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The AUDIENCE 88 Study

by Eric Friesen
(2 pages)

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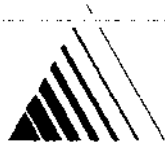
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David Giovannoni, Audience Research Analysis

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August 1988

PROGRAMMING NOTES

*"Look up in the sun's eye and give
What the exultant heart calls good
That some new day may breed the best
Because you gave, not what they would,
But the right twigs for an eagle's nest!"
- W.B. Yeats*

The "Audience 88" study is good enough, and complex enough, that it will be a source for passionate system discussion for many months, if not years, to come. A few thoughts of my own, now that I have had a chance to read some of the detail behind the report's conclusion, and also to have had the opportunity, as our entire APR staff recently did, to discuss Audience 88 with two of its chief architects, Tom Thomas and David Giovannoni:

Although I do not agree with all of its conclusions, and although I am deeply wary of the potential for audience research to be misapplied as a kind of holy writ, I am encouraged by Audience 88 for two basic reasons. The first is that the study reaches and convincingly argues a fundamental principle. The second is that, both in the written documents as well as in person, the Audience 88 team show admirable restraint and caution in resisting the temptation to become the authorities on system issues, large and small, national as well as local.

The critical principle which I take away from Audience 88 as truth, and as truth to be underscored wherever possible, is the principle of "appeal". The idea that our public radio audience is a recognizable, definable group within our society, and that in order to enlarge this audience as well as increase its time spent listening we need to understand and appeal to the needs and values of our existing and potential audience, is nothing less than a breakthrough in thinking for us all. This is so because, once and for all, it discredits formatting by program genre. Our public radio audience, beyond all other statistical indicators, is a complex, intelligent, highly motivated group of Americans, and they cannot be satisfied with just news and information, nor just with one kind of music, nor just with news and music. Give them a first-rate program beyond genre, like A PRAIRIE HOME COMPANION, and they'll commit two hours of a Saturday evening to listen to public radio.

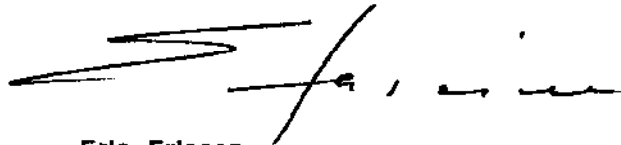
(continued on p. 2)

INSIDE:	High Performance Hosted by Andre Previn	p. 2
	The Salzburg/Vienna Festivals 1988	p. 6
	Ojai Festival 1987	p. 10
	Revelation in the Courthouse Park	p. 13
	Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra	p. 16
	1988 Long Beach Blues Festival	p. 19
	50th National Folk Festival	p. 20
	Spoleto Festival 1988	p. 22
	1988 Fundraising Offerings	p. 27
	Staff List	p. 28
	Currently Available	p. 29

In many ways, this conclusion reinforces the experience of BBC Radio, in the history of its four domestic networks, Radio One, Two, Three, and Four, which have, if not by original intention, then by subtle evolution, become networks of appeal rather than networks of program type. Some of the combinations of programming on these networks may be peculiar to the British experience, but the principle of diverse programming for a specific audience is one which we can apply here in this country.

Audience 88 confirms that producers and schedulers throughout our system can feel encouraged to entertain a rich diversity of styles and types of programs, as well as to consider something innovative, provided it is designed with the needs, values, and expectations of our audience in mind. If nothing else is generally concluded from Audience 88 (although I'm convinced that more such large truths will emerge), then all the effort and investment made in it will have been richly repaid.

Finally, I truly am encouraged by the restraint I have seen evident in Tom Thomas and David Giovannoni, when asked to apply Audience 88 conclusions to a specific issue. Time and again I have observed them force a questioner to think through his or her decision-making and use the information contained in the study in conjunction with individual, professional experience and judgement. In the same spirit, I was pleased to read at the end of Audience 88's Programming section, a disclaimer that the conclusions drawn from this study would be meaningless without the creative talent to produce the programming of appeal to our audience. Modesty becomes the Audience 88 team and will ensure that this study will be profoundly influential, even with research sceptics such as myself.



Eric Friesen
Executive Vice President

ANNOUNCING

- **High Performance Hosted by Andre Previn**

PRODUCED BY MINNESOTA
PUBLIC RADIO with assistance
from KUSC-Los Angeles, KERA-
Dallas/Fort Worth, WGUC-
Cincinnati, and WNYC-New York

52 programs, including 26 premiere programs and 26 encores, each approximately 59 minutes in length, to be fed on consecutive weeks in time for broadcast beginning in October 1988.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION: Beginning this fall, "High Performance Hosted by Andre Previn", the acclaimed weekly series that explores the diverse world of musical performance, launches its second season of broadcast over American Public Radio. The 1988-89 "High Performance" season will consist of 26 new, one-hour programs and 26 encores from the current and 1987-88 seasons.