

## the glassy eye



Mark Baldridge

## Irwin Allen fuels sci-fi imagination

It's Irwin Allen, of course. Last week I made a sly reference to an old sci-fi show "Lost in Space" (you remember: "Danger, Will Robinson!") and that show's producer, Ethan Allen.

What a furniture maker who died in 1789 has to do with a TV series that premiered in 1965 I'll never know.

It's Irwin Allen, of course. Film director ("Earthquake," "The Towering Inferno," "The Poseidon Adventure") and TV mogul, Allen represents a one-man-era in pop culture history.

So, in a kind of agony of regret, I decided to talk today about the TV legacy of this master producer of mediocre science fiction.

"Lost in Space" starred Guy Williams (famous from "Zorro" a few years earlier) when it first aired, in black and white, 30 years ago.

By the time the show folded three years later, however, the real stars were a boy, an old queen and a tin man.

The boy, Will Robinson (played dexterously by Billy Mumy — whom Jimmy Stewart called "the only child actor worth a damn"), later went on to draw a successful comic book based on the series and, still later, to play a significant role on the weirdly cult-followed "Babylon 5."

Jonathan Harris (the old queen) played Dr. Zachary Smith, a primping and cowardly villain, opposite Bob May — whom no one has ever seen and lived to tell about it — as the Robot.

Bearing a striking resemblance to Robby the Robot from the film "Forbidden Planet," the Robot served as babysitter to Will, and foil to the ever-cringing Dr. Smith.

The show went from serious B&W science fiction to zany space opera (in lurid color) in its second season, when director Ezra Stone took over.

Stone admits to never having liked science fiction, and it shows. On his watch, the series became a sort of theatrical spoof.

Ah, well. If "Lost in Space" was all he'd ever done, Allen's place in TV history would still be secure for another 20 years or so.

But he will also be remembered for two other series:

"Time Tunnel" — a very old show about time travel that featured hypnotic credits — and "Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea."

This little gem starred Richard Baseheart and inspired the modern "SeaQuest DSV."

"Voyage" took itself very seriously, as only a Cold War vehicle can.

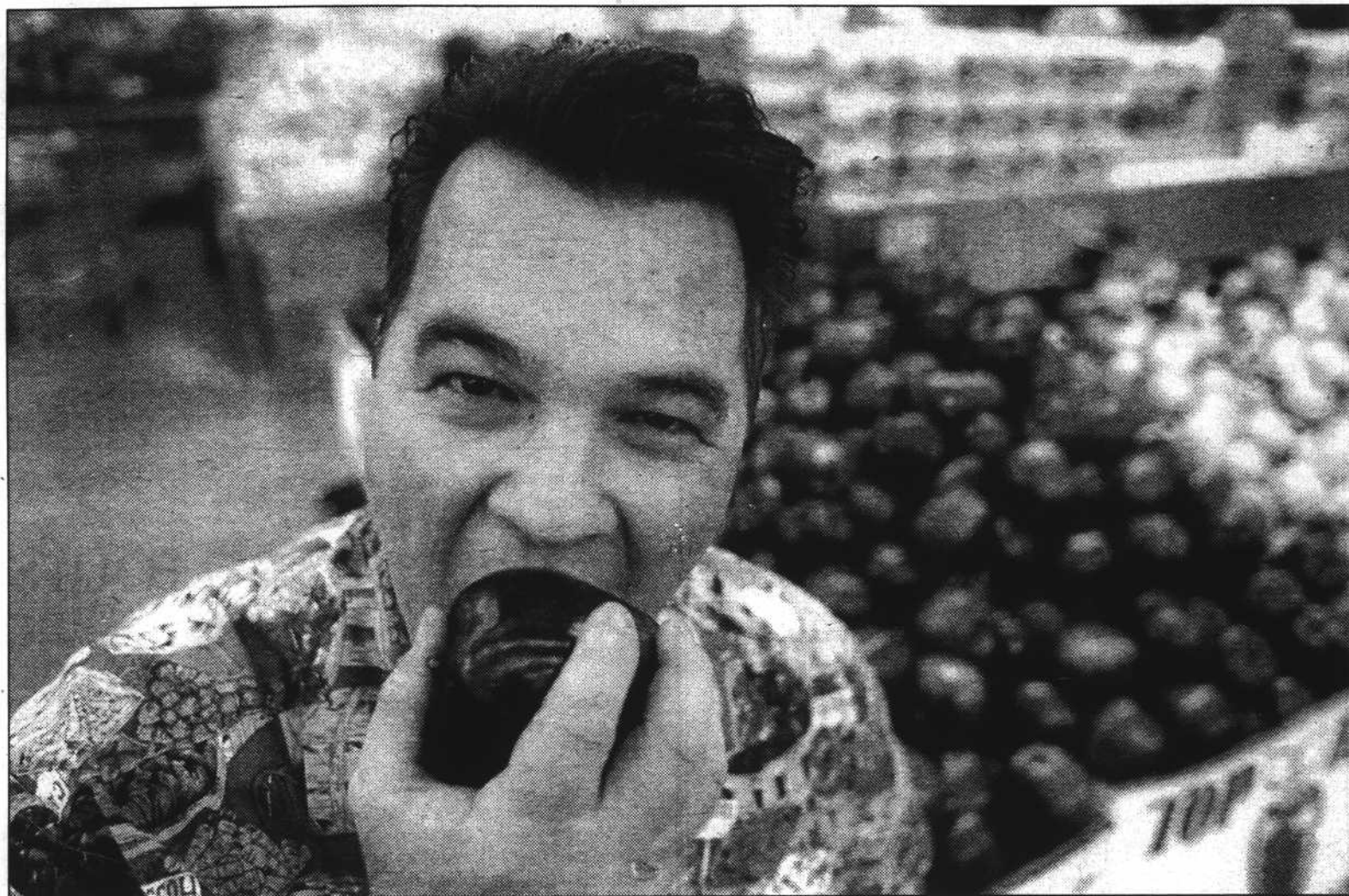
But early on, its writers ran out of things to do with the premise and started resurrecting WWII Nazis.

Whenever a show resurrects Nazis, you know it's on the way out.

The point of all this is not the poverty of these shows, but their unutterable wealth.

To those who craved alternate worlds and strange, new worlds, Irwin Allen offered something in the way of fuel for the imagination. Television has always had trouble with sci-fi, but it's always tried.

And that counts for something.



Jon Waller/DN

Michael Marks, "the Produce Man," takes a bite out of an apple at Super Saver supermarket at Highway 2 and South 56th Street. Marks is a nationally syndicated produce expert.

## Always fresh Lincolmites find Produce Man appealing

By Jeff Randall  
Senior Reporter

Tuesday morning at Super Saver on 5460 S. 56 St., somewhere among the shining red heaps of Jonathan and Top Red apples, television history was being made.

Well, sort of. "I've been on television quite a bit," said Michael Marks, television's one and only Produce Man. "But I've never done an advertisement before. This is something new to me."

"Your Produce Man," the nationally syndicated expert on fruits and vegetables, was in Lincoln Tuesday for the taping of a Super Saver commercial. And he followed the taping with a series of appearances at all three Super Saver supermarkets.

Since he started his television career six years ago, Marks has steadily gained fans and attention nationwide. In addition to his television segments, Marks is a nationally syndicated radio personality and a newspaper columnist.

And every one of these enterprises focuses on

*"You know what Tommy Osborne's favorite fruit and vegetable are? Tomatoes and strawberries. Too bad I didn't have the heart to tell him that tomatoes are a fruit."*

**MICHAEL MARKS**  
"The Produce Man"

— you guessed it — produce. Richard Malousek, vice president for B&R Stores, helped coordinate Marks' Tuesday appearances and the commercial taping. "If you were to go out and pick people at random, most probably wouldn't know who he was," Malousek said. "But he's gaining more and more fans every day." Malousek said Super Saver's sponsorship of

the "Your Produce Man" segments played a part in Marks' involvement with the grocery chain's newest advertising campaign.

The commercials featuring Marks will most likely start their run in about eight weeks, Malousek said.

"If they prove to be successful, people can plan on seeing the Produce Man speaking for Super Saver for the next year and a half to two years."

Not bad for one morning's work. But Marks said he didn't like to think of what he does as work in the usual sense.

"I don't think there's ever been a hard part of this job," Marks said.

Marks began his career in Sacramento, Calif., as a radio personality who managed to gain the attention of a producer at a local television affiliate.

"I was on the air, telling a funny story about kiwi fruit. And there's a million funny things to say about kiwi fruit, right?"

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## 'Indie' band Fugazi industry's secret gem



Courtesy of Dischord Records

Anti-corporate and a true "indie" band, Fugazi plays Ag Hall at the State Fair Park tonight.

By Jeff Randall  
Music Critic

As the qualifications for being called "indie" continue to evolve in the ever-changing world of rock 'n' roll, there's at least one band that has remained consistently anti-corporate and, at the same time, consistently good.

### Concert Preview



That one band is Fugazi. Since its first performance in September 1987, Fugazi has made a name for itself by not trying to make a name for itself.

Guitarist/vocalist Ian MacKaye's Dischord Records has released ev-

ery one of the band's recordings, and the band has shied away from radio airplay and MTV as though they were deadly viruses. They refuse to charge more than \$5 for their shows. They refuse to even sell or produce any T-shirts emblazoned with their name.

And through it all, despite any visible promotion techniques, they have become one of America's biggest and best-kept secrets.

Their Omaha concert in early summer 1993 sold out Peony Park's Royal Grove, a venue that held a crowd roughly equivalent to that of Omaha's Civic Auditorium Music Hall, which is normally limited to big-name bands with promotional departments to match.

And the way things are looking,

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