



LEFT: "No greater spectacle could have been devised to sell television than the Olympic Games"



At present, there is no visual programme pattern. With a choice of three stations in each of the two major cities, the immediacy and intimacy of home received programmes is satisfying the audience, which is increasing each week, but not as quickly as was hoped. One fact is known. When a television set is installed in a home, that household is lost to broadcasting at night.

There are indications that the public want local programmes, and stations are beginning to feature those shows which do not require a formal script or lengthy rehearsal preparation. These programmes emphasise speed of production, continuity of appeal and informality of presentation. The most popular rely almost entirely on current broadcast formats. These, termed simulcasts—i.e., televised and broadcast versions are aired at the same time—require very little adaptation and comprise audience participation, panel, forum, quiz, newscasts and talent shows. Programmes in these categories are quickly becoming established television shows because of the familiarity of the audience with the existing sound broadcasting format. The viewers had heard the programme, but the camera added a more intimate relationship between the programme and the audience.

Simulcasts will bridge the gap between sound broadcasting and the new technique of programming that will develop as television improves its skills and realises its own particular characteristics. As yet these are unexplored. This will be the challenge that Australian television will have to face.

doubted whether the initial commercial programme justified the expenditure, and decided to wait and see, and so did many medium budget advertisers. Thus, Sydney television got off to a slow start, while in Melbourne the Olympic Games provided the highlight and incentive which is still in evidence.

By the end of 1956, the two cities had a choice of three programmes each, but the ABC probably secured a greater share of the audience than it has ever obtained in sound broadcasting, for many of their initial programmes were undoubtedly of a higher standard than some of those on the commercial stations, and they included a certain number of Australian productions from the first week of transmission.

The full schedule of commercial programmes is not yet on the air, and from an academic point of view it could be said that commercial television began operations before it was really equipped to provide the full programme service that will be available within the next few months. The licensees obviously wished to be on the air and earn some money with the least possible delay.

Any comment on audience reaction to the programmes is speculative at this stage, for the emphasis is changing week by week. Television's present is already its past, and this applies particularly to the commercial services. At present the programme schedules of all stations contain a considerable proportion of filmed material, some very good and others only fair.

It is anticipated that the production of Australian televised programmes will proceed when those associated with the medium appreciate its unique personality and when the economic basis justifies greater expenditure. The ABC tackled this problem more vigorously from the inception of the service than did the commercial licensees, and it is obvious that they intend to develop the television service without unnecessarily encroaching on broadcasting formats,

while commercial stations will lean heavily on broadcasting formats and personnel.

To date, Australian television has introduced very little that is new, and it appears in the role of an assimilative medium which adapts existing and testing formats for its own use. Television will discover, as broadcasting found two decades previously, that programming depends on the intangible qualities of personality performers, and these will have to be developed.

The one exception is the televising of outside events, and in this television will provide one of its greatest services. In the field of actuality programming there will be no high rehearsal costs for the incidents and events will be televised as they occur. Already we have witnessed the world's professional tennis championships, professional golf, some interesting cricket and an occasional horse race.

Cricket telecasts by the ABC greatly impressed viewers. The camera literally sat on the bowler's shoulder as he delivered the ball, and the audience saw the expression on the batsman's face. No one in the Noble Stand of the famous Sydney Cricket Ground could see a quarter of what was revealed to the home viewer, and it is in this important sphere that the ABC is likely to steal a march on its commercial competitors.

Commercial programmes are regular and advertisers spend large sums of money in building listener habits—"same programme—same time—same station." The ABC programme schedule is more elastic and can take advantage of special events to a greater degree than the commercial stations. This freedom of action will prove important later on, particularly if the sporting organisa-

tions see the light and permit the camera free access to arenas.

At present sporting organisations are warily watching the television camera, and no major sport has yet declared itself on any permanent policy. The sporting events that have been undertaken so far have proved winners, and in themselves have convinced many people that a television receiver is a desirable object to have around. It is obvious that some sport will be broadcast each Saturday afternoon, and both the ABC and commercial stations will devote considerable time and energy to these.



RIGHT: A mannequin rehearses for the "Your Home" show at the ATN Television Centre, Epping

