

# Arts & Entertainment



## V.J.s put punch into music industry

This is the second of a three-part series examining the issues behind Music Television.

By Randy Wymore

There could be no Music Television without videos and on-air personalities who play them and fill in the gaps with light banter and music news.

Sue Binford, director of programming for Warner/Amex, said getting videos is the easy part, but getting video jockeys is another story. "We didn't know what we were looking for," she said.

Never before had there been a creature such as the V.J., she said, so finding them was basically a hit and miss process.

"We had more than 4,000 applicants," Binford said. "Of the 4,000, we did actual video-taped auditions of 1,500." The number kept getting smaller and smaller until the present five V.J.s were chosen.

J.J. Jackson, the oldest V.J. at 37, began at WBCN in Boston before moving to KWST and KLOS, both FM stations in Los Angeles.

Like Jackson, 30-year-old Mark Goodman came from a radio background that included WPLJ-FM in New York and WMMR-FM in Philadelphia.

Alan Hunter's and Nina Blackwood's resumes consisted primarily of drama credentials. Hunter, 26, has been involved in various off-Broadway productions. Blackwood has had her place on the big screen with roles in the cult hit "Vice Squad" and Francis Ford Coppola's "One From the Heart." A Playboy spread from a few years back featuring Blackwood (whose age is somewhere in the late 20s) is quickly becoming a collector's item.

The youngest V.J. is Martha Quinn, 24. After working at WNYU radio and an internship as assistant to the music director at WNBC radio in New York, she heard about the search for V.J.s through word of mouth.

### Looking for spark

Binford said the one certain quality that MTV was looking for was "that



Photo courtesy WASEC

The on-air personalities of MTV are (from left to right): J.J. Jackson, Martha Quinn, Nina Blackwood, Alan Hunter and Mark Goodman.

spark" and the ability of the V.J.s to be individuals.

Currently, a search to find a sixth V.J. who would help alleviate some of the tremendous V.J. workload is underway.

The five V.J.s tape all of the "live" material for one week of 24-hour days of programming during a five-day work week. Each day's jock spots are done in about 45 minutes, with the approximately 13 videos and eight minutes of commercials for each hour spliced into the tape later.

While the V.J.s can expect a certain

job longevity period (each is signed to a three-year contract) a video clip's life expectancy is not as assured.

"We get 25 to 30 video clips a week," Binford said. After the clips are received free of charge from the record labels, they go through a Clip Evaluation Meeting.

"The programming department watches the clips to determine if it fits the format (and) the high technical standards," she said.

After it passes the evaluation meeting, the clip then must go through a Music Department Meeting. Binford estimates that 95 percent of the videos

submitted to MTV are accepted for airplay in some capacity.

Just because a clip makes the air doesn't mean it will stay there for long.

Since the rotation has to be changed weekly, there is a staff whose only job is to get on the phone to subscribers, play bits of the clips and ask questions to help determine its popularity.

In addition, the staff calls 125 retail stores, various dance clubs and radio stations. Charts are also closely watched to see which songs are popular, Binford said.

### V.J.s have 'big say'

How much input do the V.J.s have in the video playlist?

"They don't sit in on meetings," Binford said, "but they do have a big say."

Some videos have been pulled from rotation altogether because of their content. Van Halen's "Pretty Woman" which features transvestite-chasing midgets, and the Rolling Stones' "Neighbors" which had strong undertones of murder and dismemberment are examples.

"We are very conscious of our responsibility to the cable operators," she said. "Because MTV is offered in most areas as basic service, we have to be very conscious not to supply them with a product containing gratuitous sex or excessive violence."

However, he said, "The last thing we're going to be is censors of artistry."

Racey or conventional, it is the two forms of video — concept with a story line or concert with the band doing a straight lip synchronization — that has put the punch back into the music industry. And a big part of that success is timing on MTV's part.

"There was a feeling in the business that something needed to happen," Binford said. "We struck a nerve and we continue to strike a nerve."

Binford says that the artists themselves are "very excited about video music."

"It provides another outlet... they're thrilled to have the opportunity to explore another dimension of their creativity."

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## 'Major Barbara' proves intriguing

The corrosive power of armaments manufacture is one of the main subjects of an interesting production of George Bernard Shaw's "Major Barbara," directed by William Morgan. The UNL production at Howell Theatre will play today through Friday at 8 p.m.

Shaw's Edwardian setting has been moved to the England of 1926 when continuing high unemployment caused social tensions and the international arms race was slowly building the momentum that would lead to World War II — topical considerations which may have suggested the change of time.

None of this has touched the household of Lady Britomart Undershaft (Mari Weiss), who is upbraiding her son Stephen (Tim Mathes) at the start of the play. Weiss has assurance as she speaks what are almost Wildean paradoxes — complaining that her husband preaches immorality while practicing morality, for example.

Although Shaw and Wilde may both use the paradox, the resemblance probably should not be carried further; Shaw wrote in a review of Wilde's "Importance of Being Earnest" that he liked to be instructed as well as entertained, in contrast with Wilde's "Art for Art's sake" philosophy. The Shaw play goes never need fear a shortage of instruction.

As her son Stephen, Mathes is alternately sycophantic and assertive; Sarah (Jill Ehrisman) and her boyfriend Charles Lomax (Noel Schoonover) are simply giddy. The only one to share and surpass her mother's strength is Major Barbara herself.

"I thought Barbara was going to make the most brilliant career of all of you... and what does she do? She joins the Salvation Army," Lady Britomart says. The title character is played by Julie Uribe, who is especially good in the earlier part of the play when she plays a committed worker for the Salvation Army.

Andrew Undershaft (Larry French), the country's major arms manufacturer, steps into the family

library at Lady Britomart's invitation, after being announced by the butler Morrison (William Schutz), whose growing confusion about the family's activities is amusing. His meeting with his daughter Barbara is the confrontation of technology and religion; they make a pact to tour each other's place of business. He will visit the Salvation Army yard the next morning, and she will tour his gun factory the next day, to see who will convert the other.

The sets, designed by Thomas Umfrid, are of special interest; the library is elegantly and diagonally placed and the West Ham Salvation Army shelter is splendid, from the great shelter doorway down to the icicle to the side of it.

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Yuks

by Billy Shaffer



## HOTSPOTS

### Television

• Soon NBC might stand for "Naturally Big Casts." The network's latest ensemble show is "Bay City Blues," which makes its debut at 9 tonight on KMTV, channel 3. The story revolves around players, coaches and owners of the Bay City Bluebirds, a fictional minor league baseball team.

• Tonight's installment of "Vietnam: A Television History" is titled "America Takes Charge: 1965-1967. It was during this period that the Johnson Administration dispatched 1.5 million American soldiers to fight in Vietnam. The show can be seen at 9 p.m. on KUON, Channel 12.

### Radio

• KUCV (90.9 FM) With the successful Beethoven Bash officially over, KUCV returns to its regular programming. Tonight, the Lincoln Symphony Orchestra is featured as part of the Lincoln in Concert series. The show will begin at 8 p.m.

### On Stage

• "Major Barbara" returns to the stage of the Howell Theatre, 12th and R streets, for its second week of performances. The play will run through Saturday. Admission is \$4 for students, \$5 for the general public.

### Around Town

• The Neoclassic Jazz Orchestra, one of the finest outfits in Lincoln playing jazz music, will be in concert tonight at Pius X Central High School, 6000 A St. Admission is \$6.

• RCA recording artists The Bongos will perform tonight at the Drumstick, 547 N. 48th St. The cover charge to see this unique new wave group is \$5. Opening for The Bongos will be The Jetsons.