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Study of the Current State of American Television and Video Preservation

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Paramount Television is a division of Paramount Pictures, a division of Viacom Inc. The television division currently produces over forty hours a week of television product, including first-run barter shows and product for network television delivery.

Our Asset Protection for television programs began with Paramount product having life in syndication. When Viacom bought Paramount two years ago, we added product produced by or owned outright by Viacom to our list. Today we include over 8,000 television products in our Asset Protection program.

The physical plant for protection of our television product is identical to our feature film Asset Protection program. We physically separate the original material and a copy of it in vaults, one in LA and one in Pennsylvania. We have a 40,000 square foot environmentally controlled Archive Building on the studio lot in Hollywood opened in August 1990, plus 15,000 square feet of environmentally controlled vaults in a converted limestone mine in Pennsylvania opened in February 1989. Other tenants of the mine include the Library of Congress as well as many other government organizations and studios.



The earliest series we protect is from Paramount, The Untouchables, dating from 1959. Our protection program covers all series we own and do or will syndicate. As soon as a new show such as Frasier is aired on network, we create a protection and send it to the mine.

The form of protection varies. Many older series were post-produced on film. A fine grain or low contrast print was made. The cut negative is in our environmental vault on the east coast at 40 degrees, 25 percent relative humidity. The film copy is in our Archive on the lot in identical conditions. Magnetic audio is likewise in both places in its original format (analog or digital) plus a copy on multitrack 1/2 inch analog for the bulk of our product. This season we're starting to create DA-88 tapes as protections. For the past several years, foreign territories are sending us dialogue-only foreign language tracks on DAT tapes which we're storing in the Archive. The film-to-tape transfer of these shows' network version may be on 1" C videotape in our on-lot Archive with a 1" C protection in the mine. Shows transferred in more recent years to D1 component videotape are protected with a D1 in the mine. Syndication versions of these shows when edited on 1" C are protected either with 1" C or more recently D2 in the mine.

Shows shot on film and posted on tape have the edited master (in whatever format is used by the production company) kept in our on-lot Archive. An electronic protection, usually on D2, is stored in the mine. The uncut negative is stored in the mine. Should we in the future need to reconstruct the show in an optical medium for retransfer into high definition, all the film elements exist in our 40 degree, 25% RH environment. Because so many shows today depend upon electronic opticals created in the 525 or NTSC format, our feeling is most product originally produced for television will be upconverted into HDTV. The cost to recreate the entire post-production process in HDTV including new opticals would usually be prohibitive compared with the likely available additional revenue stream in HDTV for most library series product. To upconvert opticals only and edit them into retransferred film segments would create a more noticeable change of texture to the viewer, similar to the look of a 35mm CRI optical cut into a camera negative. We're covering our position by not discarding any of the original uncut negative, however, in case time proves we want to recreate these shows optically after all.

Shows shot on videotape have the original edited master in whatever format was used by the production company stored environmentally in our on-lot Archive, with either a 1" C or D2 protection in the mine.

Our videotape environment in the Archive is 70 degrees, 50% RH. The videotapes in the mine are at 50 degrees, 40% RH. The air is filtered, and the vaults are protected with Halon or FM200 fire suppression systems. All vaults are alarmed, and the Archive is also monitored with full-time surveillance cameras. Generators at both the Archive and mine provide emergency power for the HVAC systems.

We quality control each protection and fix dropouts or other problems before sending the tape to the mine. We are assured that the image and sound on the protection is an exact replication of the source.

In anticipation of today's report to you, last month we specifically evaluated two of the earliest D1 tapes which were made and shipped to the mine. After the eight years they have resided in that very stable environment since 1988, they show no signs of deterioration. We have recalled from the mine hundreds of other format tapes as well in the course of doing business over the years. None of them have revealed any deterioration. We do not have a separate schedule to inspect stored tapes other than those we're recalling for use. Since that level of activity is several each month and none have been problematic so far, our confidence remains that by continuing to conduct business we will be monitoring our stored library effectively.

For long-term archival purposes, we never want to be so cutting edge with technology that problems with new formats may not emerge before we have manufactured hundreds of protections. Digital Betacam appears to be the newest videotape production standard for Paramount. We will continue to use D2 as the mine protection for these for another year, insuring any new format problems don't render our protections useless. We delayed starting to use digital audio as protection medium until the stability and interchangeability of the formats settled down.

We draw upon a portion of time from a dozen project managers within our organization to maintain our Asset Protection program for television. They order protection material from our in-house videotape facility, quality control the dubs,

resolve repair issues with outside vendors who created the original edited masters, and maintain computer inventory records.

We have a worldwide computer inventory system called OPIS which records descriptions and tracks movements for close to 1.2 million film and tape items, each marked with a unique bar code. The number includes features and television material, both elements and television distribution dubs. The system provides a firm handle on the quantity and status of all Paramount's film and tape assets.

Legitimate persons with valid reasons to seek information about our material will typically find us cooperative to share information about our resources. Usually one of our project managers will be the conduit through which the information is disseminated. We have been cooperative in addition with the Museum of Radio and Television in New York and about to open in Beverly Hills. Tapes of many episodes of requested series have been provided to them for their in-house reference.

Regarding copyright issues for product produced for television, we have not encountered problems locating materials held by others for which we hold copyright. Unlike feature coventures which can create myriad ownership paths, television product tends to be more straightforward. However, Paramount would indeed welcome any extension of existing copyright laws. A longer future revenue stream would indeed encourage preservation of materials on everyone's behalf.

Paramount will continue to insure its future by properly maintaining its feature and television library. Hopefully our procedures can be an inspiration for others, large and small, to attentively maintain their assets as well for the future wellbeing of our heritage.

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