

# TV drama studies men and divorce



Ted Bessell

By Jerry Buck

TRANCAS, Calif. (AP) — Wedding bells broke up that old gang, but divorce brought them together again.

Six buddies, all separated or getting divorced, move into a beach house one summer to form their own support system in "Breaking Up Is Hard To Do."

The four-hour movie, to air this fall on ABC, is a true story of six men whose emotional needs during the breakup of their marriages brought them together.

"One had the house and invited everyone else to join him, maybe out of his own need," said Jim Green, co-producer for Columbia Pictures Television with Alan Epstein. "The old gang was back together."

Green was talking outside the house in Trancas, a beach community about 40 miles northwest of Los Angeles. A thick fog clung to the seashore and blotched out the sun even at noon.

"This is absolutely a true story," said Epstein. "It all started with a lunch with one of the men. He said he had this idea and started laying out this story."

"We had been searching for a story about men," Green continued. "About what men go through when they're separated from their families. We just sort of found each other."

Green and Epstein invited the six men — all of whom are in the movie business — over to watch the first Ali-Spinks championship fight and talk. "We laid out some deli food," Epstein recalled. "By the end of the evening, the guys were all crying. I told Jim, 'My God, we're on top of a volcano.'"

"They even acted out some of the scenes. They talked about the support system and what it meant to them, how it worked. One person would tell a

story and the others would react to it and tell their version."

Green spent 38 hours interviewing the men, then writer Jim Henerson spent several additional hours interviewing each man, his former wife and their girlfriends.

The movie stars Robert Conrad, Jeff Conaway, Ted Bessell, Billy Crystal, David Ogden Stiers and Tony Musante as the six buddies. Bonnie Franklin, Trish Stewart, Susan Sullivan and Elaine Giftos also star.

The beach house, used for 23 days of the 38-day shooting schedule, was shrouded by black canvas to make it look like night inside.

In the living room, Bessell was doing an imitation of a Viennese psychiatrist. Green and Epstein had warned, "This is the heaviest scene in the movie."

Bessell was saying, "You must feel zee pain. Zee pain is goot. It builds character." The telephone rings and Conrad answers. When he hangs up his face is ashen and he tells Bessell that his wife has just been killed in an automobile accident.

Bessell, whose character had walked out on his wife in an emotional trauma brought on by cancer, has a delayed reaction, then clutches his head and lets out a scream. The others rush to his side.

Director Lou Antonio said, "It's a funny thing. I'm glad we're finally telling something from the male point of view. Not that it hasn't been done before, but all male relationships are not Newman and Redford. It's not just about suffering, but about friendship and what men will reveal to each other."

Green said the men whose story is being told are two movie agents, a casting director, a business manager, a film editor and an associate producer. "People who know them," he said, "probably will be able to figure it out."

# Jazz trumpeter hosts drum corps competition

By Tom Jory

NEW YORK (AP) — Jazz trumpeter Maynard Ferguson at the 8th Annual Drum Corps International Championships? Not as incongruous a coupling as might appear at first glance.

"I'm very much into what's happening in the schools," says the curly-haired Ferguson. "I'm very interested in upleveling the quality of music education."

"I watched the drum and bugle corps last year, and was fascinated by how much of my music was being played there. A lot of these kids are my fans, they buy my records, and I wanted to do the commentary on the show this year, in an informative way."

Indeed, Maynard Ferguson will be host for the 1979 championships, broadcast today from Birmingham, Ala., at 7 p.m. CDT on IPBN.

The five-hour show will be produced by WHA-TV, the PBS station in Madison, Wis. This is the fifth year of the drum corps championships on PBS. Previous programs were produced by WGBH in Boston.

"Let's clear up the ego thing right away," says Ferguson, meaning exactly what he says. "I'm sort of a hero trumpet player to a lot of kids into music, and I think that image makes it quite a natural thing for me to do this show."

"I'm not a great fan of the contest

part," he says. "I believe contests should be left to the National and American Leagues and my friends like Reggie Jackson. Contests should be left out of the arts as much as possible."

"But as far as helping the kids, I'm totally committed to that."

Ferguson, born near Montreal in 1928, has had his own jazz band since the age of 15. He was lured to this country by Charlie Barnet in 1949, and by 1950, he was Stan Kenton's high-note trumpet man.

Ferguson has, to be sure, kept up with the times. He's recorded music from "Rocky," "Star Wars" and "Star Trek," and a year ago, he did the theme for ABC's "Battlestar Galactica."

A good portion of his time is spent with young musicians, a likely situation when you consider the man's attitude toward his art: "Music is for giving people pleasure, and that's it."

It's not unusual to find Ferguson in a high school or college auditorium, accompanied by members of his band.

"We started doing these things called clinics — that's a terrible word; it sounds like someone is ill — where I'd take my band into schools, speak for a half-hour and answers questions, and maybe play a little."

"I studied music myself in Montreal, and was fascinated because of how badly it was taught."



Jazz trumpeter Maynard Ferguson is hosting the 1979 drum corps championship because of an interest in the quality of music education.

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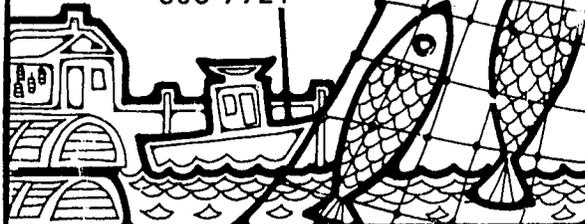
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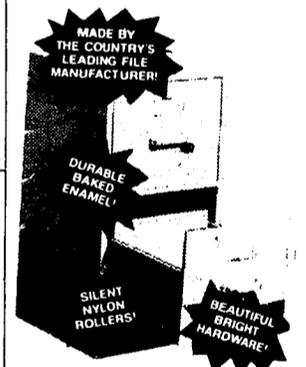
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