

NBC hopes to breathe new life into 'Real Life'

New season to feature harder-hitting stories

By Amy Schmidt

She may be America's TV-journalism sweetheart, but how have real ratings treated NBC's "Real Life With Jane Pauley?"

"Lousy," says Steve Friedman, producer of "NBC Nightly News" and now "Real Life With Jane Pauley." "That's why we're changing it. Most people who saw the show last year thought she was great and the show wasn't."

"Real Life" makes its season premiere on a new night, Friday, Sept. 6, and the new producer plans to do right by his star. There's no reason not to, given the fact that Pauley holds more audience appeal than just about any other female journalist on TV. "If you just do an acceptable program, she's enough to carry you over the top."

Part of the problem has been that "Real Life" lacks a format. People don't know what they're going to see when they tune in, says Friedman. This year's new model will feature additional journalists building an ensemble news group around Jane, a signature piece by Pauley at each show's end, and tougher issues.

"I think what they did last year was what I would call 'nice pieces,'" says Friedman. "What they tried to do is only deal with little problems affecting a lot of people. When they talked about real life, it was with real people not in real trouble. There was very little conflict and very little emotion," says Friedman.

Last season's profile of Pete Rose went so well, Friday's premiere episode will feature another celebri-

ty-talk-show host, Oprah Winfrey, her life, her loves and her successes. The following week, how to spot steroid use by sons, brothers and boyfriends will be the topic, and "scud-stud" NBC correspondent Arthur Kent will be on hand putting out oil fires in Kuwait.

"Friday night is definitely going to be a more hospitable time period for us," says Pauley. The former "Today" host admits her husband, cartoonist Garry Trudeau, might be watering geraniums in the yard, she could be reading inside, and both would forget to watch her show on Sundays. "Sunday is just an odd time, not to mention highly competitive, so Friday will definitely be better for us. But the flip side of that is that the expectation will be higher, too."

As the new television season begins to fire up, "Real Life" will face opposition from ABC's "Family Matters," CBS' "Princesses," starring Twiggy Lawson, and "America's Most Wanted" on Fox.

"Real Life" will aim for an older "thirtysomething" audience, leaving

"Family Matters" and "Princesses" to the kids. Pauley believes Friedman will also draw a bigger following with more promotional spots this season than last. "I call Steve the 'promotionmeister.' He believes in banging the drum, so we'll probably get the drums banged a little better," says Pauley.

Friedman, however, is careful to point out that all news and information series take time to find an audience, and that no program including "60 Minutes," "20/20," and "Prime-time Live," scored big its first year. "What we're going through, everybody else has already gone through," he says—but no matter what the ratings, don't look for Deborah Norville to sub-host anytime soon.

(Cover)

Hard-hitting stories and celebrity interviews may give "Real Life With Jane Pauley" a boost up the ratings ladder. The show's new season begins Friday on a new night on NBC.

Q: I would like to know about Jeff Wincott of Night Heat. Could I have his address so I can write to him? I am also a big fan of Joe Penny of Jake and the Fatman. —Laytona Ponce, Meridian, Mo.

A: You can write Jeff Wincott c/o Shapiro and Associates, 15301 Ventura Boulevard, Suite 345, Sherman Oaks, Calif., 91403. And the address for Joe Penny is c/o Viacom Productions, 10 Universal City Plaza, Universal City, Calif., 91608.

Q: I have been watching Wimbledon. I am a fan of Boris Becker and Gabriela Sabatini. Would you please let me know

where I may write to them? —Larry Wade III, Nacogdoches, Texas.

A: You can write Becker c/o TV Enterprises, 251 East 49th Street, New York, N.Y., 10017. You can write Sabatini c/o ProServe, 1101 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 1800, Arlington, Va., 22209.

Send your questions about the world of entertainment to Let's Talk, Features Dept., P.O. Box 961009, Fort Worth, Texas, 76161-1009. Because of the volume of mail, only questions of general interest can be answered.

TV WEEKLY

 <p>IMPORT AUTO SUPPLY</p> <p>PARTS & SERVICE</p> <p>PROFESSIONAL SERVICE • QUALITY PARTS</p>	<p>We Service All Imported Automobiles</p> <p>474-7744</p> <p>31151 TEN MILE ROAD</p> <p>EAST OF ORCHARD LAKE</p> <p>FARMINGTON HILLS</p>		<p>IMPORT AUTOS ONLY</p> <p>10% OFF</p> <p><small>Any Repairs Over \$100.00 With This Coupon Expires 9/30/91</small></p>