *It's Garry Shandling's Show* (*Business Wire* Feb 7 1990).

In this way, Potter suggested in 1991 that 'our series are really designed to satisfy a key audience' (Potter qtd Hastings Jan 13 1991). Albrecht also emphasised a stronger balance between first-run exclusivity and flexible options, where 'not only are these shows appropriate fare for HBO, they are also suitable as specials and prototypes for our commercial network partners' (Albrecht qtd *PR Newswire* Dec 12 1991). These experiments and a negotiation between subscriber value and new branded ventures also extended to documentary and original film cycles during the period.

HBO Pictures, Showcase, and documentaries primarily benefited from the Time Warner deal through a broader distribution infrastructure, with HBO Video's expansion enabling greater ancillary video revenues alongside new pre-buy distribution deals between Prism and Showcase (*PR Newswire* Apr 10 1989). This helped reinforce control over production, promotion and ancillary participation from 1988, with Rick Bieber replaced by regular collaborator Robert Cooper as head of HBO Pictures at the end of the year. The new set-up continued to combine first-run projects, while retaining or selling ancillary rights for video, syndication and foreign distribution. Key links were also made with HBO Sports' expanding range of original programs.

Developing the refining exclusivity and cycles of the 1986 to 1988 period can however be first viewed through the steady growth of documentaries under Potter and Nevins as lower-cost, but valuable additions to the monthly package. On the one hand, *America Undercover* maintained its collaboration with a small base of independent filmmakers for verite documentary cycles, with Potter re-emphasising a mix of topical concern and broader personal stories. She suggested here that 'we have an enormous interest in the underclass, where there's another kind of war going on in America' (Potter qtd Roush Aug 17 1989). Verite specials consequently diversified in providing more provocative, crime and inner-city themed topics, and most notably included Jon Alpert's New Jersey crime study *One Year in a Life of Crime* (1989).⁷⁴

Dear America's Oscar win in 1988 was also repeated by *Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt* (Epstein, Friedman 1989) a cross-section of perspectives on AIDS at the end of the decade promoted via World AIDS Day specials. Gala screenings also reinforced HBO's budget and content advantages over PBS-influenced prestige formats for award-winning, point-of-view led social issues. Moreover, Nevins' joint responsibility for producing more educational specials for family audiences saw the development of the award-winning *First Love, Fatal Love* (Whitney 1991) alongside occasional *Consumer Reports*.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Other examples included *Convicts on the Street; One Year on Parole* (Estrada 1990), *The Best Hotel on Skid Row* (Tajima, Choy 1990), and *Crack USA: County Under Siege* (DiPersio, Guttentag 1989).

⁷⁵ These included *Smoking; Everything You and Your Family Need to Know* (1989), *How to Raise a Drug-Free Child* (1989) and *Warning: Dieting May be Hazardous to Your Health* (1989).

In assembling a cross-section of prestige and more typical verite cycles, 1990 also however saw Nevins and Potter find significant success with *Real Sex* (1990-) a late-night series of newsmagazine specials showcasing unusual sex practices. Developed with New York producer Patti Kaplan, the series quickly built strong numbers in first-run and long-term subscriber rotation (Mahoney Nov 26 1990). *Real Sex*'s success has been used as a bridge between eclectic, explicit freedoms and middlebrow quality marketing, with Jeffrey Jones noting that HBO would rely on 'sexually oriented programming as an inexpensive yet enormously popular form of programming' (Jones 2008b: 274). For Nevins, this represented an alternation between prestige and explicit formats for subscribers, where 'as long as that balance works, I'll do the sex stuff' (Nevins qtd Jones 2008b: 276).

This format differentiation can however be expanded to cross-promotion with Cinemax and late-night aggregation of 18-34 demographics. Erotica had been a key tactic for Cinemax in competing with Showtime and TCM in the 1980s, and when viewed alongside comedy crossovers arguably provided a further transfer of the channel's success into HBO's late-night programming rotation. With Nevins promoting *Real Sex* as extending familiar verite cycles (Mascaro 2008: 279), echoing Potter's defence of Cinemax experiments, and the development of *America Undercover*, new subscriber additions again worked around long-term precedent.⁷⁶ This stabilisation of long-term cycles also crossed into HBO Pictures and HBO Showcase by 1991.

In terms of Pictures, from 1989 Fuchs targeted confidence in managing a range of appeals for subscribers, where each film should carry 'resonance. They have to work on two levels, with drama or comedy on one, and on the other, they have to reflect something about the human condition' (Fuchs qtd *Electronic Media* May 22 1989). This led to a range of international co-produced prestige and mid-level thrillers (*Murderers Among Us: The Simon Wiesenthal Story* (Gibson 1989) *Red King, White Knight* (Murphy 1989)), with individual distinction and collective quality maintained through shared screenwriter Ron Hutchinson and cinematographer Elemer Ragalyi.⁷⁷ In the same period Fuchs and Cooper worked to incorporate further prestige into genre

⁷⁶ More unusually, HBO also worked with *Sports Illustrated* to produce *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit* specials for distribution on the newly formed HBO Video label from 1986. This later produced *Illustrated: The Making of the Swimsuit Issue*, shot by verite filmmaker Albert Maysles and aired in February 1989 (Proctor Feb 8 1989), leading to video tie-ins.

⁷⁷ Producer John Kameny had also worked on *Sword of Gideon*, *The Park is Mine* and *Louisiana*.

thrillers, mixing *Third Degree Burn* (Spottiswoode 1989), *The Heist* (Orme 1989) and *Perfect Witness*'s (Mandel 1989) video-ready accessibility with prestige. This also reinforced a stabilising production infrastructure, commissioning Hutchinson to help script Mafia drama *Witness*.⁷⁸

Stable production ties extended through greater Hollywood collaboration, working with screenwriter-producer and director Irvin Kershner (*The Empire Strikes Back*) for adult comedy *Traveling Man* (1989). The film's co-producer Fred Baron also helped develop *Tales from the Crypt* for a full series in 1990.⁷⁹ Pushing for higher-profile talent similarly crossed into two-part miniseries *Glory! Glory!* (1989). A collaboration with director Lindsay Anderson, this represented a musical comedy satirising tele-evangelicalism. Following on from *Tanner '88*, the project has been overlooked in terms of HBO's prestige development, but in its crossover media and satire themes sustained experiments in high-end adaptation of popular subscriber cycles.⁸⁰

By comparison, Showcase began to expand by developing transatlantic ties developed with documentary formats, while increasing investment in a close-knit New York filmmaking and theatre community. In 1989 this ranged from working with Granada for topical low-budget docudramas such as *Tailspin: The Korean Airliner Tragedy* (Darlow 1989) to filmed staged play *Time Flies When You're Alive* (Spottiswoode 1989) and short story adaptation *Age Old Friends* (Kroeker 1989).⁸¹

By 1990 Pictures and Showcase had also begun to occasionally merge successful cycles. While developing internationally co-produced Cold War thriller *By Dawn's Early Light* (Sholder) at \$7 million a then-record for the network, Pictures also varied Showcase's more character-driven prestige with media satire *The Image*

⁷⁸ Director Spottiswoode returned from *The Last Innocent Man* for *Third Degree Burn*, with MTM co-producing for a romantic detective thriller. *The Heist*, set around a racetrack scam, was produced by *As Summers Die*'s Chris/Rose Productions and shot by *The Tracker*'s George Tirl. *Red King, White Knight* works around a Russian-American detective partnership for a Cold War espionage plot.

⁷⁹ Focusing on the relationship between a younger and older pair of travelling salesmen, Baron had also worked on the 1988 and 1989 Dan Jenkins adaptations *Baja Oklahoma* and *Dead Solid Perfect*.

⁸⁰ *Glory! Glory!* also saw HBO work with former MTM writer Stan Daniels.

⁸¹ *Time Flies* adapted a one-man stage play on cancer, and represented a third collaboration with director Roger Spottiswoode; *Age Old Friends*, a comedy set within a retirement home, shared producer Patrick Whitley with *The Christmas Wife*.

(Werner).⁸² This was followed by the co-scheduling of death row courtroom drama *Somebody Has to Shoot the Picture* (Pierson) with Showcase's *Criminal Justice* (Wolk) in September that year. A low-budget, verite-styled study of working class and ethnic discrimination in contemporary Brooklyn co-produced by Granada and co-written by Ron Hutchinson, *Justice* notably extended Potter's urban 'underclass' focus. By comparison, *Somebody Has to Shoot the Picture* reflected both Pictures' parallel role in studio experimentation with co-development by MCA-Universal, but also tied into a wider complication of prestige and genre pictures.

In 1990 family crisis and abuse themed thrillers *Descending Angel* (Kagan) and *Judgment* (Topor) added to generic distinction with political and controversial subject matter, while enhancing quality control through the return of cinematographer Ragalyi to shoot *Judgment*. Here it is possible to view changes in B-level production as further complementing higher-budget prestige from experiments between 1986 and 1988. This saw further efforts to adapt genre cycles intended for video and syndicated distribution to more prestige-driven subscriber appeals. This received further crossovers in 1990 with the success of art heist comedy *Framed*, directed by Dean Parisot, who had won an Oscar in 1989 for *The Appointment of Dennis Jennings*. Pictures also explored more family-oriented features with Western comedy *El Diablo* (Markle).

Transatlantic deals also worked through stable prestige cycles for Showcase (*Business Wire* Mar 28 1990). Callender and Potter again worked with British studio Granada for docudrama *The Tragedy of Flight 103: The Inside Story* (Woodhead) as well as the BBC for IRA special *Inside a Terrorist Bombing* (Beckham) and McCarthy era drama *Fellow Traveler* (Saville). The latter also represented a significant link between Showcase's New York-theatre and literary roots, with the BBC distributing the feature on a limited art-house basis in the UK.⁸³ Experimenting with Showcase's range further extended in 1990 to *Women & Men: True Stories of Seduction*, a European co-produced period melodrama mixing erotic appeals with literary short story adaptations. Cinematographers Ernest Day (*As Summers Die*) and *On Golden Pond*'s Billy Williams

⁸² Produced by Canadian company Citadel, *The Image* stars Albert Finney as an anchorman struggling with ratings and professional crisis in a network news division.

⁸³ *Fellow Traveller* has been used as a notable example of low-to-medium transatlantic production in the Jill Neldes' edited *An Introduction to Film Studies*, London: Routledge, 1999, 2nd ed. It was developed through the BFI and Colin MacCabe, before being picked up by the BBC and HBO.

pushed for a more cinematic style within a revival of the melodrama genre for the network.

Viewed against the development of *Real Sex*, the success of the special arguably highlighted the close-knit oversight by Potter of Showcase and documentaries by experimenting with quality formats and erotica. Moreover, criticism by Rogers et al (2002) of the anthology format as producing erratic appeals in this period can again be complicated. As with earlier experiments in the 1980s and *Tales from the Crypt*, the feature and featurette structure enabled flexibility for testing out new genres, while attracting higher-profile personnel for shorter production schedules. *Women & Men*'s art-house style, lavish period shooting in Europe and adult material therefore represented a landmark for widening film and anthology formats by 1992.⁸⁴

By 1991 Pictures and Showcase were rapidly consolidating a reputation for prestige and subscriber support, from regular nominations and supporting awards at the Emmys, to HBO Pictures consistently beating licensed theatricals in first-run airings by 1990 (*Business Wire* May 24 1990). This led Fuchs to re-emphasise ambitions for more prestige projects with contemporary relevance, arguing that

‘now we are examining the texture of America with people who are less heroic...we want to show the different sides of the country. We are looking for characters who open the door to things about American life that we find most fascinating: the drug situation, the role of the government’ (Fuchs qtd Fabrikant Apr 1 1991)

For Pictures this was primarily represented by a continuing alternation between high-profile biopics alongside further overlaps with Showcase and genre pictures. In the former, Cooper worked with Ken Russell, Ron Hutchinson and Warner Brothers to produce and distribute overseas *Prisoner of Honor* (Russell) a historical biopic starring Richard Dreyfus as a wrongly imprisoned soldier. Contemporary ties were also aligned with Showcase through *Without Warning: The James Brady Story* (Toshiyuku Uno

⁸⁴ *Traveler's* Saville had directed *Mandela*, while writer Michael Eaton scripted *The Tragedy of Flight 103*. *Women & Men* structured around stars Beau Bridges, Melanie Griffith and Ray Liotta, as well as segments ‘Dusk Before Fireworks’, focusing on a woman and a gigolo, a one-night stand in ‘The Man in the Brooks Brothers Suit’ and ‘Hills Like White Elephants’, exploring the effect of an abortion on a couple.

1991). Exploring the aftermath of a Reagan press secretary's shooting and legal disputes on gun legislation, building relevancy appeals also saw alternation between low-cost romantic and futuristic action thrillers (*Fever* (Elikann 1991) *Deadlock* (Teague 1991)) into *Doublecrossed* (Young 1991), a Dennis Hopper-starring drug smuggling thriller with a focus on government conspiracy.

Building the value of Hollywood linked B-movie production also extended here into efforts to bridge the aggregated appeals of *Crypt* through feature *Cast a Deadly Spell* (Campbell). Produced by Gale Ann-Hurd (*The Terminator* Cameron 1984) from an initial theatrical project, the film represented a distinctive noir pastiche, blending the supernatural black comedy of *Tales from the Crypt* with a self-reflexive screenplay by *thirtysomething* writer Joseph Daugherty. Pictures' developing prestige subsequently reached a new landmark in late 1991 with *The Josephine Baker Story* (Gibson), a biopic of an African-American female singer in 1920s and 1930s Europe.

Josephine Baker was produced for \$9 million with David Puttnam and Robert Halmi, and commissioned regular screenwriter Ron Hutchinson and cinematographer Elemer Ragalyi, as well as John Kemeny, producer of *Simon Wiesenthal*. Production also returned to the economy of Eastern European shooting. In 1991 it became the first HBO original film to win a Best Picture Emmy, taking five awards from twelve nominations. Viewed retrospectively, the evolution of the historical biopic from its 1980s roots through rising budget and increasingly high-profile Hollywood and international talent alongside established collaborators and production economies into *Baker's* arguably epitomised the careful planning and development of HBO Pictures' upscale prestige.

At the same time, Showcase experimented with adapting Pictures' biopic success into new transatlantic deals. This included collaborating with Amnesty International and Channel Four's newly established film division Film Four (Rohter Apr 18 1991) for *One Man's War* (Toledo) a biopic starring Anthony Hopkins that examines the life of a doctor resisting a South American dictatorship. While also developing a successful sequel to *Women & Men*, switching to US production and a range of Hollywood directors,⁸⁵ the flexible appeal of the anthology format also

⁸⁵ *Women & Men II: In Love There Are No Rules* sees Jonathan Demme, Mike Figgis and Krisi Zea work on segments 'A Domestic Dilemma', 'Mara' and 'Return to Kansas City', covering

highlighted new potential for New York and East Coast production. In 1991 Potter and Callender worked with New York independent producer Francine LeFrak, as well as a range of female directors, including documentary filmmaker Penelope Spheeris for *Prison Stories: Women on the Inside* (Deitch; Silver Micklin; Spheeris), a three-part verite study.⁸⁶

Strong ratings, subscriber value and crossover award success consequently reflected Pictures and Showcase's stable infrastructure and compatible quality control through a close-knit, well-established executive structure. This offered a basis for generating aggregate appeals and exceptional niche programs, retaining compatibility over subscription rivals. In this way, while histories note how HBO films exploited pay cable freedoms to adapt broadcast formats (Hillier 1992; Mullen 2003; Anderson 2008; Heller 2008), this can be focused through longer-term efforts to manage the subscription service. Success therefore saw Pictures' expand its ambitions in August 1991 by incorporating Canadian studio Citadel as an in-house producer, while creating HBO Worldwide Pictures as a venture for acquiring and distributing titles overseas (Parisi Aug 22 1991).

However, with foreign distribution still complicated by multiple pre-buy deals, potential for boosting revenues while centralising control also produced some basic cable spin-offs, including the sale of Western *Montana* (Graham) to TNT in 1990 (Mullen 2003: 147). Preserving exclusivity also aligned with basic cable investments in original films. TNT, USA and Lifetime all established film units tailoring low-budget and co-produced films to their niche brands. Overlaps and key distinctions were also retained with Showtime.

Still struggling to reproduce the series success of the 1980s on a more limited budget alongside occasional specials under former HBO executives Frank Biondi and Tony Cox, Showtime looked for distinction through wider acquisition of genre films. Emulating HBO's B-movie cycles, Showtime countered HBO with more films, acquiring titles through series Showtime Pictures for All Ages and Showtime Original

drinking and the family, an American writer in Paris, and a New York boxer's marriage in 1939.

⁸⁶ *Prison Stories'* continuity also extended to director Joan Micklin Silver's work on melodrama *Finnegan, Begin Again*, while segments include 'Parole Board', 'Esperanza' and 'New Chicks' in alternating mother and daughter relationships, Puerto Rican families and a new inmates' struggle to adjust to prison life.

Pictures. The service also compensated for reduced feature costs by co-financing high-quality short films *30 Minute Movies* (Walley Oct 14 1991).⁸⁷

HBO Pictures and Showcase's extension of longer-term cycles and tightening compatibility between the annual slate and links between documentary and series programming therefore retained closer forms of exclusivity. Attention to this stability can again be used to complicate glosses of HBO's subscriber identity during this period, with Anderson dismissing original films in particular as doing 'very little to redefine the relationship between HBO and its subscribers, who thought of HBO as a luxury brand, a network to watch occasionally' (Anderson 2008: 32). Viewing HBO's programming less in terms of eclectic value than as contributions to aggregate cycles can again be used to demonstrate clearer subscriber strategies. Moreover, as with the late 1980s, this enabled new degrees of cross-promotion between formats. This was best demonstrated by efforts by 1991 to tie the more traditionally self-contained HBO Sports into other programs.

During the period the division began to expand from its newsmagazine and live events foundation to complement the slow growth of PPV venture TVKO (Sandomir Feb 4 1992), while reflecting Seth Abraham's concerns over the long-term programming challenges of sports licensing's 'disorganised anarchy' (Abraham qtd Quintd Nov 17 1989), intensified following Showtime's move into boxing in the late 1980s. This took several notable early forms, from commissioning a Spike Lee short film on Mike Tyson (Ashe Dec 15 1990) to adapting reliance on cheap sporting compilations with historical special *When It Was a Game* in July 1991.

Combining 8mm and 16mm baseball footage with voiceovers (Quintd Jul 5 1991), the special arguably adapted both existing sports formats and the prestige value of specials such as *Dear America* and *Common Threads*. Drawing on both HBO's extensive catalogue of live sports from the early 1970s, and Time Inc's longer-term newsreel archives, documentary prestige became an initial strategy for widening the appeal of the division from occasional overlaps with series, films and documentaries (*Ist & Ten; Long Gone*) (Nelson Oct 20 1991).

⁸⁷ This included financing success with Oscar-nominated short science fiction film *12:01PM* (Heap 1990), followed in 1991 by nominations for short *Session Man* (Winston 1991).

In this way, steps towards extending the HBO brand within Time Warner tested interdependent trends but retained continuities with stubborn Time-era exclusivity across multiple new ventures. Subscriber value therefore remained paramount, emphasising the drives of the 1980s and caution over sacrificing programming control. These strategies were reinforced from 1992 to 1994 as wider programming success and brand extensions were reconciled with a further intensification of subscriber aggregation.

‘I don’t think we’ll have as many series as the networks, or even series like theirs...because then we’d be just like them’: 1992-1994

Wider industry interdependence continued from 1992 through further mergers, deregulation and experimentation with digital technologies. In 1993 Viacom acquired Paramount for \$8.2 billion (Marich Sep 13 1993), while taking over video chain Blockbuster. A 1992 Cable Act also strengthened the value of channels and programming by deregulating ownership, curbing inflationary subscription rates but encouraging must-carry legislation for systems. This helped produce a wave of new channels, including new Turner animated ventures the Cartoon Network (1992) and classic film channel TCM (1994). News Corp also consolidated FOX’s success with the creation of FX, a channel devoted to rerun programming from 20th Century Fox, while Paramount and Universal’s co-venture The USA Network spun-off The Sci-Fi Channel.

These new channels helped encourage greater cross-ownership between MSO and content owners as digital technology pushed for more channels, and overlaps with the growing popularity of commercial internet services. Early planned mergers between MSO providers and telecommunications giants however stalled (Perren 2004a: 250), although investments began in adding digital services to existing systems. DBS, or Digital Broadcast Satellite, also reached new landmarks through the launch of cooperative USSB and DirecTV services by electronics manufactures Hubbard and Hughes Electronics. A group of leading MSOs also launched co-ventured system PrimeStar (Parisi Mar 4 1993). DirecTV initially specialised in PPV channels and pay cable, while USSB looked to carry basic cable channels.

Time Warner’s contribution to these trends was however disrupted by a management overhaul in 1992, with Steve Ross’s death from cancer followed by the

sacking of Nicholas and the appointment of Levin as CEO (Bruck 1995: 307). Promising to make Time Warner a leader in new media, Levin declared that ‘our destiny is interactivity’ (Levin qtd Clurman 1992: 337). Licensing branded content and selling subscriptions and advertising for television channels encouraged efforts to re-centralise ownership. Deals were made to transfer equity stakes from Japan to telecommunications giant US West and Canadian media company Seagram in 1994 to reduce Time Warner’s post-merger debt (Fabrikant May 18 1993). The conglomerate also tested contracts with fast-growing internet provider AOL (*PR Newswire* May 19 1994).

A widening channel landscape, supported by further cable markets overseas and anticipations of digital carriage saw primetime broadcasters and channels diversify programming. FOX again found success in widening its share of network affiliates and advertising revenue (Perren 2004a: 236).⁸⁸ News Corp CEO Rupert Murdoch targeted FOX’s expansion to a ‘full service’ network for the second half of the 1990s, adding global sports franchises and news channels (Perren 2004a: 241). This also included aggressive efforts to build a presence for FOX and News Corp-branded channels in Latin America and the Far East (Perren 2004a: 246). In the US, FOX widened audiences by winning the rights to the NFL, and found another worldwide hit with *The X-Files* (Perren 2004a: 309). Competition from FOX and cable also saw rival networks look to further distinguish channel identities and experiment with programming.

Notable successes included NBC’s more aggressive branding of its Thursday night line-up of quality sitcoms and dramas as ‘must see TV’ from 1993. This competed with ABC’s investment in the more adult-themed police procedural *NYPD Blue* (1993-2005) (Lowry Dec 3 1993), and miniseries such as Oliver Stone’s *Wild Palms*. Moreover, ABC had looked to arrest ratings slides in 1990 and 1991 with the David Lynch-produced serial drama *Twin Peaks*, which won considerable critical praise and a cult following before second-season declines derailed its future. In 1991 NBC appointed Warren Littlefield as head of programming, encouraging further quality dramas to brand the network. By 1994 this notably included the award-winning, if low-rated Baltimore crime series *Homicide: Life on the Streets* (1993-1999) (Lotz 2007c: 270).

⁸⁸ This included scheduling blocks of female-oriented shows on Monday nights, African-American series on Thursdays, action and science fiction on Friday, reality programming on Saturdays, and 18-49 men with football and action series on Sundays.

Leading cable channels continued to distinguish themselves by selling channel formats and producing original programming. MTV notably found success with low-budget reality series *The Real World* in 1992, as well as experimental animated series *Beavis & Butthead*. The latter contributed to a range of animated blocks that marketed stylish, adult-oriented series such as *Aeon Flux* (1991-1995) and *The Head* (1994-1996), while generating merchandising revenue. Nickelodeon also continued to emulate Disney in building a global family brand (Sandler 2004: 52), selling itself overseas and across Viacom divisions through Nicktoon programming.

Digital optimism saw the pay cable market experience a similar growth from 1992, with HBO and Cinemax particularly benefiting from DBS promotion (Galloway Jul 13 1994). For HBO, the subscriber base reached 23.7 million in 1993, and generated \$200 million in profits for Time Warner (Block May 20 1993). Developing the cable infrastructure also gained momentum, adding Cinemax channels to multiplex packages to boost subscriber turn-over by 7.8% in test markets (Dempsey Jan 10-Jan 16 1994). However, reliance on film exhibition exclusivity continued to decline as Encore launched further niche service Starz to compete with Cinemax and The Movie Channel (Tobenkin Feb 2 1994), while new basic channels such as FX benefited from exclusive Fox output deals (Dempsey May 16-May 22 1994).⁸⁹

One solution was to again diversify long-term ancillary revenues by further licensing the HBO name to international co-ventured subscription channels. This included moves into Scandinavia and New Zealand (Layne Nov 10 1992), the expansion of HBO Ole into HBO Brasil and the Far Eastern market through HBO Asia in 1992. Expanding the latter from Singapore into Thailand and the Philippines by 1994, co-ventures with Time Warner, Sony and Universal again widened revenue streams but retained translation issues. Particular tensions over censorship emerged here in Asia (McIntosh 2008: 66). Exploiting new global revenue streams within Time Warner was therefore joined to priority of reinforcing US subscription market share.

1992 and 1994 marketing campaigns 'More Than Just Movies' and 'The Sure Thing' (Miller May 20 1994) promoted compatible value here. This was complemented by Cinemax's continuing focus on counter-programming HBO with expanded genre and demographic film rotation, as well as more frequent erotic segments (Dempsey May

⁸⁹ In 1992 Showtime also launched classic-movie service Flix to compete with cut-price rivals.

24 1993). In terms of adding new series to the subscription package, Albrecht however noted some caution in 1993, suggesting that

‘I don’t think we’ll have as many series as the networks, or even series like theirs...because then we’d be just like them. And there aren’t that many good ideas around. But we’ll try to have a handful of the best. They’re certainly here to stay and I think they will expand’
(Albrecht qtd Galloway Apr 26 1993)

From 1992 and 1994 these ventures primarily worked to build on the licensing potential and subscriber popularity of *Tales from the Crypt* and *Dream On*. These were complemented by a handful of new series, most notably award-winning sitcom *The Larry Sanders Show* and late-night comedy programming.

For *Tales from the Crypt*, limited season orders continued to build the series around first-run Saturday and midweek premieres, while aggregating themed marathons of episodes. Long-term ancillary value for its multiple studio partners also increased as Universal developed the franchise into a theatrical feature (*Demon Knight* Dickerson; Adler 1995). The series was also sold into domestic and international syndication, while being adapted for a children’s animation and a merchandising line. However, with HBO remaining an exclusive pay cable window, the series also contributed to stable primetime and late-night programming blocks with network-length seasons of *Dream On*.

The latter’s incorporation of more upscale appeals was enhanced in August 1992 with the critical success of half hour comedy *The Larry Sanders Show*. Licensed for a thirteen episode run through production company Brillstein-Grey and Columbia for a ‘few hundred thousand dollars’ (Albrecht qtd Higgins 2003), the deal saw HBO work with comedian Garry Shandling. Having developed *It’s Garry Shandling’s Show* at Showtime, *Sanders* again encouraged concessions to a network-type model and adaptations to popular broadcast formats. However, like *Dream On* it also worked within more specific trends for comedy aggregation and wider prestige cycles.

Based around the production of a late-night talk show and the backstage workplace comedy of its host and crew, the series merges on-air pastiche and mock-

verite footage. The latter is distinguished through 16mm film recording and taped segments for the chat show, while developing a mix of self-deprecating celebrity cameos and longer-running, frequently provocative satires of industry trends. Viewed as a landmark for showcasing HBO's potential to brand itself through quality series, Plasketes argues that *Larry Sanders* broke censorship restrictions while featuring authentic 'emotional insights' into 'various personal and professional situations' (Plasketes 2008: 191).

Williamson has also discussed the series as a prototype for HBO's later success with industry 'insider' comedy differentiated by production values, adult content and a 'complex layering of styles that challenges the conceived notion of the sitcom as a visually muted and limited form' (Williamson 2008: 112). This in turn overlapped with the success of Emmy-winning sitcoms from NBC in the period (*Seinfeld*, *Mad About You* (1992-1999)), generating critical praise as a breakthrough for quality cable television.

However, the series can again be returned to more specific comedy aggregate trends. In terms of precedent, Haggins and Lotz note some demographic consistency with *Dream On* through a 'white male baby boomer nearing middle age' (Haggins, Lotz 2008: 163) while Morreale identifies influences from *Tanner '88*'s mockumentary format (Morreale 2008: 114-115). *Larry Sanders*' roots arguably went further though, extending HBO, Cinemax and Comedy Channel trends in its reflexive video satire, celebrity deprecation and upscale pathos. The latter focus on backstage television networks and shows had been particularly successful for Showcase and Pictures films *Lip Service* and *The Image*.

More specifically, in 1992 standup specials had experimented with celebrity satire, from Sandra Bernhard's *Sandra After Dark* (Boskovich) to Roseanne and Tom Arnold's *The Naked Truth*. In addition, a primetime focus on formal experimentation and psychological pathos can be traced back to 1991's *Sessions*. As a result, *Sanders*' impact continued to develop the wider appeal of original series while forming part of longer trends for comedy re-aggregation from Cinemax around 18-34 and wider upscale appeals for heavy prime-time promotion and late-night rotation.

Scheduled in first-run primetime slots with *Dream On* on Wednesday nights, with *Crypt* also running on Wednesdays from October 1992, criticism of ‘scattered’ exhibition practices can again be revised into the more non-linear linking of aggregate comedy and anthology blocks across the monthly service. This came against suggestions by Albrecht that hit series could be more aggressively promoted in marketing materials, where the network were ‘just starting to do programming for specific time slots’ (Albrecht qtd Hornaday Nov 7 1993). Premiering weekly series on Wednesday nights as a first-run comedy block consequently extended earlier Showtime experiments with *Brothers* and *Garry Shandling’s Show* in competing for primetime audiences.

By 1994 *Crypt*, *Dream On* and *Sanders* had the highest aggregate ratings for original cable programming (Tyrer Sep 26 1994). Moreover, while continuing HBO’s dominance of the CableACEs, also began to break into Emmy nominations. This success encouraged efforts to participate in studio syndication, with *Crypt* and *Dream On* reruns moving to FOX (*Hollywood Reporter* Dec 23 1993; de Moraes Oct 21 1994) for 1995 tests. With *Dream On* having recorded extra footage without R-rated content (Haggins, Lotz 164), these options offered further evidence for widening series revenues beyond subscriber value. This was also boosted by a long-term output deal with syndicator Rysher Entertainment in 1993 to market HBO programs to overseas territories (Dempsey Jul 29 1993).

Beginning to establish syndication options for HBO-produced programming also expanded to HBO Independent Productions’ development of sitcoms and comedies for broadcast networks. Downtown Productions’ collaboration with Comedy Central also boosted production. From 1992 HIP found success with further FOX commissions (Perren 2004a: 161), while also producing comedy magazines and procedural satires for ABC (*Daily Variety* Jun 9 1992). However, developing more niche series again contributed to the more immediate and long-term value of strengthening exclusive comedy aggregation.

In 1992 HBO sold the rights to late-night series staple *Kids in the Hall* to CBS for new first-run episodes (*Daily Variety* May 29 1992), and replaced it with *Hardcore TV* (1994) a limited run pastiche sketch show rotated in midnight slots. Broadening accessibility for the block also expanded to scheduling *One Night Stand* comedy

specials at 11pm from the summer of 1992, while attempting to develop chat show formats. Beginning in February 1992 with a pilot order for a show hosted by female comedian Paula Poundstone, a long-term series run was commissioned in 1994 with standup Dennis Miller for *Dennis Miller Live*. The series launched for a limited season on Friday nights from April 22nd to May 27th. Shot on the CBS lot, the show worked around standup monologues, a live band and a single guest discussing a single topical theme.⁹⁰

Jeffrey Jones has framed *Dennis Miller Live* as providing further HBO adaptation of quality formats negotiating middlebrow values. In this case, niche-marketed political chat shows promoted ‘brash yet smart and entertaining political humour beyond the pale of typical network talk show programming’ (Jones 2008a: 172). The format consequently aligned *Miller Live* with the programming success of Comedy Central, now an established part of cable systems with 31 million subscribers by 1994. Downtown Productions had also notably helped the channel to ratings and critical praise with the Bill Maher-hosted political chat show *Politically Incorrect* (1993-2002) (Parisi Jan 18 1993). Jones’ identification of *Miller Live*’s mix of provocative comedy and broad political entertainment (Jones 2008a: 174) however extended Time and HBO connections to accessible politics and satire. This also strengthened production ties for series, working with *Larry Sanders* producers Brillstein-Grey.

Dennis Miller Live’s contribution to late-night subscriber blocks also overlapped with the popularity of erotica. Backstein and Andrews (2007) have suggested that early 1990s erotic anthologies provided a crucial bridge between the eclectic pay cable of the 1980s and late-1990s quality series. This was led by Showtime, who by 1993 emulated *Tales from the Crypt* with experiments in horror (*Body Bags* (1993) and noir-themed anthologies (*Fallen Angels* (1993-1995)). Showtime however found longer-term success with erotic series *Red Shoe Diaries* (Galloway Apr 26 1993). Ratings and subscriber success offered distinction for the service’s smaller range of programming. Aside from original film investment, Showtime had begun to counter HBO with occasional documentary co-productions, including the critically praised *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker’s Apocalypse* (Bahr, Hickenlooper, Coppola 1991).

⁹⁰ Early examples included ‘Violence in America’ (1.01) with Senator Bill Bradley and ‘Fame’ (1.02) with Jim Carrey.

Backstein and Andrews (2007) view *Red Shoes* as contributing towards pay cable's future middlebrow respectability through the use of male hosts, mystery plotting and stronger production values to create an 'upscale aura' (Backstein 307). Andrews suggests that this was explicitly gendered towards reaching female audiences, acting as a form of 'middlebrow feminization' (Andrews 2007: 314) of sexploitation. Erotic anthologies could therefore provide 'hints of what cable could evolve into' by enhancing 'adult-oriented fare' (Backstein 2001: 304). Backstein's latter point has been particularly picked up by Polan as an 'intermediate step in the elaboration of modern cable' programming (Polan 2009: 210) from earlier pay-cable wide reliance on eclectic 'cinema, sports and sex' (Polan 2009: 188) packages. Polan (2009) particularly glosses the format overlaps but more specific differences between the two pay networks here.

Key Time and Viacom-originating differences over content, emphasis and differentiation can be noted here. Moreover, they gloss over HBO's earlier, upscaling ventures into art-house feature anthologies with *Women & Men I* and *II* and female-led features *Prison Stories*, as well as wider upscale marketing in the 1980s. HBO had also tested the erotic anthology format in 1992 with Paris-set feature *Strangers*, but discarded a long-term series in favour of relying on more compatible comedy and erotic documentary cycles within a stable exhibition and personnel context. While female audiences admittedly remained a minor segment of HBO's subscriber audience, the radical shift implied by these histories arguably obscures more comprehensive forms of subscriber aggregation and earlier Time influences.

HBO's promotion of brand consistency through the service was also extended through film and documentary production, as well as limited Time Warner synergy. In terms of stabilising *America Undercover*, Nevins re-emphasised cautious long term growth and editorial control over updating in-house formats and selecting occasional acquired projects. These aimed to tap into 'the mood of the time' while acknowledging that 'since it takes a year to make, it has to have legs' (Nevins qtd Natale Oct 21 1992). Rotation of a flexible range of formats tied together through aggregate cycles and a general verite sensibility for provocative, but accessible realism continued. HBO also responded to shifts in broader tabloid newsmagazine coverage (Caldwell 1995: 388) by primarily rotating more sensational titles in late-night blocks. This aligned with wider transatlantic deals for the popularity of late-night programming, working with Channel

Four to develop *Shock Video* (1993-) an occasionally produced compilation of adult video footage alongside new editions of *Real Sex*.

Long-term PBS-style collaborations with Consumer Reports led here to experiments with 1994 erotic and semi-investigative special *Talking Sex: Making Love in the 90s*. Higher-end prestige appeals around taboo sexuality were also sustained, reuniting with *Common Threads*' producers Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman for *The Celluloid Closet* (1993) a study of Hollywood homosexuality. This joined to further projects on AIDS (*The Broadcast Tapes of Dr Peter* (Paperny 1993)) and family-oriented experimental shorts. Success in the latter culminated in an Oscar win for Down's Syndrome-focused special *Educating Peter* (Wurzberg 1992). Nevins also increased production of family and educational specials, including long-term teen issues series *Lifestories: Families in Crisis* (1992-1996) from 1992.

Stable documentary cycles were also matched and refined into award-winning forms by HBO Pictures and Showcase. Both had benefited from the wider distribution of HBO Home Video titles under Warner Video overseas (Berman Jul 24 1992). Moreover, Pictures' expanded pre-buy foreign rights with Odyssey Entertainment (*Daily Variety* Aug 7 1992; Toumarkine May 11 1993) helped attract development deals with independent producers (Parisi Apr 29 1992) against greater expectations of licensing revenue for overseas theatrical, syndication and video sales.

Cooper and Fuchs therefore outlined a commitment to raising budgets and attracting more familiar acting and production talent (Dempsey Sep 23 1993). By comparison, Showcase enhanced its smaller-scale boutique identity, developing long-term deals with Granada and the BBC on \$3.5 million average budgets (Parisi Apr 29 1992). They also began to option foreign distribution rights on titles with British broadcaster Anglia in 1993 (Riddell Mar 15 1993). Again, with pre-buy deals helping to stabilise network choice and oversight of annual film production, Pictures and Showcase could work towards refining popular subscriber formats while looking for crossovers between the broader and more upscale niche of the latter.

In 1992 Fuchs reaffirmed his ambition for Pictures to join Showcase and verite documentary success by upscaling character-led social commentary for quality productions. He suggested here that 'no one in America is playing the role of Dickens,

is writing about these incredible problems' (Fuchs qtd Carter Nov 1 1992). By 1994 Pictures combined its popular genre pictures with more award-winning features, and crossovers with Showcase and documentaries. Socially progressive themes and boomer settings ranged from 1911-set American Indian rights drama (*The Last of his Tribe* Hook 1992) to more provocative star-marketed studies of historical figures. This notably included McCarthy era defence lawyer and closet homosexual Ray Cohn (*Citizen Cohn* Pierson 1992), 1970s union leader Jackie Presser in *Teamster Boss: The Jackie Presser Story* (Reid 1992) and a \$9.2 million limited miniseries on Josef Stalin. Following *Josephine Baker's* flexible model for international co-development and Eastern European shooting, the lavishly shot *Stalin's* (Passer) premiere in November 1992 helped anchor HBO's 20th anniversary celebrations.⁹¹

While Dana Heller has argued that *Citizen Cohn* and *Stalin* combined biopic forms and pay cable freedoms through exploitation of 'disreputable lead characters' (Heller 2008: 47), this also worked within longer-term aggregate cycles. Docudramas *Afterburn* (Markowitz 1992) and *A Private Matter* (Micklin Silver 1992) sustained overlaps with *America Undercover* and Showcase through female-led explorations of military and 1960s abortion scandals. The latter was also cross-promoted in June with award-winning *America Undercover* special *Abortion: Desperate Choices* (Dickson, Fromke, Maysles 1992).⁹²

Higher prestige docudramas therefore complemented Showcase's sustained relationship with the BBC in 1992 for docudrama prestige, collaborating on *Dead Ahead: The Exxon Valdez Disaster* (Seed). Efforts to build broader appeal for subscriber and wider ancillary revenues also crossed into older-targeting HBO Pictures romantic comedies *For Richer, For Poorer* (Sandrich 1992) and *Running Mates* (Lindsay-Hogg 1992), a satire of a Presidential election love affair between a candidate and a partner

⁹¹ Frank Pierson returned from *Somebody Has to Shoot the Picture* to direct *Cohn*, while *Wiesenthal's* Abby Mann contributed the screenplay for *Teamster Boss*, with John Kemeny (*Josephine Baker*) co-producing along with stylistic continuity for period design, low-key lighting and occasional subjective POV flourishes from regular cinematographer Ragalyi. *Stalin* also boosted prestige style through cinematography by Vilmos Zsigmond (*Heaven's Gate* Cimino 1980).

⁹² *Afterburn* director Markowitz had previously worked on miniseries *A Dangerous Life*, while *A Private Matter* director Micklin Silver had formed part of the directorial tram for *Prison Stories*. In the latter, cinematographer Paul Elliott's 1960s period photography emulated his parallel work in 1930s-1980s shooting for *Cohn*. Produced by Albert Maysles with Susan Fromke and Deborah Dickson, *Abortion* went on to win Emmy and Peabody awards in 1993.

with a radical history. These were joined by baseball comedy *Comrades of Summer* (Wallace 1992), transplanting an American coach to the Russian leagues.

The latter film also encouraged further overlaps by 1994 with a series of award-winning HBO Sports documentaries. While continuing to promote TVKO and limited Warner synergy (O'Connor Jul 13 1992), a commitment to improving historical documentary specials led to a *When It was a Game* sequel (*When it was a Game II*) and the biopic *Arthur Ashe: Citizen of the World* (Anderson 1994). Broadening appeal from filler compilation segments (Horn Dec 8 1993), making the historical documentary and biopic a regular source of aggregated prestige reflected a new confidence in production by HBO Sports' producer Ross Greenburg by 1992. Suggesting that the *When it Was a Game* series 'changed the way I look at documentaries,' he remarked how 'one thing we've learned is you can't just splatter footage onto a cassette anymore and call it a documentary' (Greenburg qtd Nelson May 30 1992). With further collaborations with *Sports Illustrated* retaining a mix of live promotion and entertainment-led sports journalism, HBO Sports' specialist role within the service remained key to aggregating appeals from 1995.

With twenty-four nominations and four awards at the 1992 Emmys, Pictures had refined its slate by 1993 alongside Showcase in differentiating and re-aggregating post-1950s to 1980s upscaling boomer themes (the Cold War, McCarthyism, abortion, civil rights, 1960s liberalism, AIDS) into more contemporary adaptations. R-rated comedy and content appeals also retained primary distinction. This helped anchor key Pictures and Showcase cycles in 1993 and 1994 around prestige and transatlantic productions. Notable examples included corporate greed satires *Barbarians at the Gate* (Jordan 1993) and *White Mile* (Butler 1994),⁹³ while Showcase again worked with Granada for Beirut drama *Hostages* (Wheatley 1992) as well as extending its lower-budget verite docudrama style into inner-city healthcare drama *State of Emergency* (Linka Glatter 1994) and the Gulf War military corruption-focused *Doomsday Gun* (Young 1994).

As HBO's hold on the Emmys increased, with *Barbarians* sharing a second Best Picture Award with *Stalin* in 1993 and drawing level with ABC for total nominations, attention to programming increased. Auster (2000) has suggested that a formula for pay

⁹³ Larry Gelbart (*MASH*) adapted the bestselling *Barbarians* novel, while the project was initially developed and later distributed overseas by Columbia. *White Mile* also provided a rare collaboration with Viacom for overseas and syndicated distribution rights.

cable freedoms and budgets enabled HBO to support ‘auteur’ filmmakers marginalised by studios. This is used to establish further precedent for later series success. On the one hand, this was supported by a productive collaboration with director John Frankenheimer in 1994 for Attica riot drama *Against the Wall*, and South American environmental biopic *The Burning Season*. HBO also chose to remake Frankenheimer’s 1960s Cold War conspiracy thriller *The Enemy Within* (Darby 1994).⁹⁴ However, HBO’s growing awards success and promotion of an aggregate back-catalogue of quality titles for pay cable and HBO Video rights against settled video, syndication and foreign sales for individual pictures provoked some further production conflicts.

These tensions particularly surfaced around *And the Band Played On* (Spottiswoode) in 1993 as Fuchs, Cooper and director Roger Spottiswoode clashed over the docudrama, a star-driven AIDS history promoted as a major prestige event (Parisi Sep 10 1993). Final cut earlier in the year had been problematic, with Spottiswoode pushing for a more political ending over HBO’s desire for focusing on the emotional fall-out of the virus and implicit institutional failings (Parisi Apr 23 1993). Fuchs and Cooper eventually commissioned *Common Threads* director Bill Couturie to provide a less controversial ending that featured a candlelit vigil for AIDS victims. Interference was arguably vindicated, with the film collecting HBO’s third Best Picture Emmy in 1994, while sale to NBC produced a 17.5 million audience.⁹⁵

Continuing to develop B-level production to boost diversity and compatibility while recouping some costs through ancillary sales also saw highly rated stalker thriller *Blind Side* (Murphy 1993) sold to NBC for reruns (*Daily Variety* Feb 3 1993). BBC collaboration also renewed non-US theatrical distribution for spy thriller *Blue Ice* (Mulcahy 1992). Merging appeals for R-rated genre diversification and exclusive network cycles also encouraged further production crossovers, from *Blind Side* director Geoff Murphy working on Western *The Last Outlaw*, while crossovers between *Tales from the Crypt*’s horror comedy pastiche and broader upscale audiences were revived.

⁹⁴ Prestige ties were also enhanced here by screenwriter Ron Hutchinson, who worked on both *Against the Wall* and *The Burning Season*.

⁹⁵ *Women and Men 2* co-director Mike Figgis would also complain here of HBO’s role in editing the feature as an example of an ‘interfering television company that thinks it knows best’ (Figgis qtd Hillier 1992: 173).

In 1993 and 1994 Pictures worked with Warner Brothers to develop science fiction spoof remake *Attack of the 50 Ft. Woman* (Guest 1993) with *Cast a Deadly Spell* screenwriter Joseph Daugherty. Pictures also produced a less successful sequel to the *Deadly Spell* with darker McCarthy-era drama *Witch Hunt* (Schrader 1994).⁹⁶ Further moves in 1994 towards speculative science fiction drama *Fatherland* (Menaul) adapting a pre-sold bestseller, again explored broader quality control by commissioning Ron Hutchinson to work on the screenplay. Broader comedy compatibility was also developed by dark media satire *The Positively True Adventures of the Alleged Texas Cheerleader-Murdering Mom* (Ritchie 1993). By 1994 the process of widening options for ancillary participation consequently negotiated key subscriber cycles and a mature production infrastructure against rising secondary revenues.

This stability retained ties to and distinctions over rival development of original cable films. While TNT consolidated basic cable film prestige with award-winning miniseries *Gettysburg* (Maxwell 1993), Showtime notably widened its pre-buy and co-financing infrastructure to compete with HBO's B-movie cycles, from adapting 1950s genre franchises (Walley May 17 1993). Showtime also expanded a pool of independent financing for genre, prestige and family pictures for 1994 (Silverman May 20 1994).⁹⁷ Again, while B-level cycles and investments in more occasional prestige projects emulated HBO's success and particular co-production flexibility during the period, Showtime conceded distinction through wider licensing against HBO's tightening production infrastructure. This was notably reflected by HBO Showcase's maturity as a boutique division by 1994, which saw Callender and Potter extend ties to a boom in theatrical independent film.

By 1994 US independent film market had consolidated around an infrastructure of video distribution, foreign co-financing, multiplex expansion and promotion through festivals such as Sundance. In this climate, major independent studios such as Miramax and New Line Cinema had emerged to box office success with niche-marketed prestige and more explicit features. Engaging with previously discussed niche trends, Wyatt and

⁹⁶ *Witch Hunt*, starring Dennis Hopper, frames the McCarthy hearings through supernatural plotlines, but received largely negative reviews after the lighter *Cast a Deadly Spell*.

⁹⁷ Compared with Showtime's lower budgets, shorter shooting schedules, and competition through wider studio co-financing and Viacom production, HBO's more advanced infrastructure and investments offered significant differences from their pay cable rival. Directors particularly noted how the extra shooting time and budget made a 'huge difference in what you are able to do' in terms of quality production (Roth qtd Hillier 1992: 120).

Perren note how Miramax in particular translated exploitation and middlebrow art-film marketing to establish clear brand identities for a valuable crossover market.

This was epitomised by Miramax's success in 1989 with Steven Soderbergh drama *sex, lies and videotape*. Sold at Sundance, and marketed to art-house theaters and multiplexes through auteur experimentation and explicit content, the film demonstrated the potentially high value of selling previously marginal films in mainstream markets (Perren 2001; Wyatt 1998: 79-80).⁹⁸ Miramax was complemented here by New Line, which expanded from similar exploitation and video market origins to lucrative revenues with genre franchises such as *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (Barron 1990) *A Nightmare on Elm St* (Craven 1984) and *House Party* (Hudlin 1990)). The studio also invested in art-house titles with brand-name auteurs, including *My Own Private Idaho* (Van Sant 1991) and *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me* (Lynch 1992), and established speciality division Fine Line Features to distribute foreign and smaller art-house releases.

Levy has suggested that the contemporary 'indie' movement helped standardise art-film and exploitation marketing for the 1990s, where

‘the maturation of the baby-boomer generation, which possesses more sophisticated taste, more disposable time, and more money to spend on movies, has provided indispensable backing for indies. The core audience for indie films is small - about 5 to 10 percent of the market - but it's a loyal and appreciative one’ (Levy 2001: 28)

By 1994 Miramax and New Line were acquired by Disney and Turner, while other studios established speciality divisions such as Sony Pictures Classics (1992) and Fox Searchlight (1994) for targeting niche markets. This in turn encouraged the wider exploitation of 'indie' brands across media. By the end of 1994 the widening of a commercial art-house market was reinforced by MSO Cablevision's creation of subscription service The Independent Film Channel (IFC) as a stable outlet for recent

⁹⁸ Miramax's exploitation and art-house marketing strengths also saw the studio achieve success with titles ranging from *My Left Foot* (Sheridan 1989) to *Reservoir Dogs* (Tarantino 1992), *The Crying Game* (Jordan 1992), *Just Another Girl on the I.R.T* (Harris 1992), *The Piano* (Campion 1993) and *Pulp Fiction*.

and past features, documentaries and original programs following the thriving independent scene (Dempsey Sep 12-Sep 18 1994).⁹⁹

HBO and Showtime's part in this 'indie' boom primarily emerged through adding financial backing for independents and wide television exposure. By 1994 this included HBO's acquisition of a cable premiere for neo-noir dramas *Red Rock West* (Dahl 1993) and *The Last Seduction* (Dahl 1994) (Simon Jul 31 1994). However, HBO and Showcase also participated in specific production trends, notably support for Sundance projects, independent directors from New York and transatlantic collaborations for art-house marketed features. By 1993 Showcase had continued to combine transatlantic prestige titles with provocative co-productions, including Martin Luther King assassin special *The Trial of James Earl Ray*. However, in 1993 Callender and Potter financed *Daybreak* (Tolkin) an urban AIDS allegory in a science-fiction setting.

Adapted from an off-Broadway play and partially developed at Sundance, *Daybreak* offered opportunities to fold independent cinema's complementary mix of upscale and adult-themed material into existing cycles. In this context, with a continued emphasis on mainstream Hollywood film rotation, and more specialist titles on Cinemax, integration with the 'indie' scene placed HBO at the centre of a wave of commercially appealing films and personnel. Some caution however remained over pursuing more avant-garde films. This notably included a deal with David Lynch in 1993 for a poorly received special (*Hotel Room*) that sustained the director's problematic collaboration with broadcast television.¹⁰⁰

Other options however included financing and offering exhibition for female directors. In 1993 Showcase then helped finance Alison Anders' low-budget Los Angeles gang war and family drama *Mi Vida Loca*, later selling theatrical rights to Sony Pictures Classics. Showtime also competed here for financing, but looked towards the exploitation and genre end of the market, establishing development deals with young

⁹⁹ For more on the early history and marketing discourse of the Independent Film Channel, see Robert Eberwein (2004) 'The IFC and Sundance: channeling independence' in *Contemporary American Independent Film: From the Margins to the Mainstream*, Chris Holmlund, Justin Wyatt eds, Routledge, 231-247

¹⁰⁰ The special, built around a three-part exploration of a single hotel room that extended anthology trends, was critically dismissed as 'flat and wooden' (Hilsman Jan 7 1993), and a 'pretentious trilogy of oblique, smarmy psychodramas' (Roush Jan 8 1993).

filmmakers such as Robert Rodriguez (Simon Jul 31 1994). Showcase consequently offered an existing production infrastructure for investing in and folding 'indie' trends into HBO's complementary desire to brand itself through distinctive but accessible quality productions.

These moves also overlapped with a comprehensive effort to market HBO to African-American niche audiences, while re-aggregating exclusive upscale audiences by 1995. With the demographic already a key niche for marketing boxing and comedy, more aggressive investment began with HIP's production of *Roc* for FOX. This was followed in 1992 with Warner co-produced sitcom *Martin* (1992-1997) as a vehicle for stand-up Martin Lawrence. Stand-up connections also extended in 1992 to African-American focused stand-up series *Def Comedy Jam* (1992-1996; 2006-) packaged by New York hip-hop producer Russell Simmons as a brand extension of his Def Jam record and merchandise label.

Linking HIP production through *Roc* co-producer Stan Lathan and host Martin Lawrence, as well as *The Larry Sanders Show*' Brillstein-Grey, the show drew criticism as part of wider trends in adapting 'ghetto-centric' rap and hip-hop culture to conglomerate-backed niche outlets. Viewed by S. Craig Watkins as an exploitation of the 'commercial vitality of hip-hop culture in general and the popularisation of gangster rap music specifically (Watkins 1998: 237), this crossed into independent feature and studio speciality cycles focusing on black youth. These included perspectives on the inner-city ghetto (*Menace 2 Society* (Hughes, Hughes 1993); *Boyz n the Hood* (Singleton 1991); *Just Another Girl on the IRT*) that Watkins describes as a corporate 'merchandising of hardcore' (Watkins 1998: 240-241).

In this respect, HBO's promotion of *Def Jam*, and later production through HIP of Martin Lawrence theatrical stand-up feature *You So Crazy* (Schlamme 1994) formed part of more general attacks on Time Warner's lucrative but controversial investment in explicit rap label Interscope. In 1993 Potter moved to defend *Def Jam*'s late-night popularity as not 'stereotypical of anything' (qtd Karlin Feb 16 1993) than widening exposure for comedians. The show's popularity for linking 18-34 and African-American appeals was consequently extended in 1993 to new ventures into Hispanic demographics, building on *Selecciones* language tracks and a short-lived creation of

HBO Tropix as a division exploring program development for HBO and potential sale to Latin American partner channels (*Daily Variety* Nov 25 1992).

Following the African-American model, this ranged from producing John Leguizamo stand-up special *Spic-O-Rama* (Askin 1993) to developing a Hispanic sketch comedy with the actor for FOX, before producing four half pilots in 1993 for *Society's Ride*, a multi-ethnic, hip hop and rap showcase hosted and produced by Rosie Perez for Friday midnight slots in June 1993. This would be re-focused again in 1994 for short-lived Latino stand-up series *Loco Slam!* Identification with late-night programming alongside erotica and comedy however began to shift towards upscaling aggregate trends by 1994 through Showcase and documentary cycles, as well as further series hybrids in widening general appeal.

Def and *Society's Ride's* formats, importing hip-hop themed musical sequences and shooting within Manhattan strengthened Showcase and *America Undercover's* long-running investment in production within the city, as well as documentary cycles for inner-city culture and crime from 1989. In this way, Showcase began to negotiate 'ghetto-centric' exploitation fears in beginning to produce broader upscale urban productions in 1993, notably represented by *Strapped* (Whitaker 1993). A Brooklyn-set, hip-hop soundtracked production incorporating handheld camera-work and video effects, *Strapped* was promoted as a morality lesson on gun crime. Early success, emulating theatrical 'indie' praise for *Boyz n the Hood's* and *Menace 2 Society's* crossover cautionary tales, produced a failed theatrical sale to Sony Pictures Classics, with HBO refusing to sacrifice first-run subscription exclusivity (*Hollywood Reporter* May 19 1993).

Upscaling production also extended here to HIP's development of critical inner-city miniseries *Laurel Avenue* (Franklin 1993) with *Roc* producer Charles S. Dutton. Nevins and Potter's success with *America Undercover* verite cycles similarly produced a range of African-American prestige and more specialist urban documentaries. This ranged from collaboration with Alan and Susan Raymond and the Levin brothers for inner-city school system study (*I am a Promise: The Children of Stanton Elementary School* (1993) and more explicit gang warfare verite project *Gang War: Bangin' In Little Rock* (Levin) in 1994. During the period HBO also developed prestige documentary *Mo' Funny: Black Comedy in America* (Smith 1993) as a history of

African-American stand up, while expanding collaboration with the BBC for civil rights histories such as *Southern Justice: The Murder of Medgar Evers*, as well as helping produce family animated special *Whitewash* (Sporn 1994).

Not all experiments with aggregating African-American appeals with broader programming trends were a success though. This included internal network criticism of popular HBO Pictures' werewolf feature *Full Eclipse* (Hickox 1993). A clumsy mix of LA cop drama, addiction and the supernatural, Fuchs tried to distance Pictures from its gratuity (Miller May 20 1994). Moreover, 1994's *Cosmic Slop* (Hudlin, Hudlin, Sullivan), a three-part anthology developed with *House Party*-franchise producers Reginald and Warrington Hudlin was pitched as a 'cross between *Tales from the Crypt* and *Def Comedy Jam*' (Meisler Nov 7 1994).

While each segment mixes a science fiction or noir adaptation into inner-city or civil rights drama, while being hosted by music producer George Clinton, the format was not extended. More broadly though, African-American cycles arguably merged long-term aggregate trends. Aligning with selected Time Warner synergy, while preserving exclusive stability, HBO's expansionist plans worked around a clear subscriber foundation. The accelerated rate of development of African-American audiences as a valuable mix of niche and wider aggregate audiences consequently reinforced established practices by 1995.

Conclusion

HBO's development after the Time Warner deal demonstrated both change and significant continuity from the 1980s. While existing histories suggest an inevitable re-focus of a brand identity through original programs, aggregate subscriber strategies remained crucial to success. This shared links with, but also retained historical forms of exclusivity and an emphasis on quality subscriber exhibition from the Time-era. Moreover, HBO's investment in new ventures and original programming reflected mixed success in beginning to manage a consistent brand identity beyond subscription roots. In this way, attention to the durability of subscriber tactics arguably demonstrates how risk in the latter was repeatedly offset by more conservative trends.

These first three chapters have broadly aimed to provide a more comprehensive history of HBO as a distinctive subscriber service emerging from Time in the 1970s and 1980s, and as negotiating new brand extensions with familiar strategies in the early 1990s. Institutional exclusivity and trust in subscriber aggregation beyond 'utility brand' dismissals can be used to provide crucial distinctions from standard accounts of HBO's transformation from an eclectic subscription to an original program-led brand identity by the mid-1990s. Chapter Four will therefore complicate accounts of HBO's re-brand changes from 1995 to 1999 through 'not TV' embodying programs as a precursor to 2000s brand management by contextualising programs within these aggregate subscriber strategies.

Chapter Four: 1995-1999

Re-branding by 1996 around the slogan ‘It’s Not TV: It’s HBO,’ the network’s success with high-quality programs has been used to define its brand identity as a ‘creative change agent’ (Edgerton, Jones 2008: 327) for the television industry. Building from new waves of corporate consolidation, raised brand marketing and digital technologies tied into debates surrounding niche audiences, and a deregulated, globalised industry. Existing histories use this period as one of significant transition from HBO away from a ‘utility brand’ towards a producer of distinctive content able to set up later management across platforms.

This chapter aims to rethink this process in several ways. Primarily, it views quality programs within longer-term subscriber cycles, understood again through coordination of exhibition and production cycles. Moreover, discussions of middlebrow branding tensions can be contextualised around a more specific integration with trends for independent filmmaking in New York during the period. Considering how HBO intensified, rather than reinvented its early identity as a prototype for rivals in the mid to late 1990s, a clearer foundation can be proposed for analysing HBO’s further expansion into the 2000s. It is first necessary though to review existing histories of the network from 1995 to 1999.

‘A new hybrid functioning on different levels’: Building the ‘Not TV’ Brand: 1995-1999

Between 1995 and 1996 the media industries experienced further consolidation. The repeal of the Fin-Syn Rules in 1995 and the passing of a 1996 Telecommunications Act enabled studio and network cross-ownership, while opening up new markets for selling branded content. In this context, Disney acquired ABC, and Westinghouse CBS, while Paramount and Time Warner competed with FOX through niche broadcast networks UPN and WB. This encouraged further vertical integration and synergy between studios and networks (Flint Aug 1 1995).

A year later Time Warner expanded its filmed entertainment portfolio to the Turner group of leading cable brands, including CNN, TBS and TNT, as well as independent mini-major studio New Line (Flint, Cox et al Sep 22 1995; Peers Oct 11

1996). Encouraging digital access and convergence of media ownership and technology, the Telecommunications Act boosted a deregulatory climate, with Schatz framing a new era where the ‘logic of synergy and tight diversification met the larger forces of globalisation, digitisation, and US media deregulation’ (Schatz 2009: 25).¹⁰¹

For the US television industry, transitions formed around the branding ‘urgency of targeting through formats’ (Turow 1997: 105) while developing more exceptional shows ‘created expressly for a particular programming network as an explicit on-air statement to audiences and advertisers about the personality of the network’ (Turow 1997: 105). Wider distribution and merchandising looked to connect brand loyalty across media platforms, encouraging crossovers with lifestyle-marketing advertisers and consistent consumption patterns. Ron Becker describes here how a dot.com boom and general economic affluence established older boomer and younger Generation X demographics as the ‘upwardly mobile’ drivers of the ‘postindustrial information economy’ (Becker 2006: 186-187). This produced an intensification of network branding and wider brand management of content across markets for broadcasters and cable channels.

NBC found particular success here in branding its award-winning Thursday night ‘Must See TV’ upscale sitcom and drama block through thematic and intertextual links (San Martin 2003: 34).¹⁰² Establishing these kinds of network-specific brand relationships and programs also extended to UPN and the WB in adapting FOX tactics for aggregating African-American, cult genre, female, teenage and child demographics around 18-25 and 18-34 narrowcasting. Cable by comparison promoted niche value through basic channels reinforcing loyalty to distinctive formats, now sold globally and with spin-off services through digital systems (Sandler 2003: 93).

Increased production and co-production of niche looks consequently became a priority for better defining channel identities and providing content for global

¹⁰¹ For more on the immediate efforts at global consolidation, vertical and horizontal integration of the New Hollywood after 1995, see Thomas Schatz (1997) ‘The return of the studio system’ in *Conglomerates and the Media*, Eric Barnouw ed, New York: New York University Press, 73-106

¹⁰² San Martin points here to a ‘a series of structuring devices and intertextualities – intersecting, multi-episode storylines; ensemble casting; casting crossovers; cross-show promotional campaigns; uniformly high production values; a self-reflexive pastiche of popular cultural references; and similar direction, editing and writing – that reward viewers for watching the block in order in its entirety’ (San Martin 2003: 34)

distribution (Walley Aug 28 1995). Nickelodeon and MTV remained leaders here in adapting youth, music and reality-themed programming into wider licensing deals, while first-run action adventure and FOX-influenced animation experiments were made by the USA Network (*Duckman* 1994-1997). Moreover, ESPN and The Disney Channel¹⁰³ provided early experiments in synergy through cross-promoting shows, ABC's Monday Night Football franchise and family programming blocks.¹⁰⁴

Existing histories of HBO view these shifts as influencing a 'tipping point' (Edgerton, Jones 2008: 316) for re-focusing the network from monthly subscriptions to original programs. With competition limiting film exclusivity, and digital markets encouraging distinction, Edgerton and Jones suggest that HBO were 'stalled at about 19.2 million subscribers' (Edgerton, Jones 2008: 315) by the end of 1994, and needed to 'set itself apart from the competition for the second time in its short history by deciding to emphasise innovative, original programming above all else' (Edgerton, Jones 2008: 315). With Fuchs replaced as CEO by former chief financial officer Jeffrey Bewkes, who promoted Albrecht to head of programming as Potter departed. For Edgerton and Jones, the new management structure replaced Fuchs' 'controlling, top-down managerial style' with a 'collaborative, bottom-up way of doing business.' in doing so 'unleashing a great deal of creative energy and a new era at HBO' (Edgerton Jones 2008: 316).

Rogers et al argue here that despite his original programming ambitions, Fuchs had fallen 'short in his efforts to create a strong brand identity for the channel' (Rogers et al 2002: 51). An emphasis on promoting a 'wide range of programming' (Edgerton, Jones 2008: 316) as a 'monthly subscription service' (Albrecht qtd Edgerton 2008a: 8) could instead be substituted for selling the brand through weekly series able to establish loyalty to unique characteristics. For Anderson, this produced a marketing shift away from the pre-1995 HBO as a 'consistent and identifiable HBO brand, a luxury brand in a populist medium' (Anderson 2008: 30) into a content producer.

In this way, series programming offered both a 'deeper and more durable *relationship* between subscribers and the brand' (Anderson 2008: 30). These

¹⁰³ The Disney Channel was gradually rebranded as a basic, advertising-supported service from 1997.

¹⁰⁴ This included MTV's *Beavis & Butthead Do America* (Judge 1996) and Nickelodeon's production of Paramount-distributed *Harriet the Spy* (Hughes 1996).

connections, generating associations with high-quality content for recognition across media platforms was supported by the launch of the slogan ‘It’s Not TV, It’s HBO’ on October 20th, 1996. Investing more marketing resources in promoting hit series, while re-allocating resources towards series production launched a ‘slow and deliberate process’ (Edgerton 2008a: 8) of re-branding the network from 1997 to 1999. For existing histories, this saw HBO take an eclectic range of programming appeals from the pre-1995 era, and fuse them into shows embodying an exclusive brand identity able to attract quality demographics.

In this way, basic cable and pay cable offered solutions by 1999 to broadcast problems in adjusting to digital technology, branding and censorship. From criticism of studio-network favouritism (Peers Apr 2 1997) to caution over the rate of a change for an interactive digital infrastructure, the smaller production slates, limited co-production and niche marketing of cable offered a more flexible model for innovation.¹⁰⁵ Combined with conglomerate investments in DVD as an enhancement of VHS for television distribution, (Hettrick Jan 9 1998) and experiments in time-shifting TiVo players (Horowitz Mar 10 1999), the marketing of strong cable brands promised wider growth from 2000.

Pay cable’s experiments with digital multiplexing and DBS marketing established ideal precedent for changes, attracting early technology adopters and maintaining premium costs for expanding cable and satellite systems. With HBO increasing subscribers by 2.7 million from 1996 (Collier Feb 12 1997), ‘not TV’ marketing anchored wider distribution (McConville June 23 1997) on DBS for consolidating the network’s market lead and brand recognition. Levin consequently suggested that HBO’s brand is ‘so dynamic that it’s entering the digital future with the creative edge superior to our competition’ (Levin qtd Edgerton 2008a: 9).

Early digital plans notably included extending the multiplex in 1998 and 1999 around the ‘megabrand HBO the Works’ (Edgerton 2008a: 10) as a package of bonus

¹⁰⁵ On the one hand, DirecTV and USSB merged to control the DBS market and promote exclusivity (Hettrick; Jan 7 1998; Bolieks Apr 5 1999), while AT&T absorbed MSOs TCI and MediaOne to become the largest cable and phone provider in the US, while also taking a 25% share in Time Warner (Peers Feb 2 1999). However, with rising costs lowering consumer enthusiasm (Stern Dec 8-Dec 14 1997; Richmond Mar 3-Mar 9 1997), ambitious investments in Microsoft and NBC internet television (Hettrick May 4 1998), copyright disputes (Stern Oct 28 1998) slowed growth.

channels. This included 1998's HBO2 (time-shifting HBO and later re-branded as HBO Plus), HBO Signature (prestige films and specials) and HBO Family. In 1999 these expanded to include HBO Comedy and the younger, urban-focused HBO Zone. Rivals also followed HBO, with Showtime, Encore, Discovery, Nickelodeon and MTV all producing sub-channels mixing film, music and original programming rights by 1999 (Katz, Peers Nov 30-Dec 6 1998). Other ventures included adding affiliates to Asian, Eastern European and Latin American film channels, while HBO Enterprises' focused on gaining control of global syndication rights from Warner, Rysler and other distribution partners (Steuer May 8 1997).

Cable programming innovations also benefited from domestic tensions over broadcast content (Hettrick Jun 4 1998). With license fees spiralling for primetime series, the ability to attract quality and niche audiences was hit by anti-violence and sexual content campaigns, a V-chip censoring programming and battles over a standardised content system for broadcast networks (Bolieks May 2 1997; Stern Jun 4 1997; Boliek Feb 26 1998).¹⁰⁶ Eventually producing an MPAA-led compromise on ratings from family to TV-14 and TV-MA, effectively reproducing PG-13 to NC-17 in the latter, the Content Code added caution to primetime innovation while encouraging further cable distinction.

In the former, anxieties over TV-MA programming's syndication potential clashed with critical praise for dramas such as *NYPD Blue* and *Homicide*. This also created tensions over TV-14 ratings for the UPN and WB as they experimented with studio-linked niche franchises (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*; *Star Trek: Voyager*, UPN, 1995-2001) (Levin, Hontz May 12-May 18 1997), with the Columbine High School shootings in 1999 intensifying broadcast concerns over media violence.¹⁰⁷ In this way, while the broadcast networks continued to promote quality distinctions, with examples including ABC's *The Practice* (1997-2004) FOX's *Ally McBeal* (1997-2002)¹⁰⁸ and

¹⁰⁶ For more on the V-Chip legislation and censorship wars between Hollywood, networks and Washington, see Monroe E. Price (1998) *The V-Chip Debate: Content Filtering from Television to the Internet*, London: Routledge

¹⁰⁷ Lisa Parks (2003) has explored some of the audience and regulative responses to Columbine in 'Brave New Buffy: Rethinking TV Violence' in *Quality Popular Television*, Mark Jancovich, James Lyons eds, London: BFI, 118-133

¹⁰⁸ For an in-depth study of *Ally McBeal*'s contribution to quality television debates within this period, see Greg M. Smith (2007) *Beautiful TV: The Art and Argument of Ally McBeal*, Texas: Texas University Press. Discussion of key series from this period can be found in Jancovich, Lyons eds 2003 and Hammond, Mazdon ed 2005.

from late 1999 NBC's upscale-targeting *The West Wing* (1996-2006), immediate investments turned towards cheaper formats. From increased sports coverage and newsmagazines to reduced orders for original films and miniseries, ABC's surprise success in the summer of 1999 with game-show *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* (1999-) demonstrated lucrative potential for low-cost reality formats. Basic and pay cable's value for producers consequently increased as stable exhibition channels with expanding audiences (Richmond Apr 27-May 3 1998). Experiments in producing regular series continued here across the USA Network, the Sci-Fi Network, TNT, MTV and Nickelodeon.¹⁰⁹

Retaining an aggregate foundation in the latter however remained key to grounding a family entertainment brand, with the core channel format working around Nick Jr (preschool), Snick (teen) and Nick at Nite (adult) segments (Pecora 32) as a basis for exporting channel formats and spin-off programs. This was also emulated by the growth of Cartoon Network as a rerun site for classic animation and original programming for global franchising in the period, defined by series such as *The Powerpuff Girls* (1998-2005) and licensing of DC Comics properties (Sandler 2003).

The more specialist branding distinction of TV-MA programming and greater programming resources however became crucial to attracting quality producers to HBO. Rogers et al suggest that Bewkes and Albrecht HBO initially re-experimented with Fuchs' 'adult-oriented content' (Rogers et al 2002: 51) by developing programs that 'upped the ante on violence, sexuality, and the macabre' (Rogers et al 2002: 51) while looking for stronger quality production hybrids. More specifically, formats aimed to improve on the adult appeals of the early to mid 1990s' 'para television' shows that 'contributed little to the brand identity' where 'apart from greater profanity and some nudity, these programs were little different from standard network fare' (Rogers et al 2002: 52).

Precedent for how new series could balance quality authorship and explicit content was achieved in July and August 1997 by a limited run for hour-long prison drama *Oz*. Attracting *Homicide* writer-producer Tom Fontana, *Oz* mixes highly explicit

¹⁰⁹ This included the USA Network's action-adventure drama *La Femme Nikita* (1997-2001) and TNT's acquisition of the first-run syndicated cult science-fiction drama *Babylon 5* (1993-1998) as well as plans to develop similar action series *Witchblade* (2001-2002) (Katz Jul 17 1998)

content with a quality-drama influenced serial structure, combining ensemble casts, and formal experimentation. These are anchored by voiceover narration and direct-camera addresses by prisoner Augustus Hill (Harold Perrineau) that set prison conflicts into wider philosophical and political contexts.

Enhancing stylistic distinction through 16mm film, video and handheld shooting, jazz scoring and the construction of a prison soundstage in New York highlight the show's mix of verite realism and avant-garde experimentation. Michele Malach has used the series' experimental form, explicit content and Fontana's creative licence as an 'introduction to what would clearly be HBO's philosophy of original, serialised dramatic programming' (Malach 2008: 60). Further distinguished by first-run scheduling and marketing against broadcast summer reruns and heavy rotation on the service (Malach 2008: 54), *Oz's* positive subscriber and critical response was followed in 1998 by the broader success of half-hour comedy *Sex and the City*.

With successful network writer-producer Darren Star (*Beverly Hills 90210*, *Melrose Place*, FOX, 1992-1999) adapting a New York relationships column and book, the twelve episode first season establishes a format focusing on the romantic and sexual plot-lines of journalist lead Carrie Bradshaw (Sarah Jessica Parker) and single professional friends Miranda (Cynthia Nixon), Charlotte (Kristin Davis) and Samantha (Kim Cattrall) within Manhattan. Combining familiar sitcom appeals with explicit content, high-budget single camera shooting in Manhattan, and fashion and luxury product placement, the series has been used as a break-through in adapting 18-34 male appeals for the network into an explicit but more accessible format as HBO's first genuine crossover success.

Haggins and Lotz suggest here that in combining 'voyeuristic pleasure' (Haggins, Lotz 2008: 164) with high production values, strong characterisation and plotting, the show extended earlier middlebrow tensions into a commercial format that was 'both edgy and tasteful' (Haggins, Lotz 2008: 165). By 1999 the series' widening audience and critical attention then highlighted its zeitgeist significance for tongue-in-cheek debates over 'gender, lifestyle, materialism, and orgasms' (Simon 2008: 93). Building loyalty for a relatively untapped adult female niche in an exclusive subscription context saw the series boost HBO's average weekly primetime audiences to 2.36 million by early 1999 (Hetrick Feb 12 1999). Cementing the 'not TV' brand

marketing's identification of HBO with quality television, 1999's *The Sopranos* however provided a broader landmark. For Edgerton, the drama's impact defined a 'a transitional moment in the industry, when cable and satellite channels rather than the traditional broadcast networks became the first place to look for breakout programming' (Edgerton 2008a: 10).

Initially running from January to April 1999, a commitment to creative freedoms for writer-producer David Chase saw the thirteen episode series build around thematically complex family conflicts between Mafia leader Tony Soprano's (James Gandolfini) home and criminal life. Connected by psychotherapy sessions and further differentiated by negotiations of explicit content, dark comedy, psychological ambiguity and reflexive media intertextuality, serial and vignette-structured episodes were enhanced by exceptional budgets allowing producers to approximate the stylistic quality of a 'carefully composed and edited film' (Nelson 2007: 32).

High-quality 35mm film stock, extended takes, restricted camera movement and mise-en-scene, supported by low-key depth lighting, eclectic soundtrack scoring and New Jersey location shooting helped define the 'not TV' brand's exclusivity and commercial appeal. Gaining 3.45 million viewers for its premiere (Hettrick Jan 15 1999) and a 5.22 million finale (Hettrick Apr 7 1999), the series' sixteen Emmy nominations and a first comedy nomination for *Sex and the City* was supported by continued awards success for original films, miniseries, documentary and specials production in reinforcing the success of the brand.

Most notable here was April 1998 miniseries *From the Earth to the Moon* as a more accessible complement to TV-MA series. A twelve-part, \$68 million internationally co-produced and \$8 million marketed special, *From the Earth to the Moon*'s exploration of the NASA Space Race from the 1950s to the early 1970s represented a 'yardstick for future industrial practice' (Michael Allen 2008: 123) for the network in occasional, lavish miniseries specials. Produced with Tom Hanks and Imagine Entertainment on a mix of Hollywood lots and Florida sound-stages with extensive CGI and stylistic flourishes, the miniseries' cross-promotion with toy merchandising and educational tie-ins reinforced HBO's attraction and future adaptation to attracting Hollywood producers with exclusive network freedoms and budgets. With joint subscriptions for HBO and Cinemax rising to 31.1 million in 1999 from 28.9

million in 1998, series success and digital innovations consolidated the success of the rebrand by 2000.

Retrospective explanations of HBO's rebrand success look to how program production adapted FOX success within a vertically integrated structure, while highlighting risk and some criticism of exclusive niche marketing. In the former, Robin Nelson describes the post-*Oz* HBO-branded series as a 'new hybrid functioning on different levels' (Nelson 2007: 90), illustrating 'not TV's' dual promotion of exclusivity and continuation of familiar quality appeals. Rogers et al (2002) suggest here that the quality and exploitation of earlier series was gradually reconciled around distinctive authorship and production values. *The Sopranos* is used here as an ideal example of a producer taking 'advantage of the creative freedom offered by premium cable without seeming sleazy' like erotica, 'or gratuitous (like *Dream On*)' (Rogers et al 2002: 53). This has also been tied to middlebrow quality television and art-film influences, with Andrews suggesting that 'it is as if premium cable were 'waiting' for producers capable of satisfying its emerging art-house sensibility' (Andrews 2007: 320).

This was demonstrated by the use of shorter season lengths (12-20 episodes) and 'individual, resonant vignettes' (Polan 2009: 26). For Polan, *The Sopranos*' aspirations to cinematic style, psychological ambiguity, comic satire and intertextuality (Polan 2009: 34) provided clear links with the marketing of art cinema as distinctive but accessible middlebrow culture. Kristin Thompson suggests here that *Sex and the City* and *The Sopranos*' innovations relied on adaptations of the 'formulaic structure' (Thompson 2003: 51) of the television sitcom and drama's clear temporal deadlines, voiceovers and flexible but still stable three to four act episodic structure (Thompson 2003: 54).¹¹⁰ This in turn encouraged a mix of television production challenges for recycling locations and dialogue coverage, instead focusing style through space and production design (Nochimson 2003b).¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ For more on *The Sopranos*' take on the gangster genre, see Martha Nochimson (2003a) "'Waddaya Lookin' At?'" Re-reading the Gangster Genre through *The Sopranos*' in *Film Quarterly* (Winter-Spring), 2-13

¹¹¹ For *The Sopranos*, Nochimson suggests here that 'when David Chase decided that television production could not allow for such painstaking work indefinitely, the production team left off creating singular cinematic visuals, and relied increasingly on the refrains to sustain a visual texture of high cinematic quality' (Nochimson 2003b para 8).

More broadly, Auster notes how HBO and producers were able to adapt and fill broadcast gaps in popular genres, citing Fontana and Chase's conversion of quality broadcast drama into more explicit themes and cinematic budgets (Auster 2005: 29). This also encouraged televisual hybrids of cinematic genres, most notably through *The Sopranos*' reflexive negotiation of the gangster films' epic scale within an intimate serial setting. Moreover, *From the Earth to the Moon*'s epic style formed part of wider cable exploitation of gaps in broadcast production (McMurria 2003; Perren 2009). Jane Feuer (2007) also views HBO's series as updating trends from the 1980s for primetime series such as *thirtysomething* for highly determined visual styles.

Newcomb has consequently suggested that HBO's success acted as 'merely a symptom' (Newcomb 2007: 562) of broader industry trends, where a 'generic and institutional tradition of quality could be adapted for the expanding niche economy of television in the 2000s' (Newcomb 2007: 572). In this way, HBO demonstrated how 'some executives understand the newer model better than those in other organisations' (Newcomb 2007: 577), with Santo considering late 1990s success within FOX and basic cable influences (Santo 2008: 29-30). HBO's success was joined here by wider cable experiments.

This ranged from Comedy Central's break-through success with TV-MA animation *South Park* in significantly widening the basic network's profile and setting up Nickelodeon-scaled franchising success (Sandler 2003: 97),¹¹² to more problematic efforts to convert a quality sensibility to the sector. Lotz (2004; 2007a) presents Lifetime's 1998 drama *Any Day Now* (1998-2002) here as a critically praised blend of 1960s civil rights and female friendship as struggling to reconcile 'elements of exploitation and being a nice woman's show' (Lotz 2004: 235) for advertisers and the network.

Moreover, with Showtime struggling through a range of TV-MA and other series experiments, the details of which can be returned to later, HBO's run of success with *Oz*, *Sex and the City* and *The Sopranos* positioned the network as an 'incubator for creative television' (Lotz 2007a: 220). The impact of the latter two series in particular has anchored their use for analysing wider cultural tensions (Lavery ed 2002; Lavery ed

¹¹² By 1999 this was translated into a Paramount-distributed feature film (*South Park: Bigger, Longer and Uncut* Parker 1999) as the series expanded into a global franchise.

2006; McCabe, Akass eds 2004; Merri-Lisa Johnson ed 2007; Polan 2009 et al).¹¹³

Further institutional explanations for this distinction have looked here towards an economy of risk within Time Warner and the exclusive value of ‘not TV marketing.

In the former, Polan has argued that the re-brand developed from HBO’s identity as a ‘fiercely independent’ and ‘autonomous operation’ (Polan 2009: 183-184) within Time Warner. Based out of a 1,700 New York core staff, Polan goes on to argue that HBO’s ‘small boutique-like identity within a huge corporation’ anchored ‘creative independence within a tightly controlled operation’ (Polan 2009: 184),’ establishing a niche identity adapting programming to ‘new opportunities in the social and technological changes that broadcasters face with apprehension’ (Anderson 2008: 31). This boutique identity reflected the ongoing value of conglomerate ownership of multiple distinctive brands, complementing efforts at closer synergy for an unstable Time Warner.

Grainge suggests that after the 1995 and 1996 mergers, the conglomerate experienced a ‘new round of anxiety, friction and bloodletting within operational structures and management hierarchies’ (Grainge 2008: 116), particularly between Levin and the rest of the board. Jon Lewis notes here that the drawn-out costs and executive tensions of the Turner merger revived internal questions over Levin’s leadership as CEO (Grainge 1998: 103). This promoted caution over protecting lucrative cable brands alongside global blockbuster marketing.¹¹⁴ Negotiations were also made to adjust to slower than expected growth in overseas television distribution (Dawtre, Molnar Jun 26-Jul 9 1995).¹¹⁵

Synergy consequently developed less around early ideals for wide cooperation than for divisional strengths. In this respect, Klein has positioned Time Warner by 1999

¹¹³ See *Reading The Sopranos* (Lavery ed 2002), *Reading Sex and the City* (McCabe, Akass eds 2004), and Merri Lisa Johnson ed (2007) *Third Wave Feminism: Jane Puts it in a Box*, London: IB Tauris, for multiple examples of these approaches.

¹¹⁴ For blockbuster franchising, Grainge argues that the Turner and Warner deal enabled synergy through flexible properties and library re-issuing, most notably in Looney Tunes and Warner’s *Space Jam* (Pykta 1996) franchise (Grainge 2008: 116-117).

¹¹⁵ Dawtre and Molner suggest that Time Warner struggled with minor partnerships, as well as ‘coordinating the separate agendas of HBO, Warner Bros. and its international TV division.’ New strategies would see more ‘film-driven pay TV options,’ while efforts by HBO to invest in the UK’s Channel Five would see former Cinemax programming director Lee de Boer leave the network after 18 years following a failure to establish a suitable presence for the network in Western Europe (Dawtre, Molnar Jun 26-Jul 9 1995).

as ‘less a fully integrated company than a feudal system, a loose collection of kingdoms defined by a stock price, which was fine by Wall Street as long as the media giant produced’ (Klein 2003: 231). HBO’s identity within this structure offered value for exclusive marketing of subscriptions, providing a vertically integrated internal structure able to set up close-knit management of a brand for new markets. By 1997 *Variety* were therefore able to describe HBO as virtually ‘sovereign state’ within the conglomerate (Littleton Nov 3-Nov 9 1997).

As previously noted, this exclusivity has been used to criticise HBO and Time Warner for exploiting middlebrow content to establish anti-competitive market share. McCabe and Akass argue here that by mixing quality authorship and adult content, ‘courting controversy has been institutionalised by HBO, embedded in and through its original programming, as a distinctive feature of its cultural cachet, its quality brand label’ (McCabe, Akass 2007: 63). This process has in turn been used to illustrate the tightening economies of scale for a deregulated broadcast and cable industry ‘driven by, among other things, consumer demand and customer satisfaction’ within negotiations over ‘industry protectionism and competition, broadcasting freedoms and regulations’ (McCabe, Akass 2007: 68).

An emphasis is therefore placed on how deregulation encouraged a neoliberal market strategy of both encouraging diversity while consolidating ownership, removing genuine choice. McCabe and Akass suggest here that HBO’s revised ‘approach to original programming is rooted in this legislative change, emerging at the very moment the Act comes into effect’ (McCabe, Akass 2008a: 85). Taken further by Jaramillo (2002), Miller and Kim’s (2008) critiques of neoliberal exploitation of niche brands, Jane Arthurs has also suggested that key series like *Sex and the City* epitomised 1990s trends for mixing post-feminism and lifestyle politics to appeal to ‘bourgeois bohemians’ (Arthurs 2004: 320).¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ The term ‘Bourgeois Bohemians’ was defined by cultural historian David Brooks in his 2000 book *Bobos in Paradise: The new upper class and how they got there*, New York: Simon & Schuster. Brooks argues that the American middle classes in the 1990s merged the countercultural individualism of the 1960s with the conspicuous consumption of the 1980s. The result, a superficial identification with radical lifestyle, has also been discussed in Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter’s (2006) *The Rebel Sell: How the counter culture became consumer culture*, Chichester: Capstone. Also see Thomas Frank (1997) *The conquest of cool: business culture, counterculture, and the rise of hip consumerism*, Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press for how this emerged within the advertising world of the 1960s

Extending Johnson's (2007) discussions of HBO as 'high pop' and previously noted criticisms of the relationship between cable brands and audiences, the network's success in negotiating a quality identity has been used to demonstrate new marketing options for television. By converting 'scattered' (Anderson 2008a: 32) programming trends as a subscription service into high-quality original content, HBO could innovate within a changing marketplace for Time Warner. In doing so, this distinction and exclusivity has been interpreted as symptomatic of middlebrow cultural changes, and as part of a wider caution over neoliberal brand critiques.

The rest of this chapter looks to rethink this transition and its related contexts in several ways. Primarily, exceptional programs can be re-contextualised through more stable forms of subscriber aggregation. This can be used as an anchor for offsetting risk, while offering historical basis for suggestions of reinvention. Moreover, debates on middlebrow brand identities and neoliberal critiques can be specified around HBO's involvement in New York independent production trends. In this way, rather than posing an alternative to these critiques, it is possible to offer a more precise context beyond generalising arguments. Discussions of HBO as a prototype for industry change can also be revised back onto Time-era roots and the cautious approach to interdependence taken in the 1989 to 1994 era.

Aiming to better document and set the 'slow and deliberate process' (Edgerton 2008a: 8) of the rebrand into an improved historical context, particular attention to under-examined transitions between 1995 and 1996, and the complex interaction of programming and marketing strategies can be extended from 1997 to 1999 around hit program success. While emphasising how the 'not TV' brand rested on a much longer programming transition and adaptation of cores subscriber strengths, some minor tensions can also be identified over HBO's move into wider brand management and global economies of scale by the end of the decade.

'...We're not only going to keep the things that work and replace shows like *Dream On*, but we're going to add on more shows': 1995-1996

It is first necessary to return to management changes and Fuchs' perceived failure in creating a strong programming identity for the network. Having reached 27 million joint

subscribers with Cinemax by 1995 (Finnigan Jan 18 1995), the network was at its strongest period of growth since 1983 (Marich Feb 8 1995). However, Fuchs' long-running feud with Warner Brothers heads Bob Semel and Terry Daley led to a decision to move from HBO to take over Warner Music in a bid to re-launch the division, while remaining chairman of the network. In this context, Bewkes' initial changes in sacking Potter and promoting Albrecht also re-assigned Robert Cooper to oversight of Pictures and Showcase, with Callender becoming head of the smaller division. Sheila Nevins gained Potter's control over documentaries, in addition to family programming. Refining, rather than overhauling the existing management structure, arguably reduced Potter and Fuchs' oversight but adapted continuity through Albrecht, Cooper, Callender and Nevins.¹¹⁷

However, Fuchs' future within the company remained problematic, and after further clashes the former CEO left by a somewhat tense mutual consent in November. This allowed Bewkes to take full control (Peers, Wharton Nov 17 1995). While focused on extending the HBO brand, significant change can be reconsidered here, with Anderson noting some 'self-mythologizing' (Anderson 2008: 34) in Albrecht's denial of subscriber measurement and monthly consistency. Programming analysis of the 1995 and 1996 period arguably demonstrates this through aggregate subscriber strategies, as well as an intensification of a New York identity.

Ambitions for developing more prominent weekly series in the period came against increased production centralisation around late-night, HBO Independent Productions and Downtown Productions trends after Fin-Syn and turns towards enhanced program ownership. For *Tales from the Crypt*, the long-term value of participation in a niche franchise had begun to decline by 1996, and the show's final season was moved to the UK to cut costs, before coming to an end that year. The sixth season was however still linked into wider efforts to reinforce late-night rotation, scheduled on Friday nights as a lead-in to the 11pm-midnight block of sketch comedies, *Def Comedy Jam*, chat shows and erotica.

¹¹⁷ This also led to promotions for development executives Susie Fitzgerald and Anne Thomopoulos (miniseries and dramas), Carolyn Strauss (comedies and specials), while Lowell Mate and Russell Schwartz, who had worked under Albrecht at HIP, also received promotions (Battaglio May 26 1995).

By 1996 *Dream On* was also cancelled, with criticism of falling quality (Letofsky Mar 19 1996) matched by a disappointing syndication run on FOX. This raised doubts over the appeal of studio co-financed pay cable series outside of their HBO context. Moreover, with uncertainty over HBO Independent Productions' appeal after Fin-Syn encouraged network turns to in-house studios, the division cut back production. This did however produce one major success in the development with Warner Bros. Television of traditional multi-camera sitcom *Everybody Loves Raymond* (1996-2005).

The ongoing critical and niche audience success of *The Larry Sanders Show* became a test case here for expanding weekly series visibility. It was premiered on Wednesday nights in 1995 before being stripped on weeknight post-11pm slots in the summer of 1996 as an experiment in competing with late-night chat shows (Richmond May 23 1996). Albrecht's planned increase in marketing series consequently did so within aggregate primetime and late-night trends. This was reflected in the development of *Tracey Takes On* (1996-1999) a sketch comedy initially run for eleven Thursday night episodes from January to April 1996.

Produced with British comedian Tracey Ullman, the series' use of character sketches around themed episodes extended *Dennis Miller Live* and the earlier anthology flexibility of *Not Necessarily the News*. It also adapted proven standup ties from 1993 specials *Tracey Takes On...New York* and *Tracey On...The Class System*. Moreover, reflecting a partial turn away from Los Angeles studio collaboration, the series built on the earlier specials' co-production deal with British broadcaster ITV. Ullman and McKeown also retained independent rights for merchandising and syndication. Raising episodic budgets to \$500,000, the series' mix of video and film styles emulated *Larry Sanders* (Battaglio June 23 1995), while combining experienced American collaborators and British talent around New York production.

Tracey Takes On's continuities with comedy aggregation, as well as its variation on female leads and New York production was complemented in the period by experiments in crossover appeals between late-night and primetime programming. A partial infrastructure for scouting new comedy talent for standup and series deals had been developed in 1995 through a HBO-branded Aspen Comedy Festival (Marisi Mar 23 1995). In November 1995 this led to a commission for *Mr. Show* (1995-1998) a

limited series of adult-themed, surreal sketch shows that filled the more experimental, explicit Friday night 11.30pm and midnight slot into 1996 previously held by *Hardcore TV*. Stable production ties were also sustained through packaging by *Def Comedy Jam*'s Brillstein-Grey.

Moreover, building links with Downtown Productions and Comedy Central, new specials extended into spinoff *HBO Comedy Half Hour*'s (1995-) and late-night comedy blocking alongside crossovers with *Dennis Miller Live*, *Politically Incorrect*. This also helped produce an election-themed *Not Necessarily the News* reunion special in 1996. Other experiments included animated psychotherapy satire *Dr Katz: Professional Therapist* (1995-2002) for Comedy Central, with self-deprecating celebrity voiceovers further drawing on standup relationships. By contrast, developing *Def Comedy Jam*'s late-night appeals was more problematic, with comedian Bernie Mac's variety pilot *Midnight Mac* failing to attract subscribers in 1995. The Def Jam format was later dropped from first-run rotation by the end of 1996. Although beginning to focus around Aspen and New York bases to develop late-night comedy, Los Angeles production continued to anchor select production, albeit without the broader popularity of *Sanders* and *Dream On*.

From August to October 1996 this was represented by a further variation on standup relationships for sitcom *Arli\$\$* (1996-2002). Independently produced within Los Angeles and focused on a sports agents' deal-making, the show offered both an extension of more accessible niche series for adult, male-oriented comedy (Haggins, Lotz 2008: 163), while aligning with *Larry Sanders*' 'insider' success. It was run here in *Larry Sanders*' Wednesday night primetime slot. Moreover, using the series to build 18-34 compatibility with sports audiences arguably represented an extension of *1st & Ten*'s earlier experiments in making lower-cost comedy an extension of HBO Sports demographic appeal.

HBO Sports' crossovers were extended to new formats in the period. This most notably included adding the Bryant Gumbel-hosted investigative magazine series *Real Sports* (1995-) in 1995 as a format focused on topical, personality-led investigations of labor strife and industrial corruption (Battaglio Feb 9 1995). While Miller and Kim connect the series to a still-running *Inside the NFL*'s economy of 'cheap sporting gossip programs' (Miller, Kim 223) and as 'sociology lite' (Miller, Kim 2008: 226) in terms of

its sports journalism, raising production values alongside the late-night politics and entertainment format of *Dennis Miller Live* helped multiply the sporting niche while aggregating upscale appeal. Sports' primarily focus on boxing promotion also however led to efforts to merge with *Def Comedy Jam*'s ghetto-centric late-night blocks. This led to the development of younger-marketed series *Boxing After Dark* as a 'little hipper' (Abraham qtd Nelson Jan 12 1996) variation on approximately twice-monthly title bouts.¹¹⁸ This experimentation with younger niche comedy and sports therefore worked within existing trends for aggregating late-night audiences.

In 1996 this led to an expanded deal with syndicator Rysler for selected international series distribution, as well as picking up HBO's residual rights to *The Hitchhiker* (Brennan Jul 9 1996). The Rysler deal was particularly notable here for relaxing reliance on conglomerate sibling Warner, as well as Universal and Columbia for overseas licensing, reaffirming HBO's boutique role and integration of independent distribution for the late 1990s within Time Warner. Improving syndication rights also crossed here to *Boxing After Dark* as a more specialist option for late-night sales, with HBO Enterprises planning to market the series worldwide soon after its premiere (Nelson Jan 12 1996).

In April 1996 Albrecht suggested that for comedy development, 'we're not only going to keep the things that work and replace shows like *Dream On*, but we're going to add on more shows' (Albrecht qtd Hettrick Apr 1 1996). However, beginning to widen primetime upscale appeals outside of established stand-up talent proved difficult, with a pilot for broadcast satire *The High Life* (1996) a pastiche of 1950s sitcoms, struggling to find an audience. Exploring options for broadening the appeal of primetime shows with niche dramas also led to a licensing deal with Granada and ITV for the first season of adult-themed realist drama *Band of Gold* (1995-1997) in May 1995 (Mallalieu May 23 1995). Plans were also explored for acquiring rights to family-marketed action-adventure series.¹¹⁹ In this way, while still retaining a mix of primetime and late-night rotation of 18-34 to older upscale appeals, expanding options looked to build from aggregate appeals.

¹¹⁸ Enhancing HBO Sports' distinction through original documentary and newsmagazine programming was also motivated by Showtime's capturing of Mike Tyson for an exclusive boxing contract in 1995 (*Variety Staff* Jun 7 2001).

¹¹⁹ This also involved a brief consideration for co-financing Australian action-adventure series *Tales of the South Seas* (Williams, Dempsey Oct 9-Oct 15 1995)

Making these changes work for both re-brand plans and adaptation of monthly and long-term subscription value can be briefly compared here with the overlaps and greater emphasis by Showtime on reinforcing studio collaboration for series production. While DBS marketing helped the network enjoy an 11% subscription rise by 1996 (Flint Apr 29-May 5 1996), a HBO-echoing promise of beginning to convert ‘sporadically scheduled’ originals into regular weekly series (Walsh May 3 1995) initially worked to develop earlier 1990s trends for anthology participation.

Working with MGM to develop franchise *Poltergeist: The Legacy* (1996-1999) alongside ratings and award success in reviving *The Outer Limits* (1995-2002) expectations for syndication sales arguably retained Showtime’s smaller-scale limited series model. Long-term studio relationships and sale across basic cable also encouraged flexible options for these anthologies as spin-offs from theatrical properties. This overlapped with the USA network’s success with weekly series *La Femme Nikita* and the less-successful Universal franchise *Weird Science* (1994-1997).¹²⁰ With HBO adapting genre anthologies towards more specific extensions of stand-up comedy, pushing for exclusivity encouraged a focus on working with New York independent producers for 1995 and 1996 documentary and film cycles.

For documentaries, Mascaro has suggested that the 1995 rebrand encouraged a ‘departure in programming strategy from the eclectic specials that appeared within the ‘home box office’ open framework’ (Mascaro 2008: 246). Mascaro also describes how HBO improved a loosely organised’ collection of specials into a branding focus on more regular time-slots and variations on quality and exploitation appeals (Mascaro 2008: 246). However, this niche approach can again be revised around the wider rotation and recycling of long-term documentary formats for reproducing and aggregating value within the ‘open framework’. Nevins particularly emphasised the production stability of working as an

‘unspoken repertory company. We cast docs like we cast a feature. 80% of the time we come up with the concept. We develop it into

¹²⁰ While Viacom and MGM did not share any formal ties, Showtime had agreed an exclusive output deal with the studio several years before that crossed into series co-production.

something correct for HBO. The filmmakers work with the concept until it's their own' (Nevins qtd Moore Apr 29 1996)

In this context, *America Undercover* continued to mix cycles for prestige accessibility and more exclusive adult content, while experimenting with further limited theatrical releases to boost awareness of premieres.¹²¹ Being able to rotate niche documentaries between day-part film blocks, primetime prestige and later evening to midnight specials also extended and looked to further upscale erotica's popularity from 18-34 to wider audiences.

As well as *Real Sex* and *Shock Video* updates, this extended into adaptations of loosely investigative specials. This included annual medical examiner series *Autopsy* from 1995, and the success that year of *Taxicab Confessions* (1995-) a hidden camera series relying on 'first-person narratives of ordinary people's lives' (Jones 2008b: 279). Contextualised by Nevins as providing a 'particularly arresting view of humanity' (Nevins qtd Jones 2008b: 282), the series' promotion of a New York setting and low-budget video aesthetic notably reflected trends for Manhattan filmmaking by the mid-1990s, and new series *Cinemax Reel-Life* (1995-).

Based around more experimental, low-budget specials, Mascaro views the series as further proof of documentary's expansion of niches after the rebrand for projects 'too long, too short, too artsy, or just too strange to justify HBO's big-budget treatment' (Mascaro 2008: 247). However, Mascaro also notes how the series' followed the loose structure of 'no regular time slots' (Mascaro 247). By contrast, *Reel-Life* developed in early 1995 as a contribution to Cinemax's 'Wednesday Vanguard', a niche block promoting independent and art-house films (*Daily News* Mar 7 1995). As with Cinemax's earlier uses in the 1980s, format experimentation could rely on both the

¹²¹ *America Undercover* and stand-alone projects in the period included *To Love or Kill: Man Vs. Animal* (Thomas 1996); *Prison Life: Prisoners on the War on Drugs* (Levin 1996); *Mumia Abu-Jamal: A Case for Reasonable Doubt?* (Edginton 1996); *Memphis PD: War on the Streets* (Guttentag 1996) and *Violence: An American Tradition* (1996). Family-oriented documentaries here included *Smoke Alarm: The Unfiltered Truth About Cigarettes* (Nevins, Newman 1996); *Eagle Scout: The Story of Henry Nicholas* (Ryan 1995) and new instalments of *Lifestories*. This included award-winning Holocaust and disability specials *One Survivor Remembers* (Antholis 1996) and *Without Pity: A Film About Abilities* (Mierendorf 1996); *Paradise Lost: The Child Murders at Robin Hood Hills* (Berlinger; Sinofsky 1996) also received a small-scale theatrical run in setting up its network premiere.

network's lower profile and wider film range, which also extended to testing NC-17 film exhibition by 1996 alongside low-cost erotica (Dempsey Nov 4-Nov 10 1996).

Beginning with *Jupiter's Wife* (Negroponte 1995), a New York-set short film exploring mental illness, a Cinemax premiere was preceded by Sundance promotion and a limited theatrical run. Budgeting at around \$100,000 per project (Flint Feb 1 1995), *Reel-Life* then expanded within the aggregated 'Wednesday Vanguard' independent film block to further New York specials (*A Great Day in Harlem* Bach 1994) and more eclectic projects (*The Gospel According to Jesus* (Chumley 1996) *The Burger and the King: The Life and Cuisine of Elvis Presley* (Marsh 1996)). In 1996 a collaboration with Jessica Yu for short *Breathing Lessons*, a study of a polio-afflicted artist, also specialised verite projects into biographical and autobiographical specials.

Moreover, *Reel Life* began to expand Potter and Nevins' transatlantic deals with the BBC and Channel Four for mixing provocative (*Heidi Fleiss: Hollywood Madam* (Broomfield 1996); *Fetishes* (Broomfield 1996)) and investigative projects (*The Dying Rooms* (Blewett; Woods 1996); *The Selling of Innocents* (Gupta 1996)). *Reel-Life's* particular identification with lower-budget domestic projects has led Mascaro to note its value for financing American independent documentaries (Mascaro 2008: 248). These particular links, and the identification with New York production from earlier Showcase precedent and *Tracey Takes On's* transatlantic production, became crucial to changes in Pictures and Showcase during the period.

The Bewkes and Albrecht changeover initially reinforced Cooper and Callender's success in 1995 and early 1996, with Cooper targeting an ongoing maintenance of prestige and broader B-level niches with pre-buy and co-financing for domestic pay cable and video rights (Battaglio June 4 1996). By comparison, Callender re-committed to the transatlantic connections made by Potter, formalising new deals with British producers for 'hard-hitting, issue oriented kinds of productions' (Callender qd DiOrio May 19 1995) while increasing New York production.

In 1995 Pictures' mix of high-end biopics and docudramas produced Emmy-winning project *Indictment: The McMartin Trial* (Jackson 1995) a study of child abuse, while also broadening biopic prestige from darker figures into *Truman* (Pierson 1995). A non-R rated account of the President's life-story that drew from trusted prestige

personnel, *Truman* helped HBO to another Best Picture Emmy in 1996. This success however retained some tensions between independent producers and the network, with director Frank Pierson complaining that ‘there’s a whole level of middle management at HBO hired to oversee every level of production...it’s an enormous waste of energy’ (Pierson qtd Davies Feb 29 1996).¹²²

Continued reliance on quality control within diversified acquisitions was also reflected by the tailoring back of B-level and video pre-buy titles (*Body Language* Case 1995) in favour of higher-budget Westerns (*In Pursuit of Honor* Olin 1995) and internationally co-produced thrillers (*Citizen X* Gerolmo 1995). This also included 1960s-set gangster biopic *Sugartime* (Smith 1995), which conflates a Mafia boss’s personal life with entertainment industry corruption. At the same time, 1993 and 1994’s pursuit of African-American prestige merged 18-34 and ghetto-centric sports cycles with a Mike Tyson biopic (*Tyson* Edel 1995), and *The Tuskegee Airmen* (Markowitz 1995) a WWII set melodrama pitched to family audiences. The latter’s prestige also extended to Showcase’s BBC deal, producing its first result in 1995 as *The Affair* (Seed), an interracial-themed WWII melodrama. Contrasting with Showcase’s transatlantic co-production of investigative docudramas, reproduced that year through neo-Nazi drama *The Infiltrator* (Mackenzie 1995), the division underwent significant change in the summer of 1996.¹²³

¹²² *Truman*, a biopic of President Harry S. Truman from early life to departure from office (1917-1952), was developed with Spring Creek from David McCullough’s bestselling historical novel; biopic prestige was retained through *Citizen Cohn* producers Doro Bachrach and Paula Weinstein, while director Pierson (*Somebody Has to Shoot the Picture*) and cinematographer Paul Elliott (*Citizen Cohn*, *And the Band Played On*; *A Private Matter*) returned as familiar talent. *Indictment*, exploring accusations of child molestation grew out of HBO Pictures’ deal with James Wood’s Breakheart Films. The *Citizen Cohn* star leads the cast, with a screenplay by Abby Mann (*Teamster Boss: The Jackie Presser Story*; *Murderers Among Us*). Film director Oliver Stone also added weight to the project, with added style in docudrama reconstructions and telefilm development made by cinematographer Rodrigo Garcia, who had worked on 1993’s *Mi Vida Loca*, and would later become a regular collaborator on HBO drama series.

¹²³ *Body Language* built on pre-buy video trends for domestic licensing, but like *Sugartime* features a Mafia boss struggling with romance and corruption. *In Pursuit of Honor* examines the moral crisis of a group of defecting cavalry men. Producer Marian Rees had worked with the network’s 1983-1984 early experiments. *Citizen X* grew out Citadel Entertainment’s in-house deal as a serial killer docudrama. Co-executive producer David R. Ginsburg had previously worked on Citadel productions *Teamster Boss*, *For Richer*, *For Poorer*, *The Image* and others from the late 1980s to the mid 1990s. *Sugartime* reunited HBO with Gale Anne Hurd (*Cast a Deadly Spell*; *Witch Hunt*). *Tyson* built out of HBO’s option on a biopic of Tyson, and represented a rare collaboration with HBO Sports. *The Tuskegee Airmen* shared African-American connections to *Cosmic Slop*, as well as HBO Pictures’ prolific screenwriter-of-choice Robert Hutchinson, with director Robert Markowitz having worked on 1992’s *Afterburn*. *The Infiltrator* was developed with Francine LeFrak (*Prison Stories*).

In June HBO announced the rebranding of Showcase as HBO NYC Productions under Callender, with budgets rising to \$3 to \$5 million and the division focusing on New York independent filmmakers and transatlantic co-production deals (Dempsey Jun 4 1996). By contrast, Pictures' broader pre-buy slate entered into a more uncertain transition, with Cooper, having long maintained a close relationship with Fuchs, leaving to take over Columbia Tri-Star (Busch, Cox, Dempsey Jul 15-Jul 21 1996). By the end of the year FOX's John Matoian was hired to sustain Cooper's broader oversight (Richmond Oct 24 1996), breaking with the longevity of the inner-circle of program management from the mid-1980s. NYC's early success and exploitation of its New York production community overlaps from Showcase however begin to provide a revised model for streamlining upscale audiences by 1997.

Callender initially framed NYC as targeting a hipper, more provocative identity from Showcase. This involved a reduced investment in transatlantic docudramas, which 'tended to be long on complicated journalistic rigour and short on entertainment value,' with Callender arguing 'we want these movies to be entertaining, but without undermining their journalistic integrity' (Callender qtd Dempsey Jun 4 1996). Initial deals consequently experimented with elements of Pictures' genre thrillers with broader prestige, from BBC collaboration on slave ship thriller *Deadly Voyage* (Mackenzie 1996) to *Mistrial* (Gould 1996) a Manhattan legal drama anchored in Showcase trends (*Criminal Justice*, *Strapped*) and New York and Canadian shooting. Crossover influences to Pictures also produced a mix of familiar insider cycles, with *The Late Shift* (Thomas 1996) extending *Larry Sanders*' Hollywood satire for dramatizing a late-night chat war between David Letterman and Jay Leno, to female-led Hollywood biopic *Norma Jean & Marilyn* (Fywell 1996).

While reproducing biopic appeals for an adult-themed examination of Marilyn Monroe's life and struggle with addiction, lead Mira Sorvino's dual performance of the actresses' early and later life also merged with growing reliance on New York independent filmmakers. This notably included hiring cinematographer John Thomas, responsible for New York mid-level independents *Palookaville* (Taylor 1995) and the later *The Last Days of Disco* (Stillman 1998) to add handheld camerawork, low-key lighting and expressive point-of-view shots to traditionally flat telefilm shooting. This minor adaptation to stable period biopics was also notable for drawing cable features

into wider licensing potential, with *Norma Jean* sold to Miramax as an addition to the studio's growing overseas theatrical and video distribution slate.

Alignments with the NYC rebrand and independent filmmaking trends also continued in the summer of 1996 as Pictures developed *Don't Look Back* (Murphy 1996), a dark comedy set around small-town drug trafficking that mixed familiar thriller plot-lines with extended irony and translations of contemporary small-town crime independents (*Fargo* Coen 1996). In August the shift towards New York production then extended to *Gotti* (Harmon 1996) a biopic of the Manhattan gangster John Gotti (Armand Assante) mixing prestige cycle conventions for flashback narration of an unconventional lead with East-Coast defined production.¹²⁴

This focus merged though with continued reliance on older, star-driven biopic cycles, from Eastern European co-production *Rasputin* (Edel 1996), following in *Stalin*'s award-winning success, to the historical melodrama *Crime of the Century* (Rydell 1996), which explores the Lindbergh baby kidnapping of the 1930s. Pictures' upscale African-American and ghetto-centric trends also shifted between broader attempts to further coordinate sports programming and accessible family audiences, while again building on urban, New York-produced dramas.

In the former, period baseball docudrama *Soul of the Game* (Sullivan 1996) sustained *Tuskegee*'s civil rights history success, while in late 1996 the standup comedian Sinbad starred in *The Cherokee Kid* (Barclay 1996) as a comedy Western targeting broader family appeals in line with both widening appeal and enhanced African-American prestige. However, in November *Rebound: The Legend of Earl 'The Goat' Manigault* (La Salle 1996) returned to Showcase formulas, with an African-American led sports drama rooted in Harlem verite shooting building off increased

¹²⁴ *Deadly Voyage*'s director John Mackenzie worked on 1995's *The Infiltrator*, while *Mistrial* was developed by actress and director Geena Davis and Renny Harlin. *The Late Shift* director Betty Thomas had worked on *Dream On* (1990-1992), with Hollywood ties to producers Ivan Reitman and an adaptation of a book by *New York Times* writer Bill Carter. *Gotti*'s New York gangster drama developed through director Robert Harmon (*Homicide*), producers David Coatsworth, Gary Lucchesi and Robert McMinn, who worked on the similarly-gangster themed *Sugartime*, with cinematographer Alar Kivilo also shooting Harlem-based *Rebound*. Actors including Tony Sirico, Vincent Pastore and Dominic Chianese would later work on *The Sopranos*. *Don't Look Back*'s saw regular director Geoff Murphy (*Red King*, *White Knight*, *Blind Side*) return, while working with independent producer Alphaville Films (*Dazed and Confused*; *Mallrats*).

crossovers between HBO Sports and prestige aggregation through New York production.¹²⁵

Tyson, *Soul of the Game* and *Rebound* particularly demonstrated attempts to enhance provocative sports dramas alongside the upscaling of African-American-themed civil rights dramas and HBO Sports' award-winning athlete biographies of 1991-1994. In this respect, HBO Sports produced a series of biopics (*Sonny Liston: The Mysterious Life and Death of a Champion* Lieberman 1995) while complementing the historical and contemporary range of *Soul of the Game* and *Rebound* with broader African-American and civil rights specials (*Fields of Fire: Sports in the 60s* (1995); *Rebels with a Cause: The Journey of the African American Athlete* (1995)).

Investing approximately \$750,000 for a handful of these specials per year, executive producer Ross Greenburg emphasised ambitions to improve production quality in line with but also complementing Nevins' collective documentary output. Suggesting a move away from earlier production strategies, where 'we'd just string clips together and try to make rhyme or reason out of events,' these specials also differentiated themselves from other specials, 'which tend to be about troubling contemporary issues' (Greenburg qtd Sandomir Jun 2 1996). These instead arguably aligned themselves with prestige biopics.

While these overlaps and further prestige aggregation extended 1992-1994 cycles, in October NYC's increased focus for adapting independent film production to established formats reached a landmark with *If These Walls Could Talk* (Cher; Savoca 1996) A three-part anthology sustaining the format's experimental tradition for primetime adaptation, *Walls* built on earlier Showcase experiments with *Prison Stories* for expanding female-led projects, while crossing into *Tracey Takes On* and *Norma Jean* in targeting female and broader demographics on a prestige scale. Examining the history of abortion through three personal vignettes connected by the same house between the 1950s and the 1990s, *Walls* notably hybridised existing award success with

¹²⁵ *Rasputin* grew out of the Citadel and Rysher syndication deal, with director Uli Edel having worked on *Tyson*; *Crime of the Century*'s family scandal crisis drew on *A Private Matter* screenwriter William Nicholson. *Soul of the Game*'s study of the African-American baseball leagues, returned to *Cosmic Slop* director Kevin Rodney Sullivan. *Cherokee Kid*'s comedy Western worked with regular standup performer Sinbad, and extended ties to Spring Creek Productions.

the topic (*A Private Matter; Abortion: Desperate Choices*) around further crossovers with American independent cinema trends.

Here the blend of star involvement in executive producer Demi Moore and the sourcing of indie-associated talent encouraged further pushing of telefilm conventions into more stylised areas. This included hiring successful indie cinematographer Ellen Kuras (*Swoon* Kalin 1992), helped position *Walls* as a key hybrid for the network and emerging ‘not TV’ brand. In collecting an original film record 18.7 share and a 25 rating (Richmond Oct 17 1996), *Walls*’ success more specifically helped mark NYC Productions’ future focusing of Pictures and Showcase upscale cycles for quality branding, overlapping with documentary trends and growing cable overlaps with a thriving American independent sector.

Adapting long-term production cycles and recycling within the service’s aggregate mix of proven formats and increasing rights also helped extend quality precedent in 1996 into further award-winning prestige productions. This included African-American slavery and civil rights-themed *America’s Dream* (Barclay, Duke, Sullivan 1996) a three-part special adapting short stories, and the Native-American themed *Grand Avenue* (Sackheim 1996) a Robert Redford co-produced development of *Laurel Avenue*’s success with family crisis and urban decline in 1993.¹²⁶

Refining an exclusive identification across NYC Productions and Pictures therefore offered perhaps the clearest sign of the network’s ambition, overlaps and long-term distinctions in converting service-wide aggregate strengths into a more focused brand identity over rivals. With McMurria noting how HBO’s award-winning niche for original films continued to fill a gap left by broadcasters (McMurria 2003: 65-66), parallel attempts by TNT to widen output of epics and Westerns by 1995 (Flint June 27 1995) focused limited prestige productions. Moreover, under former HBO executive Matthew Blank, Showtime targeted refining production to more controversial, high-budget pictures and miniseries to emulate their rivals’ success. While notably including the award-winning family abuse drama *Bastard out of Carolina* (Huston 1996),

¹²⁶ *If These Walls could Talk* divides between 1952, 1974 and 1996. Co-producer Suzanne Todd had worked on *Tales of the Crypt*, as had Moore, who stars in ‘1952’, shot by Ellen Kuras (*Swoon; I Shot Andy Warhol*); ‘1974’ stars *A Private Matter*’s Sissy Spacek, with Bobby Bukowski (*Without Warning: The James Brady Story* shooting). ‘1996’ is directed by Cher with overall project director Nancy Savoca.

Showtime also re-committed to countering the larger service with a broad selection of low-budget titles, acquiring and producing up to fifty original films a year by 1996 (Dempsey Jun 5-Jun 11 1995).

HBO's market leadership in providing focused subscription value arguably continued to provide the infrastructure for offsetting risk and creative reinvention within proven cycles from rivals. In this context, while agreeing a deal to license selected original pictures to new Time Warner division TBS (Dempsey Sep 10 1996), pre-buy and co-produced financing began to shift towards more exclusive New York independent production across. This also included plans to extend HBO Home Video distribution deals, while adjusting relationships to Warner, Rysler and independent producers for overseas marketing.

By the 'It's Not TV' branding launch in October 1996, the initial management change and re-focus from 1995 had arguably undergone a transition that encouraged intensification rather than radical change. The particular value of New York indie production can also be provisionally tied to Polan's notes on HBO's boutique status, structured through NYC Productions and longer-term Time exclusive trends. By the end of 1996 these plans were extended to the creation of a HBO Animation division (Richmond Oct 1 1996), series deals with Tom Fontana, Darren Star and comedian Chris Rock (Hettrick Nov 14 1996) as well as investments in *From the Earth to the Moon* (Fleming Dec 9-Dec 15 1996). The successful launch of high-end series and miniseries programming from 1997 and 1999 can therefore be viewed within this careful development.

'...It actually appeals to a wide variety of their core subscriber audience': 1997

In terms of programming success with *Oz*, Rogers et al's upping the ante (Rogers et al 2002: 51) on explicit content and growing quality authorship can be set within longer-term exhibition and New York production trends. The former began with overlapping runs of *Tracy Takes On* and *Larry Sanders* on Wednesday and Saturday night slots in early 1997, before promoting a more ambitious block of branded series from May to June as the '11th Hour'. Running first-run episodes of new series from Monday to Thursday nights at 11pm, this also extended Friday late-night blocks promoted around the tagline 'Round Midnight'.

The block included the premiere of *Oz* on Mondays, the second season of *Arli\$\$* on Tuesdays, new adult science-fiction anthology *Perversions of Science* (1997) on Wednesdays, and a 'Best Of' *America Undercover* on Thursdays. 'Round Midnight' consisted of ongoing *Dennis Miller* and *Mr. Show* episodes, expanded to include February-launched new chat show *The Chris Rock Show* (1997-2000) and new ventures into animated series with *Spawn* (1997-1999) and *Spicy City* (1997) from May to late summer. This was complemented by continuing *Boxing After Dark* specials on Saturday nights.

On the one hand, Santo has discussed the campaign as foreshadowing the branding success of Sunday night marketing by FOX practices for counter-programming broadcast rivals (Santo 2008: 27). Wider continuities can also be made though cross-promotion of late-night and primetime formats from earlier in the decade, from comedy to younger-marketed series. Balancing specialist niche appeals for primarily male audiences and wider appeal was however initially difficult to achieve, with *Arli\$\$*'s more self-contained male sports appeals contrasted by *Perversions of Science*'s struggle to extend the *Tales from the Crypt* format. While working with the older show's producers and EC Comics titles, graphic and more explicitly erotic content suffered criticism (Roush Jun 11 1997). The same problems applied to 'Round Midnight,' where despite picking up on basic cable success with adult animation and Comedy Central precedent through Downtown Productions' *Dr. Katz*, new programs struggled to establish consistency within existing cycles.

Adapted from a bestselling independent comic, *Spawn* brought a limited series mentality to action-driven pulp appeals, while representing a rare example of Time Warner synergy for the period. A pre-packaged property also developed by New Line as a feature in the summer of 1997, *Spawn* again tested *Crypt*'s niche franchise potential, while aligning with successful basic and broadcast trends for adult animation. It initially delivered on this promise, with HBO Video selling 500,000 copies of the series by the end of the year (Goldman Nov 3-Nov 9 1997). However, *Spicy City* demonstrated some wider difficulties over adapting adult animation to the network. Working with animator Ralph Bakshi, the series shares the themed adult anthology structure and science fiction genre of *Perversions*, but also repeated its critical savaging (Bianculli Jul 30 1997).

Production tensions also resumed as Bakshi clashed with HBO over plans to make the series more accessible for a second season in 1998 (Tilley Feb 8 1999).

Struggles for animation and more traditional genre anthologies were however contrasted by the success of February's *The Chris Rock Show*. Developed by Downtown Productions and shot in New York, the show features the standup comedian interviewing African-American celebrities and public figures. This is intercut with parodic sketches, monologues and musical breaks by rap producer Grandmaster Flash. With Rock describing himself as a 'rap comedian' (Rock qtd Jones 2008b: 176), the show arguably built from the narrower, more explicit *Def Comedy Jam* in mixing prestige and younger urban-marketed African-American appeals. With African-American subscribers making up 22% of HBO's audience by 1997 (Richmond Feb 24-May 2 1997), this provided an opportunity to extend *Dennis Miller Live*'s 'no-holds-barred comedy and talk' (Jones 2008a: 179).

Further efforts to broaden more experimental comedy from late-night were also made with a pilot order to standup performers Tenacious D. This emulated the development of *Mr. Show* from the Aspen Comedy Festival as a half-hour sketch show broken up by musical performances.¹²⁷ Experimentations within the 'Round Midnight' block also expanded in the latter towards developing *Reverb* (1997-2001) a low-budget alternative music showcase taping urban club performances and backstage interviews. Like *Spawn*, *Reverb* and *Chris Rock* broadened HBO's association with variety specials, establishing hybrids able to specifically mark late-night programming blocks. *Reverb* also provided another limited example of synergy, with its alternative music showcases often working with Warner Music.

Viewed as further extensions of the niche and gradual upscaling aggregation of the rotated service from Cinemax to late-night, 'Round Midnight's' blocks of explicit comedy, rap music, alternative music and boxing helped connect midnight, 11pm and primetime audiences.¹²⁸ *Oz*'s 11pm first-run scheduling can be tied into these trends

¹²⁷ *Tenacious D* was ultimately not picked up, with reviewers noting how its 'slew of inside jokes limit the half-hour's potential and off-the-wall antics are too hit and miss to hold it together consistently' (Gallo Mar 24 1999). Carolyn Strauss would later acknowledge though that a failure to make the format work was one of her biggest disappointments in series programming (Gray Aug 13 2008).

¹²⁸ The hybridizing appeal of African-American demographics and cycles also extended here to the alternation between HBO Sports' aggressive niche marketing of exclusive boxing rights

beyond adapting broadcast formats. Moreover, ‘not TV’ debates over art-house influences can be contextualised through New York ‘indie’ film trends and NYC Productions cycles.

While drawing on quality broadcast hybrids through Fontana’s background on *Homicide*, *Oz*’s formal combination of a book-ending host, episodic theme and limited run serial plotlines arguably reproduced ‘11th Hour’ and earlier trends. As well as relying on an anthology and serialised structure, this also aligned with *America Undercover* format conventions. This included a verite look, ensemble casts, African-American and Hispanic crime and 1990s documentary cycles for inner-city decay. In this way, Fontana later noted how *Oz* tied together a range of aggregate appeals, where

‘evidently, it plays...across the board...to (HBO’s) subscriber base...young women, middle-aged couples, young urban kids...it actually appeals to a wide variety of their core subscriber audience’
(Fontana qtd Weathersbee Jul 12 1998)

Success in using the series to draw together both more general quality and exploitation accounts into linear cycle precedent can also be linked here to Bridget Potter’s involvement as a producer. The prison format recalled 1984’s *Maximum Security*, while Showcase and documentary cycles had evolved clear precedent for setting and theme. Investment in explicit, realist drama *Band of Gold* in 1995 also provided recent precedent for the series’ commission. This compatibility also extended to key thematic and personnel links with *America Undercover* and other documentaries in 1997.

Cycle connections were made through specials focusing on forensic pathology, inner-city drug policing, addiction, prostitution, HIV and AIDS, extending earlier exhibition themes across the service.¹²⁹ As with earlier efforts to promote themes across

under the slogan ‘Network of Champions’ (*Brandweek* Feb 10 1997) and further investments in aggregating civil rights histories (*Long Shots: The Life and Times of the American Basketball Association*) for June 1997.

¹²⁹ Examples here included *Execution Machine: Texas Death Row* (Levin 1997), *Calling Dr. Kevorkian* (1997), updates of 1994 medical examiner documentary *Autopsy, 27th & Prospect: One Year in the Fight Against Drugs* (Goodman, Simon 1997) *Faces of Addiction* (1997) *Hookers at the Point* (Owens 1997); *Drop Dead Gorgeous* (Moore 1997) and *Dragtime* (Kaplan 1997). More eclectic Cinemax specials included *Calling the Ghosts* (Ray 1997) *22 Women on 41 Breasts* (Powers, Spadola 1997) and Elton John fashion-world special *Tantrums and Tiaras* (Furnish 1997).

monthly and longer-term exhibition, the drama's risk was offset here by extensive precedent and complementary extensions. Further links were also made here to *Reel Life* and NYC Productions, and a thriving 'indie' scene within Manhattan. More specifically, the series' early look was shaped by cinematographers Jean de Segonzac and Alex Zakrezewski, as well as independent feature director Nick Gomez and off-Broadway and documentary filmmakers, with the former having worked with Potter and Nevins on specials prior to 1997.¹³⁰ Connections can also be made here to quality network dramas such as *Homicide*, with multiple personnel crossing over from the Baltimore series, which had also attracted independent filmmakers. However, *Oz*'s placement within these trends was arguably broader, forming part of a wider negotiation by NYC Productions into formats that closely aligned with the prison drama.

Ranging from *Path to Paradise* (Libman, Williams 1997), a docudrama examining a terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre that shared *Oz* director and cinematographer Leslie Williams and de Segonzac, the later premiere of *First-Time Felon* (Dutton 1997), a low-budget, adult-themed convict drama extended the series' conflicted examination of redemption and reform. Perhaps more significantly, *Oz*'s first-run of episodes overlapped with *Subway Stories* (various 1997) a multi-part anthology exploring the New York subway system through vignettes organised by a range of independent and avant-garde directors from multiple sectors of the US independent and art-house community. This included Julie Dash, Alison Maclean and Abel Ferrara.¹³¹ The project's blend of art-house and avant-garde technical flourishes in the latter, as well as documentary verite, jazz scoring and an ensemble cast of New York stage and film performers offered precedent for strengthening brand identity through the city.¹³²

¹³⁰ De Segonzac shot *Common Threads*, and also worked with Nick Gomez on independent feature *Laws of Gravity* (1992). Zakrezewski strengthened *Oz*'s visual style and ghetto-centric ties, having shot *Memphis PD: War on the Streets* (1996).

¹³¹ *First Time Felon* was boosted by regular collaborator Charles S. Dutton (*Roc*), and producers Spring Creek Productions. *Hostile Waters* worked with the BBC and German co-producers Ufa for a Russian submarine docudrama. *In the Gloaming*'s hour-long study of AIDS' effect on a family was notably directed by Christopher Reeve, and co-scripted by playwright Will Scheffer. *Miss Evers' Boys* premiered in February 1997's Black History Month, and follows a Depression-era experiment on syphilis in African-American men; it was adapted by Walter Bernstein (*Women & Men II*; *The Affair*) from an award-winning David Feldshuh play.

¹³² The video look and trash aesthetic employed by the series can also be expanded from *Homicide* roots towards the late-night experimentation of *Def Comedy Jam* and the short-lived *Society's Ride* for bridging avant-garde filmmaking and musical trends. This is most clearly reflected in *Oz*'s flashback sequences presenting the crimes of prisoners, using video effects, saturated colour, handheld camerawork and occasional bursts of rap music.

While BBC deals were extended for more thriller-oriented docudramas in Soviet missile drama *Hostile Waters* (Drury 1997) NYC also built on literary and theatre deals. This included the adaptation of a *New Yorker* article on AIDS into hour-long vignette special *In the Gloaming* (Reeve 1997), before updating African-American prestige ties into *Miss Evers' Boys* (Sargent 1997) a broadly targeted project framing 20th century civil rights abuses. Bringing the high-end period cinematography of Pictures' award-winning cycles to the New York economy and development process of the division, the film collected NYC's first Best Picture Emmy that September, consolidating an increasing blend of lower-budget independent credibility within the sector's contemporary success with award-winning theatrical prestige.

This success was however complicated by difficulties at Pictures in reproducing and updating successful prestige and genre cycles under John Matoian. While continuing investments in low-budget thrillers (*Dead Silence* Petrie Jr. 1997), the division also expanded on mid-range institutional satires and insider comedy (*The Second Civil War* Dante 1997; *Weapons of Mass Distraction* (Surjik 1997), *Breast Men* (Stockwell 1997)). These drew on long-term talent and the subscriber and award success of adult comedies in sustaining Hollywood talent relationships. Similarly, in producing explicit biopic *Don King: Only in America* (Herzfeld 1997), Pictures extended wider and more specialist HBO Sports links from *Tyson*, while developing more broadly targeted slave picture *Amistad* (Spielberg 1997), before its re-development and completion as a Steven Spielberg feature for DreamWorks.¹³³

As a result, although Pictures continued to draw on proven cycles, the coordination in format, personnel and sensibility between NYC, documentaries and *Oz* offered a base for aggregate quality strengths between film and new series marketing through New York independent production. Licensing through syndication also focused by the end of the year as HBO dissolved distribution carriage with Citadel for

¹³³ *Dead Silence* adapted a bestselling Jeffrey Deaver novel for a kidnap and deaf student drama, and sustained Canadian ties to Alliance Communications. *The Second Civil War*, a news comedy focusing on a reaction to a political crisis, was developed by Barry Levinson and directed by Joe Dante, mixing the former's parallel studio satire *Wag the Dog*. It also notably satirizes a CNN-style network and Southern politics a year after the Turner merger, with a similar winking reference to the Time Warner-Turner merger coming in *Weapons of Mass Distraction*, examining a Ted Turner-style mogul clash over a sports team. *Weapons* was scripted by Larry Gelbart (*Barbarians at the Gate*). *Breast Men* follows the corruption of a pair of doctors after they invent breast implants. The controversially-received *Don King* shared ties to *Tyson*.

overseas Pictures projects in order to focus on centralising HBO Home Video distribution and select HBO Enterprises and Warner Video foreign collaboration deals (Gray Oct 23 1997).

The growing importance of New York independent filmmaking to original programming can be tied to a boom in the city's art funding and film community. In the former, tax breaks helped encourage expanded film and television production in the late 1990s (Christopherson et al 2006). Part of a broader regeneration of the city's national and global image as a cosmopolitan centre for the arts from urban decay and municipal corruption from the 1970s to the 1980s, this was focused around the gentrification of Downtown Manhattan. The independent film scene was crucial to this, with new art-house theatres, and film festivals overlapping with a boom in branded outlets and luxury real estate in Greenwich Village, the East Village, SoHo and TriBeCa. This in turn linked into the previously noted growth of an indie film infrastructure through the IFC Channel, joined in 1996 by the Sundance Channel.

Polan's identification of HBO's 'fiercely independent' (Polan 2009: 183) New York structure can be extended here through clearer production contexts. As well as working with a range of independent filmmakers and directors, the network also sponsored the Independent Feature Film Market. Drawing on this community provided a backdrop for NYC's success in this period, overtaking Pictures as an Emmy leader in four out of five nomination slots in 1997, and winning with *Miss Evers' Boys*. With the CableACEs disbanded that year, retaining original film domination coordinated with indie credibility for offsetting risk.

HBO's crossovers with the indie film movement was not however unique. Showtime built on earlier pre-financing links by working with Robert Redford and Universal Studios to establish the Sundance Channel. Showtime also targeted higher-quality original films that adapted HBO biopic formats and directors (*Mandela and de Klerk* (Sargent 1997), a tactic also taken by TNT (*George Wallace* Frankenheimer 1997). Again though, in terms of scale and an exclusive, rather than interdependent infrastructure, HBO retained distinctions. Moreover, problems with HBO Animation and *Perversions of Science* highlighted declining value for the formats, with Showtime continuing to rely on the name-brand value of *The Outer Limits* and *Poltergeist*.

Awareness of these contexts can therefore be used to add to discussions of broadcast adaptation in the aftermath of the Telecommunications Act by focusing on the evolution of production and aggregate exhibition and marketing strategies. This base can be viewed as continuing to anchor expansions in 1998 through *Sex and the City* and *From the Earth to the Moon*, offsetting risk and extending proven aggregate practices to the launch of digital multiplex channels.

‘...The street pulse and the literary bent of New York....’: 1998

Replacing the ‘Round Midnight’ block with a rotation of *Miller Live*, *Chris Rock*, *Reverb* and *Spawn*, as well as Sunday episodes of *Tracey Takes On*, *Mr. Show* and a final run of *Larry Sanders* by May 1998 provided an initial foundation for new comedy investments. Completing the latter also produced some tensions over syndication, with HBO entering into a dispute with Columbia over exclusive rights (Dempsey May 28 1998). Premiering in June, *Sex and the City* reflected these more exclusive ambitions with an initial run aggressively marketed on Sunday nights alongside *Arli\$\$*. With the latter’s male sports appeals complementing *Sex and the City*’s expanding female audience, Sunday night premieres set up a Friday to Monday first-run originals rotation, with *Oz*’s second season added to Monday late primetime (11pm) a month later (Jul 21-Aug 31). Again, while *Sex and the City* balanced quality and broadcast formats, its development and contemporary production influences can be reset against *Oz* and New York cycles.

In the former, *Sex and the City*’s first season shared elements of *Oz*’s anthology format, with Carrie Bradshaw’s book-ending narration setting up episodic thematic questions varied through semi-serialized plot-lines. Sexual themes presented in a semi-serious anthropological and anthology context also retained ties with *America Undercover*. Simon (2008), Murray (2008) and Jones (2008b) have identified further middlebrow blends of erotica against quality marketing for the series (Simon 194). For Jones, the series’ success lay in its ability to offset ‘reactions to overtly erotic depictions appearing elsewhere on the network’ (Jones 2008b: 284). This included specific cycles on prostitution and urban sex life in late-night (*Pimps Up, Ho’s Down* Owens 1998)

alongside familiar verite trends, which also overlapped with *Oz*'s parallel 1998 run.¹³⁴ Crossovers around an 'art-house sensibility' (Andrews 2007: 320) for 'not TV''s middlebrow identity can however be again contextualised through NYC Productions and alternative documentary sources.

More specifically, female-focused anthology dramas *Women & Men*, *Prison Stories* and *If These Walls Could Talk* had developed adult-themed anthology ties. Documentary crossovers also extended in 1998 to *Cinemax Reel-Life*, particularly for sex and relationships study *Men Are from Manhattan... Women Are From Saskatchewan* (Manin 1998) as well as explorations of the New York fashion and music scene in *Party Monster* (Barbato; Bailey 1998). Broader influences within NYC Productions cycles and *Oz* were also developed. Super-16mm location shooting, jazz scoring and sound-stage recording at Queens' Silvercup studios adapted *Oz*'s promotion of broadcast and independent film talent from the city, but varied and re-aggregated appeals by offering a showcase for female directors such as Alison Maclean, Susan Seidelman and Nicole Holofcener.¹³⁵ In this way, *Sex and the City*, merging documentary rawness with boutique Manhattan gloss contributed to negotiations within NYC for raising production values.

Discussing female contributions to American independent cinema by the mid 1990s, Christina Lane (2005) has argued that a number of directors who had found success within the initial Sundance boom of the early 1990s struggled to maintain success in the second half of the decade. Figures such as Rose Troche (*Go Fish* 1994) and Nicole Holofcener (*Walking and Talking* 1996) found alternative support in pay cable series directing, with HBO and later Showtime by the early 2000s promoting themselves as comparable to some of 'the largest independent film companies in the contemporary 'indie' market' (Lane 200).¹³⁶ In this context, *Sex and the City* worked

¹³⁴ These included tabloid cycles (*Body Doubles: The Twin Experience* (Thomas 1998); ghetto-centric inner-city variations (*Thug Life in DC* Levin 1998) and celebrity specials (*Reno Finds Her Mom* Dean Pilcher 1998).

¹³⁵ This also extended to director Mary Harron (*I Shot Andy Warhol* 1996) working on *Oz*'s second season.

¹³⁶ The latter's 1996 theatrical feature *Walking and Talking*, a low-budget, New York and New Jersey shot comedy focusing on single life and marriage, would particularly establish precedent here for crossover appeal. Seidelman's background in low-budget (*Smithereens* 1982) and glossier studio New York and New Jersey production (*Desperately Seeking Susan* 1985) also strengthened these ties. Later discussing her work on the series, Holofcener suggested that 'you know, it was single camera, shot on film with great actors. I didn't really know then what the show was going to be like but why not?' she recalls. 'It was just more practice. After I did

within NYC's continued success with 'indie'-styled material, with Heller considering how the division began to set precedents for 'signature 'edgy' productions' (Heller 2005: 45) for series drama against the "'safer' dramatic fare' (Heller 2005: 43) of HBO Pictures. However, this relationship requires some unpacking, with crossovers between the two divisions more revolving around a mix of urban African-American dramas, and more female-marketed features.

In the former, NYC adapted Pictures' mid-range black comedy cycle for *The Pentagon Wars*, (Benjamin 1998) produced with East Coast-based independent producers Jersey Films (*Pulp Fiction*) as a satire on weapons manufacturing and military incompetence. HBO Pictures also developed Los Angeles variations on African-American verite drama and female-centred biopics. In the former, this produced *Always Outnumbered* (Apted 1998) an ensemble narrative adapting a series of Walter Mosley crime short stories focusing on overlapping lives in the city through a series of vignettes. At the same time, Pictures adapted Eastern European prestige trends for a higher-end emulation of NYC's transatlantic success with smaller-scale, contemporary docudramas. This included *Shot Through the Heart* (Attwood 1998) an exploration of family ties in the Bosnian-Yugoslav war of the 1990s and WWII drama *When Trumpets Fade* (Irvin 1998).¹³⁷

More notable however was *Gia* (Cristofer 1998) a biopic of fashion model Gia Carangi (Angelina Jolie). Set against the New York fashion scene of the 1980s and 1990s, the feature combines explicit content with a stylistic range of verite Manhattan shooting, avant-garde montages, rock soundtracking and direct camera addresses that touch on the effects of AIDS and addiction. Again, Heller cites *Gia* as a crucial example of HBO's mix of broadcast biopics and pay cable freedoms (Heller 2005: 45). However, these values, when framed as a higher-budget extension of NYC's success, arguably formed one part of aggregate trends across programming that found a long-term focus in

Walking and Talking, I wanted to re-shoot most of it. And I thought, "Well, I need some practice." And I had a great time' (Holofcener qtd Maynard June 14 2002)

¹³⁷ *The Pentagon Wars* worked with independent Jersey Films (*Pulp Fiction*) and represents a blackly comic study of military corruption. *Always Outnumbered* was directed by Michael Apted, and worked with Walter Mosley as a vignette-structured exploration of inner-city Los Angeles. *When Trumpets Fade* developed out of the Citadel deal, while *Shot Through the Heart* represented a further collaboration with the BBC, LeFrak Productions and Alliance for extending European docudrama cycles.

Sex and the City. Moreover, the fusion of art-house edge and crossover marketing encouraged clear branding associations with ‘indie’ successes.¹³⁸

A 1998 *New York Times* feature on NYC Productions identified the division as a ‘Miramax’ for television (Mifflin Feb 25 1998), drawing on and promoting both Time Warner overheads and a small New York acquisition and production office.¹³⁹ *Sex and the City*’s overlaps with the independent scene can therefore arguably be linked here to Miramax and New Line’s own efforts to market more accessible features by the end of the period.¹⁴⁰ This in turn highlighted the increasing consolidation of independent films as niche markets for conglomerates at the turn of the century, merging into what Geoff King describes as ‘Indiewood,’ an ‘area in which Hollywood and the independent sector merge or overlap’ (King 2008: 11). Associations here with New York and specific attempts to widen audiences to middle-class women can be linked here to notes by Negra on the branding strategies of independent distributors.

Negra suggests that the institutionalisation of the ‘art-house miniplex’ (Negra 2005: 76) in Manhattan and other downtown urban centres, as well as Sundance and other exhibition sites promoted forms of ‘hip consumerism’ (Negra 2005: 77). This was aided by the promotion of more romantic, quirky genres and prestige pictures. Negra uses the example of indie film star Parker Posey as negotiating disparate ideas of Hollywood and marginal art-house audiences. She suggests that Posey’s alternative but appealing persona extended Manhattan’s ‘pleasing reconciliations of conventionally disparate attributes and experiences’ (Negra 2005: 77). In this way, she formed part of efforts to rebrand the ‘contrastive images’ of New York into a cosmopolitan site

¹³⁸ *Gia* also strengthened New York ties through co-screenwriter and novelist Jay McInerney, as well as being shot by Rodrigo Garcia and Cristofer through a blend of soundtracked montage, varying stocks, and soft filters.

¹³⁹ Commenting on the comparison and the blend of downtown and high-end production, Miramax studio head Harvey Weinstein noted that Callender had found a way to take both ‘the street pulse and the literary bent of New York, that alchemy that is New York, and make it into some very compelling television’ (Weinstein qtd Mifflin Feb 25 1998)

¹⁴⁰ By 1998 Miramax combined genre successes with investments in prestige literary adaptations such as *Emma* (McGrath 1996) Oscar-winning success with *The English Patient* (Minghella 1996) and *Shakespeare in Love* (Madden 1998), prestige pictures from directors such as Gus Van Sant (*Good Will Hunting* Van Sant 1997), and projects rooted in a distinct New York sensibility (*54* Christopher 1998). By comparison, New Line found success with further genre pictures, new franchises (*Austin Powers* Roach 1997), funding of award-winning features mixing exploitation and auteur sensibilities (*Boogie Nights* Thomas Anderson 1997), and work with *Oz* producer Barry Levinson (*Wag the Dog* 1997).

incorporating but sanitising the city's role in the 'national imagination as a key site for the bizarre, the abject, the violent, and the dysfunctional' (Negra 2005: 80)

Sex and the City's use by Arthurs (2004) as an example of middlebrow, 'bourgeois bohemian' values can therefore be viewed within a broader industrial and cultural moment, with its reconciliation of verite style and boutique gloss aligning with and differentiating from *Oz* and wider programming trends. Again, these trends provide a clearer context for understanding the success of these series beyond broadcast reinvention within much longer precedents. At the same time, while NYC and series crossovers strengthened 'not TV' marketing, the launch of *From the Earth to the Moon* in April 1998 worked to enhance HBO's brand identity as part of a parallel re-focusing of HBO Pictures.

In terms of direct series links, the miniseries sustained anthology-to-drama connections, with episodic vignettes, multiple perspective and verite to filmed reconstruction, stock footage, CGI effects and Tom Hanks as a structuring narrator. This arguably sustained anthology production continuities with *Oz* and *Sex and the City*.¹⁴¹ Moreover, the sweep of American history made by the special can arguably be traced as far back as the prestige impact of *Time Was* in 1979. Chronological shifts and prestige also formed a more direct continuity with the multi-part *America's Dream* and *If These Walls Could Talk*. This adaptation of prestige cycles was closely linked to how HBO Pictures' began to adapt to a division of film production between NYC Productions and miniseries.

Throughout most of the 1990s HBO Pictures' award success had depended on alternating high-end prestige biopics tracking American social history, civil rights and

¹⁴¹ *From the Earth to the Moon* begins with 'Can We Do This?', focusing on the early days of the space race at NASA (details), before moving into 'Apollo One', developing the individual pilots. 'We Have Cleared the Tower' then varies a mock-documentary team with the launch of Apollo Seven, with '1968' combining archival footage of the first-manned lunar journey, cut against US civil rights and draft riots. 'Spider' returns to a documentary structure, following the development of a Lunar Module, with 'Mare Tranquilitis' cutting between the first moon landing and a commentary on broadcast reactions. 'That's All There Is' focuses on the Apollo 12 mission through the perspective of pilot Alan Bean, with 'We Interrupt This Program' re-focusing on the media reaction to the Apollo 13 near-disaster. 'For Miles and Miles' follows grounded astronaut Alan Shepard, 'Galileo Was Right' focuses on geology training, while 'The Original Wives Club' shifts perspective to the wives of the astronauts. Finally, 'Le Voyage dans la Lune' mixes the final Apollo 17 mission with the production of George Melies' 1902 film *Le Voyage dans la Lune*.

the entertainment industry. This had extended the older prestige appeals made by earlier 1980s Showcase and documentary cycles. However, by 1998 NYC's adaptation of prestige cycles and growing award success had shifted focus onto the smaller division. In this way, *Earth* maintained but also expanded the cycle, further intensifying *Oz* and *Sex and the City*'s synthesis of proven subscriber appeals while packaging branded themes across the annual rotation of original titles.

Here a survey of 1960s America was linked into a broader rotation of decade-focused Pictures productions alongside notable documentary specials. This ranged in the former to record divisional investment in *A Bright Shining Lie* (George 1998) a docudrama biopic exploring the personal impact of Vietnam, to noir-recycling comedy *Poodle Springs*' (Rafelson 1998) transplanting of Philip Marlowe (James Caan) to 1960s Los Angeles. Kennedy election-focused insider biopic *The Rat Pack* (Cohen 1998) also revisited the decade as part of a cycle of films dealing with sensational media biopics, from *The Late Shift* and *Norma Jean & Marilyn*.

Moreover, Pictures continued to develop insider projects with the broader reach of *Josephine Baker* and the biopic as cross-sections of early 20th century to 1970s history, completing the year with an expensively staged life-story of radio broadcaster and celebrity journalist Walter Winchell (Stanley Tucci) (*Winchell* Mazursky 1998).¹⁴² At the same time, building prestige cycles also crossed into high-end documentary production for African-American demographics, with Nevins working with Spike Lee to produce 1960s school bombing and civil rights special *4 Little Girls* (1997), nominated for an Oscar in 1998.

Further aligned with parallel specials through a mix of high-budget location shooting, star performers and reconstructed archive and documentary footage, it is possible to view *Earth* as an extension of these trends. Offsetting risk through

¹⁴² Exploring the personal experiences of a chaotic Vietnam, *A Bright Shining Lie* was directed by Terry George, and shot by *Tyson* and *The Cherokee Kid*'s Jack Conroy. *Poodle Springs* united with director Bob Rafelson and producer Sydney Pollack in adapting Philip Marlowe to the 1960s, with a screenplay by Tom Stoppard, drawing ironic comparisons between noir and 1960s changes. *The Rat Pack* similarly pushed its individual budget to \$9.6 million, and flashes between the Kennedy election and the declining career of Frank Sinatra and the *Rat Pack*, with a screenplay by *Don King*'s Kario Salem that received a controversial reception for adapting allegations of Mafia corruption. *Winchell* mixes Hollywood gossip with civil war history, further pushing budgets to around \$8 to \$10 million, with period shooting prestige developed by cinematographer Robbie Greenberg.

significant aggregation, the specials' sweep of Emmys and Golden Globes overcame mixed ratings to be promoted by Albrecht as a sign that HBO could compete on the world stage with high-quality miniseries (Hetrick Apr 22 1998).

Enhancing US subscriber value for high-end production and quality marketing was also enhanced by the end of the year with the launch of 'the Works'. The multiplex acted as both a crucial stage in selling branded channels through digital systems, but also worked within aggregate exhibition strategies. Here the service offered a mix of more specific niche differentiation and segmentation, with HBO Family building on 1996 experiments in providing a narrowcast service of non-R rated film and a mix of low budget family programming from Nevins' documentary division, as well as imported animation.

The new channel offered for provide a site for regular exhibition of family films and new productions. Described as 'slightly sarcastic, but not anti-parent, like Nickelodeon' and 'educational but not as heavy handed as some shows on PBS' (Nevins qtd Mifflin Sep 7 1998), this worked around a rotated package of pre-school mornings, movies and children's specials, educational game shows, family movies and younger teen programming. The latter included development for *30x30 Kid Flicks* (2001-2003) video diaries, building off 1993's *Lifestories*, and new media-themed *Crashbox* (1999). While scope restricts ongoing detailed analysis of HBO Family, the channel continues to provide a complement to the more adult-marketing of HBO, enhancing the brand while not significantly competing with Nickelodeon or other rivals.

Establishing added value for rotating past and new HBO programs was extended to Plus and Signature as opportunities to market to female and prestige audiences. Signature offered a higher mix of major independent titles, award-winning studio films, as well as a second-run channel for new episodes of *Sex and the City*, HBO films, *Dennis Miller Live* and *Larry Sanders*. The channel also featured a 'Flashback Umbrella' block that combined reruns of *From the Earth to the Moon* with classic studio films from the 1950s and 1960s, while also launching a 'Double Take' occasional series of internationally acquired or co-produced documentaries. Multiplex channels further differentiating niches and offering aggregation through themes shared precedent here with earlier Cinemax differentiation. This was extended to HBO2's use to market *Reverb* into higher-profile primetime slots from the end of the year. While

acting as a platform for marketing digital choice, this infrastructure again worked to enhance subscriber value within the continued promotion of exclusive packaging.

This overlapped to some extent with Nickelodeon and MTV's own use of multiplexed channels to increase exhibition of branded reruns and forge loyalty across a package of programming. By comparison, Showtime's more limited back-catalogue of originals led to a stronger emphasis on themed marketing of film rights. HBO's chief rival however attempted to significantly increase its originals marketing in 1998, launching a 'No Limits' marketing campaign in 1998 that focused on promoting new series and miniseries (Katz Jun 24 1998). Early experiments however produced a more eclectic blend of imitations of HBO's programming success, while finding some key niches.

From sexually explicit Columbia sitcom *Rude Awakening* (1998-2001) to independently produced African-American political drama *Linc's* (1998-2000) mixed critical reception in attempting to adapt successful HBO formats was offset by the award-winning LGBT miniseries *More Tales of the City* (1998). Showtime also attracted attention by acquiring the rights to a controversial remake of *Lolita* (Lyne 1997) that had failed to receive a theatrical release. Other series experiments however retained participation in studio genre anthologies *Stargate SG-1* (1997-2007) and *Poltergeist: The Legacy*, later sold to the Sci-Fi Channel and worldwide syndication.

Uses of HBO as an example of more skilful marketing of branding freedoms can therefore be be again revised. Suggestions of a prototypical conversion of FOX and other cable trends into adult-themed programming can be revised here towards more exceptional reliance on exclusive, aggregate cycles and a mature production infrastructure. Further ties to the New York indie scene helped reinforce these appeals, and acted as a context for shaping brand associations with provocative but accessible content. These contexts can finally be viewed as anchoring the success of *The Sopranos* in 1999, while setting up a streamlining of production and exhibition cycles for the 2000s.

‘It’s more important than ever that we examine our strategy and strive to be a place that nobody else can go. We need to develop new ways to distinguish ourselves from everybody else’: 1999

The Sopranos began as a failed pilot order with FOX (*The Complete Book* 16) before being re-packaged for HBO by Brillstein-Grey. This continued a productive relationship from *Def Comedy Jam* and *Mr. Show*. An extended pilot and final commission for a thirteen episodes series for early 1999 was developed from approximately 1997. Production assembled around New York, New Jersey and multiple *Oz* and *Sex and the City* producers and independent film talent from the city, as well as shared soundstage work at Silvercup Studios in developing a cinematic style.¹⁴³ Generic and thematic precedents can again be found here across these series, as well as closer overlaps with *America Undercover*, HBO Pictures and NYC Productions cycles.

For the latter, *The Sopranos*’ gangster focus built on post-1995 films *Body Language*, *Gotti*, *SugarTime* and *The Rat Pack*, as well as earlier documentaries *Mob Stories* (Levin 1993) and serial killer-interviews *The Iceman Tapes* (1992). By 1999 precedent from verite documentary trends was also established by December 1998’s Jon Alpert-directed New Jersey crime project *Life of Crime 2*, as well as 1998’s psychotherapy-themed studies *Dead Blue: Surviving Depression* (Yeates 1998). This was followed in 1999 by *Panic* (Yeates 1999) and Jessica Yu’s mental-health special *The Living Museum*. Moreover, the series’ darkly comic blend of contemporary family life and Italian-American values can be extended to a range of produced and acquired family-driven cycles in 1999 across HBO and Cinemax.¹⁴⁴ The latter shared crossovers with *Oz* through inner-city specials (*Black Tar Heroin* (Okazaki 1999); *Come Unto Me: The Faces of Tyree Guyton* (Cattell 1999)), while *Sex and the City* generated crossovers with relationship and urban life studies (*Out at Work* (Anderson; Gold 1999)).¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Directors Nick Gomez and Alan Taylor had worked on *Oz*, Andy Wolk directed the pilot of *Arli\$\$* and episodes of *tales from the Crypt*. Actress Edie Falco (Carmela) was a series regular on *Oz* for its first two seasons. Multiple actors had also appeared in *Gotti* in 1996.

¹⁴⁴ These ranged from the Appalachian-set *American Hollow* (Kennedy 1999) and the Native Indian (*Super Chief* Kurzon 1999), to a range of lower-budget and short Cinemax specials on adoption (*The Adoption Picnic* Head 1999), anthology specials around Father’s Day (*Sons and Daughters: A Father’s Day Trilogy*), that included autobiographies of divorce (*Grist for the Mill* Wade 1999), Korean intergenerational and cultural tensions (*Fighting Grandpa* Pak 1999) and Chris Triffo’s *Dad* (1999) as well as more direct crossovers for Irish-American crime story *The McCourts of Limerick* (McCourt 1999)

¹⁴⁵ An effort to mix African-American reparations and satire into the show also takes place in ‘A Hit is a Hit’ (1.10).

Opportunities to build comedy boutique ties through prestige specials and standup ties were also continued through theatrical-linked and award-nominated productions (*Lenny Bruce: Swear to Tell the Truth* Weide 1999). In addition, *America Undercover* continued to alternate cycles from tabloid to prestige material and *Reel Life*'s international docudramas and avant-garde specials¹⁴⁶ into variations on continuing adult series (*Private Dicks: Men Exposed* Powers, Spadola 1999). HBO Sports' occasional thematic overlaps with prestige series and film drama were also developed in 1999 around female-centred niches from 1998 (*A Cinderella Season: The Lady Vols Strike Back* Alpert; DeLeo) to African-American civil rights appeals (*Fists of Freedom: The Story of the '68 Summer Games* Roy 1999).¹⁴⁷

While documentary links offered a further source of trusted compatibility, more specific format and production were also retained. The use of self-contained, character-driven episodes and serial plot-lines varied quality formats, but also connected to miniseries trends adapted by *Oz*, *Sex and the City* and *From the Earth to the Moon*. The first season of *The Sopranos* particularly draws on the anthology vignette conventions developed by 1999, using psychotherapy sequences for setting up wider thematic commentary on individual and serial plot-lines (Tony Soprano's leadership anxieties and conflict with mother Livia (Nancy Marchand)). This arguably echoed the Augustus Hill, Carrie Bradshaw and Tom Hanks structuring devices from 1997.¹⁴⁸

Format continuities provided a basis for marketing consistency across the aggregate service in 1999. This included the promotion of late-night series (*Miller Live*, *Chris Rock*, *Spawn*) and Sunday primetime premieres approaching year-round linear continuity (*Tracey Takes On*, *Arli\$\$*, *Sex and the City*, *The Sopranos*). With *Tracey Takes On*, *Mr. Show* and *Spawn* completing their runs as transitional examples of the

¹⁴⁶ This ranged from the lower-end (*Juror Number 5* (Bailey; Barbato 1999; *Fatal Twisters* (DiPersio 1999)) to the award-targeting (*A Century of Living* Horvath 1999) into transatlantic, international and eclectic (*Sunrise over Tianenman Square* (Bo-Wang 1999); *Bach in Auschwitz* (Daeron 1999); *Speaking in Strings* (Di Florio 1999) and *Wisconsin Death Trip* (Marsh 1999), a BBC co-produced document of death in a Wisconsin settlement in the late 19th century.

¹⁴⁷ By the end of the year, the division had built enough of a documentary back-catalogue to run a 'Sports in the 20th Century' themed season, while combinations of boxing exclusivity, *Real Sports* and news-magazines led to a decision to further focus the brand, dropping a twenty-five year association with Wimbledon tennis rights (Sandomir Jun 26 1999).

¹⁴⁸ Psychotherapy as a device for primetime series reflexivity can also be linked here to *Sessions* in building older boomer appeals.

1995 to 1998 experimentation, links were made between Sunday premieres and midweek replays.

This notably included the re-scheduling of *Oz*'s first-run on Wednesday nights from the summer alongside a full replay of *The Sopranos*' first season and *Sex and the City* reruns as 'Destination Wednesday' (Katz Aug 30 1999). With a 13% ratings spike and a cumulative 8.8 million viewers across the week (Potts Sep 17 1999), establishing conventions for heavy rotation of series formats was complemented by new multiplex channels. HBO Comedy and HBO Zone aggregated comedy titles, while Zone specialised in 18-25, urban and African-American niches. As a result, Zone retrieved exhibition rights to *The Hitchhiker*, paired with reruns of *Chris Rock* and *Oz*. This also helped complement the further re-branding of Cinemax towards more film selections and ever-popular late-night erotica (Hettrick May 20 1999).

The Sopranos' contextualisation within aggregate trends also worked to adjust *Sex and the City*'s broader appeal as the two series eclipsed the more specialist *Oz* in popularity.¹⁴⁹ While retaining its vignette-organised structure, the second season of the *Sex and the City* moves into more complex story arcs, while beginning to alter its documentary verite influences towards more fluid Steadicam tracking shots and higher key lighting. This retained Super-16mm stock, but notably cut down on the self-conscious documentary grain of the first season. Coordinating formats was aided here by crossovers with *The Sopranos* directors Alan Taylor and Allen Coulter, as well as shared production and post-production facilities at the Queens Silvercup Studio.

Moreover, *Sex and the City*'s higher budgets were complemented by hiring cinematographer John Thomas (*Norma Jean & Marilyn*), who had worked with Alan Taylor on New York-set indie *Palookaville*. Important links were also made with miniseries production, with John Melfi and Antonia Ellis becoming co-producers on the series, having played a key role in *Laurel Avenue* and *From the Earth to the Moon*.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ *Oz* links varied from crossover *Sopranos* director Nick Gomez ('The Truth and Nothing But...' (3.01) to providing further directing opportunities for New York actors, including Matt Dillon ('Napoleon's Boney Parts' (3.02)) and extending documentary verite ties to filmmaker Barbara Koppel for the season finale ('Out of Time' (3.08)).

¹⁵⁰ Refinements of *Sex and the City*'s style include more archival footage fades and graphic matches over direct-camera commentary (2.03), and pastiches of multi-frame credits (2.17). Longer serial arcs include Carrie's relationship with Mr. Big (2.5-2.12; 2.17-2.18), Miranda's relationship with bartender Steve (2.8-2.10; 2.18) and stand-alone episodes set in the Hamptons (2.17). *Oz* crossovers via Silvercup shooting also included actor Dean Winters (2.14).

These crossovers reflected wider efforts to consolidate New York film production by the end of the year, providing a streamlined basis for sharing talent and widening from Manhattan to US and international coordination.

In April Bewkes promoted Albrecht to oversight of film and series, with Carolyn Strauss having already been promoted to senior vice president for series in March (Hettrick Mar 3 1999). This also saw Downtown Productions further shift away from Comedy Central collaboration towards exclusive HBO development. In doing so, the division's executive Nancy Geller joined producer Anne Thomopoulos in working with Albrecht and Strauss on comedy and miniseries commissions (Hettrick May 19 1999). At the same, John Matoian's disappointing spell at HBO Pictures ended, leaving Callender to assume full control of the original film division (Katz Apr 13 1999). Matoian's departure reflected the declining value of HBO Pictures' broad slate, with moves quickly made to consolidate film development.

Pictures had struggled to consistently find audiences and critical praise in 1999, with *Winchell's* older-ranging biopics struggling to build ratings (Katz Apr 13 1999). Efforts to draw on NYC's success with lower-budget, indie-type films included road movie *Earthly Possessions* (Lapine 1999), as well as high-budget, star-driven Western *The Jack Bull* (Badham 1999). The latter shared *From the Earth to the Moon's* cinematographer Gale Tattersall, but raised production costs against lower subscriber returns. By contrast, the August 1999 success of *Introducing Dorothy Dandridge* (Coolidge 1999) a biopic of an African-American female star in prewar Hollywood, was praised for aggregating diverse appeals between children, teenagers, 18-34 males and 18-49 women (Hettrick Aug 25 1999).

Moreover, Pictures' success in building mature cycles around emerging series was reproduced through a series of gangster-themed dramas in 1999. This included Jewish Mafia biopic *Lansky* (McNaughton 1999), turn-of-the-century racketeering drama *Vendetta* (Meyer 1999), and Italian co-produced black comedy *Excellent Cadavers* (Tognazzi 1999). Ties to NYC's indie and transatlantic roots were also developed through what would become Pictures' final feature, the BBC co-produced, Ridley and Tony Scott-developed Orson Welles drama *RKO 281* (Ross 1999), building on both prestige and transatlantic ties with insider Hollywood cycles.

Mixed results against extensive format compatibility however came against NYC Productions' continued success as a more limited, exclusive operation. This ranged from a second Emmy for *A Lesson Before Dying* (Sargent 1999) recombining *Miss Evers' Boys'* civil rights, African-American historical drama prestige for a prison-set melodrama, before developing a *New Yorker* article into *Witness Protection* (Pearce 1999). Another Mafia-themed drama, but building from a contemporary Irish-American family's struggles within the witness protection program, the film arguably built off the success of *The Sopranos* to enhance aggregate subscriber value.¹⁵¹ By the end of the year, plans had therefore been put in place to consolidate and establish an infrastructure for further expanding the reach of the brand into new markets for the 2000s.

Following his April promotion, Albrecht announced that he and Callender were 'going to sit down and look at the slate. We're going to use this opportunity for us to really look at the types of movies we make and how we make them' (Albrecht qtd Bernstein Apr 13 1999). By October this plan was announced as the consolidation of Pictures and NYC into HBO Films, a single Los Angeles and New York-rooted division targeting a 'broad slate of low-budget to high-profile films, expanding its current niches to broaden its audience base' (Pursell Oct 22 1999). In this respect, Films offered a mix of Pictures' pre-buy and wider options with the more focused New York economy, translating a 'Miramax for television' promise into a division closely integrated with series production for refining quality control across the aggregated service.

As a result, HBO announced development deals by the end of the year with New York independent film producers such as Robert DeNiro's Tribeca Films and Christina Vachon's Killer Films. They also entered into agreements for new films with *Oz's*

¹⁵¹ *Earthly Possessions*, a black comedy following a bored housewife's kidnapping by a bank robber adapted an Anne Tyler novel, with co-star Susan Sarandon also co-producing. Producer Rastar had developed *Barbarians at the Gate*, while cinematographer David Franco and director James Lapine mix unusual optical POVs with direct camera interviews and local news coverage. *The Jack Bull* was a pet project for star and co-producer John Cusack, offering a morality tale in 1830s Wyoming over clashes between a rancher and a land-owner, with cinematography by *From the Earth to the Moon's* Gale Tattersall. *Dorothy Dandridge* was directed by Martha Coolidge, and shot by Winchell's Robbie Greenberg. *Lansky* worked from a screenplay by David Mamet (*Lip Service*), but struggled as a 20th century Jewish gangster biopic. *Vendetta's* 1890s New Orleans Mafia saga worked with regular producer Gary Lucchesi and *Goodfellas'* (Scorsese 1990), Nicholas Pileggi, and shared *Earthly Possessions'* cinematographer David Franco. *Excellent Cadavers* represented HBO Pictures' last co-European financed production, while *Witness Protection's* *New Yorker* adaptation's study of a family struggling with a Mafia double life references both a New York production community, and regular Showcase collaborator Forest Whitaker in a supporting role.

Fontana-Levinson, *The Sopranos*' Brillstein-Grey and *The Chris Rock Show*'s executive producer Nelson George. Suggestions were also made for re-aligning miniseries and international co-production cycles around higher budgets and centralised production (Pursell Oct 22 1999). Speaking in April, Bewkes had linked the consolidation of exclusive production across the network as reflecting a long-term desire to 'streamline the telefilm production process...it was the right time to consolidate for a lot of reasons having to do with vision and relationships with the talent community' (Bewkes qtd Bernstein Apr 13 1999). Albrecht also suggested that 'it's more important than ever that we examine our strategy and strive to be a place that nobody else can go. We need to develop new ways to distinguish ourselves from everybody else' (Albrecht qtd Bernstein Apr 13 1999).

In terms of continuing to exploit a mature programming and exhibition structure, these strategies arguably offered a further basis for contextualising 'not TV' risk, setting up wider brand management plans. Finding this stability was particularly crucial by the end of the decade. Despite *The Sopranos*' widespread impact, NBC had found success with quality drama *The West Wing*, while ABC retained a hold over the 1999 Emmys with offbeat procedural *The Practice*. Rival attempts to emulate HBO's brand notably failed though, with FOX's comedy pilot *Action* (1999), an insider Hollywood series with bleeped profanity struggling to find an audience (Polan 2009: 190).

The value of original programming for branding cable channels however continued, from FX's plans to develop low-cost comedies, to film channel AMC's success with occasional quality dramas and comedies (*Remember WENN* (1996-1998); *The Lot* (1999-2001)). In addition, TNT's award-nominated dot.com original film feature *Pirates of Silicon Valley* (Burke 1999) came against the difficult costs and investments in franchise dramas such as *Witchblade*, retaining HBO's dominance of cable programming prestige by the end of the year. Showtime also experienced a mix of individual success and difficulties in stabilising its programming lineup.

For the latter, mixed reactions to *Linc's* and *Rude Awakening* combined with short runs for insider satire *Beggars and Choosers* (1999-2001) as well as developing African-American basketball drama *The Hoop Life* (1999) with *Oz* producers Barry Levinson, Tom Fontana through Viacom. Moreover, original film success with miniseries *Thanks of a Grateful Nation* (Holcomb 1999) emulated HBO's Vietnam

themes through Gulf War setting alongside Jodie Foster-produced legal drama *The Baby Dance* (Anderson 1999). Efforts to share in *The Sopranos*' success however produced a critical attack on Mafia miniseries *Bonanno* (Poulette 1999). Showtime did however retain ties to independent producers, increasing co-financing to include Canadian studio Lionsgate's award-winning *Gods and Monsters* (Condon 1999).¹⁵² In this way, Showtime overlapped with but lacked HBO's traditional strengths as an exclusive aggregate service, which had aligned with a comprehensive production infrastructure.

Conclusion

It is therefore possible to add more specific historical contexts to the 'slow and deliberate process' of the rebrand. Rather than explain branding success through a transition from eclectic appeals to marketing through quality program formats, a longer-term evolution of aggregate exhibition and production can be identified. In this way, links between deregulation and individual series for middlebrow appeals evolved from much clearer institutional roots. Polan's (2009) overview of HBO's exclusive New York identity can also be expanded here to continuities from the Time era's promotion of subscription value.

Rather than simply act as a prototype for industry change, HBO's success drew from but also sustained its own distinctive relationship to interdependent trends as a market-leading subscription service over rivals. Awareness of more exceptional subscriber aggregation as well as production of branded content therefore offers a clearer basis for contextualising risk and a foundation for later changes. Moreover, by placing general middlebrow debates as part of contemporary 'indie' trends within New York, a clearer sense of how this identity evolved from institutional roots can be proposed.

Understanding this distinction can also be used to suggest some provisional caution over HBO's expansion into the 2000s as a brand managed across digital platforms. Tensions remained over domestic exclusivity and global branding for HBO within Time Warner. While Viacom, News Corp and Disney had successfully

¹⁵² A deal was reached by early 2000 between Showtime and MGM to extend output deals with the studio's first-run and classics archive for the multiplexed channel, The Movie Channel and The Sundance Channel, offering the Viacom network a significant aggregate film identity alongside Paramount synergy.

franchised its channels and programs worldwide, McElvogue notes that in terms of syndication and co-ventured film channels, the ‘the politics between sister company Warner Bros. and HBO’ had created recurring ‘problems domestically and internationally’ (McElvogue May 2 1995).

In this way, HBO’s global ventures arguably fell some way behind those of its cable rivals. Showtime had also widened its name-brand value within Viacom, and as a historically closer partner with Hollywood studios. This included a consortium of network and studios for an Australian film channel in 1995, and investments in Latin America with News Corp and MGM. Parallel tensions over gaining exclusive rights for hit series were also highlighted by disputes with Columbia over *The Larry Sanders Show*. Deals with Rysher, and plans to expand DVD distribution from 2000 looked to significantly extend HBO beyond the subscription service into more aggressive brand management across markets. However, in analysing this success from 2000 to 2002, it is possible to again consider how far programming distinction and wider brand management drew from and produced complications with an exclusive, aggregated subscriber identity.

Chapter Five: 2000-2002

Having established a distinctive branding platform by 1999, from 2000 to 2002 HBO helped redefine ‘what was possible in terms of both quality innovations on the small screen and how much money could be made by pursuing alternative business models for TV’ (Edgerton 2008a: 12). This ranged from the continued ‘not TV’ embodiment of series such as *Six Feet Under*, *The Wire*, *Curb Your Enthusiasm* and miniseries *Band of Brothers* to a more general management of the HBO brand across new digital platforms. Used by existing histories as a prototype for how the television industry began to seek distinction in an era of digital convergence, HBO’s success became crucial to Time Warner as the conglomerate entered into a disastrous merger with internet provider AOL in 2001.

While again considering how long-term subscriber aggregation provided a stable basis for program development, HBO’s overall brand management success can be contextualised as an example of Caldwell’s (2003) ‘second shift’ adaptation to digital technologies. Retaining distinct institutional continuities over exclusivity and protection of a subscriber identity, uses as a model for ‘resilient refashioning’ (Polan 2009: 183) can be re-examined against more cautious adaptations to new media markets in the period. Beginning with a wave of innovation from 2000 to mid-2001, some tensions over new formats and brand extensions within Time Warner can be identified from September of that year to 2002 in setting up new challenges for 2003.

‘Experimental not only in the often daring nature of its shows, but also in its economic practices and media operations’: 2000-2002

The decade began with renewed optimism for deregulation, consolidation and synergy. While deals between Viacom and CBS, and French media giant Vivendi and Universal in 2000 tightened interdependence, the merger of AOL and Time Warner reflected the high point of a dot.com boom. Completed in January 2001 for \$112 billion, AOL Time Warner was promoted as a ‘prototype for a new kind of conglomerate,’ combining ‘the new media potential of the Internet with old media wealth vested in cable systems and entertainment content’ (Grainge 2008: 131). Coming against further Bush-Cheney FCC deregulation of station ownership, and a global boom in DVD, broadband internet and

improving high definition technology, hoped-for synergy and media convergence promised increased diversification.

HBO formed a key part of these trends, continuing to lead praise for quality series while extending its brand into new digital markets. Early in 2001 Albrecht reflected on how ‘HBO has taken over Sunday nights, and we’re going to keep them’ (Albrecht qtd Sporich Jan 22 2001). Led by the enormous success of *The Sopranos* and *Sex and the City* in boosting weekly Sunday night ratings, from 2000 to 2002 ‘not TV’ exclusivity was most notably strengthened by investment in quality dramas *Six Feet Under* and *The Wire* alongside comedy *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. This was also joined by miniseries *Band of Brothers* and *The Corner* (2000), as well as the more niche-oriented ongoing seasons of *Oz*, *Arli\$\$* and new addition *Mind of the Married Man* (2001-2002).

Sunday promotion was further complemented by the scheduling new instalments of *America Undercover* from January 2001. Wider documentary experiments also included HBO-branded reality contests (*Project Greenlight* 2001; 2003) and adaptations of erotica for series promotion in 2001 (*G-String Divas* 2000). A rebranded HBO Films also provided award-winning features across the month, while late-night appeals included the continuing *Dennis Miller Live*. However, in terms of attention and marketing weight, *Six Feet Under*, *The Wire*, *Curb Your Enthusiasm* and *Band of Brothers* extended the success of *The Sopranos* and *Sex and the City*.

Developed with Academy Award-winning screenwriter Alan Ball, *Six Feet Under* has been described by McCabe and Akass as pushing the ‘not TV’ quality brand to its limits (McCabe, Akass 2005: 2). Focusing on the serial and episodic development of the Fisher family and their undertaking business in contemporary Los Angeles, the series intensifies *The Sopranos*’ adaptation of broadcast quality formats. Inter-generational plot-lines interact here with explicit psychological ambiguity, dream digressions, episodic visitations from the dead, and darkly comic takes on death, sex, addiction, gender and sexuality.¹⁵³ With Ball noting HBO’s encouragement to ‘fuck things up a bit more’ (Ball DVD Commentary 2002), the series overlapped with *The Sopranos*’ art-house and independent cinema overlaps. Lavery (2005) has also drawn

¹⁵³ For a more detailed discussion of *Six Feet Under*’s broader themes, see Janet McCabe and Kim Akass eds (2005) *Reading Six Feet Under: TV to Die For*, London: IB Tauris.

more specific links between the series' surreal style and magical realist fiction, as well as modernist theatre.

Establishing further hybrids of conventional telefilm drama and cinematic style, 'anti-TV language' (Caso qtd McCabe, Akass 2008b: 78). Represented by 'very painterly, motivated, natural lighting, desaturated colours and lots of depth' (Caso qtd McCabe, Akass 2008b: 78), as well as a mix of pop soundtrack and non-Western underscoring by composer Michael Newman, *Six Feet Under*'s 'anti-TV' style helped reinforce upscale distinctions from rivals by 2001. For McCabe and Akass, this reflected production influences from 'modernist art conventions to make a uniquely televisual product for a more select audience' (McCabe, Akass 2007: 8). Here cinematographer Caso has identified the importance of defining the show's style from the more kinetic aesthetic of broadcast dramas such as *NYPD Blue* (Caso qtd McCabe, Akass 2008b: 78).

In this context, *Six Feet Under* notably distinguished itself from CBS' Sunday night success by 2001 with highly-rated procedural *CSI*'s episodic structure and kinetic style. Here Polan, discussing HBO's investment in *The Sopranos* and the show, suggests that by adapting the 'aesthetic look and temporal feel of European cinema' HBO offered 'a contrast with the fast pace of much television in the post-music video moment' (Polan 2009: 89). These continuing adaptations and distinctions, particularly over the success of broadcast procedurals, were sustained in the summer of 2002 by *The Wire*.

Expanding on a pitch by former journalist David Simon for a show exploring the complex relationship between law and order in contemporary Baltimore, *The Wire* continued to build on prestige expectations for distinct pacing, ensemble casting and long-term serial plotting. With a first season of episodes exploring the intricacies of a drug war against the wider scope of politics, institutional crisis, and African-American inner-city decline and addiction, extensive praise and critical attention have subsequently celebrated the series' ambitious narrative structure and sustained exploration of urban decline.¹⁵⁴ Brian Rose has argued here that the series

¹⁵⁴ Simon framed the series as 'dissent...It is perhaps the only storytelling on television that overtly suggests that our political and economic and social constructs are no longer viable, that our leadership has failed us relentlessly, and that no, we are not going to be all right (Simon qtd O'Rourke 2006) over the decline of the inner-city and institutional failure. For more on the

‘has, in many ways, helped to reinvent the wheel, transforming the police drama from its emphasis on investigative heroics into one of the few places in television willing to argue passionately about the world outside the boundaries of the small screen’ (Rose 2008: 90)

An emphasis on graphic realism, supported by a long-lens verite style and ambient soundtracking (Griffin 2007), also offered a variation on the more psychologically ambiguous, art-film influences of previous dramas.

Immediate precedent here had also come from Simon’s production of 2000’s *The Corner* for HBO, an award-winning miniseries displaying parallel themes for addiction in Baltimore that shared many of the same cast and crew. Moreover, ambitions for varying the scale and complexity of drama programming was represented by September 2001’s WWII epic miniseries *Band of Brothers*. Re-uniting with Tom Hanks from *Earth to the Moon*, and working with Hollywood mini-major DreamWorks, the \$120 million, ten episode miniseries was supported by BBC co-financing, and received a \$10 million marketing campaign (Feiwell Sep 3-Sep 9 2001).

Tracking the development of WWII through a group of American soldiers, a mix of documentary interviews, European location shooting, CGI-supported battle sequences and digital processing for a desaturated, painterly style has been cited by Schatz as allowing HBO to ‘push more aggressively into the cinematic realm’ (Schatz 2008: 127). Moreover, backing strengths in serial complexity, Albrecht emphasised the benefits of ‘following one group of characters all the way through’ (Albrecht qtd *Multichannel News* Jun 11 2001) over the more episodic *Earth*. In this way, Schatz has suggested that the series’ intimate scope enabled it to remain ‘very much a television series’ (Schatz 2008: 128). While *Band* provided the highest-end of production in the period, costly drama scale was complemented during the period by the lower-budget impact of *Curb Your Enthusiasm* from October 2000.

A collaboration with former *Seinfeld* producer Larry David, *Curb Your Enthusiasm* built on a 1999 comedy special to evolve as a mock-verite exploration of

series’ negotiation of contemporary anxieties over the American city, see *The Wire: Urban Decay and American Television*, Tiffany Potter, C.W. Marshall eds, London, Continuum International Publishing, 2010.

the comedian's daily life. Semi-improvised episodic plot-lines follow David's taboo misunderstandings around Hollywood, and interaction with self-deprecating celebrity guests. Explicit content, and a handheld digital-video (DV) style have been used to tie the series into *Tanner '88* and *Larry Sanders*, presenting a reflexive format playing off the 'insider' genre's intertextual satire (Williamson 2008: 114). Moreover, Lavery suggests that the series adapted the 'trivial details of modern urban existence' (Lavery 2008: 205) from *Seinfeld*'s enormous critical and ratings success by amplifying improvisational performance and jazz-influenced 'Fellini-esque theme music' (Lavery 2008: 206). In returning to male-centred taboo comedy (Haggins, Lotz 2008: 165), the series returned to more typical male marketing appeals to complement *Sex and the City*'s more exceptional Sunday night appeals.

Taken together, *Six Feet Under*, *The Wire*, *Curb Your Enthusiasm* and *Band of Brothers* helped reinforce *The Sopranos* and *Sex and the City* in embodying 'not TV' value on Sunday nights. For Anderson, awards and critical praise enabled the marketing of the HBO series as a work of art' (Anderson 2008: 38). Promotional campaigns for individual shows in this period involved pastiches of fashion photography and Renaissance painting in establishing bold graphic billboard and print advertisements (McCabe, Akass 2008a: 85). As Johnson argues, a playful blending of exclusive and popular cultural forms sustained HBO's quality identity in soliciting distinctive taste and wider flexibility (Johnson 2007: 10-11).

Jane Feuer has also noted how on-air network promotions further emphasised consistent brand values, with idents 'interdiegetically connecting its Sunday night shows...into a single unified world' (Feuer 2007: 154), to the extent of digitally compositing characters into single locations. For Kompare, these network promotions helped link 'HBO's programs together as one distinctive package' (Kompare 2005: 187), provisionally united as a brand through production values and creative license for producers in an exclusive context.

Exclusivity and distinction has therefore been developed by histories to argue that HBO counter-programmed broadcast success with reality and game-show formats such as *Big Brother* (CBS, 2000-) *Survivor* (2000-) and *American Idol*. *Curb Your Enthusiasm*'s incorporation of reality trends for DV shooting more directly tied into trends for digital production here. Coordinating aggressive marketing campaigns with

raising production, *Sex and the City* received a first Best Comedy Emmy in 2001, while *The Sopranos* competed with *The West Wing* in drama categories. With the premiere of *The Sopranos*' delayed fourth season winning 13.4 million viewers (Grossman Sep 18 2002), and 12.5 million for its finale (Wallenstein Dec 11 2002), Edgerton and Jones suggest that the network were 'certifiably white-hot' (Edgerton, Jones 316) by 2002.

This was enhanced by the success of HBO Films, with Heller suggesting that the 'HBO signature' represented a mark of 'originality, even when working with the familiar genres and typically uplifting narrative structures of Hollywood and made-for-TV movies' (Heller 2008: 44). Particular successes here included sequel *If These Walls Could Talk II* (2000) as well as cancer drama *Wit* (Nichols 2001) and Churchill historical biopic *The Gathering Storm* (Loncraine 2002). Sunday night marketing of *America Undercover* has also been described by Murray and Mascaro as combining broad appeals with award-winning specials (Mascaro 2008: 249).

More specialist appeals have also been noted through late-night erotica, with fly-on-the-wall reality series *G-String Divas* winning substantial ratings if not quality marketing attention (McCabe, Akass 2005: 8). The success of erotica has been used here to further present some middlebrow tensions over quality marketing and explicit content. Leverette describes the popularity of sex and boxing as an example of AOL Time Warner's exploitation of deregulated content.¹⁵⁵ This has been echoed by Miller and Kim's critique of boxing, *Real Sports* and sport documentaries as regularly showcasing 'bloodcurdling masculinist rituals that induct viewers into violence' (Miller, Kim 2008: 230). Leverette and Miller and Kim thus retain brand criticism of the 'passing' of 'quality and progressive politics' (Miller, Kim 2008: 231) within explicit freedoms. As previously noted, Martinez has also viewed the creation of multiplex channel HBO Latino as homogenising Hispanic audiences through subtitled series and some low-cost programming (Martinez 2007: 203).¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ In this context Leverette wonders if HBO ultimately represents the 'biggest pimp in the Time Warner empire's army?' (Leverette 2008b: 138).

¹⁵⁶ By 2000 11% of HBO's subscriber base was Hispanic, with 19% of Hispanic households receiving the network (Andreeva May 7 2000). HBO Latino director Bernadette Aulestia defined the channel as an opportunity to expand into this market, arguing that 'these are people who prefer to watch TV in Spanish...that's the part of the market that has not been as well penetrated from a business perspective. HBO Latino really just brings more people into the HBO fold' (Aulestia qtd Stark Sep 11 2000).

While ongoing criticism of middlebrow and corporate tensions can be again unpacked through intensifications of cycles, programming success has been further linked in accounts to HBO's wider extension and management of its brand through digital innovation. Polan has suggested that the 'uncertain identity' (Polan 2009: 183) of series like *The Sopranos* as a drama with multiple appeals could contribute to HBO's growing success as an 'experimental arm of Time Warner: experimental not only in the often daring nature of its shows, but also in its economic practices and media operations' (Polan 2009: 183). Faced with challenges to maintain quality, Kelso notes how HBO was 'forced to take risks' (Kelso 2008: 49) on these shows, with higher costs offset by a 'concerted attention to the computer revolution and digitalisation of its media products' (Polan 2009: 188). For Polan, this allowed HBO to become a vertically integrated 'laboratory' for its conglomerate parent in testing new brand extensions, retaining 'relative independence while continuing to generate important revenue streams' for Time Warner (Polan 2009: 185).

These revenue streams were primarily represented by the lucrative possibilities of DVD alongside the boosting of cable packages through high definition and TiVo compatibility. DVD's particular success came through its re-packaging of television content into a 'tangible form' (Kompere 2005: 205), able to be more easily marketed as complete seasons than video storage. Separating programming from television's exhibition flow into individual commodities consequently produced an emphasis on distinctive programs within what Lotz has described as an increasingly 'wide ocean of content' (Lotz 2007a: 120) by 2002.

For Lotz, HBO's subscription strengths as an advertising-free branded service provided an ideal starting point for adapting to selling high-quality DVDs that could showcase technical fidelity and serial narratives. Distributed worldwide, the extension of the HBO brand to a DVD label reinforced and diversified the 'network's value proposition of offering something of exceptional quality and clearly distinct from the rest of the televisual field' (Lotz 2007a: 112). This fidelity was enhanced by new multiplex channels, high-definition feeds, widescreen letter-boxing and digital sound for *The Sopranos* and *Band of Brothers* (Hogan Jan 8 2001; Dempsey Apr 16-Apr 22 2001). Finding distinction through the production values and niche interest of shows was also complemented by the popularity of TiVO. An electronic program guide enabling viewers to save and filter programming while skipping commercials, TiVo

challenged traditional network scheduling and encouraged further distinctions in branded content (Boddy 2004: 130).

For Johnson, the increasingly global spread of *Sex and the City* and *The Sopranos* on DVD by 2002, when coupled with international syndication and merchandising meant that an ‘understanding of the HBO brand simply in relation to its subscription channel’ had become ‘problematic’ (Johnson 2007: 11). The parallel distinction offered by program brands able to convert associations with the network brand into more specific values and mobility across media could trade here on *The Sopranos*’ ‘ironic knowingness’ (Polan 2009: 149), *Sex and the City* fashion tie-ins or *Oz*-branded rap soundtracks (Conniff Jan 18 2001).¹⁵⁷ McIntosh also suggests here that HBO-branded series provided marketing continuity for investments in Asian, Latin America, Eastern and Central European film channels (McIntosh 2008: 75).

In this context, Caldwell also points to 2001 reality series *Project Greenlight* as a promotional vehicle for tying the HBO brand into wider markets. The show’s use of an online-promoted contest enabling a young filmmaker to produce a film with Miramax, by compressing branding appeals of ‘lottery, Sundance, and Gen-Y mythoi with the chance to be a ‘player’ in the new culture industry’ (Caldwell 2006: 102), could extend and complement quality branding. For Caldwell programs like *Project Greenlight*’s conversion of industry behaviour into a contest also offers valuable insights into how practitioners theorise their own relationship to production and definitions of specific corporate identities (Caldwell 2006: 134).

The globalisation of HBO’s brand, extending from the subscription service to wider brand management across digital and global markets has consequently led to a focus of hit series as highly mobile and determined branded content. Polan argues here that ‘whatever their content and whatever their initial media platform...HBO productions are also intended to serve in a circulation of media into a digital realm’ (Polan 2009: 184). In this way, Polan suggests that the success of *The Sopranos* in tying together DVD, global distribution and merchandising within a culture of risk at the

¹⁵⁷ Johnson describes merchandise for the shows as falling into three categories: diegetic (objects used by characters within the show-world), pseudo-diegetic (objects that do not appear in the ‘series’ diegesis, but that ironically stem from or directly relate to the series’ fictional world’ (Johnson 2007: 15) such as branded *Sopranos* cookbooks), and extra-diegetic material, most commonly CDs, DVDs and merchandise tie-ins (Johnson 2007: 16).

network, offered a ‘a fitting symptom of cutting-edge New Hollywood’ (Polan 2009: 187).

HBO’s clearly defined brand identity also provided stability for AOL Time Warner as the conglomerate struggled to adjust to the merger, and the preservation of divisional autonomy and crossover content. With the initial merger pressuring Levin to improve stock value (Klein 2003: 70) against dot.com market declines (Klein 2003: 192-193), AOL’s effort to replace the ‘feudal’ infrastructure with a ‘more integrated AOL Time Warner’ (Klein 2003: 242) created clashes and more frequent collaboration and synergy as the ‘dread word’ (anonymous qtd Klein 2003: 254). A crashing stock market after September 2001 consequently increased pressure to prove divisional autonomy and the value of key brands.¹⁵⁸ By 2002 Levin was sacked as the conglomerate lost \$1.8 billion (Szalai Jan 31 2002).

Replaced by Richard Parsons, Grainge has suggested that the conglomerate re-stabilised around blockbuster franchises and economies of scale through key divisions and select synergy within an infrastructure of cable distribution and exhibition channels (Grainge 2008: 131). HBO’s individual contribution proved crucial here to restoring confidence, taking \$2.6 billion in revenues that year (Goldsmith Nov 4-Nov 10 2002). In July 2002 Bewkes was rewarded with promotion to Time Warner’s executive board, with Albrecht promoted to CEO alongside continued programming duties (Sperling Jul 19 2002). Klein notes here how after excessive losses, radical “convergence” was out and “best in class’ was in” (Klein 2003: 284), restoring the ‘feudal’ economy of the past while encouraging ‘divisions to burrow ahead and become the best in their own market’ (Klein 2003: 284).

For HBO, this encouraged further ambitions to reinforce exclusive leadership of the US subscription market while exploring wider brand extensions from 2003. With Albrecht announcing in July 2002 that ‘we look at HBO as a brand name that will carry us into many other marketplaces’, early plans for expansion included investments in theatrical features, Video-On-Demand and producing for other networks (Grego, Bing Jul 22 2002). In terms of theatrical investments, co-financing of documentaries for limited art-house releases was expanded in 2002 by HBO Films’ investment in

¹⁵⁸ This included an acrimonious resignation by Ted Turner, and the sacking of 250 New Line employees (Klein 2003: 250), and a more general loss of 3% of AOL Time Warner’s staff (Grainge 2008: 188).

Newmarket and IFC Films' distribution of Latino drama *Real Women Have Curves* (Cardoso 2002), and romantic comedy *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (Zwick 2002).

The box office success of the latter has been used by Perren to place HBO within the range of financing options and distribution windows for the American independent sector by 2002. Cable continued to play a key role in supporting indie filmmaking, with HBO, Showtime, IFC and the Sundance Channel helping to fund and complement studio speciality divisions and more niche distributors (Perren 2004b).¹⁵⁹ While video-on-demand can be explored in more depth in Chapter Six, planned re-integration of HIP from the lucrative production of *Everybody Loves Raymond* as a hold-over from the 1989-1994 era also anticipated closer interaction with studios for domestic syndication of *Sex and the City* and *The Sopranos* (Brennan Aug 30 2002).

The need to further distinguish the HBO brand was also driven by competition and imitation. By 2002 Edgerton and Jones suggest that HBO had produced an 'aftereffect' (Edgerton, Jones 2008: 320) in terms of high-quality niche programming and digital technologies, with studios and networks increasingly identifying themselves as 'content providers first and foremost, launching programs and thus priming the public to watch them in their initial runs' (Edgerton 2008a: 15). While late 1990s broadcast dramas *The West Wing* and *The Practice* dominated Emmy drama categories into the early 2000s, adapting distinction for popular and cult formats for global syndication, DVD and merchandising (*CSI; 24; Alias*, ABC, 2001-2006) aligned with continued success with niche franchises such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. This in turn looked for new options to find lasting options for global series syndication, particularly in comedy after the success of *Friends* (NBC, 1994-2004) and *Will and Grace* (NBC, 1998-2006).

Adaptation to cable, DVR and DVD also saw networks intensify branded product placement and cross-promotion for reality series and game-shows. With sponsorship and product placement offsetting costs for new formats such as *Survivor* from 2000 (Lotz 2007a: 222-225), the success of talent contest *American Idol* from

¹⁵⁹ The film eventually achieved a box office gross of \$241 million by April 2003. <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=weekend&id=mybigfatgreekwedding.htm> > Accessed: March 19th, 2009>. See Alisa Perren (2004b) "A Big Fat Indie Success Story? Press Discourses Surrounding the Making and Marketing of a 'Hollywood' Movie," *Journal of Film and Video* 56, no. 2 (Summer), 18-31, for a consideration of its industrial contexts in negotiating the myths and meanings of American independent cinema

2002 epitomised use of branded entertainment vehicles for networks and sponsors (Jenkins 2008: 59-93). Drawing on multiple revenues from ratings, sponsorship, phone-line costs, as well as promoting classic music libraries and exploiting contestants, *American Idol* interacted with a thriving global market for localised reality and game-show formats.

Basic cable also began to increase production to fill gaps in primetime drama and comedy, while generating digital-ready franchises. In the former, MTV expanded reality programming, generating lucrative global successes for Viacom (*Jackass* 2000-2002, *The Osbournes* 2002-2005) alongside continued Nickelodeon success. The USA Network also found success with offbeat procedurals such as *The Dead Zone* (2002-2007) and *Monk* (2002-2007), while Comedy Central established valuable niches with prime-time news satire *The Daily Show*. The latter became a hub for political satire as a key format for targeting niche demographics by cable after September 11th.¹⁶⁰ While the impact of the latter will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter, HBO faced more direct competition from Showtime and FX for adult-themed dramas.

Primary competition came from Showtime, albeit with some continued issues with stabilising a successful line-up of hit series. On the one hand, gay-themed serial drama *Queer as Folk* (2000-2005), a Canadian co-produced adaptation of an award-winning British series achieved niche success. By contrast, single-camera MGM and Columbia comedies (*Leap Years* (2001); *Going to California* (2001-2002)), Paramount film adaptation *Soul Food* (2000-2004), mock-verite comedies (*The Chris Isaak Show* 2001-2004), Latino urban drama from Viacom (*Resurrection Boulevard* 2000-2002) and Columbia-produced explicit police procedurals (*Street Time* 2002-2003) struggled.

Continued investments in studio and basic-cable syndicated science fiction anthologies, as well as fall-backs on studio and basic cable syndicated science fiction anthologies (*Odyssey 5* 2002-2004) also produced limited impact. Moreover, Showtime's reliance on a broad range of original films became more specialised, adapting HBO personnel and formats to award-winning films such as *Dirty Pictures* (Pierson 2000), an MGM-produced drama exploring the adult film industry.

¹⁶⁰ For more on comedy satire trends, see Jonathan Gray, Jeffrey Jones and Ethan Thompson eds (2009) *Satire TV: Politics and Comedy in the Post-Network Era*, New York: New York University Press.

Finding a successful drama was perhaps the strongest challenge for basic cable, with high costs leading TNT to pull out of Wall Street series *Bull* (2000) (Bergman Sep 8 2000) and genre franchise *Witchblade*. The key exception here was FX, who backed by News Corp began to channel original programming resources almost exclusively into a few quality dramas. Led by former HBO executive Kevin Reilly, FX enjoyed a surprise break-out hit in March 2002 with *The Shield*. A TV-MA drama focusing on a corrupt Los Angeles police division, the series' gritty handheld style and moral ambiguity led reviewers to identify it as the 'closest show yet to come in the wake of *The Sopranos* to really put out there a vision' (Roush qtd McConville Mar 7 2002). Lotz uses the series as a case study for how basic cable could offset the risk of a TV-MA rated series to brand distinction for 18-49 male demographics, while generating revenues through a joint-deal between Sony and Twentieth Century Fox for global syndication and DVD distribution (Lotz 2007a: 227).

Increased competition by 2002 has been used to suggest some caution in HBO's rate of success. Despite critical praise and aggressive marketing, *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, *Six Feet Under* and *The Wire* received stable but significantly lower viewing figures from prior series. For McCabe and Akass, *Six Feet Under*'s more specialist art-house style restricted some of the broader marketability of *The Sopranos* (McCabe, Akass 2005: 4). Lower ratings and global sales has also led Rose to contrast *The Wire*'s 'small, but intensely devoted audience' (Rose 2008: 89) from the high visibility of the gangster drama. With *Curb Your Enthusiasm* also gaining a 'cultish fan following' (Lavery 2008: 208), but relatively small weekly ratings and franchise extensions, a growing split emerged between the spectacular impact of *The Sopranos* and *Sex and the City*.

Difficulty in retaining consistent hits was also reflected by a number of cancelled and more disappointing ventures. This was typified by the September 2001 launch of *Mind of the Married Man*. A single camera comedy tracking the sex lies of a group of married Chicago professionals, low ratings, subscriber support and mixed reviews led to cancellation after two seasons. Haggins and Lotz briefly note here how the series 'never delivered the critical or creative heft common to HBO series at the time' (Haggins, Lotz 2008: 166).

Schatz has also commented on the difficulties of even-successful miniseries like *Band of Brothers* to live up to potential, with the production being partially ‘overwhelmed by the quest for cinematic spectacle and the sheer scope of the campaign’ (Schatz 2008: 133). Moreover, despite extending the brand, *Project Greenlight* struggled to build audiences and critical praise. With CBS breaking HBO’s hold over Best Picture wins at the Emmys with more traditional drama *Tuesdays with Morrie* (Jackson 1999) in 2000, HBO’s distinction faced increasing challenges by 2003.

Significant attention has therefore been paid to how HBO successfully reinforced and extended its quality brand identity through hit programs capable of traveling across digital and global markets as a leading example of successful brand management. However, it is possible to re-contextualise individual programming success, and some ongoing debates over middlebrow distinction, through the further intensification of subscriber aggregation. Moreover, innovations and risk on digital markets can again be reviewed through tensions over adapting the exclusive subscriber model, providing some caution over reinvention. Tensions within AOL Time Warner can subsequently be identified from late 2001 to 2002 in terms of HBO’s exclusivity and some resistance to wider collaboration within global markets.

‘Chris (Albrecht) and I can look at a piece of material and know pretty quickly if it works or doesn’t work for HBO’: 2000-Sep 2001

Beginning with the ‘Sunday Is’ campaign, the branding impact of major series in producing a ‘distinctive package’ (Kompere 2005: 187) overlaid a continued intensification of aggregate strategies and a stable production infrastructure. More specifically, the interaction between HBO NYC, Pictures and original series programming of the 1995-1999 period helped anchor series development. In terms of the continuing success of *Sex and the City* and *The Sopranos*, prestige overlaps within New York personnel were strengthened for 2000 and 2001 runs, most notably through the transfer of the drama’s cinematographer Alik Sakharov to the comedy.¹⁶¹

Sakharov’s cinematography on the episodes ‘Sex and the Country’ and ‘Belles of the Balls’ (4.9-4.10) aimed to refine *Sex and the City*’s look. Applying low-key

¹⁶¹ Continued targeting of independent directors remained across dramas and comedies, with Lee Tamahori working on *The Sopranos* (‘Toodle-Fucking-Oo’ (2.3)).

lighting and longer takes to episodes removing Carrie Bradshaw from Manhattan to upstate New York, this adapted more detailed mise-en-scene and slower pacing from *The Sopranos* and *Six Feet Under*. This also aligned with the series' reduction of first and second season direct-camera addresses, as well as more stand-alone episodes.¹⁶² With *Sex and the City* collecting its first series Emmy that year, raising prestige also saw higher episodic budgets (Dempsey Sep 10-Sep 10 2001) complement first-run scheduling with *Six Feet Under* in the summer of 2001, replacing *Arli\$\$* as a lead-in (Dempsey Jun 15 2001).

While reinforcing New York production crossovers, *Six Feet Under* also notably extended independent film ties to Los Angeles. From Ball's background in network television to work in theatre and mainstream independent film, rounding out production through playwrights and independent filmmakers retained close infrastructural ties between drama production and *Sex and the City*.¹⁶³ In terms of distinguishing within network-compatible formats, *Six Feet Under*'s production values and complex serial structure also arguably strengthened longer-term anthology conventions.

The use of episodic deaths and ghostly visitations can be particularly compared here to *The Sopranos*' integration of therapy sessions as reflexive commentary. Self-contained episodic and serial flexibility also extended compatibility for programming feature-length and single episodic blocks around 'Sunday Is' and wider HBO and multiplex exhibition. Focusing 'Sunday Is' brand consistency around production formats also influenced the decision to shift *Oz* onto the night in 2001. While the drama retained its lower-cost, more avant-garde style, the move also prompted more single protagonist plot-lines within its ensemble cast.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² *Sex and the City*'s third season (2000) reduces episodic vignettes for long serial romantic arcs, including Carrie's relationship with furniture designer Aidan (3.5-3.12), while broadening themes away from sexual anthropology towards the end of romance (3.6), honesty (3.12) and ageing (3.16). Hollywood insider plot-lines vary through Playboy visits and appearances by Carrie Fisher (3.13-3.14). The third season also features less editing wipes and more dollies, zooms, Steadicams and crane shots, with stylistic flourishes motivated by optical or psychological POV. Darker fourth season themes alongside *Six Feet Under* then range through Miranda's pregnancy and relationship with her mother (4.11; 4.8), partner Steve's diagnosis with cancer (4.9) and general anxieties over the future and aging (4.5).

¹⁶³ This ranged from filmmaker and writer Christian Taylor to playwright Kate Robin, *Sopranos* directors Allen Coulter and John Patterson, cinematographer/director Rodrigo Garcia (*Gia*), Kathy Bates (*Oz*), as well as indie directors Miguel Arteta (*Chuck and Buck* 2000) and Lisa Cholodenko (*High Art* 1998).

¹⁶⁴ These notably revolve around a rivalry between prisoner Tobias Beecher, lover Keller and rival Vern Schillinger, as well as the housing of Chinese immigrants (4.10) and a season-long

These aggregate connections can be viewed as part of 1999 plans for streamlining HBO Films, miniseries and series production. The new division initially looked to merge NYC's boutique strengths with Pictures' broader reach. Notably developing Sunday night premiers for cross-promotion, the division formed multiple continuities with hit series in this period that acted as the basis for wider DVD distribution and theatrical investment by 2002. In this way, while Heller notes a continued reliance on adapting broadcast genres for subscription freedoms (Heller 2008: 43-46), HBO Films' relaunch in March 2000 with *If These Walls Could Talk II* tightened links across cycles.

A sequel to the 1996 success, the three-part anthology retains a vignette structure in telling a history of lesbian relationships in the 20th century. This combined a range of well-established independent film personnel for '1961', '1972' and '2000' segments.¹⁶⁵ While packaged with *The Sopranos*' on Sunday nights, where it drew 5.3 million viewers (Bernstein Mar 8 2000), the series' broader female style enabled wider aggregation with *Sex and the City* in setting up key hybrids within the division. This strategy was also complemented by efforts to extend key demographics into aggregate formats in the summer of 2000.

Cheaters (Stockwell 2000), a docudrama exploring a high school scandal, promoted itself as a 'younger-skewing, hipper, more provocative movie' (Callender qtd Higgins May 18 2000). Shooting in Chicago, the film mixes a conventional telefilm style with faster cutting and montages set to a contemporary soundtrack. Attempting to 'broaden the range of audience that comes to HBO' (Callender qtd Higgins May 18 2000) *Cheaters*' adaptation overlapped with efforts to market HBO Zone for 18-25

basketball tournament (4.15). Variation also takes place through the filming of a tabloid mock-documentary on the prison (4.9), while the irony in self-reflexive channel compatibility was extended to a finale featuring prisoners receiving HBO and cheering for *G-String Divas* and *Sex and the City*. This also occurs in *Six Feet Under*, where gay characters David and Keith watch an episode of *Oz* and laugh at its extremes.

¹⁶⁵ '1961' follows an elderly lesbian dealing with the death of her partner and a confrontation with her family, and was directed by Jane Anderson (*The Positively True Adventures of the Alleged Texas Cheerleading Mom*), and shot by Paul Elliott (*And the Band Played On, Truman*). '1972' follows a romance between college students, and was directed by *Introducing Dorothy Dandridge*'s Martha Coolidge, with a script by 1997 queer independent *All Over Me*'s Alex and Sylvia Sichel. It was shot by Robbie Greenberg (*Introducing Dorothy Dandridge*). '2000' takes a lighter tone, with its lesbian adoption story directed by Anne Heche and feature-film cinematographer Peter Deming.

audiences within familiar HBO formats. Widening focus also applied here to the more unusually pitched *Last of the Blonde Bombshells* (MacKinnion 2000). A WWII melodrama co-produced with the BBC, the specials' marketing to older female audiences in late August was cross-promoted with *Sex and the City*. It also developed successful BBC cycles from Showcase (*The Affair*) in widening the scope of 'Sunday Is' subscriber value.¹⁶⁶

By 2001 HBO Films' built on and focused New York and East Coast independent ties, overlapping with key series while increasing promotion to African-American demographics. This included *Disappearing Acts* (Prince-Blythewood 2000), a New York-produced romantic comedy focusing on a young female professional that further developed links with *Sex and the City*. In February 2001 African-American titles were also marketed as part of Black History Month. The theme, which had relied since the 1990s on rerunning classic films and original specials, focused here around prestige historical drama *Boycott* and upscale insider comedy *Dancing in September* (Rock Blythewood 2000). The latter, a festival-premiered project lightly satirising the development of an African-American niche network, continued *Dancing in September's* urban romance, transplanted to Los Angeles and set against familiar televisual insider pathos.

By contrast, *Boycott* (Johnson 2001) built on the 'hipper' stylistic experimentation of *Cheaters* by framing a study of the 1955 Alabama boycott and Martin Luther King through extensive digital effects, stylised colour schemes, flashbacks and an anachronistic soundtracks (Gallo Feb 19-25 2001). For Heller, *Boycott* represented a further HBO variation on the biopic genre that mixed higher production values with civil rights history (Heller 2008: 48-50). Viewed instead as part of African-American appeals and the stylisation of *Cheaters*, its experiments in digital production also overlapped with *The Sopranos's* more widely noted experiments in high definition exhibition from March 2001.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ *Cheaters* also sustained production ties, with producers Mark S. Hoerr and Kevin Reddy (*Weapons of Mass Distraction*, *Poodle Springs*, *Winchell*, *Introducing Dorothy Dandridge*, *The Jack Bull*). Director John Stockwell had also scripted 1997's *Breast Men*. *Last of the Blonde Bombshells* also collaborated with Working Title Films, and was co-produced by Frank Doelger, who had worked on HBO's family documentary series *Lifestories: Families in Crisis*.

¹⁶⁷ *Disappearing Acts* was produced in New York with independent director Gina Prince-Blythewood (*Love and Basketball* 2000, extending *Sex and the City's* relationship to female directors. Producers included Juanita F. Diana (*Lansky*, *A Lesson Before Dying*) and Lydia Dean Pilcher (*Reno Finds Her Mom*). Cinematographer Tami Reiker had previously worked with Lisa

Continuing to rely on the niche and aggregate strengths of African-American demographics, award-winning 2000 miniseries *The Corner* also linked into *Oz*'s Sunday night marketing. As previously noted, *The Corner* offered precedent for David Simon's later work on *The Wire* as a study of inner-city addiction. However, this arguably built on *Oz*'s successful synthesis of series and documentary formats. Motivations for this came through a desire to bridge *From the Earth to the Moon* and *Band of Brothers* with a 'much more personable movie' (Thomopoulos qtd Ault Aug 12 1999). This also returned to the inner-city themed approach of 1990s dramas *Laurel Avenue* and *Grand Avenue*. Reviewers consequently noted compatibility with *Oz*, describing *The Corner* as a

'frightful drama, cut from some of the same cloth as the prison series *Oz*. But that series has an insulated quality - those inmates aren't among us; *The Corner* is a dark, dark place that could be anywhere' (Gallo Apr 13 2000)

Closer production ties also extended through the anthology structure of the series, divided between the perspectives of a family. Regular series and film collaborator Charles Dutton also provides book-ending commentary and contextualisation, while directing all six episodes.¹⁶⁸ Adaptations of documentary verite formats were sustained by cinematographer Ivan Strasburg. Shooting in West Baltimore, the miniseries combines conscious film grain, source lighting and ambient background noise with more expressive filters for flashbacks. It also reproduces *Oz* and *Sex and the City*'s use

Cholodenko and Maria Maggenti on the female-centered boutique independents *High Art* and *The Incredibly True Adventures of Two Girls in Love* (Maggenti 1995). It also notably features a cut-away to one of the leads watching *The Chris Rock Show. Dancing in September* worked with independent filmmaker Reggie Rock Blythewood, who also acted as a still photographer on *Disappearing Acts*. *Boycott*'s prestige African-American appeals are established through screenwriter Timothy J. Sexton (*For Love or Country*) and producer Juanita F. Diana (*Disappearing Acts*), with cinematographer David Hennings having worked on *Cheaters*, and director Clark Johnson acting in *Disappearing Acts*. A more focused analysis of *Boycott*'s civil rights politics can be found in Valerie Smith (2005) 'Meditation on Memory: Clark Johnson's *Boycott*,' *American Literary History* 17.3, 530-541.

¹⁶⁸ Dutton had starred and produced *Roc*, produced *Laurel Avenue*, directed *First-Time Felon* and had acted on *Oz* in 1998. Verite elements are represented through an opening caption reading 'True Stories...from Baltimore, Maryland', cutting to an interview between Dutton and real-life figures, and voiceover, before transitioning into an episodic vignette on a single character, before returning to interviews at the end of each episode, and Simon's original interviewees for the finale.

of jazz leitmotifs for scene breaks, while soundtracking blues tracks over still photograph montages for end-credit sequences.

Refining film, miniseries and series formats around Sunday marketing reached new degrees of aggregation in the summer of 2001 through the prison drama *Stranger Inside* (Dunne 2001). Focusing on the relationship between an African-American mother and daughter, working with independent filmmaker Cheryl Dunye (*The Watermelon Woman's* 1996) extended late 1990s trends for supporting female directors alongside thematic ties with *Oz*. Crossovers with the drama also included its producers Tom Fontana and Barry Levinson's development of *Shot in the Heart* (Holland 2001), a docudrama examining family conflict on Death Row.¹⁶⁹

Moreover, developing NYC Productions' Showcase-ties to Broadway and transatlantic collaboration, 2001's *Wit* and *Dinner with Friends* (Jewison 2001) enhanced upscale impact and post-*Oz* and *Six Feet Under* avant-garde theatre influences alongside art-film hybrids. *Wit*, a British-shot adaptation of an award-winning play, explores the struggle with cancer of an English professor, while *Dinner with Friends*, an intimate marriage drama developed from a similarly successful play, intensified mainstream independent production to regular Coen brothers' cinematographer Roger Deakins.¹⁷⁰ Their premieres between March and August 2001 overlapped with the launch of *Six Feet Under*, re-aggregating themes for death, family and Ball's adaptation of theatre conventions.

Links across dramatic formats were also emulated in the period by *Curb Your Enthusiasm's* relationship to aggregate comedy trends. Here the series' development from a special mixing live footage and backstage drama developed long-term series ties to standup formats, with multiple repertory circuit producers assisting in the show's

¹⁶⁹ *Stranger Inside* sustained HBO Films' relationship to female independent directors, working with Cheryl Dunye (*The Watermelon Woman* 1996), while employing a handheld verite style through cinematographer Nancy Schreiber). *A Shot in the Heart* adapts *Rolling Stone* writer Mikael Gilmore's account of his brother's execution in 1976 Utah, with cinematographer Jacek Petrycki emulating the verite style of *Oz* with handheld, Super-16mm photography, conscious grain and transitions into dreams shot with desaturated color palettes, depth of field and montages of still photographs. Further *Oz* connections are made by a supporting role for Lee Tergersen (inmate Tobias Beecher in the prison serial).

¹⁷⁰ Ties to New York theatre were also sustained here through *Oz*, working with stage director Goran Gajic ('The Bill of Wrongs' (4.3)).

production.¹⁷¹ In translating to Los Angeles production, switches from a rougher, handheld style to smoother Digibeta tracking shots and jazz scoring over improvisation, as well as cutting live stand-up segments refined production style for Sunday night marketing.

Moreover, while *Curb Your Enthusiasm* lacked the ‘universal’ impact of its predecessors on its release (Gallo Oct 12 2000), its niche success in building comedy value across the service can be compared to the persistence of *Arli\$\$* as a prime-time staple. While the sports comedy never reached the prestige level of *Sex and the City* or *The Sopranos*, its crucial role in bridging wider series and sports niches provided a stable addition to the service. An understanding of how marginal series and lower-profile documentaries contributed to this value can also be used to again set middlebrow brand criticisms within longer-term subscriber strategies.

This can be understood through Sunday promotion of *Oz*, *America Undercover* and links to HBO Sports and erotica. In the former, *Oz*’s move from 11pm first-run to Sundays arguably reflected ongoing efforts to coordinate late-night blocks and HBO Zone into Sunday night aggregate promotions. *America Undercover*’s move to the night therefore sustained thematic links from the late 1990s.¹⁷² Moreover, the launch of *G-String Divas* as a Thursday night limited series can be added to efforts to widen accessibility from *Taxicab Confessions*, the ‘11th Hour’ experiment and *Sex and the City* from 1995 to 1999.

Here the development of a limited serial structure, when combined with *America Undercover*’s transition to Sunday nights helped contextualise niche and aggregate compatibility with late-night series. Returning to HBO Films’ pursuit of upscale African-American audiences and ‘hipper’ 18-25 demographics, the continued success of *Miller Live* and the upscaling *Chris Rock Show*, as well as runs of *Reverb* on HBO2,

¹⁷¹ This included Tom Bull, Scott Butler and Sandy Chanley. Director Robert Weide had also produced standup documentary *Lenny Bruce: Swear to Tell the Truth* in 1999.

¹⁷² This ranged through existing franchises (*Dead Men Talking: An Autopsy Special* (Ginsberg 2001); *Taxicab Confessions 2001: All’s Fare in Love and Vegas*), and *Sopranos*-theming (*Suicide* (Yates 2001); *Bellevue* (DeLeo 2001); *The Iceman Confesses: Secrets of a Mafia Hitman* (Ginsburg 2001)). Other specials reflected verite studies (*Soldiers in the Army of God* (Levin; Pinkerson 2000; *Just, Melvin* (Whitney 2000)), to more tabloid-oriented cycles (*Dwarfs: Not a Fairy Tale* (Hedley, Strauss 2001); *Naked States* (Arlene Nelson 2000); *Living Dolls: The Making of a Child Beauty Queen* (Cookson 2001)).

established a more accessible precedent for the expansion of HBO's midnight rotation around more specialist erotica and 18-34 series.

A similar move between continued niche differentiation and re-aggregation then spread to HBO Sports' movement between specialist programming and efforts to tie into wider upscale cycles. On the one hand, Miller and Kim's more general criticism of boxing exploitation extended to the launch of chat show *On the Record with Bill Costas* (2001-2004) in 2001, criticised as reducing investigative topics to 'individual conflict' (Miller, Kim 2008: 225). Moreover, the continued Emmy-award winning success of HBO Sports documentaries led to renewed criticism of 'sociology lite' (Miller, Kim 2008: 226). Without discounting wider critiques, like erotica sports programming can be more systematically integrated, rather than set off against quality trends.

A key shift occurred here around the departure of Seth Abraham from HBO Sports after twenty years in 2000, with executive producer Ross Greenburg promoted to head the division. In terms of sports' niche appeal, success with *Boxing After Dark* was followed in 2000 by the creation of *KO Nation* (2000-) a late-night Saturday series combining hip-hop performances with boxing. With Greenburg suggesting that 'we lost a younger audience in the world of boxing a long time ago' (Greenburg qtd Finder May 1 2000), the series' launch can arguably be placed within the summer 2000 HBO Zone and 18-25 demographic segmentation of *Cheaters*, as well as earlier *Def Jam* experiments.

Experiments were also attempted in adding limited documentary series alongside *G-String Divas*. This included fly-on-the-wall series *Hard Knocks: Training Camp* (2001-), establishing a long-running format that follows NFL teams through pre-season training. While retaining sports' broader male-impact, the series' contemporary praise for its 'cinema-verite style' (Sandomir Oct 2 2001) sustained core documentary cycles, while emulating the adaptation of erotica and limited reality runs of *G-String Divas* in 2000. This also arguably reproduced earlier attempts by *Ist & Ten* to add serial value to NFL coverage.

Further documentary links were also established in tying prestige specials into broader marketing. Reliance on sports journalism and verite documentary formats was developed here by collaboration in January 2002 with *Sports Illustrated* for special

Picture Perfect (Deford 2002). Combining HBO Sports' footage with magazine archives, this reinforced earlier publishing ties between the divisions and Time.¹⁷³ Finally, cycles aligning sports figures with biopic formats from the 1990s were expanded with HBO Film's *61** (Crystal). Directed by Billy Crystal, the special shares ties to *From the Earth to the Moon*'s creation of a high-quality 1960s period look, enhanced through CGI effects.

By September 2001 the negotiation of branding consistency through the aggregate value of the subscriber service provided the infrastructure for raising budgets and promoting exclusivity through *Band of Brothers*. From the growth of long-term transatlantic deals with the BBC, *Last of the Blonde Bombshells*' WWII themes were extended in 2001 to HBO Films' lower-budget Nazi drama *Conspiracy* (Pierson 2001), while documentaries on the Holocaust and the war spread across the monthly package from 2000 to September 2001.¹⁷⁴

The serial intensification of the miniseries noted by Albrecht alongside episodic vignettes also helped enhance continuities in the transition between miniseries, limited drama series and anthologies from the mid 1990s into *Earth* and *The Corner*.¹⁷⁵ Taken further, the miniseries' extensive CGI, digital processing and battle sequences had precedent in both prestige docudrama trends, but also in the experimentation with a

¹⁷³ This included biopics *Bill Russell: My Way, My Life* (2000) and *Jim Brown: All American* (Lee 2002), as well as compilation special *When It Was a Game III* (2000), and historical special *Ali-Frazier I: One Nation Divisible* (2000). Moreover, the Olympic race-themed drama *'03 from Gold* (2002), and more tabloid-marketed *OJ: A Study in Black and White* (2002), aligned with the development of the similarly-themed *Monica in Black and White* (Bailey; Barbato 2002) for *America Undercover*.

¹⁷⁴ This included producers Frank Doelger (*Last of the Blonde Bombshells*) Nick Gillott (*Rasputin*), David M. Thompson (*Hostile Waters*), and Peter Zinner (*Citizen Cohn*) and director Frank Pierson (*Citizen Cohn*, *Truman*), as well as employing experienced Hollywood cinematographer Stephen Goldblatt (*The Cotton Club* Coppola 1984).

¹⁷⁵ The ten episodes progress from training in 1942 ('Curahee') to the end of the war in 1945 ('Points'), and take in Easy Company's D-Day landing in Normandy ('Day of Days,' 'Carentan,' spell in Holland ('Replacements,' 'Crossroads'), time in Bastogne's Ardenne forest ('Bastogne,' 'The Breaking Point', and a final push and bittersweet victory in Germany that also incorporates the horrors of the concentration camps ('Why We Fight'). Point of view across episodes builds on *Earth* with company life ranging from Winters ('Day of Days,' 'Crossroads,' 'Points') and Nixon ('Why We Fight'), to traumatized privates ('Carentan'), medics ('Bastogne'), ordinary soldiers ('Replacements') and those returning from injuries ('The Last Patrol').

‘hipper’ style in *Cheaters* and *Boycott*, and the development of matte-painting and CGI action in *61** and *From the Earth to the Moon*.¹⁷⁶

Shifting attention from hit series and wider marketing campaigns to the aggregate contexts of the subscriber service arguably provides a clearer basis for understanding HBO’s programming success in this period. While distinguishing itself through leading series, HBO’s historical reliance on aggregate subscriber value remained crucial to rationalising risk and producing new formats. Maintenance of this structure also provided security over new series models by FX and basic cable in funding a handful of series and specials. This also retained a more significant programming infrastructure and format continuity from Showtime.

On *Band of Brothers*’ premiere, Callender particularly re-emphasised the importance of this stable management infrastructure, arguing that ‘HBO comes up with the ideas for 90% of the made-fors that it bankrolls’ (Callender qtd Dempsey Sep 10-Sep 16 2001). Callender also added that ‘Chris (Albrecht) and I can look at a piece of material and know pretty quickly if it works or doesn’t work for HBO’ (Callender qtd Dempsey Sep 10-Sep 16 2001). By recognising these continuities beyond hit series, it is possible to re-think how new brand extensions into digital technologies innovated but consolidated risk within older institutional strategies.

‘Variants of the mother brand’: 2000-Summer 2001

Initial diversification through North American Region 1 DVDs in 2000 was timed here to cross-promote network premieres, with Lotz noting how distribution primarily worked to exploit the ‘promotion potential of continuing series’ (Lotz 2007a: 98). The launch of HBO Latino in late 1999 also built from trusted aggregate strategies, relying on documentary reruns, and Latino-themed adaptations on HBO Films prestige with biopic *For Love or Country: The Arturo Sandoval Story* (Sargent 2000).¹⁷⁷ Similarly,

¹⁷⁶ This included painterly lighting interiors by cinematographers Remi Adefarasin and Joel Ransom, as well as matte paintings (‘Curahee,’ ‘Crossroads’). Prestige was also developed through series and miniseries links through producer Tony To, Erik Bork, Terri Depaolo, Ivan E. Schwarz and Tony To, as well as Hanks, who had all worked on *Earth*. Spielberg and Hanks’ *Saving Private Ryan* also provided a reference point for the CGI and handheld style of the miniseries.

¹⁷⁷ *For Love or Country*, directed by Joseph Sargent and shot by Donald M. Morgan recombined Emmy-winning appeals, with further crossovers made by Charles S. Dutton’s appearance as Dizzy Gillespie, and a producer role for Jellybean Benitez, who worked on *If*

the development of high definition and digital feeds, while focused through *The Sopranos* and *Band of Brothers* in March and September 2001, had progressed through HBO Films and series coordination, from *Boycott* to the promotion of *Dinner with Friends* through Dolby 5.1 sound in August 2001. As with the multiplex, building up DVD and a digital release infrastructure worked out from the subscription network to provide complementary variations on core strategies. Some criticism of channels like HBO Latino for encouraging homogenisation of minority tastes can thus be re-contextualised.

It is also possible to return to Kompare here in terms of how DVD extended publishing strategies. Kompare argues that

‘there are indeed limits to the viability of the flow model, and publishing television on DVD is clearly an effective strategy to make up for that deficit, and expand into new markets. The television series box set is now an established media configuration, and is likely to function similarly to the back catalog of a record label: as a collection of fixed recordings that can be easily reconfigured and repeated’
(Kompare 2005: 214)

DVD’s publishing model therefore offered extensions of HBO’s subscription strengths, building on earlier publishing connections from Time. Moreover, the exclusivity targeted by a HBO DVD label retained distinctions from Showtime and other network rivals, while overlapping with the original brand label of a Disney or Nickelodeon. This also benefited from ownership of a back-catalogue of originals, with opportunities to cross-promote new releases with re-issues.

Attention to how new media strategies adapted earlier institutional models can be linked to Caldwell’s (2003) argument for a ‘second shift’ transition in the early 2000s. Caldwell suggests that the media industries aimed to offset uncertainty over digital media change, particularly after the dot.com crash, by working through ‘serial to tangential and cyclical flows’ (Caldwell 2003: 136). Cable strengths as niche exhibition sites for aggregating programming offered precedent for marketing internet channels,

These Walls Could Talk 2. Conflating the life of a Cuban jazz trumpeter against an oppressive Cuban regime from the 1970s to the 1990s, the film borrows from standard biopic structures, including a framing interrogation and a mixture of archival and fictional narrative events.

DVD labels and other, more non-linear formats. Arguing that branded delivery channels offered loyalty through ‘temporal duration in cross-channel, cross-media, and cross-technology configurations’ (Caldwell 2003: 141), Caldwell notes that ‘programming tactics - adapted from old media’ could help ‘facilitate, prefigure, and implement new-media development’ (Caldwell 2003: 142). Combining older economies with new outlets, Caldwell notably uses *Sex and the City*’s website as an example of ‘second shift’ strategies. Promoting the show through New York fashion links and a virtual tour of the city, the site showcases real-life brands without incorporating other Time Warner properties. Brand exclusivity could therefore be retained in establishing continuity across new digital platforms.¹⁷⁸

HBO’s subscription exclusivity did however stretch to include *Reverb* tie-ins with AOL Music (Oppellar Jun 20 2001) while *Band of Brothers* was cross-promoted on TNT and TBS, and spun-off into Time-Warner books (Romano Aug 13 2001). Other opportunities for synergy remained limited though, from AOL email placed within *Sex and the City* to wider product placement in *The Sopranos*. For Caldwell, attempts to produce ‘variants of the mother brand’ (Caldwell 2003: 137) retained trust in older network strategies. As still-primary outlets for subscriptions and advertising revenue, wider brand extensions could be structured by ‘reaggregating flows, and temporal seriality’ (Caldwell 2003: 143).

Parallel examples of these extensions of network programming strategies included collaborations between NBC and Microsoft for ‘Must See TV’ branded sites able to market key series and extend advertising deals (Caldwell 2004: 47). Caution also underpinned attempts to create new, internet-linked media channels. This notably included the female-marketed website and cable channel Oxygen, where interactive web and digital content spun-out from a stable 24 hour service of rerun programming (Parks 2004: 143).

This caution also extended to some overlooked issues with managing the consistency of the HBO brand through program franchises for global markets. Despite

¹⁷⁸ Caldwell thus notes how *Sex and the City*’s placement of real-life brands and New York locations for online ‘tours’ of the city indirectly showcased products that shared little ‘fiduciary’ ties to HBO, producers or the wider company (Caldwell 2003: 137).

the popularity of key series in overseas syndication and DVD,¹⁷⁹ HBO's international identity presented a more convoluted infrastructure for distributing and licensing individual content. As well as co-ventured film channels, HBO syndication deals had varied in the late 1990s around Warner and other distributors. Time Warner had also struggled to compete with News Corp and Viacom in establishing a presence in Western European cable and satellite distribution. HBO's 1996 deal with independent distributor Rysher had offered a provisional solution to better coordinating foreign marketing of programming, while HBO Enterprises had attempted to increase distribution rights at the end of the decade.

However, in the summer of 1999 Paramount acquired Rysher and international syndication and DVD rights to *Sex and the City*, *Oz* and *Arli\$\$* (Spring May 31 1999). Later rights for *The Sopranos* and latter series were held by Warner Brothers International. While aggressively marketing *Sex and the City* for DVD and syndication to broadcast and cable outlets, Paramount delayed a Region 2 (Western European) DVD launch for *Oz* until 2007, while *Arli\$\$* remains unavailable as of 2010. Some minor issues were thus created over coordinating international release windows and centralised marketing of hit shows, with *The Sopranos* also experiencing some fluctuating license issues over building DVD sales against syndication suitability.

Johnson has noted here how *The Sopranos* suffered re-scheduling and promotional problems for the UK's Channel Four (Johnson 2007: 13-14), leading to an eventual sale to smaller niche network E4. Highlighting how a distinctive drama like *The Sopranos* held the potential to both 'support and undermine the brand values of Channel 4 as a broadcaster' (Johnson 2007: 15), collaborating with outside distributors posed some challenges over reconciling the subscriber exclusivity of domestic programs with international schedules and individual markets. While in some respects the difference between lucrative and somewhat less lucrative revenues, balancing profit

¹⁷⁹ Dermot Horan (2007) discusses how acquiring boutique US series could boost upscale appeal for Irish channel RTE for audiences wanting 'something from the norm' (Horan 2007: 117). Geoff Lealand (2007) has noted changing expectations for US quality series for public broadcasters in New Zealand, with HBO given as a key example. In discussing *The Sopranos*' reception on Canadian broadcaster CTV, Dawn Elizabeth Johnston (2002) has also discussed how after overcoming complaints over content (Johnston 2002: 33), the channel's decision to run unedited episodes reflected the quality of the show (Johnston 2002: 37), with a joint run between Canadian pay cable and broadcast (Johnston 2002: 41) signifying how *The Sopranos* and by extension HBO could raise the bar for exporting quality American series for changing broadcast and cable-satellite syndication windows by 2002 (Johnston 2002: 41).

margins against rising costs and the offsetting of risk against the stability offered by the core subscription service became increasingly significant from September 2001 to the end of 2002.

‘We have assets, so let’s figure out what to do with them, if anything’: September 2001-2002

Some uncertainty over maintaining the momentum of the 1998 to 2001 era first emerged around *Band of Brothers*. Projected DVD and global syndication revenues suffered ratings hits after 9/11 as marketing campaigns for the war-themed drama were hit by a postponed broadcast season (Littleton Sep 14 2001; Dempsey Sep 19 2001). Risk over the series’ epic scale however extended *From the Earth to the Moon*’s success in pre-selling rights to foreign broadcasters, guaranteeing a recovery of its record production costs. The miniseries’ lowered performance was joined by *Mind of the Married Man*’s failure to reproduce the lower-rated but subscriber and critical success of *Curb Your Enthusiasm*.

Mind arguably provided a variation on *Sex and the City*’s combination of urban romance and sex, adapted for an all-male group and a Chicago setting offering complementary location shooting, jazz scoring and the crossover production values of a ‘half hour independent film’ (Binder qtd DVD Commentary 2005). With writer-producer Mike Binder having worked through HBO standup collaboration and independent features, the extension of HBO Films and series infrastructure via comedy aggregation offered a logical extension of brand consistency. However, this experienced a mixed critical reaction (McConville Oct 8 2001).¹⁸⁰

Albrecht later reflected on how ‘maybe people got tired of saying nice stuff about us. We knew we would get mixed reviews, and we’re trying to evaluate the future for these shows’ (Albrecht qtd Grego Nov 7 2001). Increasing production to year-round scheduling and more ambitious projects was however boosted by an initially positive response to *Project Greenlight*, with the series reinforcing independent film links (Gallo Nov 30 2001). New late-night ventures also revived rap and African-American upscale appeals with a new Def Jam collaboration for series *Def Poetry Jam* (2002-). Structured

¹⁸⁰ HBO comedy continues came through producer Michael Rotenberg (*The Chris Rock Show*), Stu Smiley (stand-up and *Everyone Loves Raymond*).

around beat poets and performance artists, the series notably varied the earlier, narrower appeals and licensing opportunities of *Def Comedy Jam* for expanding adult-themed but broader targeting forms alongside African-American trends for HBO Films.

By the end of the year, Albrecht was careful to reconcile the rate of program spending with annual profits, suggesting that HBO were ‘quickly getting to the place where we have to make choices - we still hope to increase spending to improve the product but we’ve got to deliver profits to the corporation. We won’t always be able to go at the same rate’ (Albrecht qtd Miller Jun 8 2001). This reflected continuing internal tensions at AOL Time Warner, with budgets cut for overseas distribution (Schneider, Amdur Feb 18-Feb 24 2002). Ambitious attempts to reinforce the ‘not TV’ brand consequently saw negotiations emerge in 2002 between stable subscriber aggregation and managing consistency across wider extensions.

In terms of retaining ‘Sunday Is’ compatibility, new runs of *Oz* and *Sex and the City* from January to February mixed the exceptional performance of the latter with stable appeals for weekly rotation alongside new episodes of *Dennis Miller Live* in Friday late-night. *Sex and the City*’s overlaps with drama production also continued through further crossovers by Alik Sakharov, and a turn to darker themes in the aftermath of 9/11, with reviews noting how ‘the best comedy on TV becomes one of its best dramas’ (Gallo Jan 4 2002).¹⁸¹ Moreover, bringing forward *Six Feet Under*’s second season to March in response to *Sopranos* delays reinforced thematic crossovers with *America Undercover*.¹⁸² Some ratings dips for *Six Feet Under* (McConville Apr 30 2002) however saw HBO re-aggregate links with HBO Films, underpinning experiments in theatrical distribution.

¹⁸¹ 9/11 appeals here included season finale ‘I Heart New York’ (4.18). Avoiding explicit reference to the attacks by building a series of reflections on the city, the episode concludes with a credits coda ‘dedicated to our City of New York...then, now and forever.’ Sustaining the series’ high-end style, cinematographer Alik Sakharov returned for another two episodes (‘Change of a Dress (4.15); Ring a Ding Ding’ (4.16).

¹⁸² This again ranged through franchise extensions (*Taxicab Confessions 2002: A Fare to Remember* (2002); *Autopsy 8* (Ginsburg 2002)), to prestige projects *Murder on a Sunday Morning*, transgendered project *Southern Comfort* (Davis 2001), themed with *The Laramie Project* (Kaufman 2002)), small-town family crisis drama *Blue Vinyl* (Gold; Helfland 2002) and replays of death-themed drama *The Young and the Dead* (Springer Berman; Pulcini 2000) recurring cycles more closely re-worked prison and African-American threads, with *Gladiator Days: Anatomy of a Prison Murder* (Levin 2002) and *The Execution of Wanda Jean* (Garbus 2002).

While Heller (Heller 2008: 44) and Carolyn Anderson (2008) note how theatrical diversification represented a logical extension of a quality brand, experiments in 2002 were more cautious. This initially emerged from documentary overlaps with Sundance, with Nevins citing ambitions to expand prestige cycles as a ‘little art house...(and a) mini-New Line studio for documentaries’ (Nevins qtd Carolyn Anderson 289). This built on longer-term precedent for limited theatrical releases within the North American market in order to gain eligibility for the Oscars.

Refocusing HBO Films’ stakes in Sundance from NYC Productions, Callender offered a similar commitment to complementing network production, suggesting that ‘we feel that HBO brought a tremendous change to television, and we feel that we can do the same with feature film as well’ (Callender qtd Sipe Jan 17 2002). Developing these options for HBO Films began with the Sundance promotion of network films and documentaries. In the former, this was represented by *The Laramie Project* (Kaufman 2002) *Hysterical Blindness* (Nair 2002) and the broader targeting of *Real Women Have Curves*.

Laramie notably extended stage ties from *Wit* and *Dinner with Friends*, developing a successful off-Broadway play examining the murder of gay teenager Matthew Shepard through Sundance Labs (Ciminelli Jun 14 2002). It has been used by Heller to illustrate further creative freedoms (Heller 2008: 48). This can also however be viewed within the more specific production contexts of HBO Films’ NYC-linked support for New York theatre, the verite formats of *America Undercover* and LGBT *Six Feet Under* overlaps.

By comparison, *Hysterical Blindness*, a female-focused drama set within 1980s New Jersey, notably incorporates low-budget, handheld camerawork with further subjective POV, and drew on long-established independent trends popularised by John Cassavetes for performance-led social realism. The films’ New Jersey setting and female-cast also enabled continued series theming with *The Sopranos*, and was eventually premiered from a *Sex and the City* lead-in, while developing HBO Films’ support for independent female directors through Mira Nair (*Monsoon Wedding*).¹⁸³

¹⁸³ Cinematographer Terry Stacey had worked with directors Allison Anders and Larry Fessenden, while the large ensemble cast including notable independent actors Christina Ricci and Steve Buscemi. Traveling to the town of Laramie to interview the townspeople, the multiple vignettes, direct camera interviews and associational editing between landscape and characters

Real Women Have Curves by contrast expanded on *Cheaters*' 'younger-skewing' demographics and HBO Latino's success, and can be viewed alongside wider co-financing trends in American independent cinema. While sharing theatre trends for adapting an award-winning play, *Curves*' family comedy and crossover marketing reflected a desire to broaden appeal for a later theatrical release. This overlapped with a notable investment in 2002 in niche comedy *My Big Fat Wedding*. Discussed by Perren (2004b) as a key example of maturing mainstream independent distribution and niche marketing strategies by 2002, HBO became involved through Tom Hanks, eventually acquiring domestic and home video rights.

IFC Films picked up North American theatrical alongside opportunities for foreign sales. *Wedding* went on to find significant domestic and overseas box office, which continued in Dvd distribution. *Curves* by comparison worked as a more exclusive, HBO-branded title, taken to Cannes and sold to multiple foreign distributors that summer (Spector May 29 2002). Sharing *Greek*'s niche but accessible style therefore indicated a solution to expanding network exclusivity for compatible cycles with suitability for broader distribution.¹⁸⁴

Beginning to explore wider options for HBO Films was however offset by African-American and transatlantic cycles for the service, tied to Black History Month prestige in 2002. Represented by the acquisition of French-African drama *Lumumba* (Peck 2000) and documentary *The Middle Passage* (Deslauriers 2000) re-packaging for the network produced some recurring editorial clashes over political content, recalling *And the Band Played On* tensions. When editing *Lumumba* a biopic of an assassinated African leader distributed theatrically in Europe, HBO added English dubbing while running a censored version after a suit was filed against the producers for potential slander against an American political figure.

pushed rare avant-garde style within docudrama forms. *Blindness*'s mix of realist New Jersey drama worked with John Cassavetes regulars Gena Rowlands and Ben Gazzara, with Declan Quinn's cinematography employing neon-lit mise-en-scene, location shooting and occasional lens blurs to highlight lead Debbie's 'hysterical blindness.'

¹⁸⁴ Following teenager Ana and her dream of escaping her Latino culture and traveling to New York, Colombian director Patricia Cardoso sustained independent female ties, while working with independent producer George LaVoo (*Frisk* Verow 1995), while producer Effie Brown (*Stranger Inside*) developed niche cycles.

Preserving subscription brand boundaries also extended here to *The Middle Passage*, with the French documentary project's examination of the slave trade adjusted through voice-over narration to contextualise character-driven perspective. Tensions over breaking with long-term brand conventions for controversial but accessible programs was also driven by uncertainty over how to adapt formats to deal with a post 9/11 America.¹⁸⁵

With the fall-out from 9/11 intensifying the popularity of political satire, and contributing to terrorist-themed broadcast series cycles (24), being able to update and market flexible upscale relevance began to filter into HBO's immediate marketing and long-term program development. In the former, March's *Path to War* (Frankenheimer 2002) a docudrama examining the build-up to the Vietnam war, worked with 1960s boomer-era cycles for a mix of mock-archival footage and handheld digital verite, but was also promoted by Callender as 'staggeringly relevant to what is going on right now' (Callender qtd Higgins May 7 2002) as the War on Terror escalated.

Updating links and proven cycles to market indirectly relevancy also extended to *The Gathering Storm*. A further co-production with the BBC that built on biopic cycles and the joint-production of *Band of Brothers*, this explores the personal struggle of Winston Churchill in the years preceding WWII. Making significant changes to trusted cycles however remained limited, with HBO returning to experiment with the niche potential of the genre thriller within the division's higher budgets, producing special effects-driven procedural *Point of Origin* (Thomas-Sigel 2002) in June.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ *Lumumba* was distributed by Zeitgeist Films, with director Raoul Peck having initially compiled the African leader's story as a documentary. Editing involved producer Shelby Stone to dub and produce cuts. *The Middle Passage* was also worked on by Stone, while Walter Mosley (*Always Outnumbered*) provided an English voiceover script. The controversial cuts to *Lumumba* occurred after ex-CIA official Frank Carlucci threatened to sue Peck and Zeitgeist Films, producing attacks on Carlucci for censorship. See Joanne Laurier (2002), "'Carlucci' bleeped from HBO version of *Lumumba*", *World Socialist Web Site*. Web, Last Accessed: Jul 25th 2010.

¹⁸⁶ *The Gathering Storm* also shared *RKO 281* producers Scott Free Productions, while director Richard Loncraine had worked on *Band of Brothers*. *Path of War* was produced by Avenue Pictures (*Wit*), and shared cinematographers Stephen Goldblatt (*Conspiracy*) and Nancy Schreiber (*Stranger Inside*). *Point of Origin* worked with *The Usual Suspects*' (Singer 1995) cinematographer Newton Thomas Sigel, focusing on a delusional fire officer, and acting as a showcase for experimentation with pushed stocks, flash cuts, time lapse photography, digital morphs and CGI.

Blending topical appeals into proven formats and subscriber cycles also overlapped with post-*Band of Brothers* Holocaust documentary cycles, while Nevins extended Cinemax cycles to BBC and Channel Four deals alongside the familiar themed aggregation of Black History Month.¹⁸⁷ Relying on this consistency to develop options for single feature licensing crossed into independent distribution deals for crime and punishment themed dramas (*The Execution of Wanda Jean*), teen-targeted *Chain Camera* (Dick 2001) and *Reel-Life* and Canadian Lions Gate distribution (*The Eyes of Tammy Faye* Barbato; Bailey 2000).

This also included Albert Maysles' verite project *Lalee's Kin* (Dickson, Froemke, Maysles 2001), as well as a festival, North American participation and foreign sales of transgender-themed *Southern Comfort* (Davis 2001). Trust in documentary versatility and connecting verite and compilation cycles was however matched in May and June with a joint-scheduled, direct perspective on post 9/11 themes, collecting multiple recollections of the New York attacks (*In Memoriam: New York City 11/9/01* 2002) and the smaller-scale *Telling Nicholas* (Whitney 2002), which explores their impact on a single New York family.

Reinforcing aggregate subscription cycles while looking to widen the licensing potential of hit series was followed in the summer by increased pressure on marketing Sunday night brand distinction. This was notably represented by *The Wire*'s more specialist appeal, premiering in the wake of *Sex and the City*'s further success and DVD sales during the summer (McConville Jul 24 2002).¹⁸⁸ As previously discussed, *The Wire* both extended but retained lowered individual performance for brand distinction against the gradual expansion of basic cable prestige drama (*The Shield*), inconsistent but more ambitious Showtime and wider cable experiments, and the cross-promotional impact of reality formats.

¹⁸⁷ This included themed Holocaust Cinemax specials *I Remember* (Wajda 2002), *Hell on Earth* (Jasny 2002) and *Children of the Abyss* (Chukhraj 2002) as well as BBC and Canadian co-production *Fashion Victim: The Killing of Gianni Versace* (Hunt 2001), *Devil's Playground* (Walker 2002), a co-Channel Four produced special on Amish teenagers, and *Alison's Baby* (Milton 2002), documenting the life of a disabled artist.

¹⁸⁸ Further HBO Films ties were made here, both through co-scheduling with *Hysterical Blindness*, and by bringing in *The Laramie Project*'s cinematographer Terry Stacey to shoot the majority of the season. Additional post 9/11 themes are also developed by the episode 'I Love NY' (4.12), opening and closing with extended shots of the Manhattan skyline and fade to black and white shots of Times Square, with Carrie commenting that 'New York may just be mine.'

Viewed through drama links to HBO Films and documentaries, *The Wire*'s stand-alone strengths however varied but retained multiple continuities in reinforcing exclusive value. Most notably preceded by the success of *The Corner* in bridging African-American prestige, the series' intensification of serial complexity after *Six Feet Under* pushed at the anthology vignette structure. Episodes thus feature opening epigraphs that set up episodes, but add longer serial arcs in developing network and wider DVD compatibility from Sunday night promotions.¹⁸⁹

Linking with *The Corner*'s HBO Film and drama compatibility, *The Wire*'s extensive study of the War in Drugs within Baltimore also built on documentary trends for provocative verite crisis narratives. Ethridge has noted how the series' carefully exposes dysfunction while remaining focused on the entrenched personal struggles of life within the city (152).¹⁹⁰ Moreover, in terms of adapting verite influences, the promotion of a 'documentary feel' (Zimny, Thorson DVD Commentary 2005)¹⁹¹ retained wider format links as a complement to the higher-end production values of *Sex and the City* and *The Sopranos*.

In this respect, *The Wire* extended compatibility from *Oz* to a number of late-night programming cycles for African-American and wider subscribers. This included cross-promotion with the premiere of the second season of *Def Poetry Jam*, as well as the summer premiere of documentary *American Standoff* (Jacobson), a study of a recent Teamsters union strike. Falling back on aggregate promotion over narrower margins

¹⁸⁹ Building on the framing devices of *The Corner*, these act as a marker for plot points ('Dope on the damn table' (1.11) or as a commentary on the shared conditions across institutions ('...and all the pieces matter' 1.6; 'the King stay the King' (1.3). Further continuity with *The Corner* was achieved through producers Nina Kostroff-Noble and Robert F. Colesberry, who had also worked on *61**. New York independent film relationships were sustained through co-producer Karen L. Thorson (*Ghost Dog* Jarmusch 1999, *Summer of Sam* Lee 1999), while series crossovers developed through directors Gloria Muzio (*Oz*) and Tim Van Patten (*The Sopranos*).

¹⁹⁰ Ethridge suggests that 'Simon's project is to make a moral appeal to his viewers showing the lives of many in Baltimore as tragically bound by the institutions in their lives. In doing so, he challenges both city leaders and their booster representation of the city as well as the foundational myths of American society. Simon's challenge though, lacks a clear articulation of an affirmative social and political project' (Ethridge 2008: 152).

¹⁹¹ Briesewitz worked to create a 'classic long lens kind of show' (Chappelle qtd Griffin 2007), developing an aesthetic for 'playing with space to convey story' (Zimny, Thorson DVD Commentary 2005). This was achieved through Briesewitz's use of a Panther Dolly, combining boom and zoom technology for handheld and extended dollies (Griffin 2007), creating the effect of 'editing within the camera' (Zimny, Thorson DVD Commentary 2005), also supported by diegetic telephoto lenses and security cameras. More restricted framing also led to a use of Super 16 and 35mm stock within a full-frame, 4x3 ratio, and the use of ambient soundtracking of dialogue and recorded street noise, 'establishing the environment with different sounds' (Zimny, Thorson DVD Commentary 2005).

from *Sex and the City* and *The Sopranos* therefore weighed up enhanced exclusivity and potentially narrower licensing potential for more experimental drama, and formed a turning point of sorts for new series development.

With *Arli\$\$* and *Dennis Miller Live* completing their runs, the six year performance of the former had retained exclusive subscriber appeal through niche crossovers. The difficulties of new series to provide break-out hits as global franchises consequently acknowledged how production cycles could re-adjust to both branding through hits and reconciling the continuity of the core subscription service. The July 2002 reshuffle of management and re-emphasis of divisional autonomy at AOL Time Warner tied into this by emphasising the need to reconcile brand management across platforms with stable subscriber strategies.

In promoting Albrecht to CEO, chairman and head of programming, while refining executive series structure around Strauss (series and specials) and Thomopoulos (miniseries) (Andreeva Aug 21 2002), the move restored Fuchs' earlier coordination of the network and close-knit programming control. Plans for theatrical releases built on previously discussed extensions of HBO Films and documentary cycles,¹⁹² while increasing the role of HIP provided an extension and potential complement to Albrecht's success with the division in the early 1990s.

With syndication options primarily focused on the initial exploitation of *Sex and the City*'s exceptional success, Albrecht was however keen to offset claims for a more radical alteration of the subscription model in order to widen the value of the HBO brand into new markets, suggesting that

'this is not, 'hey guys, let's lift the stock price and sell the furniture' ...this is not us trying to go out and sell library product because we desperately need money...we have assets, so let's figure out what to do with them, if anything' (Albrecht qtd Grego Aug 30 2002)

¹⁹² Opening with \$183,772 by the end of 2002 the film had grossed \$5, 113, 230 on a maximum play in 163 theaters, and by the completion of its theatrical run in May 2003 had compiled a healthy domestic gross of \$5, 853, 194, with a foreign gross of \$1, 924, 596 pushing it to \$7, 777, 990. *Box Office Mojo*. Web. Last Accessed: March 13th, 2009.

Adjusting to a more stable, if pressurised environment for maintaining record subscriber margins and brand extensions was reinforced in the fall by divisions between *The Sopranos*' record-setting fourth season premiere and lower returns for *Mind of the Married Man*.

For *Mind*, cancellation represented a double failure to generate subscriber value or sufficient overseas distribution. Strauss thus noted how it had 'turned out to be a divisive show within households...women wouldn't watch it, so husbands didn't watch it with their wives, and boyfriends didn't with their girlfriends' (Strauss qtd Dempsey Jan 16 2003). Considered against future budgeting plans for comedy programming for 2003 and 2004, with *Sex and the City* expected to complete its run, Strauss later admitted that the cancellation 'basically came down to a matter of allocation of resources' (Strauss qtd *Chicago Sun-Times* Jan 17 2003). Looking to explore more selective mixtures of non-Time Warner synergy and stabilisation of late-night rotation then saw *Def Poetry Jam* expand into a live show, while in December HBO Films' links to Broadway were expanded for funding a limited series of high definition specials for promoting HBO Signature.

Updating HBO Films and documentary cycles for post 9/11 relevancy also crossed into December docudrama *Live from Baghdad* (Jackson 2002) focusing on a CNN crew's coverage of the early 1990s Gulf War within a detached verite context and selective Turner cross-promotion.¹⁹³ Moreover, in terms of updating documentary verite cycles to incorporate post 9/11 flexibility, special *Journeys with George* (Pelosi 2002) was acquired as a hand-held digital project tracking the everyday routines of the 2000 Presidential Election. Nevins' division also tested the potential for broadening from late-night erotica rotation, collaborating with *Real Sex* producer Patti Kaplan for observational brothel special *Cathouse* (2002).

Conclusion

Widely discussed innovations by HBO in reinforcing and extending its brand across digital markets can thus be re-contextualised through more specific subscriber continuities. Negotiation of new programs within aggregate cycles provided a stable

¹⁹³ Prestige ties were developed in *Live from Baghdad* through screenwriter Timothy J. Sexton (*A Lesson Before Dying, For Love or Country*), and producer Juanita F. Diana (*Boycott*). Director Mick Jackson had worked on *Indictment: The McMartin Trial*.

infrastructure for risk, while continuing to exploit traditional subscription leads over rivals. Emulation on a per-series basis by Showtime, cable and other rivals shared individual format continuities, but lacked HBO's exclusive scale. As a result, the crucial role of subscriber aggregation for underpinning a more general quality identity can again be used to better contextualise individual series debates and criticisms within longer-term programming trends and influences.

Continuities in this respect with Time contexts and reliance on aggregate tactics can also be tied to Caldwell's (2003) 'second shift' theories for periodising the rate of adaptation to new media outlets. Risk on new markets and brand extensions adapted and demonstrated some caution over significantly breaking from a subscriber model and cycles as the basis of brand consistency. The challenge of managing this consistency across a range of new platforms therefore arguably continued to rely on and diversify from a core set of institutional strategies.

Perhaps most notably, attention to how this success was principally governed by the branding of hit series can be widened to the collective context of the subscriber service as a stable infrastructure for brand extensions. Continued suggestions by existing approaches to HBO that the network reinvented itself within an 'era of unparalleled media change' (Edgerton 2008a: 17) can again be challenged here. While overlapping with multiple trends, HBO's innovation remained a distinct product of its subscriber structure, distinguished from the more interdependent approaches and franchising of cable and broadcast rivals. The particular freedoms offered by the domestic subscriber model also offered key contrasts with international trends in this period, with some minor but growing issues over integrated ownership of rights.

Moving into 2003, discussions of how HBO expanded its brand through the development and multi-platform management of franchises like *The Sopranos* and *Sex and the City* can therefore be again revised. By taking into consideration how trends for new program development again built from but also produced some tensions for protecting a core subscription stability, questions over wider digital innovations can be revised against efforts to begin exporting the aggregate subscription structure of the network.

Chapter Six: 2003-2007

Faced with increasing competition for programming distinction against difficulties in reproducing the impact of *The Sopranos* and *Sex and the City*, existing accounts cite the 2003 to 2007 period as reinforcing the need for HBO to extend and manage its brand through hit programs. In this context, the rise of broadband internet markets within a maturing ‘convergence’ culture and ‘post-network’ reliance on branding through flexible content has led to suggestions of declining significance for the subscription service. By comparison, this final chapter aims to reaffirm the role of the subscriber service as an anchor for managing the HBO brand across markets, while retaining tensions over exclusivity.

Discussing how HBO looked to protect its subscriber identity, some provisional links can be drawn between the continuity of the network as a branded aggregator deriving its value through a long-term exhibition and production infrastructure. The first part of the chapter will examine how subscriber aggregation offset problems with high-profile series such as *Carnivale*, *Deadwood* and *Rome*, as well as extensions into new markets. It is then possible to examine how HBO negotiated further programming misfires and the challenges of broadband licensing from 2005 to 2007, again falling back on and attempting to extend an aggregate subscriber identity to stabilise global strategies. Ending with the final season of *The Sopranos* and the controversial departure of CEO Chris Albrecht, some demands for change and continuity can be identified within broader discussions of aggregators in the ‘post network’ era.

‘HBO may survive as a brand long after it has lost its relevance as a premium channel’: 2003-2007

In terms of competition for brand distinction, HBO’s innovations in drama and comedy continued through the period with historical series *Carnivale* (2003-2005), *Deadwood* and *Rome*. *Carnivale*, a supernatural drama mapping a mythological battle between good and evil over a traveling carnival and a corrupt preacher in the 1930s American dustbowl combines narrative complexity with supernatural mythology and art-film influenced visual style. Marc suggests here that the series’ oblique, magical realism-influenced tone is ‘more suggestive of a Borges short story or a Bunuel feature film’ (Marc 2008: 103) than traditional television drama, while \$4 million episodic budgets

extended *Sopranos*-level prestige for location shooting, montage editing, CGI, widescreen and long takes. For Marc, this established a ‘visual language bearing little resemblance to the naturalistic techniques that dominate the narrative genres of American television and film’ (Marc 2008: 103). Building from *Six Feet Under* and *The Wire*’s promotion of outstanding license in ‘both its imaginative constructs and its production values’ (Nelson 2007: 104-105) for broadcast differentiation, *Carnivale* was followed from 2004 to 2006 by Western drama *Deadwood*.

Exploring the ‘laboratory experiment’ of 1870s Gold Rush America, Newcomb (2008) has identified how writer-producer David Milch followed in the auteur tradition of David Chase, Alan Ball and David Simon in constructing a densely layered serial drama around the tensions of a primitive community. Heavily researched and defined by dialogue combining TV-MA profanity and lyricism, Newcomb outlines the series’ literary ambitions for adapting the Western’s ambiguous law and order morality (Newcomb 2008: 96-99) within meticulously constructed sets, handheld shooting, low-key-lit interiors and ambient soundtracking further pushing episodic budgets. Encouraging further ‘not TV’ brand distinction and legitimation for quality programming has subsequently encouraged wide-ranging critical analysis of the show.¹⁹⁴

By comparison, 2005’s *Rome* pushed production budgets to new levels, exploiting a \$100 to \$120 million co-financed deal with the BBC, RAI, Canal Plus and EOS Distribution to become the most expensive television drama in history (Vivarelli Sep 30 2004). Shot in Rome’s Cinecitta Studios and on location around Europe, the series’ exploration of the family dynamics of the Roman aristocracy and power struggles for a global empire combines explicit content with the spectacular scale of period sets, CGI-enhanced battle sequences and a broad sweep of classical history.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ The anthology *Reading Deadwood* (Lavery ed 2006) incorporates television auteur debates on Milch through Lavery’s ‘Introduction: *Deadwood*, David Milch, and Television Creativity,’ (1-10), psychoanalysis (Kim Akass, ‘You Motherfucker: Al Swearengen’s Oedipal Dilemma,’ 23-32), gender performance (Kathleen E.R. Smith, ‘Whores, Ladies, and Calamity Jane: Gender Roles and the Women of HBO’s *Deadwood*,’ 79-92), literary contexts (Joseph Millichap, ‘Robert Penn Warren, David Milch, and the Literary Contexts of *Deadwood*,’ 101-114), and representations of an information society (Shawn McIntosh, ‘Six Shooters and the Fourth Estate: A.W. Merrick and *Deadwood*’s Information Society’, 33-42).

¹⁹⁵ *Rome* has also inspired a collection of essays mixing television studies with broader considerations of classical Rome’s representation on-screen in Monica Cyrino ed (2008) *Rome: Season One: History Makes Television*, Oxford: Blackwell.

However, despite enhancing the brand's exceptional prestige, *Carnivale*, *Deadwood* and *Rome* struggled to capture the ratings or broader crossover impact of their predecessors. By the summer of 2006 all three series received cancellations. Raising questions over HBO's ability to reproduce the break-out impact of 1997 to 2001, with *Oz*, *Six Feet Under* and *The Sopranos* completing their runs by 2007, a more economical niche success was made from 2006 by *Big Love* (2006-). Focusing on a polygamist Mormon family in Utah, the drama ties together serial plot-lines exploring marriage, domestic tensions and spiritual crisis, sustaining drama conventions without the broader scale of the historical dramas of the 2003 to 2005 era. Edgerton and Jones view the wave of series cancellations by 2007 as evidence of how a 'mild undercurrent of HBO fatigue was clearly surfacing' (Edgerton, Jones 2008: 317) for audiences and critics by the mid-point of the decade. For Marc, this 'cooldown' (Marc 2008: 101) also affected comedy programming.

For Haggins and Lotz, efforts to replace *Sex and the City* produced mixed results. On the one hand, 2004 series *Entourage* (2004-) built on *Curb Your Enthusiasm's* reflexive Hollywood insider series within the high-gloss style and the 'relational comedy' (Haggins, Lotz 2008: 165) of the female-led show. The series focuses on the pathos of industry deal-making and excess through young film star Vince Chase (Adrien Grenier), his childhood friends from New York, and a struggling actor brother. While failing to achieve the broader impact of *Sex and the City*, *Entourage's* niche popularity aligned with *Curb Your Enthusiasm* as a stable source of subscriber value and lucrative DVD and foreign sales.

By contrast, Haggins and Lotz note recurring problems with new series experiments. These included 2003's *K Street*, a mock-verite political 1 half hour building on *Tanner 88's* 'strange real and fictional blend of actors and politicians telling political stories'. 2005 also saw the premiere of *Unscripted*, a digital-shot comedy featuring a 'similarly uncertain blend of real actors and improvised and fictionalized storytelling that featured the increasingly trademark incorporation of the Hollywood celebrity machine' (Haggins, Lotz 2008: 166).

A growing backlash against the saturation of insider comedies was also developed by summer 2005's *The Comeback*. A satire of reality television fame built around former *Friends* star Lisa Kudrow as an ageing sitcom actress, a blend of verite

filming and direct-camera confession has led Williamson to identify the series as an updating of *Larry Sanders* and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*'s reflexive approach to sitcom formats (Williamson 2008: 117). For Haggins and Lotz its cancellation however reflected problems with an 'increasingly trademark' use of celebrity deprecation had 'mainly produced uncomfortable awkwardness' (Haggins, Lotz 2008: 166) over pathos.

The limitations of the insider genre were further stretched in 2005 by higher critical praise but limited niche audiences for BBC co-production *Extras* (2005-2007). A dark satire of modern celebrity from writer-producer Ricky Gervais, the series built off the global success of mock-verite comedy *The Office* (BBC, 2001-2003). Problems in finding new options for comedy increased by 2006 with *Lucky Louie*, a failed attempt to produce a HBO-branded version of the multi-camera sitcom, with Haggins and Lotz arguing that the 'style of the series was jarring for viewers, as by that point even most broadcast sitcoms had adopted much of the visual style of the previous HBO hits' (Haggins, Lotz 2008: 167).

Haggins and Lotz also note varying success for HBO standup series, talk shows and limited series. The former included the rap-themed *P Diddy's Bad Boys of Comedy* (2005) and *Dane Cook's Tourgasm* (2006), a 'part concert film/part road trip' (Haggins, Lotz 2008: 161). Greater success was found with late-night sketch and interview series *Ali G in da USA* (2003-2004), adapted from a Channel Four series. In 2003 HBO also replaced *Dennis Miller Live* with chat show *Real Time with Bill Maher* (2003-). Combining stand-up from Maher with roundtable discussions of topical issues with celebrity guests, Jones has discussed the series as extending HBO's success with the 'comedy talk show with a strong point of view' (Jones 2008a: 179).

Immediate explanations for the loss of series momentum by 2007 identify rival success in adapting HBO formats. Describing the spread of such 'stylistic signatures as the use of innovative and unconventional narrative pacing, characterisation, dialogue, subject matter, music, wit, and irony,' Edgerton and Jones suggest that 'HBO's aftereffect permeates the full range of contemporary television, from its pay-TV rivals to basic cable and satellite channels to the traditional broadcast networks as well' (Edgerton, Jones 2008: 320). Moreover, Lotz suggests that most networks 'have simply taken pages from the book HBO has been writing on successful promotion for the last eight years' (Lotz 2007a: 112).

This notably ranged in basic cable to FX's expansion of *The Shield*'s success with ratings and critical success for darkly comic plastic surgery drama *Nip/Tuck*, and post 9/11 firefighter procedural *Rescue Me* (2004-). In addition, diversifying into digital video comedy *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia* (2005-) combined with the more narrowly successful dark comedies *The Riches* (2007-2008) and celebrity insider series *Dirt* (2007-2008). USA and TNT procedural success (*The Closer*, USA, 2005-), the Sci-Fi Channel's cult franchising with *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-2009) and Comedy Central political and niche comedy impact with *South Park*, *The Daily Show*, *The Colbert Report* (2005-) and *Chappelle's Show* (2003-2006) also enhanced competition.

Subscription competition came through Showtime, with the Viacom network building on *Queer as Folk*'s success with lesbian serial *The L Word* (2004-), drug-themed half hour *Weeds* (2005-) Irish-American gangster drama *Brotherhood* (2006-2008) serial killer procedural *Dexter* and historical drama *The Tudors* (2007-2010). This also included more limited ventures into dark psychological comedy *Huff* (2004-2006) insider series *Fat Actress* (2005) and terrorist miniseries *Sleeper Cell* (2005). Further further genre series deals with MGM also continued with supernatural comedy *Dead Like Me* (2003-2004). Moreover, the broader narrowcast and global branding impact of MTV in reality, and Nickelodeon in animated and live action franchises underpinned the spread and demographic variety of both formats across basic cable.

With Lotz noting how by 2003, 'the networks increasingly considered that being unconventional might prove the key to success' (Lotz 2007a: 231), broadcasters looked to win back ratings and exploit DVD and licensing markets with niche content alongside traditional procedural, sitcoms and cross-promotional strengths of reality television. From reflexive, single camera comedies (*Arrested Development*, (FOX, 2003-2006), *Scrubs* (NBC/ABC, 2001-2010) *30 Rock* (NBC, 2006-)), to more narratively complex multiple-camera sitcoms (*How I Met Your Mother* (CBS, 2005-), and FOX animated comedy (*Family Guy* (2005-)-, *American Dad* (2005-)), comedy success also spread into revived demographic and ratings success in primetime drama.

While diversifying procedural formats (*Grey's Anatomy* (ABC, 2005-), *House* (FOX, 2004-)) alongside the continued franchising of *CSI* and *Law and Order*, intensified formal complexity and content also contributed to the success of densely

plotted, high-budget action-adventure *Lost*, and black comedy *Desperate Housewives*. The latter's combination of 'murder, mayhem, sex, and general bawdiness' within 'populist interest in the lurid and lascivious' (Polan 2009: 192) perhaps best epitomised the 'HBO aftereffect,' turned down by the network before being picked up by ABC.

Despite series competition, Edgerton and Jones do however note how HBO's broader award-winning prestige remained stable. HBO Films and Documentary Films contributed to a record 124 nominations at the 2004 Emmys and substantial subscription leads over rivals, as well as the highest annual profits for any US network (Edgerton, Jones 2008: 317). Moreover, they acknowledge that the exceptional performance of *The Sopranos* and *Sex and the City* had perhaps exaggerated some contemporary concern over a loss of success (Edgerton, Jones 2008: 318).

In this way, while Heller continues to sketch out HBO Films' 'contradictory packaging of edgy, socially relevant narratives of gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality in well-worn TV-movie genres' (Heller 2008: 50-51), Edgerton has promoted 2003 miniseries *Angels in America* as particularly reinforcing the branding of uncensored creative vision and production values (Edgerton 2008b: 145-146). This retained distinction within an increasingly narrower and more internationally co-produced made-for-television film and miniseries market (Perren 2009b).

Developing Tony Kushner's award-winning study of AIDS in the 1980s into a six-part, \$65 million epic with a cast that included Meryl Streep and Al Pacino, Edgerton discusses the series as framing the play's 'intimate and epic' (Edgerton 2008b: 136) appeal through chaptered vignettes and a range of perspectives in New York and the afterlife on the virus's relationship to homosexuality and the American family. Described as sustaining and varying trends from *Band of Brothers* for the 'grandeur of film with the theatrics of the stage and the immediacy of television' (Deggans qtd Edgerton 2008b: 143), *Angels'* prestige was complemented by the diverse niche appeal of documentaries and sports programming.

For Mascaro, Murray and Jones, documentaries maintained a niche mix of 'the sensational and the high-minded' (Murray 2008: 271) against reality competition, while returning to a less visible status from Sunday night promotions. Murray interprets the decision to drop *America Undercover* from Sunday nights in 2004 as returning here to

documentary programming's more traditional role of 'appearing more irregularly and infrequently' (Murray 2008: 271) as diverse forms of added value, while occasionally experimenting with new specials to test reality formats alongside the success of late-night erotica. This ranged from 2004's *Family Bonds*, a limited series following a New York family of bounty hunters (Murray 2008: 271) to August 2005's limited series adaptation of erotic special *Cathouse*.

While Jones notes how the latter's success could continue to embody the exploitation end of HBO's deregulated freedoms (Jones 2008b: 284), Murray has more broadly reaffirmed how *America Undercover*'s inclusive range of niche cycles helped enhance the 'branding of HBO as a quality network', while also helping to 'determine the direction of American independent documentary production' (Murray 2008: 272). A similar mix of subscriber success and recurring criticism can again be found here in HBO Sports' output, with Miller and Kim criticising the entrenched role of exploiting boxing promotion (Miller, Kim 2008: 231) with the 'banalities' (Miller, Kim 2008: 225) of sports shows, including *On the Record with Bob Costas* revision in 2005 as *Costas Now* (2005-) and historical documentaries as negotiating 'trivialities around the margins of a powerful system' (Miller, Kim 2005: 225).

Within this climate, competition has led scholars to identify the 2003 to 2007 era as setting up a provisional new 'tipping point' for HBO to draw success by managing branded content across new platforms. Discussing HBO's steadily exceptional profit margins by 2004, breaking a record \$1 billion for Time Warner in 2003 (Dempsey Dec 23 2004), Rogers et al (2006) and Johnson (2007) identify a gradual shift away from highly lucrative but slowing US subscriptions¹⁹⁶ towards the importance of licensing for domestic and foreign ancillary markets. These represented 20% of total revenues by the end of the year (Higgins Feb 9 2004). Here Albrecht's 2002 promotion of exploiting properties to both enhance awareness of the service and spin-off revenues extended to HBO Home Video's continued DVD impact, with six of the top fifteen retail titles of 2004 (Hettrick Nov 24 2002). Global DVD sales of *Sex and the City*, *The Sopranos* and *Band of Brothers* also boosted sales.

¹⁹⁶ By 2005 HBO was received by 27.7 million subscribers and Cinemax by 10 million (Martin Feb 28 2005).

This also aligned with selective synergy for selling pay cable series to the traditionally broadcast-restricted syndication market. Most notably including the licensing of *Sex and the City* to Tribune stations (Wallenstein Sep 11 2003) and fellow Time Warner network TBS as part of the basic network's rebranding around comedy reruns from 2003, a record deal licensing *The Sopranos* to basic network A&E established a peak in series distribution. A \$195 million deal with \$2 million episode sales (Martin Feb 1 2005), the gangster drama demonstrated appeal for edited episodes to find audiences and attract advertisers. The exceptional performance of the two series also led to renewed merchandising deals by the end of 2004 (Reynolds Sep 20 2004).

Setting precedent for wider syndication, from 2003 to 2007 additional deals were made in licensing *From the Earth to the Moon* and *Mr. Show* to TBS for primetime and late-night runs, while *Band of Brothers* was picked up by The History Channel (Dempsey Nov 19 2003). Comedy Central also acquired rerun rights to selected titles from the standup library (Dempsey Jan 9 2004). In January 2005 this was followed by licensing of several HBO Films titles to PBS, and *Angels in America* for Viacom's new LGBT-niche channel Logo, *Six Feet Under* to Bravo in 2006. Channel Four International also acquired rights to license documentaries overseas.

Syndication rights through HBO Independent Productions similarly retained lucrative value through *Everybody Loves Raymond*. Plans for theatrical distribution also expanded from 2002, with Carolyn Anderson pointing to a wave of successes for demonstrating 'how HBO could operate successfully in theatres as well as TV' (Carolyn Anderson 2008: 294). Outlining a 2003 first-look deal with fellow Time Warner subsidiary Fine Line Features (294), she sketches out the successful impact of *American Splendor* (Pulcini; Springer Berman 2003), an offbeat biopic of comic book artist Harvey Pekar mixing animation, narrative and documentary techniques (Carolyn Anderson 2008: 295).

This was followed Gus Van Sant's Cannes Palme D'Or winning *Elephant* (2003), an avant-garde structuring of perspectives on the 1999 Columbine High School shootings further distinguished through extensive Steadicam tracking shots by cinematographer Harris Savides (Carolyn Anderson 2008: 296). Moreover, she notes 'another thoughtful HBO narrative' (Carolyn Anderson 2008: 296) in *Maria Full of Grace* (Savides 2004), an internationally co-produced drama focusing on Columbian

drug smuggling to the US. HBO's success in extending 'its product well beyond its subscriber base' (Carolyn Anderson 2008: 297) through 'supporting modestly budgeted, nontraditional documentary and narrative features' (Carolyn Anderson 2008: 298) consequently reflected a smaller-scale, occasionally lucrative participation in a still-thriving independent film sector.

The extent to which HBO's theatrical diversification could both enhance an 'already stellar reputation' while expanding the 'reach and value of its corporate brand' (Carolyn Anderson 2008: 298), was supported by 2004 with Albrecht's promotion of a refreshed HIP's positioning for broadcast commissions alongside *Everybody Loves Raymond's* one-off syndication success (Schneider Jun 3 2004). Confidence in the HBO brand's diversification was therefore enough by the end of 2003 to help justify Time Warner's sale of its stake in Comedy Central, with Viacom fully acquiring the network for \$1.22 billion (Schneider, Amdur Apr 22 2003).

Although the conglomerate dropped AOL from its title by 2003, continuing to recover losses through divisional performances and new markets for branded content could sustain a 'dream of digitalisation of all electronic media' (Polan 2009: 184). In this way, HBO's successful management of its brand across new markets has been linked to demands for exceptional content to feed broadband distribution by 2005. For Rogers et al (2006), the slowing performance of series like *Carnivale* and *Deadwood* in combining critical prestige and subscription value with lowered licensing flexibility contrasted with the ideals set by *Sex and the City* and *The Sopranos*.

Suggesting that future programming and branding decisions would be 'not about building subscriber numbers anymore' but rather intensifying the process of 'developing highly-rated content and attaching the HBO brand to that content' (Rogers et al 2006: 19), they go on to argue that by constructing an 'identity that is separate from the physicality of a conduit, HBO may survive as a brand long after it has lost its relevance as a premium channel' (Rogers et al 2006: 25). By taking the brand into wider new media platform through exceptional content, HBO's success would therefore be 'not so much about ratings or demographic streams' as 'brand equity and the synergy of new revenue streams' (Rogers et al 2006: 25).

Demands for multiplying the reach of branded content and boosting market share for distribution and exhibition were enhanced by further mergers and technological shifts in the period. From DVD's outstripping of global theatrical box office by 2003 (Bordwell 2006: 238), mergers between NBC and Universal (2004), Sony's acquisition of MGM's back-catalogue, and Viacom's 2006 separation of its faster-growing basic cable brands and studios from CBS and Showtime properties extended to the merger of the WB and UPN into teen and young adult network the CW. Copyright anxieties over broadband piracy, YouTube and mobile distribution subsequently accelerated adaptations to new platforms that could seek revenues and build audience loyalty outside of network scheduling and advertising (Jenkins 2008).

This produced more aggressive 'transmedia' strategies for coordinating franchises across platforms, incorporating blockbuster franchises and serial dramas such as *Lost* and *Heroes* (2006-2010) (Sconce 2004: 95, Pearson ed 2009). For Michael Curtin, coordinating branded content between network channels, media-ties and global markets helped produce what he describes as a 'matrix model' recirculating media between outlets (Curtin 2010: 9-19). Lotz's 'post-network' description of the industry by the mid-2000s, driven by 'phenomenal content' (Lotz 2007a: 37) and adaptations to multiple delivery channels, viewer interactivity and ancillary media, thus helps define an industry looking to promote branded content in diverse ways. In this way, adjustments to the speed of digital access, the portability of mobile phones and internet marketing has led Lotz to suggest that HBO and other pay services needed to find 'other ways to mark their difference and establish their value' (Lotz 2007a: 99).

Edgerton suggests that for HBO, 'breakout signature shows are the most essential ingredient allowing this newly emerging multidimensional personal-usage market structure to flourish' (Edgerton 2008a: 15). Rogers et al's (2006) promotion of adapting the brand to new outlets has been supported by Kelso's prediction of HBO evolving into more of an 'owner-syndicator than a network' (Rogers et al 2006: 59), with Polan reflecting on the 'imputed limitations of a subscriber model' (Polan 2009: 186) for widening global distribution of programming.

Being at the 'forefront of technological innovation' (Edgerton 2008a: 17) for Time Warner thus represented a further challenge for HBO as reinventing itself as the 'prototypical entertainment corporation of the twenty-first century' (Edgerton 2008a:

18). In terms of successful brand management, this content could be used to generate an economy where

‘various aspects of its commercial identity as a network, a production studio, a diverse multinational business enterprise, and a global brand work closely together to enhance one another’ (Edgerton, Jones 2008: 322)

However, while noting the importance of maintaining and expanding the value of the HBO brand, some attention has been paid to retaining older network continuities. Kelso suggests here that ‘HBO’s first priority is holding onto subscribers which still account for the lion’s share’ (Kelso 2008: 60) of revenues, while Edgerton and Jones acknowledge that while ‘HBO means several different things depending on the context’ by the mid 2000s, ‘first and foremost it is a foundational network that has generated a whole host of related spin-off channels’ (Edgerton, Jones 2008: 322).

The rest of this chapter therefore aims to expand on how those ‘foundational’ strategies continued to anchor successful brand management around long-term aggregate stability. Moreover, collaborative tensions and difficulties in adapting to broadband markets reproduced earlier tensions over exclusivity. In this way, an emphasis on distinctive content through hit programs can be re-oriented towards distinctive forms of subscriber aggregation, offsetting challenges from 2003 to 2004, and adapting to the challenges of the broadband-era from 2005 to mid-2007.

‘The product that we sell is HBO the network. You can’t buy a piece of it. You have to buy it all’: 2003-2004

2003

Time Warner’s return to its ‘feudal’ system after the AOL merger was reinforced in 2003 as CEO Dick Parsons announced a ‘reset’ from two years of internal conflict (qtd Goldsmith Jan 30 2003). Albrecht’s focus on expanding brand licensing while controlling spending and reinforcing subscriber value was primarily negotiated by heavy investment in *Carnivale*, *Deadwood* and *Rome* as multi-year drama projects. This was set against more cautious HBO Films and documentary cycles, as well as

extensions into theatrical diversifications. Attempts to adapt program cycles to post 9/11 themes and individual franchises to new licensing also produced some difficulties.

Carnivale and *Deadwood* premiered within six months of each other in late 2003 and early 2004, and arguably represented calculated risks from the late 1990s for integrating HBO Films and miniseries production for anchoring prestige within trusted drama cycles. With challenges for series to enhance the prestige achieved by *Six Feet Under* and *The Wire*, while improving on their ratings and licensing potential, filling Sunday night scheduling was further pressured by the completion of *Oz* in February after six years. A consistently lower-scale but extensively compatible package staple, Sunday night premieres overlapped with *America Undercover* cycles, while *Six Feet Under* and *The Wire* experienced further ratings declines for third and second seasons in March and August (Wallenstein Jun 4 2003).

Despite sustained critical prestige, subscriber approval and a rolling-out of DVD, syndication and licensing revenues, drama performance continued to lack the crossover success of *The Sopranos* and *Sex and the City* (Kissell Jun 25 2003). Coming against the improved performance of basic cable, broadcast narrowcasting and Showtime, and most notably FX's expansion from *The Shield* to *Nip/Tuck*, basic cable ratings and brand recognition grew more competitive (Wallenstein Oct 31 2003; Martin Aug 27 2003). 'Sunday Is' marketing was also hit by broadcast success with *CSI* and reality programming, while Showtime re-affirmed ambitions for series prestige by appointing *Six Feet Under* producer Robert Greenblatt as head of programming. Focus shifted here for the network between expanding Viacom licenses within a traditionally more interdependent pay cable model (Littleton Jun 26 2003).

Precedent for the historical drama beyond stretching boundaries for premium series can be traced to existing production cycles between series, HBO Films and miniseries for aggregating value. With the pilot, series order and shooting of *Carnivale* spread over two years, the overlaps in serial structure, theatrical quality and personnel between the divisions arguably enhanced prestige efforts. *Carnivale*'s \$4 million episodic budgets, location shooting, CGI and dense ensemble cast therefore reproduced the narrative complexity and theatricality of the series drama while retrofitting to the historical scope of the miniseries and original film. The series had been created by

Daniel Knauf, a screenwriter who had earlier produced gunslinger picture *Blind Justice* for HBO Pictures.

While offering a richly detailed mythology to HBO, uncertainty over the series' suitability for the brand led to a fourteen month delay from a pilot for script treatments, before assembling a familiar team of collaborators.¹⁹⁷ Being able to reproduce the prestige drama's production values also prompted options for extending the show as a fantasy franchise. Early marketing of *Carnivale* in September 2003 thus alternated quality promotion for Sunday nights with CD-ROM games and interactive competitions (Wallenstein Aug 15 2003). However, *Carnivale*'s potential as a franchise ultimately reproduced the critical praise but lowered ratings for *Six Feet Under* and *The Wire*. This led to a renewal, but more cautious optimism over the series' value as a franchise. Some of this risk was again offset by aggregate compatibility with HBO Films cycles and *Angels in America* in 2003.

Following Albrecht's promotion of theatrical films as a suitable extension of the domestic brand, HBO Films' growth reflected both new ambitions, but also drew from and preserved the stable development of network cycles within some contingencies over foreign distribution. Challenged for distinction by growing investment in Sundance acquisitions and co-productions by cable rivals (Harris Jan 16 2003), cooperative deals with Fine Line for *Splendor* drew on biopic and wider independent film trends, while working with documentary collaborators. This also aligned at the festival with the extension of subscriber niches for crossover LGBT cycles from *If These Walls Could Talk 2* and *The Laramie Project* for Jane Anderson's transgender drama *Normal* (2003).¹⁹⁸ The success of the former led to a first-look deal with Fine Line, with HBO Films Domestic Theatrical Releasing established to work with the New Line division (Dunkley, Rooney May 19 2003).

¹⁹⁷ These included veteran producers Todd London, David Knoller and Howard Klein, independent producer Daniel Hassid, Gigi Coello-Bannon (*NYPD Blue*), Anthony Santa Croce, Kelly McCarthy writers Knauf, William Schmidt, Henry Bromell, Dawn Prestwich and Nicole Yorkin and Toni Graphia, production supervisor Kimberley A. Dickens, and from the HBO stable, Gregg Fienberg (*Mind of the Married Man*); directors then ranged from further veterans in Jack Bender, Tim Hunter (*Twin Peaks*), Scott Winant (*Dead Like Me*), and HBO regulars John Patterson, Jeremy Podeswa, Peter Medak (*The Wire*), Alison Maclean (*Sex and the City*) and Rodrigo Garcia (*Gia*, *Six Feet Under*).

¹⁹⁸ *Normal* reunited with Anderson from *The Positively True Adventures of the Alleged Texas Cheerleading Mom* and *If These Walls Could Talk*. Dealing with a Midwesterner's transgendered transition, community ties to *Laramie* also shared *Walls*' '1960' cinematographer Alar Kivilo.

While extending selective synergy within Time Warner, the deal was however mixed with caution, with Fine Line covering the majority of marketing and distribution costs. Here Callender noted how the deal reflected HBO's demands for suitable collaboration, where

‘over time, we have been approached by lots of distributors but have resisted time and time again...we wanted to be able to extend the HBO brand into other areas and make sure that the value of HBO's involvement is part of what is being sold to the audience and Fine Line really stepped up to the plate to allow us to do that...we're really in sync editorially with their approach to marketing and their positioning as counter-programmers’ (Callender qtd Spector Jul 25 2003)

At the same time, Callender and Albrecht worked to gradually improve HBO's fragmented relationship to global distribution and marketing, setting up HBO Films London in March as a small hub for coordinating acquisitions and distribution from multiple licensors.

Callender justified this as a necessary step in improving HBO's consistent branding for foreign market distribution, suggesting that the ‘international marketplace is changing rapidly, and we wanted to do business overseas in a completely different way’ (Callender qtd Rooney Mar 27 2003). One of the immediate benefits of the deal was a diversified stake in titles with lowered North American potential through Van Sant's *Elephant's* Palme D'Or win at Cannes, sold by the division to international distributors alongside *Splendor* (Kemp May 2 2003; *Hollywood Reporter* May 19 2003). Moreover, deals were made for acquiring Spanish drama *The Holy Girl* and low-budget British picture *The Fever* (Dunkley, Rooney May 19 2003).¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁹ *The Holy Girl* (Martel 2004), a drama focusing on a 16 year old girl's relationship to a middle-aged doctor, was co-produced by Augustin and Pedro Almodovar, with European funding and HBO Films' licensing through HBO London. It went on to gross \$304,124 on US limited release from May 1st to July 4th 2005. *The Fever* (Nero 2004) a political drama directed by Carlo Gabriel Nero and starring Vanessa Redgrave, was picked up by HBO Films London, but despite festival screenings from 2004 to 2005 would not receive a HBO screening until June 2007.

Protecting US subscription cycles while expanding on trusted international collaborations was also developed through British collaboration *My House in Umbria*, an older-targeted melodrama sold for theatrical release in the UK and Europe by Momentum Pictures. This then came against Nevins and Documentary Films' gradual diversification and expansion of its Sundance and international ties, acquiring domestic and international titles for aggregation within stable HBO and Cinemax cycles.²⁰⁰

The division also looked to exploit theatrical distribution for documentary features (Kaufman Aug 18 2003). This included selling *Capturing the Friedmans* (Jarecki 2003) to Magnolia, as well as *Bus 174* (Padiha, Larcada 2002) and spelling contest documentary *Spellbound* (Blitz 2002) to ThinkFilm (Rooney Apr 3 2003). Brazilian drama *Balseros* (Bosch, Domenech 2002) was also licensed to Seventh Art Releasing. Again though, expansion came against a focus on stabilising a mature domestic market, adapting key cycles as the basis for wider extensions.

Enhancing the rotation of niche cycles, the summer saw HBO Films' *Undeclared* (Leguizamo 2003) a low-budget Manhattan-produced boxing drama, cross between both Latino and sports appeals. It was also cross-promoted with verite documentaries.²⁰¹ Ongoing confidence in production cycles and the aggregation of high-end drama prestige alongside series was also demonstrated by September's *And Starring Pancho Villa as Himself* (Beresford 2003) preceding and aligning with *Carnivale*.

A \$20 to \$30 million HBO Films drama following an attempt by the Mutual Film Company in the 1910s to shoot a multiple-reel feature on Mexican revolutionary Pancho Villa (Antonio Banderas), branding prestige linked through extensive production experience in award-winning projects to Latino appeals and insider Hollywood satire. Moreover, with plot-motivated pastiches of silent film style combining with location shooting, epic battle sequences, desaturated colour palettes and

²⁰⁰ These included combinations of late-night erotica and verite documentary (*Showgirls: Glitz and Angst* Dick 2003), subculture specials *Born Rich* (Johnson 2003), new franchises (*Cathouse*), Channel Four licensed Olympics terrorist attack special *Terror in Moscow* (Reed 2003) and a season of themed HBO2 specials on documenting war that included (*The Struma* (Jancobovich 2003) and *War Photographer* (Christian Frei 2003).

²⁰¹ *Undeclared* reunited with John Leguizamo from acting roles in *Point of Origin* and stand-up performances. Co-written by Frank Pugliese (*Shot in the Heart*), it focuses on a boxer's negotiation of family and professional life. Cross-promotion came through Jon Alpert-developed urban verite special *Latin Kings* (2003)

digital post-production colour timing, *Pancho Villa* helped merge with *Carnivale*'s event marketing around the scale of the historical miniseries.²⁰²

Book-ending *Carnivale*'s completion, December's *Angels in America* arguably offered further complements to the blurring of miniseries and serial scope. With producers Avenue Pictures and director Mike Nichols returning from the Emmy-winning *Wit*, HBO Films' ties to theatre boosted its study of AIDS as part of both the provocative event epic appeals and star cast discussed by Edgerton (2008b), but also built on series art-house links and anthology structure. This notably sees episodes mix subjective POV with dreams, narrative commentary by Greek chorus-style visitations and reflexive direct camera address. European and New York filming ties also extended to 35mm shooting and the incorporation of digital techniques, as well as transferring composer Michael Newman from *Six Feet Under*.

Moreover, the miniseries' aggregate strengths returned to familiar film and documentary AIDS themes for 20th century history (*And the Band Played On*, *Citizen Cohn*, *In the Gloaming*; *Common Threads*). This also built on older independent and theatrical appeals to the cycle of LGBT projects between HBO Films (*If These Walls Could Talk 2*, *The Laramie Project*, *Normal*). Links here further developed cross-promotion with *Six Feet Under* from 2001, as well as a history of successful network documentaries on sexuality, gender and disease.²⁰³

The development of the historical drama series thus sustained production and aggregate value, while exploring options for global DVD exporting and world-building cult franchises, and HBO Films' theatrical and overseas distribution. However, difficulties remained in reproducing series scale, with *Angels* suffering audience dips in first-run (Kissell Dec 17 2003), compensated by heavy rotation as marathons and

²⁰² *Pancho Villa* was developed by City Entertainment (*Introducing Dorothy Dandridge*), with producers including Juanita F. Diana, Lourdes Diaz, Mark Gordon, Diana Isaacs, Sue Jett and Tony Mark (*Witness Protection*, *Vendetta*, *Earthly Possessions*), Gary Levinsohn, Joshua D. Maurer (*Dorothy Dandridge*), Luiz Maria Rojas and Larry Gelbart (*Weapons of Mass Distraction*).

²⁰³ The latter was also themed in the summer of 2003 through documentary special *Pandemic: Facing AIDS* (Kennedy 2003) as well as a leading role for Ray Cohn, leading from *Citizen Cohn*. More immediately, the series' micro-niche relevance to aggregating the December subscriber package was enhanced through cross-promotion with annual World AIDS Day film and documentary specials across HBO and Cinemax.

feature-length specials, as well as anticipation of DVD and global sales as one-off box-sets and prestige series.

The higher risk of drama and miniseries production can be compared here to more cautious comedy development within late-night and primetime rotation. In the former, replacing *Dennis Miller Live* produced February's chat show *Real Time with Bill Maher* for filling 11pm and primetime rotation. This also adapted post 9/11 satire cycles that had been popularised by Comedy Central and *The Daily Show*. Here Maher's existing connection to HBO via Downtown Productions' development of his Comedy Central and later ABC chat-show, was promoted by Strauss as offering a creative outlet after the later was allegedly cancelled by the network for criticism of the Bush administration.²⁰⁴ Round-table, entertaining but politically insightful commentary was also packaged with post-midnight runs for *Ali G in da USA*. The series adapted a long-term relationship with Channel Four, with its combination of low-budget sketches and stunts enhancing late-night marketing to 18-34 demographics. While receiving low ratings, with 1.8 and 1.3 million averages (*Hollywood Reporter* Feb 26 2003), when aligned with new episodes of *Def Poetry Jam*, familiar demographic compatibility continued through the year.

With *Sex and the City* still dominating primetime ratings, efforts to diversify comedy and reality formats experienced challenges, with *Project Greenlight* representing a key example. Despite demographic cross-promotion with *Real Time* and *Ali G*, the series' mixed critical reception and subscriber interest in its multi-platform format led to the series being sold to Bravo (Richmond Aug 3 2004).²⁰⁵ September's *K Street* offered a similarly experimental approach, enhancing independent film ties and multi-platform interactivity alongside *Real Time*'s political satire.

²⁰⁴ Strauss repeated the marketing of creative vision, arguing that 'the logic of Bill on HBO is crystal clear. He's done five stand-up specials on our air and we produced *Politically Incorrect* for nine seasons', while adding how 'he has his own unvarnished, well-thought-out opinions that can sometimes be very provocative' (Strauss qtd Reynolds Jan 27 2003).

²⁰⁵ For *Variety* reporter Ray Richmond, the sale reflected both dips in feature film budgets for the initial project, and opportunities for improved marketing on advertising-supported cable, overcoming HBO's issues with 'what can and cannot be included in the framework of the shows aired, as far as sponsorship'. The article would also note how the series might have fallen victim to the costs of *The Sopranos* and *Six Feet Under*, while series producer Chris Moore joked that 'the target audience' for the show 'probably doesn't have the money to subscribe to HBO anyway' (Moore qtd Richmond Aug 3 2004).

Developed with Steven Soderbergh, *K Street* was conceived as a limited series reacting to news stories and mixing improvisation and longer conspiracy arcs through a Washington lobbying firm, enhanced through digital verite shooting and mock-surveillance effects for a 'run and gun' style (Strauss qtd McConnell Sep 8 2003). However, in offering an extensive online presence, with polls and feedback, the series' promotion as a response to the 'nervousness' of post 9/11 politics (Strauss qtd Levine Aug 25-Aug 31 2003) alongside *Carnivale* suffered declining ratings (Romano Nov 17 2003).

McGrath has particularly noted the series' unsuccessful focus on politics and interactivity as breaking with subscribers' 'clear identification with the HBO style and brand' and 'very particular expectations of what a HBO series should deliver for them' (McGrath 2008: 172). In this case, art-house stylisation, and online interaction could only attract a 'political junkie' (McGrath 2008: 178), with lowered aggregate value outside specialist niches and formal experimentation. For McGrath, this demonstrated how while 'the channel is justifiably proud of being 'not TV,' it does still have commercial limits' (McGrath 2008: 186). Viewed more broadly, the series' experimentation in 'real time' politics arguably reproduced some of the earlier subscriber difficulties with *Tanner '88*, as well as broader entrenched verite trends over direct political, or 'junkie' satire. Taken together with *Greenlight*, resistance to online interaction extended problems in producing flexible multi-platform content. Resistance to adjusting proven formats and subscriber aggregation consequently resurfaced in 2004.

2004

Options for developing the historical drama cycle alongside HBO Films received further blows in pushing for ancillary revenue and negotiating subscriber value by the end of the year. Challenges for replacing completed series were notably highlighted in January and February by record ratings for the final episodes of *Sex and the City* on Sunday nights, dwarfing a parallel Sunday run of *Curb Your Enthusiasm* in highlighting gaps between exceptional and more typical aggregate series performance (Dempsey, Kissell Feb 25 2004; Littleton Mar 17 2004). Efforts to enhance series prestige in the early months of the year came against further awards and ratings impact for FX (Martin, Schneider Jan 16 2004).

At Showtime, Robert Greenblatt called for the service to invest more resources into primetime series, retaining occasional sports PPV, boxing, specials, and diverse co-financing of original films and documentaries (Dempsey Jan 12-Jan 18 2004). Early success was found here with January's *The L Word*. Niche marketed against *Sex and the City* as a lesbian-themed serial, while adapting HBO's success with independent directors to sustain an art-house influenced style (reproducing Greenblatt's success with *Six Feet Under*), cable rival success also crossed into single comedy experimentation with FOX's *Arrested Development*.²⁰⁶

On the one hand, HBO could still rely on *The Sopranos*' exceptional ratings, awareness and licensing success, with the drama's fifth season premiere in March accompanied by \$75 million in foreign syndication fees, \$240 million in DVD sales and \$800 million in total revenues from 1999 (Lowry Mar 8-Mar 14 2004). However, the launch of *Deadwood* from the drama's lead-in reflected both lavish production continuities from *Carnivale* and growing caution over costs and narrower returns.²⁰⁷

Like the fantasy drama, *Deadwood*'s mix of graphic realism and period style arguably lacked the more flexible aggregation of niche appeals of *Six Feet Under* or *The Wire*, and struggled to achieve individual franchise distinction on the lucrative scale of predecessors. Although improving on *Carnivale*'s ratings, helped by *The Sopranos*' 12.14 million lead-in (Kissell Mar 10 2004), the drama's weekly audiences emulated *Six Feet Under* in dropping to 4 to 5 million against increased network competition (Staff Sep 20 2004). In addition, with \$4 million episodic budgets, the costs of securing Milch was complicated by a pre-existing deal between the writer-producer and

²⁰⁶ A 2004 *Village Voice* article highlighted the regular crossovers in directors with pay cable. Producer Christine Vachon emphasized here how 'up until a couple of years ago, if you went to direct TV, you didn't tell anyone because there was such a stigma attached to it.' The article also sees Miguel Arteta discuss how working on *Six Feet Under* represented 'everything that we look for in independent cinema.' See Joy Press (2004) 'Out of the Box: Indie film directors invade the TV screen,' *Village Voice*, Aug 3, Web. Last Accessed: Nov 16th 2010.

²⁰⁷ Direct crossovers from *Carnivale* included cinematographer James Glennon, and producers Gregg Fienberg and Hilton Smith. Other producers included Scott Stephens (*Mind of the Married Man*), Kathryn Lekan, and playwright Regina Corrado, while collaborators from *NYPD Blue* included Jody Worth (writer-producer), Ted Mann (writer), George Putnam (writer), Elizabeth Sarnoff (writer) as well as experienced industry veteran Malcolm MacRury, playwright John Belluso and Bryan McDonald. Directors included more *NYPD Blue* personnel in Bernadette McNamara, *The Shield*'s Davis Guggenheim, *The Wire*'s Ed Bianchi, *Six Feet Under*'s Daniel Minahan, Steve Shill (*The Wire*, *Carnivale*), and Alan Taylor, continuing his track record for having directed episodes of every HBO drama since 1997.

Paramount that saw the studio assume foreign rights for the series (*Daily Variety* Jan 7 2003). This created some collaborative tensions that can be returned to later in the chapter.

Offering further alternatives to drama spending and revenue-generating potential, the summer premiere of *Entourage* represented a more reliable format, working with Leverage Management and actor Mark Wahlberg for its combination of light, fast-paced industry satire and adult content. Reproducing on a more economic scale earlier attempts to mix *Sex and the City*'s accessibility with traditional 18-34 male comedy, the series' success countered 24% declines in 18-34 subscribers in 2003 (Littleton Nov 25 2003; Becker June 28 2004).²⁰⁸ With its use of lightweight location shooting, and insider Hollywood satire, *Entourage* arguably provided a more successful adaptation of *Greenlight*'s younger-marketed format. It also benefited from cross-promotion with *Ali G in da USA*, as well as viral DVD and street team campaigns, culminating in a New York premiere party hosted by *Def Poetry Jam* producer Russell Simmons (Becker Jun 28 2004).

As a result, producing lowered comedy ratings but focused 18-34 aggregated appeal, *Entourage* could reaffirm subscriber value within a more specialist context. This arguably strengthened HBO's subscriber distinction over basic cable and Showtime competition for series market share. FX's *Rescue Me* further boosted advertising rates for the network in the summer (Higgins Sep 13 2004), while one-off prestige miniseries (*The 4400* (USA, 2004-2007)) aligned with promises by NBC to re-invest in primetime drama (Albiniak May 24 2004). Showtime also invested in new seasons of *Queer as Folk*, variety anthology *Penn & Teller: Bullshit!* (2003-), and *American Candidate* (2004), a short-lived reality series to find a potential candidate for the 2012 Presidential Election earlier passed on by HBO.

While the latter would be a failure, Showtime's niche flexibility again retained distinctions from HBO's more comprehensive programming infrastructure. In this way, Showtime's new programming ventures shared greater continuities with FX and other

²⁰⁸ Alongside Levinson, Ellin, Wahlberg and Charles, the series was also produced by Eric Weinstein, Janace Tashjian (*From the Earth to the Moon*), Timothy Marx (*Arli\$\$*), and Matthew Salsberg; Directors recruited from the HBO stable included Julian Farino (*Sex and the City*), Daniel Attias (*Six Feet Under*), David Frankel (*Sex and the City*), and Adam Bernstein (*Oz*).

basic networks in producing a handful of niche series by 2004. HBO's protection and cross-promotion of aggregate strengths therefore retained significant degrees of difference from Showtime's more interdependent model, and collaboration for DVD and syndicated distribution with studio partners.

Moreover, while Showtime, other basic film rivals (IFC, Sundance Channel) and PBS continued to compete for film rights at Sundance (Meyer Sep 8 2004), HBO reinforced more exceptional production continuities.²⁰⁹ Sundance again acted as a platform for theatrical and non-theatrical releases, in the latter represented by further efforts to boost attraction and loyalty for a 'younger audience' (Putnam qtd Oei Feb 12 2004). This was primarily represented by *Iron Jawed Angels* (Von Garnier 2004), an early 20th century suffragette drama distinguished by kinetic camerawork, expressive digital processing and an anachronistic soundtrack.²¹⁰

Again used by Heller as an example of HBO Film's adaptation of genres to stylish production values (Heller 2008: 48-49), the film also extended trends for promoting 18-34 and female appeals. By comparison, *Everyday People* (McKay 2004), an ensemble drama connecting multiple vignettes in a contemporary Brooklyn drama, overlapped with the African-American and ethnic community themes of *The Wire* and earlier NYC Productions trends. Developed with *Chris Rock* producer Nelson George as a variation on *Subway Stories*' 1997 success with submitted New York stories and a vignette structure, writer-director Jim McKay moved from low-budget New York dramas and music videos to develop the project for a summer network premiere.

Finally, *Maria Full of Grace* boosted Fine Line distribution and attempts to expand overseas feature infrastructure, with Sundance development by director Joshua Marston and co-financing in South America (Pinsker Jan 14 2004). With ties to Latino niches for *Real Women Have Curves* in its drug-smuggling plot, further links to the female-led drama were made by cinematographer Jim Denault and a mix of New York

²⁰⁹ Showtime's investments in the Sundance Channel aligned here with longer-term reliance on countering HBO and saturated film exhibition deals with cooperative and exclusive output licenses with studios, including IFC Films, ThinkFilm, as well as relationships to MGM and Lions Gate.

²¹⁰ *Iron Jawed Angels* worked with producers Len Amato (*First-Time Felon*), James Bigwood (*Boycott*), Lydia Dean Plcher (*Hysterical Blindness*, *Normal*) and Paula Weinstein (*The Cherokee Kid*) via Spring Creek Productions, with cinematographer Robbie Greenberg having worked on period dramas such as *If These Walls Could Talk II* ('1972'), *Introducing Dorothy Dandridge* and *Winchell*.

personnel from *Everyday People*.²¹¹ Theatrical and network coordination was also maintained by Nevins, from negotiating rights to *Angels in America*-themed *Heir to an Execution* (Meeropol 2004) to internationally co-produced Indian investigative cycles with *Born into Brothels* (Briski, Kauffman 2004) and variations on *America Undercover* and *Cinemax Reel-Life* formats.²¹² Discussions of *America Undercover*'s return to more eclectic monthly formats from Sunday night scheduling (Murray 2008: 71) can also be complicated here through the aggregation of cycle blocks. This was more specifically sustained through the cross-promoted scheduling in February's Black History Month of *Beah: A Black Woman Speaks* (Hamilton 2003) and *Mighty Times: The Legacy of Rosa Parks* (Houston 2002) with African-American library titles, including *Boycott* and *The Chris Rock Show*.

Despite successes, some ongoing problems with global distribution and marketing re-emerged over a straightforward extension of the quality brand to new markets, with HBO Films London reducing its scale in 2003 (Dawtre Oct 22 2003). Callender also looked to re-invest in New York Broadway ties through *Angels in America* playwright Tony Kushner's new production *Caroline, or Change* (Hofler Apr 12-Apr 18 2004), acquiring potential film and licensing rights. Trust in consistency and long-term planning was further tested in April 2004, as experiments in adding more political shows produced a notable failure.

Produced with *Oz*'s Tom Fontana and Barry Levinson, as well as director Sidney Lumet, *Strip Search* (Lumet 2004) was conceived as a docudrama reacting to the recently passed Patriot Act, using identical interrogations in China and New York to comment on the stretching of civil liberty abuses in post 9/11 America. Perhaps the most explicitly political film to emerge from the network, early caution and tensions in post-production led to an 88 minute run-time cut to 55, a restriction of preview tapes (Barnhart May 18 2004) and a brief Tuesday night premiere, before being pulled from rotation by the summer.

²¹¹ Crossovers here included line producer Becky Glupzynski, and producer Paul S. Mezey.

²¹² Other specials in the period included the family conflict features *A Boy's Life* (Kennedy; Doob 2003) and *My Flesh and Blood* (Karsh 2003), health drama *Three Sisters: Searching for a Cure* (Lovett 2004) and Broadway performer-focused *Elaine Stritch at Liberty* (Doob; Hegedus, McKay, Pennebaker, Picheta 2002); and commissioning investigative projects on horse racing (*Jockey Davis* 2004) and animal abuse (*Shelter Dogs Wade* 2003).

On the one hand, the film aligned with a popular backlash against the impending Iraq War and came against a growing range of award-winning documentary and feature trends for critical perspectives on the US administration.²¹³ However, as what *The New York Times* called a ‘painfully wrongheaded’ (Stanley Apr 27 2004) take on torture and civil liberties, *Strip Search* shared *K Street*’s problems in breaking with longer-term format conventions. While *Cinemax Reel-Life* and HBO2 documentaries had occasionally showcased more international documentaries with political themes, tensions previously demonstrated by cuts to *Lumumba* in 2002 reaffirmed some internal anxieties over brand suitability.

Network interference in more political documentaries extended here to collaboration with director Oliver Stone in 2003 and 2004 for Fidel Castro specials *Comandante* (2003), *Looking for Fidel* (2004) and Israel-Palestine profile *Persona Non Grata* (2003). Having worked with Stone on 1995’s *Indictment*, the Castro documentaries progressed for HBO from a wide-ranging interview with the Cuban leader and the director, mixing specific politics with a ‘verbal Rorschach test of subjects political, historical, biographical and philosophical’ (McCarthy Jan 20 2003).

Working from this base, HBO commissioned *Looking for Fidel*, a shorter feature produced in the wake of controversy over Cuban dissidents, which re-focused on personal dialogue. Adjusting scope to offset political commentary with dialogue resurfaced in *Persona Non Grata*. Stone’s survey of the Middle East peace process centres here on interviews with Yasser Arafat and other leaders. This falling back on verite format conventions consequently bought specials in line with the political entertainment style of *Real Time*, with the more direct rhetoric of *Strip Search* carefully downplayed.

Strip Search’s breaking of brand boundaries was notably followed in May by a return to familiar trends. This included *Something the Lord Made* (Sargent 2004) a civil rights docudrama filtered through prestige personnel and digital enhancements to period

²¹³ Douglas Kellner’s (2010) *Cinema Wars: Hollywood Film and Politics in the Bush-Cheney Era*, London: Wiley-Blackwell discusses a range of theatrical and television trends for dealing with civil liberties, from *Unconstitutional: the War on Our Civil Liberties* (de la Pena 2004) the complicity of corporate power (*Outfoxed* (Greenwald 2004); *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price* (Greenwald 2005), *The Corporation* Achbar, Bennett 2003), as providing a rich forum for documentary entertainment negotiating national and international policies (Kellner 2010: 51-97).

authenticity that followed *Miss Evers' Boys* and *A Lesson Before Dying* in taking 2004's Best Picture Emmy. Transatlantic ties also resurfaced for *The Life and Death of Peter Sellers* (Hopkins 2004), a BBC Films co-production structuring the life of the English comedian through flashbacks, reflexive breaks into direct commentary and animated sequences.²¹⁴ However, despite gaining a theatrical release overseas, compatibility between network and Fine Line deals were more limited, and it went directly to a HBO premiere in the US.

A restoration of stability consequently came against further narrowed series margins for *The Wire*'s third season in the autumn (Martin Nov 1-Nov 7 2004) as ABC's *Desperate Housewives* became a HBO-influenced breakout hit. Options for building primetime value through aggregate cycles during the fall therefore remained key to offsetting lower primetime performance for individual programs, with series recombination including a documentary commission for *Family Bonds*'s serialised verite study of a New York family of bounty hunters.

Co-produced between Nevins and Strauss, the series has been noted by Murray as a further experiment in broadening *America Undercover* to counter-program reality content (Murray 2008: 271). Strauss's promotion of the series as 'like *The Sopranos* without all the heaviness and murder' (Strauss qtd Martin Jun 22 2004) however sustained lowered ratings during the fall season (Martin Nov 10 2004). Individual series losses were again offset though by a stable aggregation of cycles between HBO, Cinemax and HBO2.²¹⁵ Preserving format stability also saw Nevins note that reality series balanced *America Undercover*'s successful hour-long specials and multiple

²¹⁴ *Something the Lord Made*, focusing on race and medical innovations in Nashville, reunited with director Joseph Sargent (*Miss Evers' Boys*; *A Lesson Before Dying*, *For Love or Country*) and cinematographer Donald M. Morgan from the same series. *Peter Sellers* worked with the BBC and UK shooting. Director Stephen Hopkins had worked on *Tales from the Crypt*, while producer Juanita F. Diana sustained HBO Films investment in the production.

²¹⁵ Releases varied here between further subcultural studies (*Celibacy* Thomas 2004) to ghetto-centric sequels (*Gang War 2*, Levin 2004), Channel Four and Nick Broomfield collaboration *Aileen: Life and Death of a Serial Killer*, and late-night erotica specials (*Pornucopia: Going Down in the Valley* (2004)). The acquisition *Heir to an Execution* also notably explored the Rosenberg trial and execution, connecting through prosecutor Roy Cohn to *Angels in America*. Other shorts included the Billy Crystal-produced *My Uncle Berns* (Crystal 2004) as well as a season of HBO2 specials on nuclear accidents (*Chernobyl Heart* (DeLeo 2003), *Indian Point: Imagining the Unimaginable* (Kennedy 2004)). Late 2004 Cinemax specials also included *Six Feet Under*-theming *The End* (Dick, Schmidt 2004) a study of a Los Angeles hospice program and *Paternal Instinct* (Nossell 2004), a special on a gay New York couple and adoption, and *Sex and the City*-theming *Ferry Tales* (Esson 2003) featuring interviews with women crossing to Manhattan on the Staten Island Ferry.

perspective, reflecting that the series had ‘always been more like an anthology’ (Nevins qtd Murray 2008: 271). Documentary continuity also returned to more familiar verite takes on post-9/11 politics for the 2004 Presidential Elections, from *Journeys with George* sequel *Diary of a Political Tourist* (Pelosi 2004) to *Last Letters Home: Voices from the Battlefields of Iraq* (Couturie 2004) tackling the war through the multiple verite perspective format, forming a loose sequel to 1987’s Vietnam special. The latter also returned to earlier Time trends, collaborating with *The New York Times* and *Life* for tie-in books.

Awareness of how far HBO continued to rely on subscriber aggregation for stabilising the management of a consistent brand identity can therefore be used to complicate discussions of the network’s reinvention through hit series. As previously noted, 2004 ended with a swing towards ancillary revenues. However, the subscription model, providing 80% of revenues for billion-dollar annual profits remained essential. In this context, Strauss re-emphasised how the US DVD market continued to reinforce ‘promotion and awareness’ (Strauss qd Higgins Dec 22 2003) of subscriptions. Enhancing value rather than breaking with the subscriber economy can also be linked here to the rolling-out of On Demand services for direct purchase of titles.

Edgerton positions On Demand as a way of making HBO’s ‘entire catalogue available day and night’ (Edgerton 2008a: 17), establishing precedent for more direct distribution to consumers beyond subscriptions. This interpretation can however be challenged. HBO Subscription On Demand (SVOD) acted primarily as a bonus for existing subscribers, complementing new premieres and providing a limited selection of films and older HBO programming. Edgerton’s (2008a) suggestion of an ‘entire catalogue’ of programming glosses the selective role of HBO in filtering access. It also obscures how far On Demand extended DVD distribution and multiplex exhibition as a way of complementing aggregate value. As Albrecht re-emphasised in 2003, ‘the product that we sell is HBO the network. You can’t buy a piece of it. You have to buy it all’ (Albrecht qtd Anderson 2008: 29).

Reinforcing the sale of subscriptions as key to exclusive market leadership, and the management of continuous value across new platforms therefore became key to understanding new extensions. This was represented in 2004 and 2004 through some tensions with distributors over syndicating individual programs. Networks and stations

complained of inflated licenses for *Sex and the City* (Schneider Feb 11 2003), while a sale of *Band of Brothers* to the History Channel saw it counter-programmed against *Deadwood* on Sunday nights (Martin Apr 14 2004). Moreover, while building a significant critical profile, HBO and Warner faced problems in attracting buyers to *The Wire* for international markets traditionally uncertain over African-American-centric US programming (Mason May 2 2010; Lotz 2007a: 96).

DVD success remained a surer way of extending the subscription economy, ensuring compatibility with managing an exclusive brand in the US. HBO Enterprises however worked on building control of global distribution from partners, establishing a HBO Home Entertainment office alongside HBO Films London in 2003. Setting up these offices also provided a potential solution to some disappointing promotion of HBO-branded content on foreign networks. Lavery notes that *Six Feet Under* created particular difficulties with its lack of an ‘identifiable genre’ (qtd Johnson 2007: 18). Johnson also notes how *Deadwood* merchandising established a product line, but lacked *The Sopranos*’ success in constructing an ‘authentic fantasy world’ for re-exploitation (Johnson 2007: 19).²¹⁶

Exclusivity issues thus retained collaborative tensions over synchronising management of the HBO brand through the subscription service and branded content overseas. While finding an outlet for series through packaging deals with News Corp franchised channels, including the 2004-launched FXUK, co-ventured partnerships in HBO Latin America, Asia and Central and Eastern European markets carried selective program rights. This was also affected by Paramount’s ongoing control of *Sex and the City* rights. Tensions over HBO exclusivity contrasted here with Showtime’s lending of its brand-name to new film channels, including Showtime Scandinavia in 2004, and an output deal with French media giant Canal Plus.²¹⁷ Other solutions for HBO included extending miniseries partnerships for *Rome* alongside location shooting and pre-buy sales to broadcasters. The creation of HBO Films London had also represented a

²¹⁶ Lavery (2007) has noted here how *Six Feet Under*’s tie-in publication, *Six Feet Under: Better Living Through Death* (2005), emulated the series’ art-film links and niche appeals, doing so ‘while breaking with companion-book conventions’ (Lavery 2007: 235). The restrictions compared to *The Sopranos*’ broad cross-media merchandising would however highlight per-program variations in recycling difficult-to-define dramas and comedies beyond exceptional hits.

²¹⁷ For Showtime, *The L Word* was sold overseas by Fox, *Queer as Folk* by a combination of studio and independent distributors, and *Soul Food* by Paramount.

significant step in centralising European distribution and marketing of features and theatrical deals. Formalising trusted partnerships also affected the previously noted deal with Channel Four to distribute select documentaries outside of North America (Mutel Feb 5 2004).

Taken together, discussions of how HBO acted as a prototype for successful content-led brand management across new platforms can be complicated through institutional distinctions. Albrecht was also keen to downplay the demand for HBO to substantially alter its subscription-led approach to building the brand, suggesting in 2003 that despite the visibility and ancillary revenues of hit series, ‘HBO grew at the same rate before those shows were on the air as after those shows were on the air’ (Strauss qtd Anderson 2008: 33). Protection of aggregate strategies thus expanded from 2005 to 2007, offsetting series problems while providing a stable basis for licensing individual content to broadband markets.

‘...if we keep our eyes on the job that we need to do and not get distracted by people who mistake someone else’s business model for HBO’s model, we’re going to be in fine shape’: 2005-2007

2005

The multiyear drama project experienced growing tensions in 2005 around the immense cost of *Rome*, with pressure on performance heightened by *Carnivale* and *Deadwood*’s rising costs. With the latter suffering 38% dips for its second season without a *Sopranos* lead-in (Kissell, Martin Mar 9 2005), and despite promotion of On Demand and rerun added value for the network (Martin Mar 31 2005), committing to the series remained problematic. Greater difficulties were found though with *Carnivale*, whose failure to build sustained critical or network support for a second season run from January (Kissell Jan 12 2005) led to a controversial cancellation in March, with multiple plot-lines left unresolved.

Despite a limited cult following, the series had never translated into significant subscriber, merchandising or global support. Albrecht later admitted that given the costs of the show, aligned with both *Deadwood* and the near \$200 million spread across *Rome*’s projected two seasons, it had simply become too expensive even within record

profits and strong subscriber response. Responding to a viewer backlash, Albrecht argued that

‘honestly, if *Carnivale* was a \$2 million-an-hour show, we’d keep going with it...but a period piece, shot all on location, a huge cast like that...by the third season of a show time that, and you’ve got to order at least 13 episodes to give something a real shot - it’s an enormous investment’ (*Carnivale* fans besiege HBO with emails’ Jul 19 2005)

Doubts over multiyear drama spending and narrower returns were again highlighted in March as Strauss delayed commissioning a fourth season of *The Wire*, despite its growing critical praise and DVD and syndication revenues (Martin Mar 18 2005). The pattern for niche but lowered performances for post-2000 drama returned in the summer as *Six Feet Under* completed its five year run. The drama was unsuccessfully moved to Monday nights in an effort to boost ratings, before being returned to Sundays to finish its run as a prestige but relatively inflexible show for merchandising (Martin Jun 28 2005).

The August premiere of *Rome* was consequently promoted by Albrecht as ‘very, very important to the success of the network’ (Albrecht qtd Vivarelli Sep 20 2004). Merging historical miniseries scope with serialised dramatic narrative complexity consequently emphasised a blend of prestige strengths, with Strauss highlighting the series’ combination of classical Roman history and intimate familial drama as mixing ‘many different angles and ideas. Like all of our dramas, it’s got several threads arcing over the season and it’s driven by a multitude of complex characters’ (Strauss qtd Martin Feb 28 2005).

Moreover, miniseries producer Anne Thomopoulos promoted the series’ crossover value beyond adult content as ‘historical but highly entertaining’ (Thomopoulos qtd Andreeva Oct 27 2003). Pushing costs and achieving this balance had though created production tensions, with executive producers being replaced.²¹⁸

²¹⁸ Production ties built around regular directors Allen Coulter, Steve Shill, Timothy Van Patten and Alan Taylor; producer crossovers included Frank Doelger (*From the Earth to the Moon*) and John P. Melfi (*From the Earth to the Moon, Sex and the City*), while original music by Jeff Beal extended composing duties from *Carnivale*. Other multi-series ties included casting director Nina Gold.

Bringing in *Sopranos* cinematographer Alik Sakharov also worked to enhance the series' mix of sound-stage shooting on Arricam 35mm and handheld, while developing aesthetic ties to candle-lit interiors and location shooting to *Carnivale* and *Deadwood*.

Supported by a blockbuster marketing campaign that widened to online promotions (Paskin Jun 30 2005) and tie-ins (Stump Aug 1 2005), marketing the series as a prestige drama and a blockbuster-scaled miniseries pinned hopes on further translating subscriber value into niche franchise revenues (Martin Aug 31 2005). However, with only 3.8 million viewers for its premiere (Martin Aug 31 2005) and a mixed critical reaction, the first season heightened pressure on the enormous costs of the series, as well as doubts over its international appeal from co-licensors. By the end of the year drama executive Miranda Heller resigned (Andreeva Dec 15 2005), and with a commitment to a second season, the series' future would continue to drain resources and increase tensions into 2006. While pushing for higher drama prestige, a gradual increase in comedy aggregation by contrast looked to reaffirm exclusive aggregation over individual hits.

This began in January with *Unscripted*'s digital video insider satire, again marketed to 18-34 demographics. While working with *K Street* producer Steven Soderbergh and George Clooney, the series failed to find a reliable audience (Kissell Jan 12 2005). By comparison, summer marketing of new and returning series looked to coordinate 18-34 and wider promoted comedies with *Sex and the City*. Working with the series' executive producer Michael Patrick King, *The Comeback*'s previously noted mixture of industry and reality satire arguably worked to both reinforce familiar format trends while targeting the exceptional crossover female audience achieved by the Manhattan series.²¹⁹ However, the series also formed part of a broader effort to strengthen 18-34 male comedy between primetime and late-night, with new episodes of *Entourage* linking into explicit standup. This included the premiere of African-American focused series *P Diddy Presents the Bad Boys of Comedy* and a return for *One Night Stand* and *Ali Gi*.

²¹⁹ *The Comeback* shared directing duties with *Sex and the City* through Patrick King and Michael Lehmann (*The Larry Sanders Show*), as well as writer/producer John Riggi (*Larry Sanders*). Other *Sex and the City* connections came through John P. Melfi, while cinematographer Nancy Schreiber had worked on *Path to War*, *Cathouse*, *Stranger Inside*, *The Celluloid Closet*, and *Real Sex*.

Programmer David Baldwin promoted the summer line-up as aiming to create block of 'varsity shows' (Baldwin qtd Martin Feb 25 2005) reinforcing comedy value across the service. This was extended from September with BBC co-production *Extras*, a backstage insider comedy sharing verite trends for mock-film footage and behind-the-scenes action. The series was paired with new episodes of *Curb Your Enthusiasm* through the autumn. Working with award-winning British producer Ricky Gervais, the *Extras* deal extended more economical comedy options through the British network, building on the established ties for *Rome* and earlier experiments.

However, the run of compatible comedy shows as a backdrop to the higher costs of *Rome* struggled to find success, with *The Comeback*'s cancellation after a single season preceded by reviewer criticism of 'one more self-referential ode to a self-obsessed town on a channel that has overly indulged that impulse' (Lowry Jun 2 2005). In this context, while providing a secure set of options for aggregation, when paired with the under-performing *Rome*, primetime ratings experienced a 58% dip (Martin Oct 10 2005). Ratings slides were also affected by the continued strengths of *Desperate Housewives* on Sunday nights (Kissell Sep 28 2005).

Reinforcing 18-34 comedy value with *Entourage* and late-night also provided distinctions over basic cable and Showtime series. FX notably experimented with male-targeted comedies and limited series through the summer (Becker May 16 2005). This included comedy *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*, the Steven Bochco-produced Iraq drama *Over There* (2005) and Morgan Spurlock's reality series *30 Days* (2005-). Moreover, with Comedy Central reinforcing its 18-34 and 18-49 demographic premiums for *South Park* and *The Daily Show*, continued competition for broadcast ratings by TNT and the USA were expanded by Showtime's further focus on a handful of TV-MA niche series adapting the HBO formula for adult drama and comedy (Martin Jun 13 2005).

From Canadian studio Lionsgate's drug-themed sitcom *Weeds* to re-packaged MGM African-American franchise *Barbershop* (2005), studio partnerships reinforced Showtime's more flexible identity as a pay cable window for Viacom. Moreover, efforts to more directly adapt HBO formats, including psychotherapy comedy *Huff* (Sony) and insider satire *Fat Actress* between 2004 and 2005 received limited runs. Showtime's success in adapting familiar formats and franchises therefore retained distinctions from

HBO's renewed comedy promotion. Pressure to compensate for the lower turnout for *Rome* also spread into a re-emphasis on award-winning HBO Films, documentary and theatrical extensions by the end of the year.

On the one hand, HBO Films strengthened transatlantic production and distribution ties. This involved co-producing terrorist bomb docudrama *Dirty War* (Percival 2004) with the BBC, while licensing docudrama *The Hamburg Cell* (Bird 2004) from Channel Four for cross-promotion in January. Trusted BBC collaboration extended later in the year to *The Girl in the Cafe* (Yates 2005) a romance set against the G8 energy summit, re-establishing a relationship to Working Title Films from *Last of the Blonde Bombshells*. This was followed by a series of trusted prestige formats, from African-American civil rights history *Lackawanna Blues* (Wolfe 2005) to African docudrama *Sometimes in April* (Peck 2005) and Presidential biopic *Warm Springs* (Sargent 2004).²²⁰

Moreover, repeating the reduction in limited miniseries against investment in *Rome* from *The Corner* and *Band of Brothers*, two-part miniseries *Empire Falls* (Schepisi 2005) blended a star-driven cast with a low-budget adaptation of a best-selling novel in May.²²¹ Continued options for extending the success of the Fine Line deal also provided the basis in May for an extended partnership with New Line for Picturehouse, a joint-owned distribution company folding Fine Line and independent Newmarket's distribution arm into a single company.

Led by former IFC and Newmarket Bob Berney, partially responsible for the worldwide success of *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (Fritz, Mohr Mar 24 2005), the new

²²⁰ *Dirty War* and *The Girl in the Cafe* continuity with BBC production extended to the broadcaster's series relationships with *State of Play* in the latter. *Lackawanna Blues*, an autobiographical drama set in upstate New York, worked with playwright Ruben Santiago-Hudson, previously a voice actor on *Spawn*, as well as regular producers Halle Berry and Vince Cirrincione (*Dorothy Dandridge*), Nellie Nugiel (*In the Gloaming, 61**), Shelby Stone (*Boycott, Lumumba*), and cinematographer Ivan Strasburg (*The Corner, Live from Baghdad*). *Sometimes in April*, a study of the Rwandan Genocide, worked with Raoul Peck (*Lumumba*), with French co-production and collaboration with ThinkFilm (*K Street*), as well as starring *The Wire* actor Idris Elba. *Warm Springs* again worked with Joseph Sargent and the Mark Gordon Company (*Pancho Villa*), as well as Juanita Diana and Celia Costas (*Angels in America*). Cinematographer Robbie Greenberg (*Iron Jawed Angels*) sustained prestige ties, while stars Kenneth Branagh and Cynthia Nixon had appeared in *Conspiracy* and *Sex and the City*.

²²¹ *Empire Falls* explores the decline of a Maine industrial town around the experiences of a family, tracking generational conflicts around voiceovers and extending *Angels* use of a narrative sub-divided into chapter segments. A focus on blue-collar life also extended HBO Films' ties to *The Corner* and *The Wire*, as well as Jim McKay (*Everyday People*) cycles.

division primarily focused on acquiring and producing a broad range of features and documentaries for the North American market. Differentiated as a smaller boutique from Warner's Warner Independent Pictures specialty division, HBO's investment remained flexible, with a small New York office aligning with HBO Domestic Films Releasing for co-financing and first-look options around Callender's focus on the network slate. Like the earlier New Line deal, Albrecht thus suggested that despite a more collaborative domestic focus, the opportunity to 'bring all these elements together was one that couldn't be passed up' (Albrecht qtd Fritz, Mohr Mar 24 2005).

At the same time, Picturehouse offered an alternative to continued overseas problems in building a suitable infrastructure, with HBO Films London closed in June after a failure to convert art-house picture *The Holy Girl* into a North American success (Mohr Jun 20 2005). By contrast, Picturehouse's relationship to New Line enabled shared options on North American and DVD releases, while selling foreign rights to individual distributors (Harris May 16 2005). This provisionally enabled HBO Films to retain ties to more international markets through Gus Van Sant's impressionistic but narrowly targeted character study *Last Days* (2005). Early optimism for the studio was however complicated as distribution of Newmarket titles, including documentary *Rock School* (Argott 2005) teen comedy *The Chumscrubber* (Posin 2005) broader family comedy *The Thing About My Folks* (Reiser 2005) and acquired European picture *Ushpizin* (Dar 2004) struggled to build substantial box-office (Mohr Sep 7 2005).

Nevins' documentary unit offered a comparatively more stable base for economic theatrical growth. This included mixing Sundance ties into limited runs for specials *Protocols of Zion* (Levin 2005) *The Aristocrats* (Provenza 2005) and *Twist of Faith* (Dick 2005) while acquiring US cable rights to Universal-distributed feature *Inside Deep Throat* (Barbato; Bailey 2005). Moreover, while maintaining extensive Cinemax and HBO cycles, opportunities to aggregate and complement monthly series rotation continued, working with *Entourage* producer Mark Wahlberg for verite study *Juivies* (Neale 2005). Other crossovers ranged to observational gangster documentary *Chris Columbo: House Arrest* (2005) and Hollywood insider feature *A Father...a Son...Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (Grant 2005).

Boosting series crossovers to enhance value also extended to late-night erotica, where the development of *Sex and the City*-themed special *Kim Cattrall's Sexual*

Intelligence (Annau 2005) and deals with Channel Four for tongue-in-cheek series *The Sex Inspectors* (2004) worked alongside the previously noted experimentation with limited reality series *Cathouse*. However, while boosting late-night erotica popularity, *Cathouse* also worked within and was contextualised through broader segmentation and aggregation of erotic specials during its August premiere. This ranged through prestige burlesque history *Pretty Things* (Goldwyn 2005) and more explicit verite documentary *Downtown Girls: Hookers of Honolulu* (Owens 2005). Documentary flexibility for building collective appeal was then re-emphasised for a World AIDS Day theming with HBO Films, pairing South African AIDS drama *Orphans of Nkandla* (Woods 2005) with Callender's division's acquisition of award-winning HIV South African picture *Yesterday* (Roodt 2004).

Aggregate solutions to individual hits can therefore be used to offset suggestions of successful brand management through turns away from the service. While *Rome* widened scope, lower returns led HBO to reaffirm its more stable source of revenues and long-term advantage over rivals. Moreover, cautious extension of the brand into Picturehouse offered more flexible coordination of formats beyond the service, but retained HBO Films and documentary programming's strengths in maximising exhibition cycles and production infrastructure.

Reliance on the subscriber service for underpinning wider brand management can also be crucially set against HBO's uncertain response to extending its brand into broadband licensing. Early network adaptations looked here to challenge piracy and create reliable markets for series distribution and marketing (Downey May 19 2005). By 2005 the WB had tested pilots on AOL (Lotz 2007a: 111), while options for distributing shows on iTunes and through co-licensed internet portals offered to further develop personal-usage markets. Sponsorship, opportunities for synergy helped offset 'free' access here (Mermigas Jul 29 2005). Showtime also notably experimented by licensing a preview of *Fat Actress* to Yahoo! (Dempsey Feb 16 2005).

By January NBC had agreed a landmark new series licensing deal with iTunes (Adalian Jan 3 2006), with Showtime following soon after against the division of CBS and Viacom. Based on existing accounts, HBO's prototypical industry leadership in digital technology and content licensing seemed to offer further precedent for extending

its brand. However, the threat posed by broadband distribution, without a clear subscription model, encouraged reinforcements of aggregation.

In August Albrecht re-emphasised the challenges of growing at ‘double-digit profit margins every year’ (Albrecht qtd Wallenstein Aug 26 2005), with Bewkes, taking over as Time Warner CEO in late 2005, calling for the company to boost its exceptional market share (Zeitchik Jan 11 2006). However, when questioned over licensing more HBO content to broadband outlets, Albrecht argued that while committed to new media adaptation, the network refused to ‘cannibalise our brand by enabling technologies that will allow people to steal our programming’ (Albrecht qtd Littleton Sep 13 2005).²²²

Here the secure strengths and coordination of US service, its On Demand extension, and the DVD label with a network infrastructure remained paramount for managing consistency. Albrecht went on to suggest that any new branding venture had to let ‘one platform integrate in a seamless but enhancing way with the other platforms that you’re on’ (Albrecht qtd Littleton Sep 13 2005). In this context, early deals ranged from agreeing licensed promotional content to domestic and international mobile phone providers (Learmonth Dec 16 2005), and podcasts to iTunes (Angell Dec 8 2005).

Broader ventures however arguably drew on aggregate and demographic strengths, selling the Sony Playstation PSP a compatible package of 18-34 titles, including *Ali G in da USA*, *Entourage*, *Spawn* and *Chris Rock* (Hettrick Jul 27 2005). Here again the strengths of demographic aggregation and working through a stable subscription model for rotation and updating, rather than an out-dated conduit (Rogers et al 2006: 25). However, making broadband platforms work for the brand while retaining core subscription values rose in importance by the summer as the DVD market experienced its first major slow-down in growth (Hettrick, Netherby Jul 20 2005).

Other strategies extended to rare collaborations with co-ventured international pay services. Licensing HBO Latin America’s successful independent production of serial killer miniseries *Epitafios* (2004) for HBO Latino and HBO Signature niche rerunning at the end of the year, HBO also acquired US DVD rights to the series (Blum

²²² This was later followed by pressure on potential piracy and re-transmission of subscription and PPV boxing content for online and DVR copying and reproduction (Miller, Kim 2008: 231; 236).

Nov 15 2005). Compensating for series dips, investment in the series as a Spanish-language and subtitled series again looked to boost subscriber aggregation through the multiplex, without producing a significant outlay on new production.²²³

Again, without a substantial subscriber lead or extensive programming infrastructure, rival moves by Showtime, US basic cable rivals and broadcasters looked to additional advertising, sponsorship and co-licensing deals for adjusting to new revenue streams and per-program licensing. Showtime in particular, by moving faster to offer its shows as online previews, moved earlier to generate broadband revenues for new shows. HBO's dependence on the subscriber service to build out consistent brand management thus continued into 2006 against further series disappointments and new examples of subscriber aggregation.

2006

In terms of economising inflated drama costs, the return of *The Sopranos* for the first half of a final sixth season in March was accompanied by smaller-scale series *Big Love*. While the former continued to produce widespread impact, extended to Google Maps and broadband promotions for the sixth season (Reynolds Mar 6 2006), *Big Love* offered a more exclusive alternative to the budget strains of the historical drama. The series' focus on polygamy through a Mormon family shared both multi-generational, provocative-themed drama formats, while tailoring the more ambiguous psychology of *The Sopranos* and *Six Feet Under* for character-driven realism.

In this respect *Big Love* returned to more stable *America Undercover* and HBO Films formats, working with producers Will Scheffer and Mark V. Olsen from NYC ties (*In the Gloaming*) and miniseries collaborator Tom Hanks' production company Playtone. With retained film ties on a smaller scale, polygamy and religious themes tied into both well-established *America Undercover* subcultural formats and Middle American HBO Films cycles (*Normal*, *The Laramie Project*).²²⁴ A more economical scale also resulted in shooting on sound-stages in Santa Clarita, California. Relying on

²²³ This would later include soap opera miniseries *Alice* (2008-), *Oz*-styled prison drama *Capadocia* (2007); 2010) and detective thriller *Mandrake* (2005).

²²⁴ Other crossovers included series directors Michael Lehmann, Charles McDougall and Michael Spiller, as well as links to theatre and independent film screenwriting by Dustin Lance Black. Cinematographer James Glennon (*Carnivale*, *Deadwood*) then added continuities from 2003-2006 drama production.

extensive dolly tracking, high-key lighting and coverage over more expressive mise-en-scene and camera movement, the series provided a more economical variation on drama prestige. Working again with familiar producers, *Big Love* also produced more exclusive appeals, with its religious themes arguably offering challenges to syndication, even with cuts. International DVD appeals were also reduced.²²⁵

Reduced scale offered HBO the chance to reduce series costs, while promoting heavy rotation rotation, with Strauss suggesting that ‘half of the people watching *Big Love* are watching it outside of Sunday nights’ (qtd Martin Apr 20 2006). Awareness of compensating for narrower margins also came against the sale of *Six Feet Under* domestic rights to Bravo at a profitable but significantly lower margin than *The Sopranos* or *Sex and the City*. Further series cancellations during the summer sustained these trends.

After multiple problems with Paramount and spiralling production costs, a third season of *Deadwood* was preceded by the admission that the series would not be renewed for a fourth year (Martin May 12 2006), ending like *Carnivale* with multiple plot-lines unresolved. While suggesting that a future option for specials remained possible (Martin June 5 2006), alongside new development deals with Milch following the completion of his Paramount contract, cast member W. Earl Brown noted that Albrecht ‘can’t base a decision solely on art when his bottom line is suffering’ (Brown qtd Kronke May 28 2006). Lowered licensing fees combined with inflated costs, despite subscriber support and critical acclaim, thus reproduced *Carnivale*’s problems.

This soon extended to *Rome*, where a disappointing overseas run led to the BBC, RAI and other broadcasters pulling out of a second year, forcing HBO to cut back the season order and cancel further episodes. Strauss later admitted that *Rome*’s problems had begun with a decision to not film a pilot and commit to two seasons, suggesting that ‘we had made a calculated gamble, which did not pay off’ (Strauss qtd Gray Aug 13 2008). The combined cancellations and doubts over recovering prestige also led Strauss to reflect on a ‘dark’ period for the network, with series losses coming against tighter profit demands. Asked if she could change anything about HBO’s relationship to Time Warner in the first half of the decade, she wished that it had ‘not merged with AOL’

²²⁵ As of November 2010, *Big Love* has only received a first season DVD release in the UK under Warner.

(Strauss qtd Gray Aug 13 2008). Developing more economical strategies to rebuild and stabilise production spending while not discounting a focus on eventually producing another *Sopranos*-sized hit was also reflected by the summer through efforts to reinforce comedy aggregation alongside individual multi-platform experiments.

Announcing a deal for multi-part series and online cross-promotions with standup Dane Cook, Strauss emphasised the need to build loyalty with ‘college kids, who are our future subscribers. Getting to them is very important’ (Strauss qtd Martin Apr 24-Apr 30 2006). With plans for a live tour, competitions and downloadable content, *Dane Cook’s Tourgasm* arguably offered another attempted solution to subscriber resistance to interactive series. Albrecht was also keen though to stress HBO’s overlaps but need for distinction from rivals for broadband and new media distribution strategies, arguing that ‘everyone’s out there planting their flags and there’s all this activity, but we still don’t know what we have here...that said, we’re definitely interested in taking HBO into all these platforms in the appropriate way’ (Albrecht qtd Martin Mar 2 2006). A projected summer 18-34 multi-platform campaign produced mixed results however, with experiments in *Tourgasm* cross-promoted albums, an iTunes pilot sample and mobile phone content aligning with *Entourage* MySpace marketing (Becker Jun 5 2006). While the latter continued to build stable value, *Tourgasm* was not renewed.

Looking for alternative strategies for building up comedy aggregation from within instead crossed into efforts to re-focus HBO Independent Productions. After struggling to build on *Everybody Loves Raymond*’s precedent for broadcast deals, internal comedy production instead shifted to *Lucky Louie*’s realist variation on the multi-camera sitcom, working through standup precedent with Louis CK (*The Chris Rock Show*) and *Carnivale* and *Chris Rock* packagers Three Arts.²²⁶ Again tested through a pilot licensed to website TV.com (Martin Jun 21 2006), further critical uncertainty and low ratings however led to the series’ cancellation. Executive reshuffles were however already underway, with Sarah Condon leaving as head of comedy after eight year (Andreeva Jun 19 2006).

²²⁶ *Lucky Louie* comedy production continuity included producer Leo Clarke (*Roc*), as well as standup and *Dennis Miller* producers Dave Becky and Vic Kaplan.

Demands for producing a comedy hit capable of achieving multi-platform distinction came against further ‘sampling’ and broadband marketing by rivals. FX used MySpace to promote series, while TNT entered into a long-term preview deal with AOL (Becker Jun 5 2006), and Showtime extended series distribution deals to the Playstation Portable (Vernadakis Jun 26 2006). Both FX and Showtime enjoyed ratings boosts and advertising premiums (Martin June 21 2006) in building brand value that summer. Wider basic cable investment in originals also led to advertising-supported film channel AMC finding success with Western miniseries *Broken Trail* (Hill 2006). With an FCC inquiry into broadcast standards (Adalian Apr 24-Apr 30 2006) retaining cable’s niche role for pushing adult content, HBO’s overlapping but more tentative licensing of key series and promotion of exclusive subscriber options continued in the fall through *The Wire*’s fourth season premiere.

New episodes of the drama were previewed on HBO On Demand, with Albrecht suggesting that it was important to promote the service as more of ‘an integral part of HBO, rather than just another way to see repeats’ (Albrecht qtd Umstead Jul 17 2006). This was complemented by efforts to aggregate *The Wire* with HBO Films and documentary programming. In the former, *Angel Rodriguez* (McKay 2006), a low-budget Brooklyn drama continuing the division’s relationship with Jim McKay from *Everyday People* for a prestige drama exploring immigrant assimilation and education for Hispanic and African-American youth.²²⁷ This was joined by the re-commissioning of *Def Comedy Jam* in late-night, building on the success of the Def label for *Def Poetry Jam*, but within the narrower ghetto-centric niche updated by *Bad Boys of Comedy* in the summer.

As a result, while *The Wire*’s premiere expanded to 4 million in cumulative ratings (Martin Sep 18-Sep 24 2006), falling back on aggregate links again provided a stable alternative to narrowing revenues, with the series licensed to Viacom’s BET for \$100,000 per episode (Wallenstein Oct 6 2006). This was joined to the re-scheduling of Saturday night theatrical film premieres to Sunday nights to boost series lead-ins (Umstead Jul 17 2006). HBO Sports also received a boost, with boxing promotions

²²⁷ *Angel* includes a lead performance from Rachel Griffiths (*Six Feet Under*), while Becky Gulczynski (*Maria Full of Grace*; *Everyday People*) also worked on the project. McKay would later work on *The Wire*.

aligning with new runs of *Real Sports*, *Costas Now*, documentary specials and individual revenue from PPV events.²²⁸

Able to rely on a 28.2 million subscriber base for HBO alone and domination of the subscription market with Cinemax's all-film and erotica niche to approximately 40 million total subscribers (Umstead Jul 10 2006).²²⁹ thus retained distinctions over rivals. FX's particular success, raising its percentage of 18-49 adult viewers by 92% from 2002 (Moss Nov 20 2006) shared ties here with Showtime's gradual subscriber growth and series merchandising. Showtime also re-focused its brand identity in 2005 around the slogan 'TV: At It's Best'.

Emphasising compatibility as well as adult-themed formats, without HBO's market leadership, Showtime entered into licensing deals with CBS and Viacom divisions. This included plans to run edited versions of *Dexter* on CBS, and promotion of crime drama *Brotherhood* alongside the broadcaster's successful lineup of procedurals. (Norczyk Jul 17 2006). These ties became particularly significant as a Viacom restructuring placed Showtime in an older-marketed broadcast group with CBS, separated from MTV's inclusion with Paramount Pictures and younger-targeted brands.²³⁰

Aggregate strengths resumed through HBO Films and efforts to coordinate theatrical deals with Picturehouse. Key collaborations here included working with Christine Vachon's Killer Films for blackly comic network docudrama *Mrs. Harris* (Nagy 2005) and studio release *The Notorious Bettie Page* (Harron 2005).²³¹ However, the latter, a biopic of the burlesque model set against 20th century civil rights disputes, struggled at the box office as part of an eclectic slate. Despite achieving a rare series of

²²⁸ Sports documentaries in the period included *Dare to Dream: The Story of the US Women's Soccer Team* (2006) post 9/11 reflection *Nine Innings from Ground Zero* (2006) further historical biopics (*Mantle* (2006); *Billie-Jean King: Portrait of a Pioneer* (2006)) and African-American specials (*Perfect Upset* 2005).

²²⁹ Cinemax competition continued against Showtime's film-focused secondary services The Movie Channel and Flix, as well as AMC, Encore and Starz.

²³⁰ Showtime would also later provide a pay cable window for uncut footage of CBS' *Big Brother*.

²³¹ *Mrs. Harris*' co-production with Killer Films also extended to *Warm Springs* producer Chrisann Verges and regular HBO producer Juanita F. Diana, while playwright connections through Pyllis Nagy adapted former *Life* journalist and *Carlin at USC* host Shana Alexander's non-fiction book. *The Notorious Bettie Page* extended support for female independent directors via Mary Harron (*Oz*), as well as *Six Feet Under* independent film talent (Lili Taylor) and *The Wire* actor Chris Bauer.

box office successes with Robert Altman's ensemble drama *A Prairie Home Companion* (Altman 2006) and Spanish import *Pan's Labyrinth* (del Toro 2006) other art-house and niche titles struggled to rise above limited release. By the end of the year Berney reflected on the difficulties of building a stable brand identity for the division, claiming that 'we're not doing art-house films. We're doing films that can connect with a bigger audience' (Berney qtd McClintock Sep 11 2006). HBO's investment and uncertainties over retaining management ties also experienced problems by the end of the year, with Dennis O'Connor resigning as head of HBO Domestic Releasing (Zeitchik Dec 6 2006).

A more stable option was again provided by network production. Latino appeals and prestige personnel combined for *Walkout* (James Olmos 2006) a high school-set drama examining the history of Chicano civil rights in 1960s Los Angeles. This was joined by the success of Channel Four co-produced two-part miniseries *Elizabeth I* (Hooper 2005) sustaining ties from *Rome* within transatlantic success for broader prestige titles anchored by character-driven romance.²³² Settled transatlantic relationships also worked by the end of the year to produce limited docudrama miniseries *Tsunami: The Aftermath* (Nalluri 2006), a collaboration with BBC Films. In the same way, documentary rotation of cycles merged Sundance theatrical distribution, and familiar movements between *America Undercover* and *Reel-Life* specials,²³³ as well as updating post 9/11, verite-rooted prestige with *Baghdad ER* (Alpert 2006) a ground-level cross-section of Iraq War medical work.

²³² *Walkout* was developed with Robert Katz (*Dorothy Dandridge*), Ligiah Villalobos (*Dancing in September*), with screenwriter Timothy Sexton completing the screenplay after work on *For Love or Country*, *Boycott* and *Live from Baghdad*. Cinematographer Donald M. Morgan had worked on *For Love or Country* and *Something the Lord Made*. Co-produced with Channel Four, *Elizabeth I* resumed collaboration with *The Life and Death of Peter Sellers'* Company Films.

²³³ *Plastic Disasters* (Davis; Heilbroner 2006) maintained occasional tabloid cycles while insider special *Boffo! Tinseltown Bombs and Blockbusters* (Couturie 2006) was cross-promoted with *Entourage*, and stand-up documentary *The Aristocrats* with more general comedy aggregation. Specialist cycles of international dramas were themed around African specials later that year (*The Moon and the Sun: An Imagined Conversation* (Canemaker 2006); *Note of Triumph: The Golden Age of Norman Corwin* (Simonson 2006); *The Mushroom Club* (Okasaki 2005); *God Sleeps in Rwanda* (Acquaro, Sherman 2005); *The Death of Kevin Carter: A Casualty of the Bang Bang Club* (Krauss 2004)). Themed specials for the mid-term elections also emerged around political biopics (*Mr. Conservative: Goldwater on Goldwater* Anderson 2006), voting fraud (*Hacking Democracy* Michaels, Ardizzone, 2006) and everyday reactions to elections (*No Umbrella: Election day in the City* Paglin 2006), as well as internationally sourced terrorism specials (*The Journalist and the Jihadi Jamal*, Sharmar 2006) and personally-led 9/11 accounts (*Brothers Lost: Stories of 9/11* McGinly 2006).

Prestige was also achieved by four-part Spike Lee documentary *When the Levees Broke*, a study of the Hurricane Katrina disaster in New Orleans. While criticising the Bush administration, the special works around multiple perspective on community trauma, echoing Lee's earlier success with *Four Little Girls* in 1997. More broadly, the strength of HBO's documentary archive was developed in February, with A&E agreeing to license key *America Undercover* specials, to be promoted alongside *The Sopranos* (Schneider Feb 6 2006).

Trust in subscription strategies and caution over collaboration was reinforced by Albrecht by the end of the year, making investments in AOL start-up comedy sites (Zeitchik, Martin Nov 16 2006) while re-asserting the importance of exclusivity. Albrecht argued that

‘if the proof is in the pudding, HBO has more subs than ever before, has more revs and more earnings than ever before, and we’re executing a more complex business plan than ever before...if we keep our eyes on the job that we need to do and not get distracted by people who mistake someone else’s business model for HBO’s model, we’re going to be in fine shape’ (Albrecht qtd Guider Oct 5 2006)

Coordinating brand management through a stable subscriber base was further developed in October as HBO looked to solve global distribution problems. In October HBO Enterprises took over control of worldwide series syndication and programming marketing while targeting future enhanced rights over series, films and specials (Guider Oct 5 2006). This was followed in early 2007 by plans to export HBO On Demand services to key markets, working alongside DVD and syndication to focus on packaging premium On Demand services for cable and satellite systems. HBO International executive Simon Sutton cited the UK deal as offering a clearer extension of US infrastructure and exclusivity, allowing us to ‘raise our profile in the region, while providing viewers with a distinct HBO environment’ (‘Virgin Media Boosts TV Offering with HBO hits’ Feb 13 2007).

Described as a solution to branding HBO ‘more effectively abroad’ and part of an effort to ‘clear up confusion about who licenses its product,’ HBO Enterprises’ Charles Schreger emphasised long-term problems with varying license fees and poor

marketing by exhibitors. Suggesting that ‘we want to control our destiny,’ other sources complained that ‘the brand, wasn’t being, well, ‘brandished’ well enough because of the disparate distribution arrangements,’ from Warner blanket deals to Paramount’s international ownership of *Sex and the City* and *Deadwood*. Schreger consequently emphasised how ‘it is difficult to ascertain what kind of license fees were paid by foreign broadcasters for, say, *The Sopranos* and *Sex and the City*’ (Schreger qtd Guider Oct 5 2006) because of the third-party arrangement.

Again, Guider notes how while ‘both series are cult viewing in several territories’, difficulties in scheduling uncut episodes and longevity for serialised dramas and comedies ‘doesn’t always translate into big bucks.’ With HBO Films London’s closure and attempts to reinforce trusted transatlantic deals and distribution with the BBC and Channel Four, these strategies aligned with AOL’s success with feudal economies. Here Bewkes emphasised ‘cooperating “adjacencies” rather than ‘out-and-out synergies’ (Bewkes qtd Guider Oct 5 2006). In this context, HBO Enterprises and On Demand services arguably provided a new stage in globally managing the brand, exporting the aggregate value of the service as well as hit programs.

Providing a basis for better controlling marketing and licensing in non-subscription markets, building exclusive HBO platforms came against further dips in other markets. This included still-lucrative but slowing DVD sales. Optimism for Blu-Ray as a high-definition format for reissuing shows combined here with a range of new theatrical acquisitions for HBO Home Video to arrest some lower sales for new original series (Dempsey Jun 26 2006).

Reproducing aggregate strengths thus provided continuity for transitioning to new broadband markets. This also worked around some early difficulties in widening the franchise value of individual series, notably represented by negative critical reactions to a *Sopranos* video game. While early releases had been made for a HBO Boxing title, *The Sopranos: Road to Respect*’s attempts to add a vigilante structure to the series’ psychologically ambiguous tone received a mixed reception.²³⁴ In this way,

²³⁴ Reviews for *Road to Respect* varied from it being ‘surprisingly better than most movie/television based video games’ (Adam Brown (2006) ‘The road less traveled,’ *Cheat Code Central*, Last Accessed: November 12 2010) to having the ‘look and feel of *The Sopranos*’ while ‘decidedly lacking in plot depth’ (Nick Dunn (2006) ‘*The Sopranos: Road to Respect*,’ *Gaming Age*, Nov 30, Web. Last Accessed: Nov 12 2010).

while Jenkins has argued that trans-media trends led by *Lost* and *Heroes* in 2006 could be ‘applied to the quality dramas that appeal to more mature consumers’ (Jenkins 2008: 133), problems remained over adaptation. This arguably built on earlier subscriber uncertainty about expectations for HBO programs as multi-platform content, demonstrated through mixed reactions to *Project Greenlight*, *K Street*, *Dane Cook’s Tourgasm*.

2007

Subscriber aggregation and more limited licensing ventures continued into 2007. With *The Sopranos* ending in June 2007, HBO also suffered a more unexpected blow to management stability. The year began with further broadband marketing and licensing for rivals, with FX premiering new insider comedy *Dirt* across multiple broadband windows (Robins Jan 8 2007). Showtime also cut back on theatrical output deals to invest more into series (Snyder, Dempsey Jan 1-Jan 7 2007), agreeing new deals with CBS and DirecTV for historical serial *The Tudors* (2007-) (Adalian Apr 4 2007).

The completion of *Rome* instead relied on heavy On Demand and multiplex runs for an already-cancelled series. Primetime and late-night comedy strengths were also promoted through new *Extras*, *Def Poetry* and *Bad Boys of Comedy* instalments. Moreover, with Picturehouse continuing to struggle in generating box office successes, including HBO Films’ BBC-developed comedies *Starter for Ten* (Vaughan 2006) and *Rocket Science* (Blitz 2007) the studio was partially re-organised around former Miramax staff (Hayes Mar 6 2007) and turns to pre-sold family franchises.²³⁵ Viewed alongside general box office dips and uncertainty over studio speciality divisions (Goldstein Jan 5 2007), the future of the studio remained in question. By contrast, stable network cycles reinforced HBO’s long-term collaborations and demographic recombinations, producing docudrama biopic *Longford* (Hooper 2006) with Channel Four, and a further collaboration with Jim McKay for AIDS-themed Brooklyn drama *Life Support* (George 2007).

Trends for smaller-scale historical prestige were also continued in May with *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (Simoneau 2007), a non-fiction adaptation sharing

²³⁵ This included an investment in family franchise *An American Girl* for a feature tie-in (Schneider Feb 21 2007)

broad surveys of 19th century Native American civil rights histories from early 2000s trends (*Iron Jawed Angels*; *Boycott*; *Walkout*). Digital intermediate processing, and lavish location shooting also retained historical drama conventions.²³⁶ Again, documentaries provided a stable range of cycles, including new post 9/11 specials across HBO and Cinemax.²³⁷ Success was also found with *Addiction*, a multi-platform project marketed and distributed across On Demand, DVD, tie-in books and podcasts (Schneider Mar 12 2007). While experimenting with broadband streaming, the series notably packaged a range of established documentary talent, retaining a focus on verite observation.²³⁸

Series losses and uncertainty over future directions came to a head from April to June with the final episodes of *The Sopranos*, paired with a split-season run of *Entourage*. With Strauss describing the drama series as a ‘once-in-a-lifetime show’ (Strauss qtd Zeitchik Mar 26-Apr 1 2007), *The Sopranos* exceptional success translated into a record finale centring on a teasing conclusion to the eight year run. The widespread attention to the June 10th finale subsequently filled press and online reports debating the continued pressures on network prestige against rising competition. While plans remained in place to strengthen exclusive appeals and aggregate programming, the immediate transition towards late 2000s strategies was disrupted by the shock departure of Albrecht following an arrest for minor assault in Las Vegas (Zeitchik May 14 2007).

With reports emerging of a struggle with alcoholism, Albrecht chose to voluntarily depart HBO after 22 years as programmer, executive and CEO (Wallenstein, Szalai May 10 2007). Arguably the central figure in building up comedy compatibility via Cinemax in the 1980s, while developing HIP and the architect with Bewkes, Strauss, Callender and Nevins of the intensified programming structure from 1995, his loss represented a major blow to HBO’s exceptionally stable management.

²³⁶ *Bury my Heart* includes a screenplay adaptation by Daniel Giat (*Path to War*), and cinematography by David Franco (*Earthly Possessions*; *Vendetta*).

²³⁷ This included subcultural and ghetto-centric specials (*Friends of God* (Pelosi 2007); *Bastards of the Party* Sloan 2007), post 9/11 (*Iraq in Fragments* Longley 2006) and Cinemax artist profiles (*What Remains: The Life and Work of Sally Mann* Cantor 2007; *Black Sun* (Tam 2007); *Helmut by June* (Newton 2007)).

²³⁸ *Addiction* would provide a platform for long-term directors and producers, including Jon Alpert, Joe Berlinger, Susan Fromke, Liz Garbus, Eugene Jarecki, Barbara Kopple, Albert Maysles, Susan Raymond, and Bruce Sinofsky.

Temporarily replaced by marketing and business heads Richard Plepler, Harald Akselrad, Eric Kessler and Michael Lombardo, with operations chief Bill Nelson as CEO, the new infrastructure promised innovation within stability, particularly around rebuilding digital options from Albrecht's problems in setting up an internal new media division (Fritz, Zeitchik Jun 19 2007). Caution over the radical changes to the network was however demonstrated by Strauss in acknowledging some re-allocation of duties, while stressing editorial continuity. She suggested here that

‘I think it seems more hierarchical than it really is... We've worked as a collective for a long time. That's how we'll continue to work. The programmer-CEO that Chris was is actually an anomaly in the business. This is a structure that everyone will be comfortable with’
(Strauss qtd Zeitchik, Schneider Jun 6 2007)

Albrecht's departure and the emerging need to stabilise and make further calculated risks with the ending of *The Sopranos* can therefore be used as a turning point for the post-1995 era. However, a brief crisis in management and series success can also be used to re-emphasise adaptations around long-term subscription practices.

Conclusion

Uses of HBO as a prototype for industry change, achieving successful brand management through hit series and departures from an inflexible subscriber model can therefore be complicated. As with earlier periods, negotiations took place between regulating a subscription infrastructure with cautious extensions. Moreover, plans to adapt subscriber services to global distribution through revised syndication deals and sale of On Demand features provided alternative forms of coordination to the program branding suggested by current accounts. Exporting a clearer ‘HBO environment’ thus preserved the core principles of the subscriber service. While sharing comparisons with the format standardisation of other brands, most notably Disney, coordinating brand management arguably continued to rely on the aggregate exhibition and production infrastructure of the subscriber service as the base for generating programs with distinctive characteristics.

‘Post-network’ challenges for enhancing the range and mobility of branded content within fragmented audiences and converged technology can again be linked to the stabilising role of older forms of exhibition as platforms for longer-term loyalty. HBO’s greater emphasis on subscriber aggregation over rivals can again be tied here to discussions of publishing precedent for negotiating flexible content and reinforcing aggregate packaging. In discussing the range of programming and marketing options for the industry by the late 2000s, Lotz outlines the interaction of ‘multiple revenue streams’ that

‘mirror the bookstore (DVD sell-through, iTunes downloading), magazine subscription (pay cable networks such as HBO), and the library (Free on demand), as well as other related venues, such as the subscription library model of NetFlix’ (Lotz 2007a: 34)

Links between HBO’s Time-era origins and a ‘magazine subscription logic’ (Lotz 2007a: 34) can therefore be re-emphasised for the contemporary network’s expanding plans to sell overseas branded subscription services by 2007. Longer-term precedent might also be made here with Time’s success in exporting an ‘American feel’ for publications to foreign markets in the 1970s after initial tensions over collaboration.

It is therefore crucial to view HBO in mid-2007 as still very much defined by its subscriber service’s aggregate tradition. Here Lotz qualifies the adapting role of major networks and subscription services as evolving into ‘program aggregators’ (Lotz 2007a: 149), retaining value through converging content around key exhibition sites merging ‘particular characteristics’ (Lotz 2007a: 149). In this way, she acknowledges that despite the ‘post-network’ emphasis on exceptional content, ‘networks and channels have remained important sites of program aggregation, operating with distinctive identities that help viewers find content of interest’ (Lotz 2007a: 16) by ‘aggregating a collection of niche audiences’ (Lotz 2007a: 128)

Continuities in these forms of aggregation can also be tied to Christopher Anderson’s (II) ‘Long Tail’ economics, where fragmented content can be regulated around digital ‘rights aggregators’ (Anderson (II) 2006: 149) for structuring access and providing distinctly branded environments for repetitive use. To return to Arvidsson’s more general theories of brand management, stabilising spaces and platforms for

ritualistic use (Arvidsson 2007: 25) can be linked here to the extension of loyalty to market leading outlets such as YouTube and iTunes by 2007.

HBO's exceptional branding success can therefore be connected much more clearly with its aggregate structure around a set of clearer historical continuities as a subscription service. Uses as an industry prototype for generating more flexible branded content by the late 2000s arguably gloss these continuities, and their stubbornly exclusive Time origins. Recognising their perseverance for HBO in an era of 'unparalleled media change' (Edgerton 2008a: 17), while presenting a more conservative logic than the mobility and risk of of branded content, is crucial for understanding efforts to stabilise and reproduce tangible value for HBO's brand.

Conclusion

Aiming to significantly expand on histories of HBO, this thesis has emphasised the importance of long-term subscriber continuities from the 1972 to 1994 era for understanding contemporary brand management from 1995 to 2007. From ‘utility brand’ glosses to a better understanding of the influence of Time on forms of exclusive aggregation, the contemporary HBO’s success with exceptional content can be placed within variations on these older trends. As a result, it is possible to re-position HBO’s history from cutting-edge reinvention to more cyclical forms of adaptation around more tangible aggregate contexts. This can be used to enhance the role of network branding within the wider process of brand management across a range of media platforms, while reinforcing its value against suggestions of a focus on program branding by the late 2000s. The importance of subscriber aggregation can be crucially understood here through HBO’s overlap with wider industry trends, but also through its continuing reliance on older, more exclusive sources for stabilising a brand identity.

Viewed through examples of aggregation through loyalty to branded exhibition spaces and platforms as well as individual properties, the importance of these cyclical processes to HBO’s brand management can be aligned with Kompare and others’ discussions of longer-term institutional continuities. Locating the patterns of the subscriber service is therefore crucial to using HBO as a historical case study for branding precedent and continuity over zeitgeist reinvention. The continuation of these approaches, varying in key respects over subscription exclusivity from rivals by mid-2007, can be briefly extended here to HBO’s development from mid-2007 to the present.

‘It’s about enhancing the subscription and continuing the life cycle of the subscriber’: July 2007-2011

In terms of competing for brand distinction, HBO’s ventures in the past three years have both varied exceptional content and re-aggregated key strategies from within the subscriber service. For series drama, 2007 problems initially continued with David Milch’s oblique, densely plotted family drama *John from Cincinnati* (2007) cancelled after a season, while explicit relationship drama *Tell Me You Love Me* (2007) suffered a similar fate in late 2007. By 2008, the smaller-scale niche audiences for *Big Love* and

the completion of *The Wire* was complemented by Israeli format adaptation *In Treatment* (2008-) a half hour series of psychotherapy segments spread over nightly episodes and recycling for On Demand and multiplex plays.

HBO-exclusive drama was however significantly varied in 2008 by the break-out success of blackly comic vampire drama *True Blood* (2008-). Combining *Six Feet Under*'s Alan Ball's experience with a pre-sold franchise of supernatural novels, *True Blood*'s blend of explicit content, stylish production values and serial plotting has made it the highest-rated new series on HBO since *The Sopranos*. More than any series in HBO's history, *True Blood* has also achieved trans-media distinction, spinning-off merchandise and online cross-promotion as a carefully coordinated narrative world. As a more accessible genre property than *Carnivale*, the series' exclusive and widely exploited franchise identity has also aligned with efforts to extend previous successes, with *Sex and the City* adapted through New Line and Warner collaboration as a two-film series from 2008 (Patrick King) to 2010 (Patrick King), spinning off global box office, DVD and merchandise licensing.

To some extent though, *True Blood* has remained the exception to network production cycles against aggregate continuities. In terms of the latter, the success of the vampire series has been set against continuing reliance on more exclusive, aggregate-suitable seasons of *In Treatment* and *Big Love*, as well as more recent adaptations of *The Wire* into densely plotted New Orleans serial *Treme* (2010-). The potential of *Carnivale*, *Deadwood* and *Rome* to convert miniseries scope to series form has also been revisited, albeit more cautiously in terms of budget and genre familiarity

September 2010 saw Prohibition-era gangster drama *Boardwalk Empire* work with *The Sopranos* screenwriter Terrence Winter and Martin Scorsese for an elaborately-produced period serial. Plans to vary *True Blood*'s franchise success have also set up development of fantasy series *Game of Thrones* as a pre-sold drama for 2011. Variations in series development have been affected here by the departure of Carolyn Strauss in 2008 (Gray Aug 13 2008), replaced by externally hired executive Sue Naegle. Strauss has however returned as executive producer for *Game of Thrones*.

Drama prestige has responded to but attempted to reinforce exclusive distinctions over broadcast and cable rivals' more interdependent models. From FX's

continued success with variations on procedural and criminal drama serials such as *Damages* (2007) and *Sons of Anarchy* (2008-), to Showtime's investment in Lionsgate-produced dark medical comedy half-hour *Nurse Jackie* (2009-) the sexually explicit comedy *Californication* (2007-) and multiple-personality drama *United States of Tara* (2009-) from DreamWorks, prestige has also been partly outstripped by basic cable network AMC. Emulating FX and Showtime's success with a handful of exceptional series, the triple Emmy Award-winning, Lionsgate advertising drama *Mad Men* (2007-) has become a global niche success, while series such as *Breaking Bad* (2008-) and horror drama *The Walking Dead* (2010) have successfully extended prestige for studio and network DVD, merchandising and worldwide syndication.

Wider cable programming innovations have also included short comedies and limited series on the Independent Film Channel, USA's competition with broadcast ratings and syndication revenues for procedural dramas, MTV reality franchising, and pay cable network Starz's investment in limited drama and miniseries (*Crash* (2008-) *Spartacus: Blood and Sand* (2010-)). The latter has notably been developed by Chris Albrecht, taking over as CEO of the rival subscription service and launching more elaborate programming. Broadcast drama cycles, while in some respects overtaken by cable in terms of prestige if not yet ratings, has maintained serial drama success in varying formats (*Lost*; *House*; *Grey's Anatomy*) and the continuing popularity of more traditional procedurals, including the persistent appeal of the *CSI* franchise, alongside hit reality series.

By comparison, HBO has continued to partly rely on aggregating comedy cycles, competing with basic cable success and a run of award-winning broadcast comedies (*30 Rock*; *Modern Family* (2009-)). On the one hand, the early success of *Entourage* with 18-34 male segments has been sustained with ongoing seasons alongside the cult impact of *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, while efforts have been made to adapt new ventures as more flexible, if still subscriber-rooted multi-platform experiments alongside occasional stand-up specials.

In the former, summer 2007's musical comedy *Flight of the Conchords* (2007-) notably combined New York production with a cross-promoted pre-sold property, licensing to iTunes and establishing a platform for marketing music videos on YouTube and other sites over its two seasons (Morfoot May 17 2007). More specialist comedy

however continued with low-budget animated series *The Life and Times of Tim* (2008-) co-ventured online and network comedy *Funny Or Die* (2009-) and *The Neistat Brothers* (2010-) for late-night rotation alongside *Real Time with Bill Maher*. Transatlantic collaborations have also been retained with the BBC and Channel Four from *Extras* (*The Ricky Gervais Show* (2010-); *Little Britain USA* (2008)), as well as African-set pre-sold detective comedy pilot *The No 1 Lady's Detective Agency* (2008) and Australian imports tied into BBC exhibition (*Summer Heights High* (2007-)).

Moreover, broader adult comedy and an attempt to revive the higher-budget pathos of upscale series (*Sex and the City*; *Mind of the Married Man*) have produced sex comedy *Hung* (2009), as well as HBO Sports crossovers with the baseball-themed *Eastbound and Down* (2009-). *Entourage's* 18-34 niche success has also translated into 18-34 New York comedy *How to Make it in America* (2010-) forming part of a continuing identification with boutique Manhattan production and independent producers also developed by cult private eye series *Bored to Death* (2009-). Maintaining key cycles and links across the subscriber service also continues to benefit, in a more refined sense, from HBO Films and documentary programming.

In terms of broader production and brand extensions into theatrical distribution partnerships, the Picturehouse venture closed in 2008, while Callender left the network after twenty one years as a programming executive later that year. Promoted executive Len Amato has notably worked though to sustain familiar production ties and cycles. This has ranged at the highest-end of production to Iraq miniseries (*Generation Kill* 2008) and further collaboration with Playtone for historical biopic *John Adams* (2008), to the 2010 globally marketed *The Pacific* as a sequel to *Band of Brothers*, emulating the pre-buy financing of its predecessor for offsetting exceptional costs.

More regular HBO Films production have however maintained long-term economic ties to the BBC for multiple prestige cycles and filmed plays.²³⁹ This has included revisiting older, blackly comic melodramas (*Bernard and Doris* Balaban 2007) and sequels to award-winning successes, with *Into the Storm* (O'Sullivan 2009)

²³⁹ These have included *A Number* (MacDonald 2008); *As You Like It* (Branagh 2007), *Capturing Mary* (Poliakoff 2007); *The Special Relationship* (Loncraine 2010); *Joe's Palace* (Poliakoff 2007), *My Zinc Bed* (Page 2008), miniseries *House of Saddam* (2008); *Primo* (Lough 2005); *Einstein & Eddington* (Martin 2008). HBO Films have also collaborated with Channel Four for miniseries *The Devil's Whore* (2008).

extending *The Gathering Storm*'s Churchill biopic focus. Variations on older relationships and cycles have also returned to verite documentary success and collaboration with the Maysles Brothers for *Grey Gardens* (Sucsy 2009), adapting their own documentary. Biopic drama has also received Emmy success through autism-focused *Temple Grandin* (Jackson 2010) and fellow documentary adaptation *You Don't Know Jack* (Levinson 2010). Future projects for 2011 notably include *Cinema Verite* (Springer Berman; Pulcini 2011), a dramatisation of the making of the 1973 PBS documentary *An American Family*, of which Nevins co-produced and later licensed a sequel for HBO in 1983.

Nevins' wider continuity with Documentary Films for flexible aggregation and limited theatrical release has also been sustained through *America Undercover* and individual specials, although *Cinemax Reel-Life* has been scaled back as the sister channel has targeted more frequent late-night erotica and movie packages as a complement to the parent brand. Sustaining regular cycles for verite inner-city studies (*12th & Delaware* Ewing, Grady 2010), African-American prestige (*The Black List* Greenfield-Sanders 2008), family-focused specials (*Autism: The Musical* Regan 2007), Iraq verite-led interviews (*Alive Day Memories: Home from Iraq* Alpert, Goosenberg Kent 2007) has also sustained occasional crossovers with HBO Sports (*Assault in the Ring* Drath 2009). While continuing to exploit live boxing value and PPV revenues, Sports has also continued popular serialised reality series (*Hard Knocks*) alongside these occasional prestige documentary crossovers.

Taken together, the reliance on exclusive aggregation around the domestic service has weathered some of the network's most exceptional management changes from 2007, varying significantly in some respects through *True Blood*'s broader franchise appeal, but predominantly relying on familiar comedy cycles, film and documentary stability. In this way, the emphasis on updating and stabilising the service has retained protection of exclusive subscriber aggregation around a defined production infrastructure. However, efforts have been made to extend branded content into multi-platform forms.

From June 2007 HBO has invested in online previews and cross-promotion of series such as *Flight of the Conchords* with further efforts to centralise international distribution and marketing for HBO Enterprises and other subsidiaries (*Time Warner*

Newsroom Sep 26 2007). This has also notably included drawing on the Time archives to act as a wholesale distributor for *March of Time* newsreels alongside HBO Sports library and entertainment footage (*Time Warner Newsroom* Oct 2 2007).

Domestically, preserving quality control around the aggregate strengths of the subscription service received complementary promotion in 2008 through branded YouTube channels, the exporting of a package of digital content to iTunes (with some tensions over premium pricing), followed by an On Demand paid licensing service for Amazon.com (*Time Warner Newsroom* June 16 2008). Moreover, efforts to expand the value of the subscriber service saw HBO On Broadband established in 2009 as a further On Demand extension for existing US subscribers, marketed as adding ‘even greater value to their subscriptions’ (*Time Warner Newsroom* Jul 13 2009).

This has since been followed by the development of HBO Go as a more significant statement of intent for streamlining a single aggregate service for subscribers into the new decade (*Time Warner Newsroom* Feb 17 2010). Offering over 600 hours of HBO-branded programming, the recycling of original content from the 1970s to the 2000s arguably promises to retain long-term strategies around subscribers. Plans have also been made to license the service as a subscription option to Google TV and iPad platforms (*Time Warner Newsroom* Oct 4 2010).

HBO Go and HBO On Broadband thus represent variations on wider efforts to both adapt and preserve niche economies of scale for subscription platforms and broadband library management as a one-stop digital aggregator for HBO-branded content. Responding to broadband piracy fears over devaluing premium content, efforts to complement exceptional series with subscription brand loyalties has become increasingly vital in the context of continued, lower-cost syndication of shows such as *Curb Your Enthusiasm* and *Entourage* to basic cable, and older domestic rights for *Oz* and *Deadwood* to DBS service DirecTV (Levine May 22 2009).

Increasing global control of distribution and exhibition rights has also seen the network gain majority ownership of HBO Asia and HBO Central Europe, while licensing subscription channel HBO Canada and continuing to export HBO-branded On Demand channels overseas as aggregate services for cable and satellite operators. Licensing for network syndication has taken a similar route, combining per-market

distribution with recent specialist deals. This includes an aggressively promoted licensing with British satellite operator Sky for prestige channel Sky Atlantic, packaging a range of hit series, documentaries and original films alongside non-HBO programming (Frost Oct 1 2010).

Maintaining exclusivity has also arguably reinforced problematic interdependence within Time Warner and the wider industry against the protection of a stubborn approach to retaining brand consistency. In this context, while *Sex and the City* represented a major brand extension, its collaborative impulse can be considered against the prior difficulties of fully exploiting the series against Paramount's overseas television and DVD distribution rights. The Film versions, so far the only theatrical adaptation of HBO-branded programming, remain a further exception to strategies. By comparison, the failure of Picturehouse reflected both slow-downs in the studio speciality market by 2008, and further tensions over separating film distribution from the subscription service.

This continued aggregate logic has in turn affected wider changes and variations on 'post-network' experiments and caution over distributing and merchandising content beyond adding value to existing outlets as key to managing brands. Here Showtime has notably sustained its arguably closer links to basic cable and conglomerate synergy by continuing to promote 'TV. At It's Best' with online episode previews and cross-promotion of high-impact series within and across Viacom-owned channels and commercial partners. Moreover, Showtime has contrasted HBO by licensing programming to television video aggregator Hulu.com as a licensed alternative to download piracy and illegal streaming.

The future of a single licensed aggregator for network and studio television programming in Hulu has however been recently threatened by difficulties in monetizing the site, with suggestions of a subscription conversion further driving promotion of distinctly branded folders of content as loyal narrowcast destinations and extensions of legal platforms over broadband piracy for internet television ventures (Krashinsky June 29 2010). Some brief comparisons for precedent in future network aggregators as re-stabilising the circulation of digital content can be made here with the UK.

This has notably been represented by the BBC's successful adaptation of their license fee exclusivity to the BBC iPlayer as a commercial-free aggregator of archive and recently-run programming, streamlining legal networked access as an added value proposition for viewers alongside significant market share. Studio efforts to establish control of online archives can also be linked through both extended DVD promotion, re-issuing and the use of monopolised subscription rental services such as NetFlix and the UK's LoveFilm, where studio film-themed channels have recently been added to subscription packages, most notably WarnerFilm's broadband arm's licensing of library features for LoveFilm's streaming video service.

In this context, the importance of long-term tactics for aggregation can be reinforced as part of variations within a diverse publishing model, and digital 'rights aggregators' (Anderson (II) 2008: 149). Again, uses of HBO as a reinventing prototype for the re-embodiment of brand identities through digital content can be challenged around their aggregate source. Reflecting on the future plans of the network in 2010, co-CEO Michael Lombardo explained that 'we're in original programming to satisfy the HBO subscriber,' where 'over time you build the brand significantly enough that when people are opting for a pay service the one they view as critical is HBO' (qtd *Screen International* Apr 16 2010).

In the same way, marketing head Eric Kessler has re-emphasised how ultimately 'we're a subscription service and our ongoing overarching objective is to enhance the service to make it better. It's about enhancing the subscription and continuing the life cycle of the subscriber' (Kessler qtd Keane Feb 18 2010). From adaptations to Time publishing and subscription strategies to adaptation and negotiation with exclusive content in the 1990s and 2000s, HBO's future as a 'subscription service,' whatever form that might be, will arguably then continue to build from these distinctive origins.

Methodology Review

The methodology employed by the thesis, providing a more extensive institutional history that stresses long-term continuities, can therefore be used to promote the value of archive-led institutional research. It is likely that anthologies, monographs and articles will continue to rely on arguments for brand reinvention and significant post-1995 change, over-simplifying key aspects of HBO's history. The thesis has aimed to

be a corrective to these gaps, re-emphasising the roots and continuing influence of HBO's past.

From this base, there is however significant room to more specifically research key historical moments, while re-incorporating key socio-cultural issues, political economic, reception and aesthetic analyses. Within this, Time and HBO links demand further analysis of the relationship between cable and the magazine history. Moreover, HBO's attachment to key demographics, most notably African-American audiences, has generated a broad range of productions, producer relations and tensions between exploitation and middle-brow marketing. On a broader scale, the recurring overlaps between American independent cinema and HBO can be significantly expanded, from New York production cycles to wider processes of exhibition and brand management for channels such as IFC. Recurring overlaps with the BBC and Channel Four from the 1970s also offer the possibility of a comparative study into transatlantic production and overlaps British networks and US cable companies throughout their histories. Notes on ownership and global distribution of HBO-branded channels could also benefit from a clearer analysis of their specific efforts to build local brand identities.

In terms of brand management itself, the term's mix of corporate strategies for coordinating formats and regulating affective loyalty invites new studies of HBO audience response and negotiation of values from a revised institutional base. Future analysis might also consider how principles for branding theatres, library spaces, websites, portals and archive channels, as well as subscription websites, newspapers and media channels aggregate content in meaningful ways. As Lotz notes, it will continue to be important to find ways of differentiating strategies 'among media that consumers pay for directly versus those that are advertiser-supported - particularly within a single medium' (Lotz 2007a: 190).

How older values are adapted but sustained could also be used to explore, as work by Santo (2006) and Sperb (2010) have demonstrated, key continuities despite significant historical and demographic change within brands, and how these are embodied through infrastructures like television channels. More attention to the affective dynamics of branding might be viewed here as extending negotiations around franchises to day-to-day exhibition platforms in structuring engagement with media. Again, a 'bid for precision' (Acland qtd Grainge 2008: 7) in cultural or sociological

analysis of media institutions can be sharpened through better understanding of their repetitive contexts.

It is also important to view the thesis as very much a contribution to ongoing research into HBO and opportunities for re-evaluation and complication as new material becomes available. While the archive resources opened up during the course of research, from YouTube to back-issues of *Daily Variety* and importing of US DVDs provided a broad range of evidence, a more comprehensive institutional history of HBO will have to wait until internal network archives are made available. Moreover, although trade journals and Time Warner's annual reports provide insight, the full scope of production budgeting, costs and economic areas such as affiliate and operator negotiations and publicity materials should hopefully one day construct a better sense of year-to-year practices.

Greater internal access to network chiefs and producers could also benefit from a stronger sense of decision-making and management theories, of which Santo's (2006) history of George Trendle's early brand management has particularly benefited. This can also be used to promote more rigorous analysis of production culture and the ritual industry theorising recently developed by Caldwell (2008) and Caldwell, Mayer and Banks' edited collection *Production Studies* (2009). Given the exceptionally long-lasting management structure at HBO, being able to piece together a clearer set of interviews could perhaps shed additional light here on the network as a subscriber service and wider brand, although that same structure suggests a long wait for wider disclosure of operations.

Continued attention to HBO's history offers multiple opportunities for re-examining the network's ongoing innovations within longer-term institutional continuities. As of May 2011, ongoing research projects such as Shayne Pepper's PhD thesis on HBO's AIDS programming will undoubtedly fill in some of these gaps. Awareness of the long-term, cyclical contexts of media institutions, generated through archival research and critical chronologies can add to well-established contexts. Rethinking HBO from an example of zeitgeist reinvention towards a more complex adaptation of its subscriber roots to underpinning contemporary brand management arguably epitomises the value of this research in dealing with the specificities of industrial histories.

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- A Prairie Home Companion*, Picturehouse/New Line Cinema; GreenStreet Films/River Road Entertainment, Dir. Robert Altman, 2006
- Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery*, New Line Cinema, Dir. Jay Roach, 1997
- Balseros*, Bausan Films/Buenavida Producciones S.L; Dir. Carlos Bosch, Josep Maria Domenech, 2002
- Batman*, Warner Bros; Guber-Peters, Dir. Tim Burton, 1989
- Beavis & Butthead Do America*, Paramount; Geffen Pictures/MTV Films; Dir. Mike Judge, 1996
- Boogie Nights*, New Line Cinema, Dir. Paul Thomas Anderson, 1997
- Boyz n the Hood*, Columbia Pictures, Dir. John Singleton, 1991
- Bus 174*, Zazen Producoes/New Yorker Films, Dirs. Jose Padiha, Felipe Lacerda, 2002
- Capturing the Friedmans*, Magnolia Pictures; HBO Documentary Films, Dir. Andrew Jarecki, 2003
- Chuck and Buck*, Artisan Entertainment; Blow Up Pictures/Flan de Coco Films, Dir. Miguel Arteta, 2000
- Dazed and Confused*, Universal; Gramercy; Alphaville, Dir. Richard Linklater
- Demon Knight*, Universal, Dirs. Ernest R. Dickerson, Gilbert Adler, 1995
- Desperately Seeking Susan*, Orion, Dir. Susan Seidelman, 1985
- Don't Tell Mom the Babysitter's Dead*, Cinema Plus, Dir. Stephen Herek, 1991
- Elephant*, HBO; HBO Films/Fine Line Features; Dir. Gus Van Sant, 2003
- Emma*, Miramax, Dir. Douglas McGrath, 1996
- Fargo*, Polygram, Working Title Films; Gramercy, Dir. Joel and Ethan Coen, 1996

- 54, Miramax, Dir. Mark Christopher, 1998
- Frisk*, Strand Releasing, Dir. Todd Verow, 1995
- Ghostbusters*, Columbia, Dir. Ivan Reitman, 1984
- Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai*, Pandora Filmproduktion/ARD/Degeto Film, Dir. Jim Jarmusch, 1999
- Gods and Monsters*, Lionsgate, Dir. Bill Condon, 1999
- Gone with the Wind*, MGM; Selznick International Pictures, Dir. Victor Fleming, 1939
- Goodfellas*, Warner Bros, Dir. Martin Scorsese, 1990
- Good Will Hunting*, Miramax; Dir. Gus Vant Sant, 1997
- Harriet the Spy*, Paramount; Nickelodeon Movies/Rastar, Dir. Bronwen Hughes, 1996
- Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse*, American Zoetrope; Cineplex-Odeon Films, Dirs. Fax Bahr, George Hickenlooper, Eleanor Coppola, 1991
- Heaven's Gate*; UA-MGM, Dir. Michael Cimino, 1980
- High Art*, October Films/391 Productions/Antidote Films, Dir. Lisa Cholodenko, 1998
- House Party*, New Line Cinema; The Hudlin Brothers/The Jackson/McHenry Company, Dir. Reginald Hudlin, 1990
- I Shot Andy Warhol*, Samuel Goldwyn; Orion, Dir. Mary Harron, 1996
- Jaws*, Universal, Dir. Steven Spielberg, 1975
- Just Another Girl on the I.R.T.*, Miramax; Truth 24 F.P.S., Dir. Leslie Harris, 1992
- Last Days*, Picturehouse; Newmarket/HBO Films/Fine Line Features, Dir. Gus Van Sant, 2005
- Laws of Gravity*, Cineplex Odeon Films; Island World/Jaguar Productions, Dir. Nick Gomez, 1992
- Le Voyage Dans La Lune*, Gaston Melies, Dir. Georges Melies, 1902
- Lolita*, Showtime; Pathe, Dir. Adrian Lyne, 1997
- Love and Basketball*, New Line Cinema; 40 Acres & a Mule Filmworks, Dir. Gina Prince-Blythewood, 2000
- Mallrats*, Universal; Gramecy; View Askew Productions, Dir. Kevin Smith, 1995
- Maria Full of Grace*, HBO; HBO Films/Fine Line Features, Dir. Joshua Marston, 2004
- Menace 2 Society*, New Line, Dirs. Allen and Albert Hughes, 1993

- Mi Vida Loca*, Sony Pictures Classics; HBO Showcase, Dir. Allison Anders, 1993
- Mom and Dad Save the World*, Cinema Plus, Dir. Greg Beeman, 1992
- Monsoon Wedding*, Mirabal Films Inc, Dir. Mira Nair, 2001
- My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, HBO; Gold Circle Films/MPH Entertainment Productions/Playtone, Dir. Joel Zwick, 2002
- My Left Foot*, Miramax/Ferndale Films/Granada Television/Radio Telefis Eireann, Dir. Jim Sheridan, 1989
- My Own Private Idaho*, New Line Cinema/Fine Line, Dir. Gus Van Sant, 1991
- On Golden Pond*, Universal; ITC Entertainment, Dir. Mark Rydell, 1981
- Outfoxed*, MoveOn.org; Brave New Films, Dir. Robert Greenwald, 2004
- Palookaville*, The Samuel Goldwyn Company, Dir. Alan Taylor, 1995
- Pan's Labyrinth*, Picturehouse; Tequila Gang/Estudios Picasso/Telecinco Cinema, Dir. Guillermo del Toro, 2006
- Pulp Fiction*, Miramax; A Band Apart/Jersey Films, Dir. Quentin Tarantino, 1994
- Red Rock West*, Roxie Releasing, Dir. John Dahl, 1993
- Reservoir Dogs*, Miramax; Live Entertainment/Dog Eat Dog Productions Inc, Dir. Quentin Tarantino, 1992
- Return of the Jedi*, 20th Century Fox; LucasFilm, Dir. Richard Marquand, 1983
- Rock School*, Newmarket/Picturehouse, Dir. Don Argott, 2005
- Rocket Science*, Picturehouse/HBO Films, Dir. Jeffrey Blitz, 2007
- Saving Private Ryan*, DreamWorks, Dir. Steven Spielberg, 1998
- Sex and the City: The Movie*, HBO/New Line Cinema; Darren Star Productions, Dir. Michael Patrick King, 2008
- Sex and the City 2*, HBO/Warner Bros; Darren Star Productions, Dir. Michael Patrick King, 2010
- sex, lies, and videotape*, Miramax, Dir. Steven Soderbergh, 1989
- Shakespeare in Love*, Miramax, Dir. John Madden, 1998
- Smithereens*, Domestic Productions, Dir. Susan Seidelman, 1982
- Song of the South*, RKO; Disney, Dirs. Harve Foster, Wilfred Jackson, 1946

- Sophie's Choice*, Universal; ITC Entertainment, Dir. Alan J. Pakula, 1982
- South Park: Bigger, Longer and Uncut*, Paramount/Warner; Comedy Central Films, Dir. Trey Parker, 1999
- Space Jam*, Warner Bros, Dir. Joe Pytko, 1996
- Spellbound*, ThinkFilm; HBO Documentary Films, Dir. Jeffrey Blitz, 2002
- Starter for Ten*, Picturehouse; HBO Films/BBC Films, Dir. Tom Vaughan, 2006
- Star Wars*, 20th Century Fox; LucasFilm, Dir. George Lucas, 1977
- Summer of Sam*, Touchstone Pictures; 40 Acres & a Mule FilmWorks, Dir. Spike Lee, 1999
- Switch*, Cinema Plus, Dir. Blake Edwards, 1991
- Swoon*, Fine Line Features; Killer Films, Dir. Tom Kalin, 1992
- Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, New Line Cinema; Golden Harvest Company/Limelight Entertainment Dir. Steve Barron, 1990
- Terms of Endearment*, Paramount Pictures, Dir. James L Brooks, 1983
- The Big Chill*, Columbia Pictures/Carson Productions, Dir. Lawrence Kasdan, 1983
- The Chumscrubber*, Newmarket/Picturehouse, Dir. Arie Posin, 2005
- The Corporation*, Big Picture Media Corporation, Dirs. Mark Achbar, Jennifer Abbott, 2003
- The Cotton Club*, MGM; Zoetrope Studios, Dir. Francis Ford Coppola, 1984
- The Crying Game*, Miramax; Channel Four Films/Palace Pictures/Eurotrustees, Dir. Neil Jordan, 1992
- The Empire Strikes Back*, 20th Century Fox; LucasFilm, Dir. Irvin Kershner, 1980
- The English Patient*, Miramax, Dir. Anthony Mingella, 1996
- The Holy Girl*, HBO; HBO Films/La Pasionaria S.r.l./R&C Productions/Teodora Film/Fondazione Montecinemaverite/Fine Line Features, Dir. Lucrecia Martel, 2004
- The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love*, Fine Line Features/Smash Pictures, Dir. Maria Maggenti, 1995
- The Kentucky Fried Movie*, United Film Distribution Company, KFM/Kentucky Fried Theatre; Dir. John Landis, 1977
- The Last Days of Disco*, Castle Rock Entertainment/Polygram Filmed Entertainment/Westerly Films, Dir. Whit Stillman, 1998

- The Last Seduction*, October Films; Incorporated Television Company, Dir. John Dahl, 1994
- The Lord of the Rings* (trilogy) New Line Cinema; Wingnut Productions, Dir. Peter Jackson, 2001-2003
- The Muppets Take Manhattan*, Tri-Star Pictures; Henson Associates, Dir. Frank Oz, 1984
- The Natural*, Tri-Star Pictures/Delphi II Productions, Dir. Barry Levinson, 1984
- The Notorious Bettie Page*; Picturehouse/Killer Films, Dir. Mary Harron, 2005
- The Piano*, Miramax; The Australian Film Commission/CiBy 2000/Jan Chapman Productions/New South Wales Film & Television Office, Dir. Jane Campion, 1993
- The Terminator*, Orion Pictures; Pacific Western/Hemdale/Cinema 84, Dir. James Cameron, 1984
- The Thing About My Folks*, Picturehouse; Nuance Productions/Outlaw Productions, Dir. Paul Reiser, 2005
- The Watermelon Woman*, First Run Features/Dancing Girl, Dir. Cheryl Dunye, 1996
- Tootsie*, Columbia Pictures; Punch Productions, Dir. Sydney Pollack, 1982
- Twin Peaks, Fire Walk with Me*, New Line Cinema; CiBy 2000, Dir. David Lynch, 1992
- Unconstitutional: The War on Our Civil Liberties*, Public Interest Pictures, Dir. Nonny de la Pena, 2004
- Ushpizin*, Picturehouse; Dir. Giddi Dar, 2004
- Wag the Dog*, New Line Cinema; Dir. Barry Levinson, 1997
- Walking and Talking*, Miramax; Good Machine/Channel Four Films/Electric, Dir. Nicole Holofcener, 1996
- Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price*, Brave New Films, Dir. Robert Greenwald, 2005
- You So Crazy*, Samuel Goldwyn Company/HBO Independent Productions, Dir. Thomas Schlamme 1994
- Z Channel: A Magnificent Obsession*, IFC; Fresh Produce Films/Maja Films, Dir. Alexandra Cassavetes, 2004

Television Series

- Action*, FOX; Christopher Thompson Productions/Columbia TriStar Television, Creator: Chris Thompson, 1999
- Aeon Flux*, MTV; Colossal Pictures/CCHTV, Creator: Peter Chung, 1991-1995

- Alias*, ABC; Bad Robot/Touchstone, Creator: JJ Abrams, 2001-2006
- Alice*, HBO; HBO Latin America/Gullane Filmes, Exec prod. Rui Pires, 2008-
- Ali G in da USA*, HBO/Channel Four; Four by Two Films/TalkBack Productions, Exec Prods. Sacha Baron Cohen, Kathy Egan, Peter Fincham, 2003-2004
- All in the Family*, CBS; Tandem Productions, Creator: Norman Lear, 1971-1979
- Ally McBeal*, FOX, 20th Century Fox Television/David E. Kelley Productions, Creator: David E. Kelley, 1997-2002
- American Candidate*, Showtime; Actual Reality Pictures, Exec Prods. R.J. Cutler, Tom Lassally, Jay Roach, 2004
- American Dad*, FOX; 20th Century Fox Television/Atlantic Creative/Fuzzy Door Productions, Creators: Mike Barker, Seth MacFarlane, Matt Weitzman, 2005-
- American Idol*, FOX; FreeMantleMedia North America/19 Television, Creator: Simon Fuller, 2002-
- America's Most Wanted*, FOX; 20th Century Fox Television/Fox Productions/Mobile Video Productions, Exec prod. Lance Heflin, 1989-
- A New Day in Eden*, Showtime, Exec prod. Michael Jaffe, 1982-1983,
- Any Day Now*, Lifetime; Finnegan/Pinchuk Productions/Spelling Entertainment, Creator: Nancy Miller, 1998-2002
- Arli\$\$*, HBO; Tollin/Robbins Productions/Rysher Entertainment, Creator: Robert Wuhl, 1996-2002
- Arrested Development*, FOX; Imagine Entertainment/20th Century Fox Television/The Hurwitz Company, Creator: Mitchell Hurwitz, 2003-2006
- Babylon 5*, Syndicated/TNT, Babylonian Productions/Warner Brothers Television, Creator: J. Michael Straczynski, 1993-1998
- Barbershop*, Showtime; Blind Decker Productions/MGM Television, Creator: John Ridley, 2005-
- Battlestar Galactica*, Sci-Fi Channel; BSKyB; David Eick Productions/NBC Universal Television/R&D TV/Stanford Pictures, Executive Producer; Ronald D. Moore, 2004-2009
- Beacon Hill*, CBS; Robert Stigwood Organization, Exec prod. Beryl Vertue, 1975
- Beavis & Butthead*, MTV; MTV Animation, Creator: Mike Judge, 1993-1997
- Beggars and Choosers*, Showtime; Granada Entertainment/H.Beale Company; Creator: Brandon Tartikoff, 1999-2001

Beverly Hills 90210, FOX; Spelling Television, Creators: Darren Star, Aaron Spelling, E. Duke Vincent, 1990-2000

Big Brother, CBS; Endemol Entertainment; 2000-

Big Love, HBO; Playtone/Anima Sola Productions, Creators: Mark V. Olsen, Will Scheffer, 2006-

Bizarre, Showtime/CTV Television Network, Exec prod. Allan Blye, 1980 (Canada); 1983 (US)

Boardwalk Empire, HBO; Leverage Management, Creator: Terence Winter, 2010-

Body Bags, Showtime; 187 Corp, Exec Prods. John Carpenter, Dan Angel, Sandy King, 1993

Bored to Death, HBO; Three Arts Entertainment/Dakota Pictures/Fair Harbor Entertainment, Creator: Jonathan Ames, 2009-

Boxing After Dark, HBO; HBO Sports, 1996-

Braingames, HBO; Spinning Reels, Creator: Sheila Nevins, 1984-1985

Breaking Bad, AMC; Sony Pictures Television, Creator: Vince Gilligan, 2008-

Brotherhood, Showtime; Gangtackle Productions/Mandalay Television, Creator: Blake Masters, 2006-2008

Brothers, Showtime; Paramount, Creators: Greg Antonacci, David Lloyd, 1984-1989

Buffy the Vampire Slayer, WB/UPN, Mutant Enemy/Twentieth Century Fox Television, Creator: Joss Whedon, 1996-2003

Bull, TNT; Warner Bros. Television/Nooch Company, Exec Prods. Ken Horton, Michael S. Chernuchin, Eric Laneuville, 2000

Californication, Showtime; Aggressive Mediocrity/And Then...; Creator: Tom Kapinos, 2007-

Capadocia, HBO; HBO Latin America/Argos, Exec prod. Andres Tagliavini, 2007

Carnivale, HBO; Three Arts Entertainment, Creator: Daniel Knauf, 2003-2005

Chappelle's Show, Comedy Central; Marobru Inc/Mobile Video Productions/Pilot Boy Productions, Creators: Neal Brennan, Dave Chappelle, 2003-2006

Cinemax Sessions, HBO/Cinemax, Prod Stephanie Bennett, 1986-unknown

Costas Now, HBO; HBO Sports, Exec Prods. Ross Greenburg, Rick Bernstein, 2005-

Crash, Starz; Lions Gate Television/Starz Entertainment; Creator: Glen Mazzara, 2008-

- CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, CBS; Jerry Bruckheimer/Alliance Atlantis, CBS Television Studios, Creator: Anthony E. Zuiker, 2000 -
- Curb Your Enthusiasm*, HBO; Production Partners, Creator: Larry David, 2000 -
- Damages*, FX; KZK Productions/FX Productions/Sony Pictures Television, Creators: Glenn Kessler, Todd A. Kessler, Daniel Zelman, 2007-
- Dane Cook's Tourgasm*, HBO; Superfinger Entertainment/The Jay & Tony Show, Creator: Dane Cook, 2006
- Dead Like Me*, Showtime; DLM Productions/John Massius Productions/MGM Television, Creator: Bryan Fuller, 2003-2004
- Deadwood*, HBO; Red Board Productions/Roscoe Productions/Paramount Television, Creator, David Milch, 2004-2006
- Def Comedy Jam*, HBO; Brillstein-Grey/Russell Simmons Television, Creator: Russell Simmons, 1992-1996; 2006-
- Def Poetry Jam*, HBO; Simmons-Lathan Media Group, Creator: Russell Simmons, 2002-
- Dennis Miller Live*, HBO; Happy Family Productions, Presenter: Dennis Miller, 1994-2002
- Desperate Housewives*, ABC; ABC Studios/Cherry Productions, Creator: Marc Cherry, 2004-
- Dexter*, Showtime; John Goldwyn Productions/The Colleton Company, Creator: James Manos Jr, 2006-
- Dirt*, FX; Coquette Productions/Matthew Carnahan Circus Productions/Touchstone Television/ABC Studios, Creator: Matthew Carnahan, 2007-2008
- Disneyland (The Wonderful World of Disney)*, ABC; Disney; Creator: Walt Disney, 1954-2008
- Doug*, Nickelodeon; Jumbo Pictures/Ellipse Programme, Creator: Jim Jinkins, 1991-1999
- Dream On*, HBO; MCA Television Entertainment, Creators: David Crane, Marta Kauffman, 1990-1996
- Dr Katz: Professional Therapist*, Comedy Central; HBO Downtown Productions, 1995-2002
- Duckman*, USA Network, Klaspy Csupo/Reno & Osborn Productions/Paramount Television Creator: Everett Peck, 1994-1997
- Eastbound and Down*, HBO; Enemy MIGs Productions/Gary Sanchez Productions, Creators: Ben Best, Jody Hill, Danny McBride, 2009-
- Encyclopedia*, HBO; CTW/Distinguished Productions, Prod. Patti Kaplan, 1988
- Epitafios*, HBO; HBO Latin America/Pok-Ka Productions, Exec Prods. Fernando Blanco, Luis Peraza, Adrian Suar, 2004

- Entourage*, HBO; Leverage Management, Creator: Doug Ellin, 2004 -
- Everybody Loves Raymond*, CBS; HBO Independent Productions/Warner Bros. Television, Creator: Philip Rosenthal, 1996-2005
- Extras*, HBO/BBC, Creators: Ricky Gervais, Stephen Merchant, 2005-2007
- Fallen Angels*, Showtime; Propaganda Films/Mirage Enterprises, Exec prod. Sydney Pollack, 1993-1995
- Family Bonds*, HBO; Cactus Three/Stick Figure Productions, Exec Prods. Nancy Abraham, Steven Cantor, Daniel Laikind, 2004
- Family Double Dare*, Nickelodeon; Games Productions, 1988
- Family Guy*, FOX; 20th Century Fox Television/Film Roman Productions/Fuzzy Door Productions, Creator: Seth MacFarlane, 1999-
- Fat Actress*, Showtime; Production Partners, Creators: Kirstie Alley, Brenda Hampton, 2005
- 1st & Ten*, HBO; Creator: Carl Kleinschmitt, 1984-1991
- Flight of the Conchords*, HBO; Dakota Pictures, Creators: James Bobin, Jemaine Clement, Bret McKenzie, 2007-
- Fraggle Rock*, HBO; The Jim Henson Company, Creator: Jim Henson, 1983-1987
- Fridays*, ABC; Moffitt-Lee Productions, Creators: Bill Lee, John Moffitt, 1980-1982
- Friends*, NBC; Warner Brothers/Bright/Kauffman/Crane Productions, Creators: David Crane, Marta Kauffman, 1994-2004
- Funny Or Die*, HBO; Funnyordie.com/Gary Sanchez Productions, Creators: Judd Apatow, Will Ferrell, Tim Heidecker et al, 2009-
- Game of Thrones*, HBO; Created By/Management 360, Creators: David Benioff, D.B. Weiss, 2011-
- Going to California*, Showtime; Columbia TriStar Television/Industry Entertainment/San Vicente Productions, Producer: Paul Kurta, 2001-2002;
- Grey's Anatomy*, ABC; ShondaLand/The Mark Gordon Company/Touchstone, Creator: Shonda Rhimes, 2005-
- Hardcore TV*, HBO; Creators: Steve Kerper, David Kolin, 1994
- Heroes*, NBC; NBC Studios/Tailwind Productions, Creator: Tim Kring, 2006-2010
- Hill Street Blues*, NBC; MTM, Creators: Steven Bochco, Michael Kozoll, 1981-1987
- Homicide: Life on the Street*, NBC; Baltimore Pictures, Creator: Paul Attanasio, 1993-1999

- House*, FOX; Hell & Toe Films/Shore Z Productions/Bad Hat Harry Productions/NBC Universal Television, Creator: David Shore, 2004-
- How I Met Your Mother*, CBS; 20th Century Fox Television/Bays Thomas Productions, Creators: Carter Bays, Craig Thomas, 2005-
- How to Make it in America*, HBO; Closest to the Hole Productions/Leverage Management, Creator: Ian Edelman, 2010-
- Huff*, Showtime; Sony Pictures Television/50 Cannon Entertainment/Bob Lowry Television Show, Creator: Bob Lowry, 2004-2006
- Hung*, HBO; Tennessee Wolf Pack, E1 Entertainment, Creators: Colette Burson, Dmitry Lipkin, 2009-
- I Love Lucy*, CBS; Desilu, Creators: Jess Oppenheimer, Madelyn Davis, Bob Carroll Jr. Bob Schiller, Bob Weiskopf, 1951-1957
- In Living Color*, FOX; 20th Century Fox Television/Ivory Way Productions, Creator: Keenan Ivory Wayans, 1990-1994
- Inside the NFL*, HBO; HBO Sports, 1977-2008
- In Treatment*, HBO; Closest to the Hole Productions, Exec Prods. Hagai Levi, Stephen Levinson, Mark Wahlberg, Paris Barclay, Anya Epstein, Dan Futterman, 2008-
- It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*, FX; Bluebush Productions/3 Art Entertainment/RCH/Sunny Television Productions, Creator: Rob McElhenney, 2005-
- It's Garry Shandling's Show*, Showtime; Our Production Company, Creators: Garry Shandling, Alan Zweibel, 1986-1990
- Jackass*, MTV; Dickhouse Productions; Creators: Johnny Knoxville, Spike Jonze, Jeff Tremaine, 2000-2002
- John from Cincinnati*, HBO; Red Board Productions/Saticoy Productions, Creators: David Milch, Kem Nunn, 2007
- Kids in the Hall*, HBO/CBS/CBC; Broadway Video International, Exec prod. Lorne Michaels, 1988-1994
- KO Nation*, HBO; HBO Sports, Prod. Thomas Odelfelt, 2000-
- K Street*, HBO; Section Eight/Sennet-Gernstein Entertainment, Exec Prods. George Clooney, Grant Heslov, Steven Soderbergh, 2003
- La Femme Nikita*, USA Network, Baton Broadcasting/CTV Television Network//Firework, Warner Brothers, Creator: Joel Surnow, 1997-2001
- LA Law*, NBC; Steven Bochco Productions/20th Century Fox Television, Creators: Steven Bochco, Terry Louise Fisher, 1986-1994

- Law and Order*, NBC; Dick Wolf Prods, Creator: Dick Wolf, 1990-2010
- Leap Years*, Showtime; MGM/Temple Street Productions, Creator: Daniel Lipman, 2001
- Linc's*, Showtime/New Millennium Studios, Exec Prods. Susan Fales-Hill, Tim Reid, 1998-2000
- Liquid Television*, MTV; CCHTV/Colossal Pictures/International Rocketship Limited, Exec prod. Japhet Asher, 1991-1994
- Little Britain USA*, HBO/BBC, 19 Entertainment, Creators: Matt Lucas, David Walliams, 2008
- Lost*, ABC; Bad Robot/Touchstone, Creator: J.J. Abrams, 2004-2010
- Lou Grant*, CBS; MTM, Creators: Allan Burns, James L. Brooks, Gene Reynolds, 1977-1981
- Lucky Louie*, HBO; HBO Independent Productions, Creator: Louis C.K., 2006
- Mad About You*; NBC; TriStar Television, Creators: Paul Reiser, Danny Jacobson, 1992-1999
- Mad Men*, AMC; Lions Gate Television, Creator: Matthew Weiner, 2007-
- Mandrake*, HBO; HBO Latin America/Conspiracao Filmes, Exec Prods. Luis Peraza, Jose Henrique Fonseca, 2005
- Martin*, FOX/HBO Independent Productions, Creators: John Bowman, Topper Carew, Martin Lawrence, 1992-1997
- M*A*S*H*, CBS; 20th Century Fox Television, Creator: H. Richard Hornberger, 1972-1983
- Maximum Security*, HBO; Exec Prods. Tony Ganz, Ron Howard, 1984
- Melrose Place*, FOX, Darren Star Productions/Spelling Television, Creator: Darren Star, 1992-1999
- Mind of the Married Man*, HBO; Greentrees Films/Sunlight Productions, Creator: Mike Binder, 2001-2002
- Modern Family*, ABC; 20th Century Fox Television/Picture Day Television, Creators: Steven Levitan, Christopher Lloyd, 2009-
- Monk*, USA Network; ABC Studios/Moratim Produktions/Mandeville Films/NBC Universal Television/Touchstone Television; Creator: Andy Breckman, 2002-2009
- Mr. Show with Bob and David*, HBO; Brillstein-Grey/Dakota North Entertainment, Creators: David Cross, Bob Odenkirk, 1995-1998
- Mystery Science Theatre 3000*, Comedy Channel/Comedy Central; Best Brains, Creator: Joel Hodgson, 1988-1999
- Nip/Tuck*, FX; Ryan Murphy Productions/Warner Bros. Television, Creator: Ryan Murphy, 2003-2010

- Not Necessarily the News*, HBO; Moffit-Lee Productions, Creator: John Moffitt, 1983-1991
- Nurse Jackie*, Showtime; Lions Gate Television/Caryn Mandabach Productions/Madison Grain Elevator,, Creators: Liz Brixius, Evan Dunsky, Linda Wallem, 2009-
- NYPD Blue*, ABC; 20th Century Fox Television/Steven Bochco Productions, Creators: Steven Bochco, David Milch, 1993-2005
- Odyssey 5*, Showtime; Columbia Tri-Star/Manny Coto Productions, Creator: Manny Coto, 2002-2004
- On the Record with Bill Costas*, HBO; HBO Sports, Exec Prods. Ross Greenburg 2001-2004
- Over There*, FX; 20th Century Fox Television/Steven Bochco Productions, Creators: Steven Bochco, Chris Gerolmo, 2005
- Oz*, HBO; Fontana-Levinson Prods, Creator: Tom Fontana, 1997-2003
- P Diddy Presents the Bad Boys of Comedy*, HBO; Bad Boy Films/Latham Entertainment, Exec Prods. Sean Combs, Walter Latham, 2005
- Penn & Teller: Bullshit!*, Showtime; Mobile Video Productions Inc./Penn & Teller/StarPrice Productions, Creators: Randall Moldave, Eric Small, 2003-
- Perversions of Science*, HBO; Chum Television, Exec Prods. Richard Donner, David Gilier, Walter Hill, Robert Zemeckis, 1997
- Politically Incorrect with Bill Maher*, Comedy Central/ABC; Brillstein-Grey, HBO Downtown Productions, 1993-1997 (Comedy Central); 1997-2002 (ABC)
- Poltergeist: The Legacy*, Showtime; PMP Legacy Productions/MGM, Creator: Richard Barton Lewis, 1996-1999
- Project Greenlight*, HBO; Live Planet/Miramax, Exec Prods. Chris Moore, Ben Affleck, Matt Damon, 2001; 2003
- Queer as Folk*, Showtime; Cowlip Productions/Tony Jonas Productions, Exec Prods. Ron Cowen, Tony Jonas, Daniel Lipman, 2000-2005
- Race for the Pennant*, HBO; HBO Sports, 1978-1992
- Real Sex*, HBO, Exec prod. Patti Kaplan, 1992 -
- Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel*, HBO; HBO Sports, 1995-
- Real Time with Bill Maher*, HBO; Brad Grey Television/Bill Maher Productions, Creator: Bill Maher, 2003-
- Red Shoe Diaries*, Showtime; AFRA Film Enterprises/Playboy Entertainment Group, Exec prod. Zalman King, 1992-1999

- Remember WENN*, AMC; Creator: Rupert Holmes, 1996-1998
- Ren & Stimpy*, Nickelodeon; Spumco/Games Animation, Creator: John Kricfalusi, 1991-1996
- Rescue Me*, FX; Apostle/The Cloudland Company/DreamWorks Television/Sony Pictures Television, Creators: Denis Leary, Peter Tolan, 2004-
- Resurrection Blvd.*, Showtime; Viacom Productions, Exec Prods. Dennis E. Leoni, Jack LoGiudice, Robert Eisele, 2000-2002
- Reverb*, HBO; Warner Music Group, Exec Prods. Jim Noonan, Will Tanous, 1997-2001
- Roc*, FOX/HBO Independent Productions, Creator: Stan Daniels, 1991-1994
- Rome*, HBO/BBC, Creator/Executive Producers, Bruno Heller, John Milius, William J. MacDonald, Frank Doelger, Anne Thomopoulos, John Melfi, 2005-2007
- Rude Awakening*, Showtime; Columbia, Creator: Claudia Lonow, 1998-2001
- Rugrats*, Nickelodeon; Klasy Csupo, Creators: Arlene Klasky, Gabor Csupo, Paul Germain, 1991-2004
- Saturday Night Live*, NBC/Broadway Video, Creator: Lorne Michaels, 1975-
- Scrubs*, NBC/ABC; Doozer Productions/ABC Studios/Towers Productions/Touchstone Television, Creator: Bill Lawrence, 2001-2008 (NBC); 2009-2010 (ABC)
- SCTV*, HBO/Cinemax; Old Firehall Productions, Creators: Bernard Sahlins, Andrew Alexander, 1983-1984
- Sex and the City*. HBO; Darren Star Productions, Creator: Darren Star, 1998-2004
- Shock Video*; HBO/Channel Four; World of Wonder, Exec Prods. Fenton Bailey, Randy Barbato, 1993 - (occasional)
- Short Attention Span Theatre*, Comedy Channel/Comedy Central; HBO Downtown Productions, Exec Prods. Nancy Geller, Julian Goldberg, 1989-1994
- Seinfeld*, NBC; Castle Rock Productions, Creator: Jerry Seinfeld, 1990-1998
- Sesame Street*, PBS; CTW, Creators: Joan Ganz Cooney, Lloyd Morrisett, 1969-
- Six Feet Under*, HBO; Actual Size Films/The Greenblatt/Janollari Studio, Creator: Alan Ball, 2001-2005
- Sons of Anarchy*, FX; Fox 21/20th Century Fox, Creator: Kurt Sutter, 2008-
- Soul Food*, Showtime; Waterworks LLC/Edmonds Entertainment Group/Paramount Television Productions, Exec Prods. Felicia D. Henderson, Charles Holland, Salim Akil, Kevin Arkadie, Tracey E. Edmonds, 2000-2004

- South Park*, Comedy Central; Braniff/Comedy Partners, Creators: Matt Parker, Trey Stone, 1997-
- Spawn*, HBO; HBO Animation/D.R. Movie, Exec prod. Todd McFarlane, 1997-1999
- Spicy City*, HBO; HBO Animation, Creator: Ralph Bakshi, 1997
- Stargate SG-1*, Showtime/Sci-Fi Channel/Sony; MGM, Exec Prods. John Smith, Robert C. Cooper, Michael Greenburg, 1997-2007
- Star Trek: Voyager*, UPN; Paramount Television, Creators: Rick Berman, Michael Piller, Jeri Taylor, 1995-2001
- Steambath*, Showtime; Warner Television, Exec Prods. Joe Byrne, Elias Davis, David Pollock, Jeb Rosebrook, 1983
- St. Elsewhere*, NBC; MTM, Creators: Joshua Brand, John Falsey, 1982-1988
- Street Time*, Showtime; Columbia TriStar Television/Sony/Celebrity Public Relations, Creator: Richard Stratton, 2002-2003
- Summer Heights High*, HBO; ABC TV Australia; Princess Pictures/ Creator: Chris Lilley, 2007
- Survivor*, CBS; Mark Burnett Productions/Castaway Television Productions, Creator: Charlie Parsons, 2000-
- Tales from the Crypt*, HBO; Tales from the Crypt Holdings/Warner Brothers Television, Creator/Exec Prods. William Gaines, Richard Donner, David Giler, Walter Hill, Joel Silver, David Geffen, Robert Zemeckis, 1989-1996
- Tales of the South Seas*, Network Ten; Gaumont Television/Network Ten, Exec Prods. Marla Ginsburg, Jeffrey M. Hayes, 1998
- Talk Soup*, E! Entertainment Television, Senior Producer: Mark Tye Turner, 1991-2002
- Taxi*, ABC; Paramount Television, Creators: James L Brooks, Stan Daniels, David Davis and Ed Weinberger, 1978-1982 (ABC), 1982-1983 (NBC)
- Tell Me You Love Me*, HBO; O&M/ANN SJM Productions/Pariah, Creator: Cynthia Mort, 2007
- The Chris Isaak Show*, Showtime; C.I. Productions/Once and Future Films/Phoenix Pictures; Creator: William Lucas Walker, 2001-2004
- The Chris Rock Show*, HBO; HBO Downtown Productions, Exec Prods. Chris Rock, Nancy Geller, 1997-2000
- The Colbert Report*, Comedy Central; Busboy Productions/Hello Doggie/Spartina Productions, Exec Prods. Stephen Colbert, Ben Karlin, Meredith Bennett, 2005-

The Closer, USA Network, The Shephard/Robin Company/Warner Bros. Television, Creator: James Duff, 2005-

The Comeback, HBO; Is or Isn't Entertainment/Working Class Films, Creators: Michael Patrick King, Lisa Kudrow, 2005

The Daily Show, Comedy Central/Comedy Partners/Mad Cow Productions, Creators: Madeline Smithberg, Liz Winstead, 1996 -

The Dead Zone, USA Network; CBS Paramount; Crescent Entertainment/Dead Zone Production, Creators: Michael Piller, Shawn Piller, 2002-2007

The 4400, USA Network; Renegade 83/American Zoetrope/CBS Paramount Network Television, Creators: Rene Echevarria, Scott Peters, 2004-2007

The Head, MTV; MTV Animation, 1994-1996, Creator: Eric Fogel

The High Life, HBO; Worldwide Pants Productions, Creator: Adam Resnick, 1996

The Hitchhiker, HBO/USA Network; Corazon Productions/Quintina Productions/Atlantique & Quintina Productions, Creators: Richard Rothstein, Lewis Chesler, 1983-1987 (HBO), 1989-1991 (USA Network)

The Honeymooners, CBS; Jackie Gleason Enterprises/Viacom, Exec Prods. Jack Philin, Stanley Poss, 1955-1956

The Hoop Life, Showtime; Hardwood Productions/Levinson-Fontana Company/Viacom Productions, Exec prod. Joe Cacaci, 1999

The Larry Sanders Show, HBO; Columbia Television/Brillstein-Grey, Creators: Garry Shandling, Dennis Klein, 1992-1998

The Life and Times of Tim, HBO; Good Humor Television/Media Rights Capital, Creator: Steve Dildarian, 2008-

The Lone Star Bar and Grill, Showtime, Producers: Frank Q. Dobbs, Philip D. Fehrie, 1983

The Lot, AMC; Rick Miltz Productions, Exec Prods. Paula Connelly Skorka, Marc Juris, Rick Mitz, Michael Ogiens, 1999-2001

The L Word, Showtime; Dufferin Gate Productions, Creator: Ilene Chaiken, 2004-

The Mary Tyler Moore Show, CBS; MTM, Creator: James L Brooks, 1970-1977

The Muppet Show, syndicated, ITC Entertainment/Henson Associates, 1976-1981

The Neistat Brothers, HBO; Creators: Casey Neistat, Van Neistat, 2010-

The No. 1 Lady's Detective Agency, HBO/BBC; The Weinstein Company, Exec Prods. Richard Curtis, Amy J. Moore, Anthony Mingella, Sydney Pollack, Bob Weinstein, Harvey Weinstein, 2008-

- The Office*, BBC; Creators: Ricky Gervais, Stephen Merchant, 2001-2003
- The Original Max Talking Headroom Show*, HBO/Cinemax; Chrysalis Visual Programming, Dir. Joshua White, 1987
- The Osbournes*, MTV, Big Head Productions/JOKS Productions; Exec Prods. Lois Curren, Greg Johnston, Sharon Osbourne, 2002-2005
- The Outer Limits*, Showtime/Sci-Fi Channel; MGM/Alliance Atlantis Communications, Exec Prods. Pen Densham, Richard Barton Lewis, John Watson, 1995-2002
- The Paper Chase*, CBS/Showtime; 20th Century Fox Television, Exec prod. Lynn Roth, CBS 1978-1979; Showtime, 1983-1986
- The Powerpuff Girls*, The Cartoon Network, Hanna-Barbera/Twenty First Century Animation, Creator: Craig McCracken, 1998-2005
- The Practice*, ABC, 20th Century Fox Television/David E. Kelley Productions, Creator: David E. Kelley, 1997-2004
- The Ray Bradbury Theater*, HBO; Alberta Filmworks/Atlantis Films/Ellipse Programme, Creator: Ray Bradbury, 1985-1986
- The Red Shoe Diaries*, Showtime; Republic Television, Exec prod. Zalman King, 1992-1999
- The Real World*, MTV; Bunim-Murray Productions, Creators: Mary-Ellis Bunim, Jonathan Murray, 1992-
- The Riches*, FX; Maverick Films, Creator: Dmitry Lipkin, 2007-2008
- The Ricky Gervais Show*, HBO/Channel Four, Media Rights Capital; Wild Brain Productions, Creators: Ricky Geravis, Stephen Merchant, Karl Pilkington, 2010-
- The Shield*, FX; The Barn Productions/Fox Television Studios/Sony Pictures Television, Creator: Shawn Ryan, 2002-2008
- The Simpsons*, FOX; Gracie Films/20th Century Fox Television, Creator: Matt Groening, 1989
- The Sopranos*, HBO; Brillstein-Grey, Creator: David Chase. 1999-2007
- The Tudors*, Showtime; Peace Arch Entertainment/Reveille Productions, Working Title Films/CBC, Creator: Michael Hirst, 2007-2010
- The Walking Dead*, AMC; Valhalla Motion Pictures/Circle of Confusion/AMC Studios, Creator: Frank Darabont, 2010-
- The West Wing*, NBC, Warner Brothers/John Wells Productions, Creator: Aaron Sorkin, 1999-2006
- The Wire*, HBO; Blown Deadline Productions, Creator: David Simon, 2002-2008

- The X-Files*, FOX; Ten Thirteen Productions/20th Century Fox Television, Creator: Chris Carter, 1993-2002
- 30 Days*, FX; Actual Reality Pictures/Bluebush Productions/Borderline TV, Creator: Morgan Spurlock, 2005-
- 30 Rock*, NBC; Broadway Video/Little Stranger/NBC Studios, Creator: Tina Fey, 2006-
- thirtysomething*, ABC; Bedford Falls Company/MGM/UA Television Group, Creators: Marshall Herskovitz, Edward Zwick, 1987-1991
- Tracey Takes On*, HBO; Takes On Productions Inc./Witzend Productions, Creators: Allan McKeown, Tracey Ullman, 1996-1999
- True Blood*, HBO; Your Face Goes Here Entertainment, Creator: Alan Ball, 2008-
- Treme*, HBO; Blown Deadline Productions, Creator: David Simon, 2010- 24, FOX; Imagine Entertainment/20th Century Fox Television, Creators: Joel Surnow, Robert Cochran, 2001-2010
- 20/20*, ABC; ABC News, Creator: Roone Arledge, 1978-
- Twin Peaks*, ABC; Lynch-Frost Productions, Creators: David Lynch, Mark Frost, 1990-1991
- United States of Tara*, Showtime; DreamWorks Television, Creator: Diablo Cody, 2009-
- Unscripted*, HBO; Section Eight, Exec Prods. Steven Soderbergh, George Clooney, 2005
- Weeds*, Showtime; Lions Gate Television/Tilted Productions/Weed Productions, Creator: Jenji Kohan, 2005-
- Weird Science*, USA Network; Universal, Exec prod. Leslie Belzberg, 1994-1997
- Who Wants to be a Millionaire*, ABC/Syndicated, Disney-ABC/Sony, Creators: Mike Whitehill, Steven Knight, 1999-
- Will and Grace*, NBC; KoMut Entertainment/Three Sisters Entertainment/NBC Studios, Creators: David Kohan, Max Mutchnick, 1998-2006
- Witchblade*, TNT, Blade TV Productions/Halsted Pictures, Creator: Ralph Hemecker, 2001-2002

Made-for-Television Films

- A Bright Shining Lie*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Labrador Films, Dir. Terry George, 1998
- Acts of Vengeance*, HBO; HBO Premiere Films/Frank Konigsberg Productions/Lorimar, Dir. John Mackenzie, 1986
- Afterburn*, HBO; HBO Pictures, Dir. Robert Markowitz, 1992

- Age Old Friends*, HBO; HBO Showcase/Central Independent Television, Dir. Allan Kroeker, 1989
- Against the Wall*, HBO; HBO Pictures, Dir. John Frankenheimer, 1994
- A Lesson Before Dying*, HBO; HBO NYC Productions/Ellen M. Krass Productions, Dir. Joseph Sargent, 1999
- Always Outnumbered*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Palomar Pictures, Dir. Michael Apted, 1998
- America's Dream*, HBO; Carrie Productions, Dirs. Paris Barclay, Bill Duke, Kevin Rodney Sullivan, 1996
- And Starring Pancho Villa as Himself*, HBO; HBO Films/City Entertainment/Green Moon Productions/The Mark Gordon Company, Dir. Bruce Beresford, 2003
- Angel Rodriguez*, HBO; HBO Films/C-Hundred Film Corporation/Journeyman Pictures, Dir. Jim McKay, 2006
- And the Band Played On*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Odyssey Motion Pictures/Spelling Entertainment, Dir. Roger Spottiswoode, 1993
- A Number*, HBO; HBO Films/BBC, Dir. James MacDonald, 2008
- Apology*, HBO; HBO Premiere Films/ASAP Production/Orbis, Dir. Robert Bierman, 1986
- A Private Matter*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Longbow Productions/Mirage Enterprises, Dir. Joan Micklin Silver, 1992
- As Summers Die*, HBO; HBO Premiere Films/Baldwin/Aldrich Productions, Dir. Jean-Claude Tramont, 1986
- As You Like It*, HBO; HBO Films/BBC Films/Shakespeare Film Company, Dir. Kenneth Branagh, 2007
- Attack of the 50 Ft. Woman*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Warner Brothers Television, Dir. Christopher Guest, 1993
- Baja Oklahoma*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Lorimar, Dir. Bobby Roth, 1988
- Barbarians at the Gate*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Columbia Pictures Television, Dir. Glenn Jordan, 1993
- Bastard Out of Carolina*, Showtime; Dir. Anjelica Huston, 1996
- Bernard and Doris*, HBO; HBO Films/Trigger Street Independent/Little Bird Productions, Dir. Bob Balaban, 2007
- Between Friends*, HBO; HBO Premiere Films/Robert Cooper Productions, Dir. Lou Antonio, 1983

- Blackout*, HBO; HBO Premiere Films/Roger Gimbel Productions/Peregrine Entertainment Ltd, Dir. Douglas Hickox, 1985
- Blind Side*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Chestnut Hill Productions, Dir. Geoff Murphy, 1993
- Blue Ice*, HBO; HBO Pictures/M&M Productions/BBC, Dir. Russell Mulcahy, 1992
- Body Language*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Interscope Communications, Dir. George Case, 1995
- Boycott*, HBO; HBO Films/Norman Twain Productions/Shelby Stone Productions, Dir. Clark Johnson, 2001
- Breast Men*, HBO; HBO Pictures, Dir. John Stockwell, 1997
- Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, HBO; HBO Films/Traveler's Rest Films/Wolf Films, Dir. Yves Simoneau, 2007
- By Dawn's Early Light*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Paravision International, Dir. Jack Sholder, 1990
- Capturing Mary*, HBO; HBO Films/BBC Films, Dir. Steven Poliakoff, 2007
- Cast a Deadly Spell*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Pacific Western, Dir. Martin Campbell, 1991
- Cheaters*, HBO; HBO Films/De Passe Entertainment, Dir. John Stockwell, 2000
- Cinema Verite*, HBO; HBO Films, Dirs. Shari Springer Berman, Robert Pulcini, 2011
- Citizen Cohn*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Breakheart Films/Spring Creek Productions, Dir. Frank Pierson, 1992
- Citizen X*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Citadel Entertainment, Dir. Chris Gerolmo, 1995
- Clinton and Nadine*, HBO; HBO Pictures/ITC/Polygam, Dir. Jerry Schatzberg, 1988
- Comrades of Summer*, HBO; HBO Pictures, Dir. Tommy Lee Wallace, 1992
- Condominium*, syndicated/Universal TV, Dir. Sidney Hayers, 1980
- Conspiracy*, HBO; HBO Films/BBC Films, Dir. Frank Pierson, 2001
- Conspiracy: The Trial of the Chicago Eight*, HBO; HBO Showcase/Inter Planetary, Dir. Jeremy Kagan, 1987
- Control*, HBO; HBO Showcase/Alliance Entertainment/Cinecitta, Dir. Giuliano Montaldo, 1987
- Cosmic Slop*, HBO; The Hudlin Brothers, Dir. Reginald Hudlin, Warrington Hudlin, Kevin Rodney Sullivan, 1994
- Countdown to Looking Glass*, HBO, Dir. Fred Barzyk, 1984
- Crime of the Century*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Astoria Productions, Dir. Mark Rydell, 1996

- Criminal Justice*, HBO; HBO Showcase/Elysian Films/Granada, Dir. Andy Wolk, 1990
- Dancing in September*, HBO; HBO Films/StarRise Entertainment/WeeCan Productions, Dir. Reggie Rock Blythewood, 2000
- Daybreak*, HBO; HBO Showcase, Dir. Stephen Tolkin, 1993
- Dead Ahead: The Exxon Valdez Disaster*; HBO; HBO Showcase/BBC, Dir. Paul Seed, 1992
- Deadlock*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Spectacor Films, Dir. Lewis Teague, 1991
- Deadly Voyage*, HBO/BBC; HBO NYC Productions/Viva Films, Dir. John Mackenzie, 1996
- Dead Silence*, HBO; HBO Pictures//Alliance Communications Corporation, Dir. Daniel Petrie Jr, 1997
- Dead Solid Perfect*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Lorimar, Dir. Bobby Roth, 1988
- Descending Angel*, HBO; HBO Pictures, Dir. Jeremy Kagan, 1990
- Dinner with Friends*, HBO; HBO Films/ Nina Saxon Film Design, Dir. Norman Jewison, 2001
- Dirty Pictures*, Showtime; MGM Television/The Manheim Television, Director: Frank Pierson, 2000
- Dirty War*, HBO; HBO Films/BBC Films, Dir. Daniel Percival, 2004
- Disappearing Acts*, HBO; HBO Films/Amen Ra Films, Dir. Gina Prince-Blythewood, 2000
- Don King: Only in America*, HBO; HBO Pictures/HBO Sports/LaFray Inc/The Thomas Carter Company, Dir. John Herzfeld, 1997
- Don't Look Back*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Alphaville Films, Dir. Geoff Murphy, 1996
- Doomsday Gun*, HBO; HBO Showcase/Griffin Productions, Dir. Roger Young, 1994
- Doublecrossed*, HBO; HBO Pictures, Dir. Roger Young, 1991
- Draw!* HBO; HBO Premiere Films/Astral Film Production Ltd/Holster Productions, Dir. Steven Hilliard Stern, 1984
- Earthly Possessions*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Rastar, Dir. James Lapine, 1999
- Einstein & Eddington*, HBO; HBO Films/BBC Films, Dir. Philip Martin, 2008
- El Diablo*, HBO; HBO Pictures, Dir. Peter Markle, 1990
- Everyday People*, HBO; HBO Films/Alphaville Films/Journeyman Pictures/Urban Romances, Dir. Jim McKay, 2004
- Excellent Cadavers*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Tidewater Entertainment, Dir. Ricky Tognazzi, 1999

- Falcon's Gold*, Showtime; Entrepid Productions Inc/Paul Heller Productions/San Vincente Productions, Dir. Bob Schultz, 1982
- Fatherland*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Eis Film, Dir. Christopher Menaul, 1994
- Fellow Traveller*, HBO; HBO Showcase/BBC/BFI, Dir. Philip Saville, 1990
- Fever*, HBO; HBO Pictures, Dir. Larry Elikann, 1991
- Finnegan Begin Again*, HBO; HBO Premiere Films/Zenith Entertainment/Consolidated Productions, Dir. Joan Micklin Silver, 1985
- First-Time Felon*, HBO; HBO NYC Productions/Spring Creek Productions, Dir. Charles S. Dutton, 1997
- Florida Straits*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Orion/Robert Cooper Films, Dir. Mike Hodges, 1986
- Forbidden*, HBO; HBO Premiere Films/Clasart Film and TV Produktions GmbH, Dir. Anthony Page, 1984
- For Love or Country*, HBO; HBO Films/CineSon Entertainment/Jellybean Productions, Dir. Joseph Sargent, 2000
- For Richer, For Poorer*; HBO; HBO Pictures/Citadel Entertainment, Dir. Jay Sandrich, 1992
- Fortress*, HBO; HBO Premiere Films/Crawford Productions, Dir. Arch Nicholson, 1984
- Framed*, HBO; HBO Pictures, Dir. Dean Parisot, 1990
- Full Eclipse*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Citadel Entertainment, Dir. Anthony Hickox, 1993
- George Wallace*, TNT, Dir. John Frankenheimer, 1997
- Gia*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Marvin Worth Productions/Citadel Entertainment, Dir. Michael Cristofer, 1998
- Gotti*, HBO; HBO Pictures, Dir. Robert Harmon, 1996
- Grey Gardens*, HBO; HBO Films/Et Cetera Films/Locomotive, Dir. Michael Sucsy, 2009
- Gulag*, HBO; HBO Premiere Films/Lorimar Pictures, Dir. Roger Young, 1984
- Half a Lifetime*, HBO; HBO Showcase/Motion International, Dir. Daniel Petrie, 1986
- Halpern & Mr Johnson*, HBO; HBO Premiere Films; Dir. Alvin Rakoff, 1983
- Hostages*, HBO; HBO Showcase/Granada, Dir. David Wheatley, 1992
- Hostile Waters*, HBO/BBC; HBO NYC Productions, Dir. David Drury, 1997
- Hotel Room*; HBO; Assymetrical Productions/Propaganda Films, Dir. David Lynch, 1993

- Hysterical Blindness*, HBO; HBO Films/Blum Israel Productions/Karuna Dream, Dir. Mira Nair, 2002
- If These Walls Could Talk*, HBO; HBO NYC Productions/Moving Pictures, Dirs. Cher, Nancy Savoca, 1996
- If These Walls Could Talk II*, HBO; HBO Films/Team Todd, Dirs. Jane Anderson, Martha Coolidge, Anne Heche, 2000
- Indictment: The McMartin Trial*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Abby Mann Productions/Breakheart Films, Dir. Mick Jackson, 1995
- In Pursuit of Honor*, HBO; HBO Pictures, Dir. Ken Olin, 1995
- Inside a Terrorist Bombing*, HBO; HBO Showcase/BBC, Dir. Mike Beckham, 1990
- In the Gloaming*, HBO; HBO NYC Productions/Frederick Zollo Productions, Dir. Christopher Reeve, 1997
- Intimate Contact*, HBO; HBO/Central Television/Zenith Entertainment, Dir. Waris Hussein, 1987
- Into the Homeland*, HBO; HBO Pictures, Dir. Lesli Linka Glatter, 1987
- Into the Storm*, HBO; HBO Films/BBC Films, Dir. Thaddeus O'Sullivan, 2009
- Introducing Dorothy Dandridge*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Esparza-Katz Productions, 1999
- Iron Jawed Angels*, HBO; HBO Films/Blue Dominion Productions Inc./Bluebird House, Dir. Katja von Garnier, 2004
- J. Edgar Hoover*, Showtime, Dir. Robert E. Collins, 1987
- Joe's Palace*, HBO; HBO Films/BBC Films; Dir. Stephen Poliakoff, 2007
- Judgment*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Tisch/Wigutow/Hershman Productions, Dir. Tom Topor, 1990
- Lackawanna Blues*, HBO; HBO Films, Dir. George C. Wolfe, 2005
- Laguna Heat*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Lorimar, Dir. Simon Langton, 1987
- Lansky*, HBO; HBO Pictures/ Frederick Zollo Productions, Dir. John McNaughton, 1999
- Last of the Blonde Bombshells*, HBO; HBO Films/BBC Films/Working Title Pictures, Dir. Gillies MacKinnon, 2000
- Life Support*, HBO; HBO Films/Flavor Unit Entertainment/Urban Romances, Dir. Nelson George, 2007
- Lip Service*, HBO; HBO Showcase/Filmhaus, Dir. William H. Macy, 1988

- Live from Baghdad*, HBO; HBO Films/Industry Entertainment, Dir. Mick Jackson, 2002
- Longford*, HBO/Channel Four; HBO Films/Granada Television, Dir. Tom Hooper, 2006
- Long Gone*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Lorimar, Dir. Martin Davidson, 1987
- Louisiana*, HBO; HBO/Antenne-2, International Cinema, RAI, Dir. Philippe de Broca, 1984
- Lumumba*, HBO; Arte/Canal +/CNC; Dir. Raoul Peck, 2000; 2002 (HBO)
- Mandela*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Polymuse Productions/Titus Productions, Dir. Philip Saville, 1987
- Mandela and de Klerk*, Showtime; Hallmark Entertainment/Film Afrika Worldwide, Dir. Joseph Sargent, 1997
- Miss Evers' Boys*, HBO; HBO NYC Productions/Anasazi Productions, Dir. Joseph Sargent, 1997
- Mistrial*, HBO; HBO NYC Productions, Dir. Heywood Gould, 1996
- Montana*, TNT; HBO Pictures/Roger Gimbel Productions/Zoetrope Studios, Dir. William A. Graham, 1990
- Mrs. Harris*, HBO; HBO Films/Killer Films, Dir. Phyllis Nagy, 2005
- Murderers Among Us: The Simon Wiesenthal Story*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Citadel Entertainment, Dir. Brian Gibson, 1989
- Murrow*, HBO; HBO Premiere Films/TAFT Entertainment Pictures/TVS Films, Dir. Jack Gold, 1986
- Mussolini: The Rise and Fall of Il Duce*, HBO; HBO Premiere Films/RAI/Antenne-2, Dir. Alberto Negrin, 1985
- My House in Umbria*, HBO; HBO Films/Canine Films/Panorama Films, Dir. Richard Loncraine, 2003
- My Zinc Bed*, HBO; HBO Films/BBC Films, Dir. Anthony Page, 2008
- Norma Jean & Marilyn*, HBO; HBO Pictures, Dir. Tim Fywell, 1996
- Normal*, HBO; HBO Films/Avenue Pictures, Dir. Jane Anderson, 2003
- One Man's War*, HBO; HBO Showcase/Film Four, Dir. Sergio Toledo, 1991
- Path to Paradise: The Untold Story of the World Trade Center Bombing*, HBO; HBO NYC Productions, Dirs. Leslie Libman, Larry Williams, 1997
- Path to War*, HBO; HBO Films/Avenue Pictures/Edgar J. Scherick Associates, Dir. John Frankenheimer, 2002

- Perfect Witness*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Granger Productions, Dir. Robert Mandel, 1989
- Pirates of Silicon Valley*, TNT; Haft Entertainment/St. Nick Productions, Dir. Martyn Burke, 1999
- Point of Origin*, HBO; HBO Films/New Redemption Pictures, Dir. Newton Thomas Sigel, 2002
- Poodle Springs*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Avnet/Kerner Productions/Mirage Enterprises, Dir. Bob Rafelson, 1998
- Primo*, HBO; HBO Films/BBC Films, Dir. Robin Lough, 2005
- Prisoner of Honor*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Drefuss/James Productions/Etude/Warner Bros, Dir. Ken Russell, 1991
- Prison Stories: Women on the Inside*, HBO; HBO Showcase, Dirs. Donna Deitch, Joan Micklin Silver, Penelope Spheeris, 1991
- Rasputin*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Citadel Entertainment/Rysher, Dir. Uli Edel, 1996
- Real Women Have Curves*, HBO; HBO Films/LaVoo Productions, Dir. Patricia Cardoso, 2002
- Rebound: The Legend of Earl 'The Goat' Manigault*, HBO; HBO Pictures/The Badham Company/Way Out Pictures, Dir. Eriq La Salle, 1996
- Red King, White Knight*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Citadel Entertainment, Dir. Geoff Murphy, 1989
- Reunion at Fairborough*, HBO; HBO Premiere Films/Columbia Pictures Television, Dir. Herbert Wise, 1985
- Right of Way*, HBO; HBO Premiere Films/Post-Network Video/Schaefer/Karpf Productions, Dir. George Schaefer, 1983
- RKO-281*, HBO; HBO Pictures/BBC/Scott-Free Productions, Dir. Benjamin Ross, 1999
- Running Mates*, HBO; HBO Pictures, Dir. Michael Lindsay-Hogg, 1992
- Sakharov*, HBO; HBO Premiere Films/Titus Productions Limited, Dir. Jack Gold, 1984
- Session Man*, Showtime; Chanticleer Films, Dir. Seth Winston, 1991
- Shot in the Heart: I Was Gary Gilmore's Brother*, HBO; HBO Films/The Levinson-Fontana Company, Dir. Agnieszka Holland, 2001
- Shot Through the Heart*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Alliance Communications Corporation/BBC, Dir. David Attwood, 1998
- 61**, HBO; HBO Films/HBO Sports; Dir. Billy Crystal, 2001
- Somebody Has to Shoot the Picture*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Alan Barnette Productions/MCA Television Entertainment, Dir. Frank Pierson, 1990

- Something the Lord Made*, HBO; HBO Films/Nina Saxon Film Design, Dir. Joseph Sargent, 2004
- Sometimes in April*, HBO; HBO Films/CINEFACTO/Velvet Film, Dir. Raoul Peck, 2005
- Soul of the Game*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Gary Hoffman Productions/Mike Medavoy Productions, Dir. Kevin Rodney Sullivan, 1996
- Stalin*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Magyar Televizo/Novofilm/Trite Productions, Dir. Ivan Passer, 1992
- State of Emergency*, HBO; HBO Showcase/Bruin Grip Services/Chestnut Hill Productions, Dir. Lesli Linka Glatter, 1994 *State of Emergency*, HBO; HBO Showcase/Bruin Grip Services/Chestnut Hill Productions, Dir. Lesli Linka Glatter, 1994
- Steal the Sky*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Triumph Pictures, Dir. John D. Hancock, 1988
- Stranger Inside*, HBO; HBO Films/C-Hundred Film Corporation/Stranger Baby Productions, Dir. Cheryl Dunye, 2001
- Strapped*, HBO; HBO Showcase/Osiris Films, Dir. Forest Whitaker, 1993
- Strip Search*, HBO; HBO Films/Levinson-Fontana, Dir. Sidney Lumet, 2004
- Subway Stories: Tales from the Underground*, HBO; HBO NYC Productions/Clinica Estetico/Ten i a Car Productions, Dirs. Bob Balaban, Patricia Benoit, Julie Dash, Jonathan Demme, Ted Demme, Abel Ferrara, Alison Maclean, Craig McKay, Lucas Platt, Seth Zvi Rosenfeld, 1997
- Sugartime*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Pacific Western, Dir. John N. Smith, 1995
- Sword of Gideon*, HBO; HBO Premiere Films/Alliance Entertainment, Dir. Michael Anderson, 1986
- Tailspin: The Korean Airliner Tragedy*, HBO; HBO Showcase/Granada, Dir. David Darlow, 1989
- Teamster Boss: The Jackie Presser Story*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Abby Mann Productions, Dir. Alastair Reid, 1992
- Temple Grandin*, HBO; HBO Films/Ruby Films, Dir. Mick Jackson, 2010
- Tender is the Night*, BBC; 20th Century Fox Television/Showtime, Dir. Robert Knights, 1985
- The Affair*, HBO/BBC; HBO Showcase/Black Tuesday Films, Dir. Paul Seed, 1995
- The Baby Dance*, Showtime; Egg Pictures/Pacific Motion Pictures Corporation, Dir. Jane Anderson, 1999
- The Blood of Others*, HBO; Antenne-2, Telefilm Canada, International Cinema, Dir. Claude Chabrol, 1984

- The Burning Season*, HBO; HBO Pictures, Dir. John Frankenheimer, 1994
- The Cherokee Kid*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Spring Creek Productions, Dir. Paris Barclay, 1996
- The Christmas Wife*, HBO; HBO Showcase, Dir. David Hugh Jones, 1988
- The Cold Room*, HBO; HBO Premiere Films/MCEG/Sterling Entertainment/Jethro Films Productions/Mark Forstater Productions, Dir: James Dearden, 1984
- The Day After*, ABC; ABC Circle Films, Dir. Nicholas Meyer, 1983
- The Enemy Within*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Vincent Pictures, Dir. Jonathan Darby, 1994
- The Fever*, HBO; HBO Films/BBC, Dir. Carlo Gabriel Nero, 2004
- The Gathering Storm*, HBO; HBO Films/BBC Films, Dir. Richard Loncraine, 2002
- The Girl in the Cafe*, HBO; HBO Films/BBC Films/Working Title Films, Dir. David Yates, 2005
- The Glitter Dome*, HBO; HBO Premiere Films/Telepictures Corporation, Dir. Stuart Margolin, 1984
- The Guardian*, HBO; HBO Premiere Films/Robert Cooper Productions, Dir. David Greene, 1984
- The Hamburg Cell*, HBO/Channel Four, Dir. Antonia Bird, 2004
- The Heist*, HBO; HBO Pictures, Dir. Stuart Orme, 1989
- The Image*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Citadel Entertainment, Dir. Peter Werner, 1990
- The Impossible Spy*, HBO Showcase/BBC, Dir. Jim Goddard, 1987
- The Infiltrator*, HBO; HBO Showcase/Carnival Films/Francine LeFrak Productions, Dir. John Mackenzie, 1995
- The Jack Bull*, HBO; HBO Pictures/The Badham Company, Dir. John Badham 1999
- The Josephine Baker Story*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Anglia Television/RHI Entertainment, Dir. Brian Gibson, 1991
- The Laramie Project*, HBO; HBO Films/Good Machine/Cane/Gabay Productions, Dir. Moises Kaufman, 2002
- The Last Innocent Man*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Maurice Singer Productions, Dir. Roger Spottiswoode, 1987
- The Last of his Tribe*, HBO; HBO Pictures/River City Productions Inc., Dir. Harry Hook, 1992
- The Last Outlaw*; HBO; HBO Pictures, Dir. Geoff Murphy, 1993

- The Late Shift*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Northern Lights Entertainment, Dir. Betty Thomas, 1996
- The Laundromat*, HBO; HBO/Byck-Lancaster Production/Sandcastle 5 Productions, Dir. Robert Altman, 1985
- The Life and Death of Peter Sellers*, HBO; HBO Films/BBC Films, Dir. Stephen Hopkins, 2004
- The Lion of Africa*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Lorimar/Triumph Pictures, Dir. Kevin Connor, 1987
- The Man Who Broke a Thousand Chains*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Triumph Pictures, Dir. Daniel Mann, 1987
- The Max Headroom Show*, HBO; Channel Four/HBO/Chrysalis Visual Programming, Dirs. Annabel Jankel, Rocky Morton, 1985
- The Middle Passage*, HBO; Les Films du Dorlis/R.F.O.; Dir. Guy Deslauriers, 2000; 2002 (HBO)
- The Park is Mine*, HBO; HBO Premiere Films/Ramble Film Productions/International Cinema, Dir. Steven Hilliard Stern, 1985
- The Pentagon Wars*, HBO; HBO NYC Productions/Jersey Films, Dir. Richard Benjamin, 1998
- The Positively True Adventures of the Alleged Texas Cheerleader-Murdering Mom*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Frederick S. Pierce Company, Dir. Michael Ritchie, 1993
- The Quick and the Dead*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Lorimar, Dir. Robert Day, 1987
- The Ratings Game*, Showtime; Viacom Productions, Dir. Danny DeVito, 1984
- The Rat Pack*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Original Film, Dir. Rob Cohen, 1998
- The Second Civil War*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Baltimore Pictures, Dir. Joe Dante, 1997
- The Special Relationship*, HBO; HBO Films/BBC Films, Dir. Richard Loncraine, 2010
- The Terry Fox Story*, HBO; HBO Premiere Films/Robert Cooper Productions, Dir. Ralph L. Thomas, 1983
- The Tracker*, HBO; HBO Pictures/ITC/Polygram, Dir. John Guillermin, 1988
- The Tragedy of Flight 103: The Inside Story*, HBO; HBO Showcase/Granada, Dir. Leslie Woodhead, 1990
- The Trial of James Earl Ray*, HBO; HBO Showcase, 1993
- The Tuskegee Airmen*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Price Entertainment, Dir. Robert Markowitz, 1995
- Third Degree Burn*, HBO; HBO Pictures, Dir. Roger Spottiswoode, 1989

- Tidy Endings*, HBO; HBO/Sandollar, Dir. Gavin Millar, 1988
- Time Flies When You're Alive*, HBO; HBO Showcase, Dir. Roger Spottiswoode, 1989
- Timeslip*, HBO/Cinemax/Channel Four, Dir. Will Patterson, 1985
- To Catch a King*, HBO; HBO Premiere Films/Entertainment Partners/Gaylord Productions, Dir. Clive Donner, 1984
- Traveling Man*, HBO; HBO Pictures, Dir. Irvin Kershner, 1989
- Truman*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Spring Creek Productions, Dir. Frank Pierson, 1995
- Tuesdays with Morrie*, CBS; Carlton America/Harpo Productions, Dir. Mick Jackson, 1999
- 12:01 PM*, Showtime; Chanticleer Films, Dir. Jonathan Heap, 1990
- Tyson*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Edgar J. Scherick Associates, Dir. Uli Edel, 1995
- Undefeated*, HBO; HBO Films/Forensic Films/Hart-Sharp Entertainment, Dir. John Leguizamo, 2003
- Vendetta*, HBO; HBO Pictures, Dir. Nicholas Meyer, 1999
- Waldheim: A Commission of Inquiry*, HBO; HBO/Thames Television, Prod. Jack Saltman, 1988
- Walkout*, HBO; HBO Films/Esparza/Katz Productions/Olmos Productions, Dir. Edward James Olmos, 2006
- Warm Springs*, HBO; HBO Films/The Mark Gordon Company, Dir. Joseph Sargent, 2005
- Weapons of Mass Distraction*, HBO; HBO Pictures, Dir. Stephen Surjik, 1997
- When Trumpets Fade*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Citadel Entertainment, Dir. John Irvin, 1998
- White Mile*; HBO; HBO Pictures/Stonehenge Productions/Viacom Productions, Dir. Robert Butler, 1994
- Whitewash*, HBO/BBC, Dir. Michael Sporn, 1994
- Winchell*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Fried Films, Dir. Paul Mazursky, 1998
- Wit*, HBO; HBO Films/Avenue Pictures, Dir. Mike Nichols, 2001
- Witch Hunt*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Pacific Western, Dir. Paul Schrader, 1994
- Without Warning: The James Brady Story*, HBO; HBO Pictures/Enigma Films, Dir. Michael Toshiyuki Uno, 1991
- Witness Protection*, HBO; HBO NYC Productions/TurtleBack Productions, Dir. Richard Pearce, 1999

Women & Men: True Stories of Seduction, HBO; HBO Showcase, Dirs. Frederic Raphael, Tony Richardson, Ken Russell, 1990

Women & Men II: In Love There Are No Rules, HBO; HBO Showcase, Dirs. Jonathan Demme, Kristi Zea, Mike Figgis, 1991

World War III, NBC; David Greene Productions, Dirs. David Greene, Boris Sagal, 1982

Yesterday, HBO; HBO Films/Distant Horizon/Dv8/Exciting Films, Dir. Darrell Roodt, 2004

You Don't Know Jack, HBO; HBO Films/Bee Holder Productions/Royal Oak Films, Dir. Barry Levinson, 2010

Yuri Nosenko, HBO; HBO Showcase/BBC, Dir. Mick Jackson, 1986

Miniseries and Limited Series

A Dangerous Life, HBO Pictures/McElroy & McElroy, Dir. Robert Markowitz, 1987

All the Rivers Run, HBO Premiere Films/Crawford Productions, Dirs. Pino Amento, George Miller, 1983

Angels in America, HBO; Avenue Pictures, Dir. Mike Nichols, 2003

Band of Brothers, HBO/DreamWorks, Creator/Executive Producer, Steven Spielberg, Tom Hanks, Preston Smith, Erik Jendresen, Stephen Ambrose, 2001

Band of Gold, HBO/ITV, Granada, Exec Prods. Gub Neal, Sally Head, 1995-1997

Bonanno: A Godfather's Story, Showtime; Armeda Ltd/Daniel L. Paulson Productions, Dir. Michael Poulette, 1999

Broken Trail, AMC; Butcher's Run Films/Once Upon a Time Films, Dir. Walter Hill, 2006

David Copperfield, BBC/Time Life Television Productions, Producers, John McRae, Dan Coney, 1974

Elizabeth I, HBO/Channel Four; HBO Films/Company Pictures, Dir. Tom Hooper, 2005

Empire Falls, HBO; HBO Films/Marc Platt Productions/Aspetuck Productions, Dir. Fred Schepisi, 2005

From the Earth to the Moon, HBO; Imagine Television, Exec prod. Tom Hanks, 1998

Generation Kill, HBO; HBO Films/Blown Deadline Productions, Creators: David Simon, Ed Burns, 2008

Gettysburg, TNT; TriStar Television/Esparza/Katz Productions/Turner Pictures, Dir. Ronald F. Maxwell, 1993

- Glory! Glory!* HBO/Atlantis Films/The Greif-Dore Company, Dir. Lindsay Anderson, 1989
- Grand Avenue*, HBO; Elsboy Entertainment/Wildwood Enterprises, Dir. Daniel Sackheim, 1996
- Heidi*, BBC, 1974
- House of Saddam*, HBO; HBO Films/BBC Films, Exec Prods. Alex Holmes, Hilary Salmon, 2008
- John Adams*, HBO; Playtone; High Noon Productions, Exec Prods. Frank Doelger, Tom Hanks, 2008
- Laurel Avenue*; HBO/HBO Independent Productions, Dir. Carl Franklin, 1993
- More Tales of the City*, Showtime; Channel Four; Les Productions La Fete Inc., Propaganda Films, Exec Prods. Tim Bevan, Susanne Girard, Alan Poul, 1998
- Philip Marlowe: Private Eye*, HBO Premiere Films/London Weekend Television, Dir. Peter R. Hunt, 1983
- Roots*, ABC; Daniel L. Wolper Productions/Warner Brothers Productions, Creator: Alex Haley, 1977
- Sessions*, HBO; Castle Rock, Creator: Billy Crystal, 1991
- Sleeper Cell*, Showtime; Creators: Ethan Reiff, Cyrus Voris, 2005
- Spartacus: Blood and Sand*, Starz; Starz Media; Starz Productions, Creator: Steven S. DeKnight, 2010-
- Tanner '88*, HBO; Dir. Robert Altman, 1988
- Thanks of a Grateful Nation*, Showtime; Adelson Entertainment/Tracey Alexander Productions, Dir. Rod Holcomb, 1999
- The Corner*, HBO; HBO, Blown Deadline Productions, Creator: David Simon, 2000
- The Devil's Whore*, HBO; HBO Films/Channel Four/Company Pictures, Creators: Martine Brant, Peter Flannery, 2008
- The Far Pavilions*, HBO Premiere Films/Goldcrest Films International/Geoffrey Reeve and Associates, Dir. Peter Duffell, 1984
- The Pacific*; HBO; HBO Films/Playtone, DreamWorks SKG, Exec Prods. Gary Goetzman, Tom Hanks, Bruce C. McKenna, Steven Spielberg, Graham Yost, 2010
- The Pallisers*, BBC, Dir. Martin Lisemore, 1974
- Tsunami: The Aftermath*, HBO/BBC, HBO Films/Kudos Productions, Dir. Bharat Nalluri, 2006

Vietnam War Story, HBO; HBO/Nexus Productions/Consolidated Productions, Exec Prods. Jim Anderson, Patrick Sheane Duncan, 1987-1989

Wild Palms, ABC; Greengrass Productions, Exec Prods. Oliver Stone, Bruce Wagner, 1993

Documentaries

Abortion: Desperate Choices, HBO; Maysles Films, Dirs. Deborah Dickson, Susan Fromke, Albert Maysles, 1992

A Boy's Life, HBO, Dirs. Rory Kennedy, Nick Doob, 2003

A Century of Living, HBO; Dir. Imre Horvath, 1999

Acts of Violence, HBO, Dir. Imre Horvath, 1984

Addiction, HBO; Exec prod. Sheila Nevins, 2007

A Father...a Son...Once Upon a Time in Hollywood, HBO; Dir. Lee Grant, 2005

A Great Day in Harlem, HBO/Cinemax, Dir. Jean Bach, 1994

AIDS: Everything You and Your Family Need to Know, HBO, 1987

Aileen: Life and Death of a Serial Killer, HBO/Channel Four, Dir. Nick Broomfield, 2004

Alison's Baby, HBO/Cinemax, Dir. Bente Milton, 2002

Alive Day Memories: Home from Iraq, HBO; Dirs. Jon Alpert, Ellen Goosenberg Kent, 2007

America Undercover, HBO, Exec prod. Bridget Potter (1984-1996); Sheila Nevins, 1996-

American Hollow, HBO; Dir. Rory Kennedy, 1999

American Standoff, HBO, Dir. Kristi Jacobson, 2002

An American Family, PBS, Dir. Alan and Susan Raymond, 1973

An American Family Revisited: The Louds 10 Years Later, HBO. Dirs. Alan Raymond, Susan Raymond 1983

Autism: The Musical, HBO, Dir. Tricia Regan, 2007

Autopsy: Confessions of a Medical Examiner, Exec prod. Sheila Nevins, 1994- (various)

Autopsy 8: Dead Giveaway, HBO; Dir. Arthur Ginsburg, 2002

Bach in Auchswitz, HBO/Cinemax, Dir. Michael Daeron, 1999

Baghdad ER, HBO, Dir. Jon Alpert, 2006

Bastards of the Party, HBO; Dir. Cle Shaheed Sloan, 2007

Beah: A Black Woman Speaks, HBO, Dir. Lisa Gay Hamilton, 2003

Being Homosexual, HBO, Dir. Malcolm Clarke, 1984

Bellevue: Inside Out, HBO, Dir. Maryann DeLeo, 2001

Black Sun, HBO/Cinemax, Dir. Gary Tam, 2007

Black Tar Heroin: The Dark End of the Street, HBO; Dir. Steven Okazaki, 1999

Blue Vinyl, HBO; Dirs. Daniel B. Gold, Judith Helfand, 2002

Body Doubles: The Twin Experience, HBO; Dir. Antony Thomas, 1998

Boffo! Tinseltown Bombs and Blockbusters, HBO; Dir. Bill Couturie, 2006

Born into Brothels: Calcutta's Red Light Kids, HBO/Cinemax, Dirs. Zana Briski, Ross Kauffman, 2004

Born Rich, HBO; Dir. Jamie Johnson, 2003

Breathing Lessons, HBO/Cinemax, Dir. Jessica Yu, 1996

Brothers Lost: Stories of 9/11, HBO, Dir. Sean McGinly, 2006

Calling Dr. Kevorkian, HBO; Prod. Sheila Nevins, 1997

Calling the Ghosts: A Story of Rape, War and Women, HBO/Cinemax, Dir. Jude Ray, 1997

Cathouse, HBO, Prod. Patti Kaplan, 2002; 2003; 2008; 2009

Celibacy, HBO; Dir. Antony Thomas, 2004

Chernobyl Heart, HBO; Dir. Maryann DeLeo, 2003

Children of the Abyss, HBO/Cinemax, Dir. Pavel Chukhraj, 2002

Chris Columbo: House Arrest, HBO; Exec Prods. Christopher Gambale, Sheila Nevins, Judith Regan, 2005

Cinemax Reel-Life, HBO/Cinemax, Exec prod. Sheila Nevins, 1995 -

Comandante, HBO, Dir. Oliver Stone, 2003

Come Unto Me: The Faces of Tyree Guyton, HBO/Cinemax, Dir. Nicole Cattell, 1999

Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt, HBO, Dirs. Rob Epstein, Jeffrey Friedman, 1989

Consumer Reports, HBO/Consumers Union; Producer: Alvin Perlmutter, 1981 - (occasional)

- Convicts on the Street: One Year on Parole*, HBO, Dir. Alex Estrada, 1990
- Coupling: Other Choices*, HBO, Prod. Sheila Nevins, 1980
- Crack USA: County Under Siege*, HBO, Dirs. Vince DiPersio, Bill Guttentag, 1989
- Dad*, HBO/Cinemax, Dir. Chris Triffo, 1999
- Dead Blue: Surviving Depression*, HBO; Dir. Earnes Yates, 1998
- Dead Men Talking: An Autopsy Special*, HBO; Dir. Arthur Ginsberg, 2001
- Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam*, HBO, Dir. Bill Couturie, 1987
- Decoys: Police Under Cover*, HBO, Prod. Michael Scott, 1982
- Devil's Playground*; HBO/Cinemax/Channel Four, Dir. Lucy Walker, 2002
- Diary of a Political Tourist*, HBO; Dir. Alexandra Pelosi, 2004
- Down and Out in America*, HBO, Dir. Lee Grant, 1986
- Downtown Girls: Hookers of Honolulu*, HBO; Dir. Brent Owens, 2005
- Dragtime*, HBO, Dir. Patti Kaplan, 1997
- Drop Dead Gorgeous*, HBO, Dir. Steve Moore, 1997
- Drunk and Deadly? Do the Guilty Go Free?* HBO, Dir. Malcolm Clarke, 1988
- Dwarfs: Not a Fairy Tale*, HBO; Dir. Lisa Abelow Hedley, Bonnie Strauss, 2001
- Eagle Scout: The Story of Henry Nicholas*, HBO; Dir. Michael Ryan, 1995
- Educating Peter*, Dir. Gerardine Wurzburg, 1992
- Elaine Stritch at Liberty*, HBO; Dirs. Nick Doob, Chris Hegedus, Rick McKay, D.A. Pennebaker, Andy Picheta, 2002
- Elvis 56*, HBO/Cinemax, Dirs. Alan Raymond, Susan Raymond, 1987
- Eros America*, HBO/Cinemax, Prod. Sheila Nevins, 1983
- Eros International*, HBO/Cinemax, Prod. Sheila Nevins, 1985
- Execution: Fourteen Days in May*, HBO/BBC, Dir. Paul Hamann, 1988
- Execution Machine: Texas Death Row*, HBO; Dir. Marc Levin, 1997
- Faces of Addiction*, HBO/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Exec prod. Sheila Nevins, 1997
- Fashion Victim: The Killing of Gianni Versace*, HBO/Cinemax/BBC, Dir. James Kent, 2001

Fatal Twisters: A Season of Fury, HBO, Dir. Vince DiPersio, 1999

Ferry Tales, HBO/Cinemax, Dir. Katja Esson, 2003

Fetishes, HBO/Cinemax/Channel Four, Dir. Nick Broomfield, 1996

Fighting Grandpa, HBO/Cinemax, Dir. Greg Pak, 1999

First Love, Fatal Love, HBO, Dir. Helen Whitney, 1991

Flashback, HBO, Prod. Sheila Nevins, 1982 (occasional)

4 Little Girls, HBO; Forty Acres and a Mule Productions, Dir. Spike Lee, 1997

Friends of God: A Road Trip with Alexandra Pelosi, HBO, Dir. Alexandra Pelosi, 2007

Gang War: Bangin' in Little Rock, HBO, Dir. Marc Levin, 1994

Gang War 2: Back in the Hood, HBO; Dir. Marc Levin, 2004

Gladiator Days: Anatomy of a Prison Murder, HBO; Dir. Marc Levin, 2002

God Sleeps in Rwanda, HBO; Dirs. Kimberlee Acquaro, Stacy Sherman, 2005

Grist for the Mill, HBO/Cinemax, Dir. Cynthia Wade, 1999

G-String Divas, HBO; Producer: Patti Kaplan, 2000

Hacking Democracy, HBO; Dirs. Russell Michaels, Simon Ardizzone, 2006

Heidi Fleiss: Hollywood Madam, HBO/Cinemax/Channel Four, Dir. Nick Broomfield, 1996

Heir to an Execution, HBO; Dir. Ivy Meeropol, 2004

Hell on Earth, HBO/Cinemax, Dir. Vojtech Jasny, 2002

Helmut by June, HBO/Cinemax Dir. June Newton, 2007

Hookers at the Point, HBO, Dir. Brent Owens, 1997

How to Raise a Drug-Free Child, HBO, Prod. Sheila Nevins, 1989

I am a Promise: The Children of Stanton Elementary School, HBO, Dirs. Alan and Susan Raymond, 1993

Illustrated: The Making of the Swimsuit Issue, HBO/Sports Illustrated, 1989

Indian Point: Imagining the Unimaginable, HBO; Dir. Rory Kennedy, 2004

In Memoriam: New York City 11/9/01, HBO; Prod. Sheila Nevins, 2002

Inside Deep Throat; HBO; Universal/Imagine, Dirs. Fenton Bailey, Randy Barbato, 2005

Iraq in Fragments, HBO/Cinemax, Dir. James Longley, 2006

I Remember, HBO/Cinemax, Dir. Andrzej Wajda, 2002

Jockey, HBO, Dir. Kate Davis, 2004

Journeys with George, HBO, Dir. Alexandra Pelosi, 2002

Jupiter's Wife, HBO/Cinemax; Dir. Michel Negroponte, 1995

Juror Number 5: 58 Days of Duty on the O.J. Simpson Civil Trial, HBO; Dirs. Fenton Bailey, Randy Barbato, 1999

Just, Melvin, HBO, Dir. James Roland Whitney, 2000

Juvies, HBO; Dir. Leslie Neale, 2004

Kim Cattrall's Sexual Intelligence, HBO; Dir. Catherine Annau, 2005

Lalee's Kin, HBO; Dirs. Deborah Dickson, Susan Froemke, Albert Maysles, 2001

Last Letters Home: Voices from the Battlefields of Iraq, HBO; Dir. Bill Couturie, 2004

Lenny Bruce: Swear to Tell the Truth, HBO; Dir. Robert Weide, 1999

Life of Crime 2, HBO; Dir. Jon Alpert, 1998

Lifestories: Families in Crisis; HBO, Exec Prods. Francine Lefrak, Eve Silverman, Charles Zalben, 1992-1996

Living Dolls: The Making of a Child Beauty Queen, HBO; Dir. Shari Cookson, 2001

Looking for Fidel, HBO, Dir. Oliver Stone, 2004

Memphis PD: War on the Streets, HBO; Dir. Bill Guttentag, 1996

Men Are from Manhattan....Women Are From Saskatchewan, HBO/Cinemax, Dir. Steve Manin, 1998

Mighty Times: The Legacy of Rosa Parks, HBO, Dir. Robert Houston, 2002

Mob Stories, HBO, Dir. Marc Levin, 1993

Mo' Funny: Black Comedy in America, HBO; Dir. Yvonne Smith, 1993

Monica in Black and White, HBO; Dirs. Fenton Baileu, Randy Barbato, 2002

Mr. Conservative: Goldwater on Goldwater, HBO; Dir. Julie Anderson, 2006

Mumia Abu-Jamal: A Case for Reasonable Doubt? HBO; Dir. John Edginton, 1996

Murder: No Apparent Motive, HBO, Dir. Imre Horvath, 1984

My Flesh and Blood, HBO, Dir. Jonathan Karsh, 2003

My Uncle Berns, HBO; Dir. Lindsay Crystal, 2004

Naked States, HBO; Dir. Arlene Nelson, 2000

Note of Triumph: The Golden Age of Norman Corwin, HBO; Dir. Eric Simonson, 2006

No Umbrella: Election Day n the City, HBO/Cinemax, Dir. Laura Paglin, 2006

One Man's Fight for Life, HBO, Dir. Michael Scott, 1983

One Survivor Remembers, HBO; Dir. Kary Antholis, 1996

One Year in a Life of Crime, HBO, Dir. Jon Alpert, 1989

Orphans of Nkandla, HBO/Cinemax/BBC, Dir. Brian Woods, 2005

Out at Work, HBO; Dir. Kelly Anderson, Tami Gold, 1999

Pandemic: Facing AIDS, HBO, Dir. Rory Kennedy, 2003

Panic: A Film About Coping, HBO; Dir. Earnes Yates, 1999

Paradise Lost: The Child Murders at Robin Hood Hills, HBO; Dirs. Joe Berlinger, Bruce Sinofsky, 1996

Party Monster, HBO; Dirs. Randy Barbato, Fenton Bailey, 1998

Paternal Instinct, HBO/Cinemax, Dir. Murray Nossel, 2004

Persona Non Grata, HBO, Dir. Oliver Stone, 2003

Pimps Up, Ho's Down, HBO, Dir. Brent Owens, 1998

Plastic Disasters, HBO; Dirs. Kate Davis, David Heilbroner, 2006

Porncuopia: Going Down in the Valley, HBO; Prod. Sheila Nevins, Steve Ziplow, 2004

P.O.V., PBS;;The American Documentary, Creator: Marc Weiss, 1988-

Pretty Things, HBO; Dir. Liz Goldwyn, 2005

Primary, ABC/Robert Drew Associates, Dir. Robert Drew, 1961

Prison Life: Prisoners on the War on Drugs, HBO; Dir. Marc Levin, 1996

Private Dicks: Men Exposed, HBO, Dirs. Thom Powers, Meema Spadola, 1998

- Protocols of Zion*, HBO; Dir. Marc Levin, 2005
- Remember When*, HBO, Prod. Sheila Nevins, 1981
- Reno Finds Her Mom*, HBO; Dir. Lydia Dean Pilcher, 1998
- Sexual Abuse of Children: Beyond the Secret*, HBO, Dir. Dennis Lofgren, 1985
- Shelter Dogs*, HBO, Dir. Cynthia Wade, 2003
- She's Nobody's Baby*, HBO/Ms. Magazine, Prod. Sheila Nevins, 1982
- Showgirls: Glitz and Angst*, HBO; Dir. Kirby Dick, 2003
- Smoke Alarm: The Unfiltered Truth About Cigarettes*, HBO; Prod. Sheila Nevins, Joyce H. Newman, 1996
- Smoking: Everything You and Your Family Need to Know*, HBO, Prod. Sheila Nevins, 1989
- Soldiers in Hiding*, HBO, Dir. Malcolm Clarke, 1985
- Soldiers in the Army of God*, HBO; Dirs. Marc Levin, Daphne Pinkerson, 2000
- Songs and Daughters: A Father's Day Trilogy*, HBO/Cinemax; Exec Prod. Sheila Nevins, 1999
- Southern Comfort*, HBO; Dir. Kate Davis, 2001
- Southern Justice: The Murder of Medgar Evers*, HBO/BBC, Exec Prods. Paul Hamann, Sheila Nevins, 1994
- Speaking in Strings*, HBO/Cinemax, Dir. Paolo Di Florio, 1999
- Stepping Out: The DeBolts Grow Up*, HBO, Prod. Sheila Nevins, 1982
- Suicide*, HBO, Dir. Eames Yates, 2001
- Sunrise over Tianenman Square*, HBO/Cinemax; Dir. Shui-Bo Wang, 1999
- Super Chief*, HBO/Cinemax, Dir. Nick Kurzon, 1999
- Surveillance....No Place to Hide*, HBO, Dir. Joseph Angier, 1987
- Suzi's Story*, HBO, 1988
- Talking Sex: Making Love in the 90s*, HBO, Prod. Ellen Goosenberg Kent, 1994
- Tantrums and Tiaras*, HBO/Cinemax; Rocket Pictures, Dir. David Furnish, 1997
- Taxicab Confessions*, HBO; Prods. Harry Gantz, Joe Gantz, 1995-
- Taxicab Confessions 2001: All's Fare in Love and Vegas*, HBO, Prods. Tony Gantz, Joe Gantz, 2001

- Taxicab Confessions 2002: A Fare to Remember*, HBO; Prods. Harry Gantz, Joe Gantz, 2002
- Telling Nicholas*, HBO, Dir. James Ronald Whitney, 2002
- Terror in Moscow*, HBO/Channel Four, Dir. Dan Reed, 2003
- The Adoption Picnic*, HBO/Cinemax; Dir. Joanna Head, 1999
- The Aristocrats*, HBO; Dir. Paul Provenza, 2005
- The Best Hotel on Skid Row*, HBO, Dirs. Renee Tajima and Christine Choy, 1990
- The Black List*, HBO; Dir. Timothy Greenfield-Sanders, 2008
- The Broadcast Tapes of Dr Peter*, HBO; Paperny Films, Dir. David Paperny, 1993
- The Burger and the King: The Life and Cuisine of Elvis Presley*, HBO/Cinemax, Dir. James Marsh, 1996
- The Celluloid Closet*, HBO/Channel Four, Brillstein-Grey/Arte/Telling Pictures/Sony Pictures Classics, Dirs. Rob Epstein, Jeffrey Friedman, 1993 (HBO)
- The Death of Kevin Carter: A Casualty of the Bang Bang Club*, HBO; Dir. Dan Krauss, 2004
- The Dying Rooms*, HBO/Cinemax/Channel Four, Dirs. Kate Blewett, Brian Woods, 1996
- The Selling of Innocents*, Dir. Ruchira Gupta, 1996
- The End*, HBO/Cinemax, Dirs. Kirby Dick, Eddie Schmidt, 2004
- The Eyes of Tammy Faye*, HBO/Cinemax, Dirs. Fenton Bailey, Randy Barbato, 2003
- The Execution of Wanda Jean*, HBO; Dir. Liz Garbus, 2002
- The Gospel According to Jesus*, HBO/Cinemax, Dir. Norris J. Chumley, 1995
- The Great Consumer Rip-Off*, HBO, Prod. Sheila Nevins, 1979
- The Iceman Confesses: Secrets of a Mafia Hitman*, HBO; Dir. Arthur Ginsburg, 2001
- The Iceman Tapes: Conversations with a Killer*, Exec Prods. Sheila Nevins, Jim Thebaut, 1992
- The Journalist and the Jihadi: The Murder of Daniel Pearl*, HBO, Dir. Ahmed Jamal, Ramesh Sharma, 2006
- The Latin Kings: A Street Gang Story*, HBO, Dir. Jon Alpert, 2003
- The Living Museum*, HBO; Dir. Jessica Yu, 1999
- The McCourts of Limerick*, HBO/Cinemax, Dir. Conor McCourt, 1999
- The Moon and the Sun: An Imagined Conversation*, HBO, Dir. John Canemaker, 2006

- The Mushroom Club*, HBO; Dir. Steven Okazaki, 2005
- The Nightmare of Cocaine*, HBO, Dirs. Peter Greenberg and Fleming Fuller, 1984
- The Search for Mengele*, HBO/BBC, Dir. Brian Moser, 1985
- The Sex Inspectors*, HBO/Channel Four; TalkBack Productions, Executive Producers: Daisy Goodwin, Steph Harris, 2004
- The Struma*, HBO, Dir. Simcha Jancobovichi, 2003
- The Toxic Time Bomb: The Fight Against Deadly Pollution*, HBO, Prod. Ann Hassett, Dave Bell, 1984
- The Young and the Dead*, HBO; Dirs. Shari Springer Berman, Robert Pulcini, 2000
- Three Sisters: Searching for a Cure*, HBO; Dir. Joseph F. Lovett, 2004
- Thug Life in DC*, HBO; Dir. Marc Levin, 1998
- Time Was*, HBO, Prod. Sheila Nevins, 1979
- To Love Or Kill: Man vs. Animal*, HBO, Dir. Antony Thomas, 1996
- 12th & Delaware*, HBO; Dirs. Heidi Ewing, Rachel Grady, 2010
- 22 Women on 41 Breasts*, HBO/Cinemax, Dirs. Thom Powers, Meema Spadola, 1997
- 27th & Prospect: One Year in the Fight Against Drugs*, HBO; Dirs. Karen Goodman, Kirk Simon 1997
- Twist of Faith*, HBO; Dir. Kirby Dick, 2005
- Vigilante*, HBO, Dir. Malcolm Clarke, 1987
- Violence: An American Tradition*, HBO; Narr: Julian Bond, 1996
- Warning: Dieting May be Hazardous to Your Health*, HBO, Prod. Sheila Nevins, 1989
- War Photographer*, HBO, Dir. Christian Frei, 2003
- What Remains: The Life and Work of Sally Mann*, HBO/Cinemax, Dir. Steven Cantor, 2007
- What Sex Am I?* HBO, Dir. Lee Grant, 1985
- When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts*, HBO; Forty Acres & a Mule, Dir. Spike Lee, 2006
- When Women Kill*, HBO, Dir. Lee Grant, 1983
- Wisconsin Death Trip*, HBO/Cinemax/BBC, Dir. James Marsh, 1999

Without Pity: A Film About Abilities, HBO; Dir. Michael Mierendorf, 1996

Yesteryear, HBO, Prod. Sheila Nevins, 1982

Comedy and Variety Specials

Ann Magnuson's Vandemonium, HBO/Cinemax/Broadcast Arts Productions, Dirs. Steve Oakes, Tom Rubnitz, Newton Thomas Sigel, 1987

Bruce Willis: The Return of Bruno, HBO/Cinemax/Hudson Hawks Films Ltd/Split Screen Inc, Dir. James Yukich, 1987

Cinemax Comedy Experiments, HBO/Cinemax, Prod. Chris Albrecht, 1985-1988

Comic Relief, HBO, 1986-2002 (occasional)

Eddie Murphy: Delirious, HBO, Dir. Bruce Gowers, 1983

HBO Comedy Hour, HBO, 1987- (various)

HBO Comedy Half-Hour, HBO, Exec prod. Sandy Chanley, 1995-

HBO One Night Stand, HBO, Exec Prods. John Moffitt, Pat Tourk Lee (various), 1989-

Heartbeat, HBO/Cinemax; CBS Music Video Enterprises/Don Johnson Productions, Dir. John Nicolella, 1987

It's Just TV, HBO/Cinemax, Prod. Harry Shearer, 1985

Mondo Beyondo, HBO/Cinemax/Berner/Schlamme Production/Miss M Productions, Dir. Thomas Schlamme, 1988

On Location, HBO, 1976 -

On Location: George Carlin at USC, HBO, Dir. Marty Callner, 1977

Really Weird Tales, HBO/Cinemax/Atlantis Films, Exec Prods. Joe Flaherty, Michael MacMillan, 1987

Sandra After Dark, HBO, Dir. John Boskovich, 1992

Spic-O-Rama, HBO, Dir. Peter Askin, 1993

Standing Room Only, HBO, 1977 -

The Appointments of Dennis Jennings, HBO/Schooner Productions, Dir. Dean Parisot, 1988

The Naked Truth, HBO, 1992

This Was Burlesque, HBO, *On Location*, 1977

Tracey Takes On...New York, HBO, Dir. Don Scardino, 1993

Tracey Takes On...The Class System, HBO/ITV, 1993

Uptown Comedy Express, HBO, Dir. Russ Petranto, 1987

Viva Shaf Vegas, HBO/Cinemax/Paul Shaffer Enterprises Inc., Dir. Harry Shearer, 1986

Women of the Night, HBO, Dir. Ellen Brown, 1987

HBO Sports Documentaries

A Cinderella Season: The Lady Vols Strike Back, HBO; HBO Sports, Dirs. Jon Alpert, Maryann DeLeo, 1999

Ali-Frazier I: One Nation Divisible, HBO; HBO Sports, Prod. Ross Greenburg, 2000

Arthur Ashe: Citizen of the World; HBO; HBO Sports, Dir. Julie Anderson, 1994

Assault in the Ring, HBO; HBO Sports, Dir. Eric Drath, 2009

Billie-Jean King: Portrait of a Pioneer, HBO; HBO Sports, Prod. Ross Greenburg, 2006

Bill Russell: My Way, My Life, HBO; HBO Sports, Prod. Ross Greenburg, 2000

Dare to Dream: The Story of the US Women's Soccer Team, HBO; HBO Sports, Prod. Ross Greenburg, 2006

Fields of Fire: Sports in the 60s, HBO; HBO Sports, Exec prod. Ross Greenburg, 1995

Fists of Freedom: The Story of the '68 Summer Games, HBO; HBO Sports, Dir. George Roy, 1999

Hard Knocks: Training Camp, HBO; HBO Sports, Exec Prods. Rick Bernstein, Ross Greenburg, 2001- (various)

Jim Brown: All American, HBO; HBO Sports, Dir. Spike Lee, 2002

Long Shots: The Life and Times of the American Basketball Association, HBO; HBO Sports, Exec prod. Ross Greenburg, 1997

Mantle: The Definitive Story of Mickey Mantle, HBO; HBO Sports, Prod. Ross Greenburg, 2006

Nine Innings from Ground Zero, HBO; HBO Sports, Prod. Ross Greenburg, 2006

OJ: A Study in Black and White, HBO; HBO Sports, Exec Prods. Rick Bernstein, Margaret Grossi, 2002

Perfect Upset: The 1985 Villanova vs. Georgetown NCAA Championship, HBO; HBO Sports, Prod. Jordan Kranis, 2005

Picture Perfect: The Stories Behind the Greatest Photos in Sports, HBO; HBO Sports/Sports Illustrated, Dir. Frank Deford, 2002

Rebels with a Cause: The Journey of the American Football League, HBO; HBO Sports, Exec prod. Ross Greenburg, 1995

Sonny Liston: The Mysterious Life and Death of a Champion, HBO; HBO Sports, Dir. Jeff Lieberman, 1995

When It Was a Game, HBO; HBO Sports/Black Canyon Productions, Exec prod. Ross Greenburg, 1991

When It Was a Game II, HBO; HBO Sports/Black Canyon Productions, Exec prod. Ross Greenburg, 1992

When it Was a Game III, HBO; HBO Sports, Prod. Ross Greenburg, 2000

:03 from Gold, HBO; HBO Sports, Prod. Ross Greenburg, 2002

HBO Family

Chain Camera; HBO; HBO Family, Dir. Kirby Dick, 2001

Crashbox, HBO; HBO Family, Exec prod. Sheila Nevins, 1999

30x30 Kid Flicks, HBO; HBO Family, Exec prod. Sheila Nevins, 2001-2003

Televised Plays

American Playhouse, PBS, 1982-

Barefoot in the Park, HBO, Dir. Harvey Medlinsky, 1981

Broadway on Showtime, Showtime, 1979- (various)

Bus Stop, HBO, Dir. Peter H. Hunt, 1982

Camelot, HBO, Dir. Marty Callner, 1982

HBO Comedy Playhouse, HBO, Prod. Bridget Potter, 1984-1985

HBO Family Playhouse, HBO, Prod: Bridget Potter, 1984-1985

HBO Theatre, HBO, Producer: Michael Fuchs, Bridget Potter, 1981-1982

Separate Tables, HBO, Dir. John Schlesinger, 1982

Vanities, HBO, Dir. Gary Halvorson, 1981

Wait Until Dark, HBO, Dir. Barry Davis, 1982

Pilots

Cinemax Movie Experiment, HBO, Prod. Chris Albrecht, 1988

Disco Beaver from Outer Space, HBO; National Lampoon, Dir. Joshua White, 1979

Loco Slam!, HBO, Prod. John Leguizamo, 1994

Midnight Mac, HBO, Creator: Bernie Mac, 1995

Night Rap, HBO/Chris Bearde Productions, Producer: Chris Bearde, 1991

Over Here, Mr. President, HBO; Lorimar, 1983

People Cover Story, Time-Life Productions, 1979

Sit-Com, PBS, 1979

Society's Ride, HBO, Prod. Rosie Perez, 1993

Stopwatch, HBO/Barry Levinson, 1983

Strangers, HBO; Prism Entertainment Dir. Joan Tewkesbury, 1992

Tenacious D, HBO; Dakota North Entertainment, Creators: Jack Black, Kyle Gass, David Cross, Bob Odenkirk, 1997

The Investigators: Crusading Reporters of the Air, HBO, 1984

Theatre

Caroline, or Change, Carole Shorenstein Hays/HBO/Jujamcyn Theaters, Prods. Tony Kushner, Jeanine Tesori, Dir. George C. Wolfe, 2004