

FAMILY FABLE

'Ask Mr. Wizard' for science in small doses

By Chris Carpenter

Realizing even a few seconds of unintriguing airplay may prompt youthful viewers to abandon ship, Fox Children's Network plugs the leaky areas between shows with more than commercials. Crammed between the ads and a range of public service announcements is *Ask Mr. Wizard*, a worthwhile—60 seconds of applied science. A public TV and Nickelodeon veteran, Mr. Wizard (Don Herbert) is heard but not seen in this series of quickie experiments covering topics from astronomy to zoology.

The tidbits of technology explained on *Ask Mr. Wizard* demonstrate the human ability to overcome obstacles through careful thought. Though some of the examples are indeed cutting edge, such as the computerized apple that measures when the most bruising occurs during shipping, the answers to other scientific puzzles are often surprisingly low-tech. (How are scientists able to monitor an individual ant

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working among thousands of others? Mr. Wizard claims that a simple dot attached to our industrious insect makes him stand out in a crowd.)

For children who can spend half a Saturday glued to the television while cartoon rodents perform slapstick, *Ask Mr. Wizard* will come and go painlessly enough. For those who dream of walking on Mars or finding a cure for cancer, 60 seconds of Mr. Wizard won't be nearly enough.

CABLE NEWS

Discover 'Truth' about TV lies

By Dan Rice

The boob tube is said to be connected to 98 percent of American households, and though some may deny it, every citizen feels the impact of television. On Sunday, April 12, The Discovery Channel reveals *The Truth About Lies*—*The Tube is Reality*, in which our "culture of culturelessness" is debated by critics and academics.

It's Showtime this week for a variety of programming making its debut on

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the cable network. First we hear from *Bob Newhart: Off the Record* on Sunday, April 12. In this one-hour special, the prime-time star returns to his stand-up comedy roots by performing many of his best routines from his popular comedy records. Then on Thursday, April 16, the Showtime 30-Minute Movie features the Oscar-nominated short film *Session Man*, a poignant tale of a studio musician who gets his big break with a famous rock band. That dastardly duo of Pottsylvania spies is called to live-action when Dave Thomas and Sally Kelleman star as *Horis and Natasha*. Drawn from the animated characters on *The Rocky & Bullwinkle* series, this campy Cold War comedy debuts on Friday, April 17. And on Saturday, April 18, Chuck Norris is host of *Combat Karate: The World Championships*. The lineup of furious kick-boxing bouts includes world champ Kathy "The Princess of Pain" Long vs. Nora Daigle.



Tuesday on Cinemax, Steven Seagal stars as a hard-hitting Brooklyn cop who's *Out for Justice*.



Della Reese returns as Victoria Royal when *The Royal Family* rejoins the CBS lineup on Wednesday.

SATURDAY



Saturday on NBC's *Sisters*, the romance of Teddy (Sole Ward, right) with a fellow alcoholic (Chris Sarandon) finds competition with his need for the bottle.