

BITS AND PIECES

Couric pulls her weight on 'Today Show'

Cherchez la femme. NBC's *Today Show* recently tied ABC's *Good Morning America* for the No. 1 position in ratings among early-morning network programs. That's no easy feat, for *Good Morning America* has held the top spot for 118 of the last 119 weeks, including five other weeks when the two were tied. One probable reason for the ratings climb of *Today* is perky Katie Couric, who celebrated her first anniversary as the show's co-anchor last month. Perhaps Bryant Gumbel should dash off a memo thanking his co-anchor for adding a pleasant personality to the show, which has been in sore need of one since Jane Pauley's departure.



Katie Couric

A long way from *Saturday Night Live*, funnyman Chevy Chase will try his luck (and wit) as the host of a late-night talk show for Fox, debating most likely in the summer of 1993. Chase also agreed to develop and produce other programs over a period of years and star in a future movie for the network. In his typical manner, Chase said the talk show "will be an exact copy of *David Letterman*" without the gap between his teeth. That's a lie, which, of course, my show will be. In order to better understand what will make this new and different, call Jerry Brown's 800 number."

The late Alex Haley, author of the epic miniseries *Roots*, was working on a novel dramatizing the life of his paternal grandmother at the time of his death last February. A deal for a CBS miniseries had already been made, so executive producers David L. Wolper and Bernard Sofronski are carrying on with the project using a script adapted by David Stevens.

Queen (the working title) boasts a fine cast including Halle Berry in the title role, Ann-Margret, Martin Sheen, Tim Daly, Sada Thompson, Ossie Davis, and Danny Glover. Production has begun in South Carolina.

TIME OUT

HBO scores three Sports Emmys

By Steve Paschal

Home Box Office made a name in television sports by hyping big-money fights that often don't live up to their billing. But the premium cable channel took a serious step toward respectability at last month's Sports Emmy Awards in New York.

HBO's two-part special, *Play-By-Play: A History of Sports Television* garnered three awards at the April 20 ceremony, including the prestigious special award for Program Achievement. Producers Ross Greenburg, Rick Bernstein and Paulette Douglas, along with director Marc Payton, succeeded in making a program that is both informative and entertaining. A documentary on this subject was long overdue and should become required viewing in college media classes.

At press time, HBO had no immediate plans to rebroadcast the two-part program in its entirety, but part two is scheduled to encore on Monday, June 8.

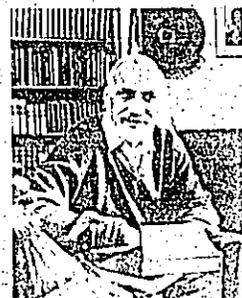
This was no flash in the pan for the cable channel. HBO, despite airing far fewer hours of sports than the competition, had eight total nominations. Its five-E Emmy total was just one less than front-runner CBS and equaled the number won by ABC, NBC and ESPN. The HBO sports special *When It Was a Game* received three nods and *Inside The NFL* garnered one. HBO was also nominated for its promotion of the Foreman vs. Ellis heavyweight bout.



Friday on *Entertainment Tonight*, Candice Bergen discusses Murphy Brown's imminent delivery.



Brigitte Bako stars in Zalman King's steamy *Red Shoe Diaries*, premiering Saturday on Showtime.



Anthropologist David Maybury-Lewis anchors *Millennium*, beginning Monday on PBS.