

PROGRAMME ADVISORY COMMITTEE
8th ANNUAL REPORT
(1 MAR 2002 - 28 FEB 2003)

INTRODUCTION

1 This is the eighth Annual Report by the Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) covering the period 1 March 2002 to 28 February 2003. The Chairman and Members of the PAC were appointed by the Minister of Information and the Arts for a term of two years starting from 1 March 2001. The members are :

Chairman : Prof Eddie Kuo
Members : Mr John Ang (Chair, Children Subcommittee)
Mrs Choo Cheh Hoon (Chair, Entertainment Subcommittee)
Mrs Maureen Goh (Chair, Sports Subcommittee)
Prof Koh Tai Ann (Chair, Info-Ed Subcommittee)
Mr Teo Han Wue (Chair, Culture Subcommittee)
Dr Vivian Balakrishnan (up to 2 Jan 02)
Mr Lam Peck Heng
Dr John Lim
Dr Mohd Maliki Osman
Mr Adrian Peh
Mr Bala Reddy
Ms Yeoh Chee Yan
Mr Rama Meyyappan

Tasks Performed

2 For the period under review, the main PAC held 5 meetings, while the Programme Advisory Subcommittees, namely Info-Education, Culture, Children, Sports and Entertainment, held a total of 20 meetings. The committees also met broadcasters to get a better understanding of the new challenges that they face. This enabled members to provide more pertinent recommendations to broadcasters. The PAC undertook the following:

- a. Reviewed public feedback on broadcast programmes.
- b. Deliberated on the range and quality of broadcast programmes.
- c. Reviewed programmes identified to be sensitive and assessed broadcasters' overall exercise of censorship.
- d. Reviewed the revised Advertising and Programming codes for Radio and the revised Programme code for Free-To-Air TV.
- e. Made programming recommendations to broadcasters and SBA (now MDA)

PAC'S OBSERVATIONS AND EVALUATION ON BROADCAST PROGRAMMES

3 Since the introduction of SPH MediaWorks Ltd as the second broadcaster in Singapore, TV viewers now have a total of seven Free-To-Air (FTA) TV channels to choose from. The incumbent broadcaster MediaCorp TV has five channels, namely Ch 5, Ch 8, Channel NewsAsia, Central (with three distinct programme belts--Kids, Arts, and Vasantham), and Suria. SPH MediaWorks has Ch i and Ch U.

4 In addition, Starhub Cable Vision, formerly known as Singapore Cable Vision, has added two channels to its line-up, bringing the total number of channels available on cable TV to 39. The two new channels are Discovery Travel & Adventure and Asia Plus.

5 The introduction of competition in the broadcasting arena means that there are more choices for TV viewers. However, it has not necessarily meant a wider variety of programmes for viewers to choose from. It was observed that broadcasters continued to offer the same kind of programming, such as Reality TV programmes and programmes featuring food, in order to attract audiences.

6 It was observed that, for the most part, broadcasters have complied with the programme standards and there were no major censorship concerns.

Entertainment Programmes

7 During the period under review, entertainment channels have continued to source for and acquire good or award-winning dramas and sitcoms such as *CSI (Crime Scene Investigation)* on Ch 5 and *Titus* on Ch i. As was observed in the previous year, it was regrettable that a number of these good programmes were relegated to late night timeslots while programmes of lesser quality and value like World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) matches were shown during prime time.

8 Broadcasters have also done a much better job catering to movie buffs. Ch i has acquired and telecast numerous quality movies in the last quarter of 2002. Movies which premiered on Ch i include *Elizabeth*, *One True Thing*, *Stepmom* and *Notting Hill*, while Ch 5 provided strong movie line-ups with titles such as *Never Been Kissed*, *Anna and the King*, *Jurassic Park – The Lost World*, *Independence Day*. Some of the titles screened by the broadcasters have been shown on TV before, but they are quality titles worth featuring again.

9 More local versions of popular formatted gameshows such as *Wheel of Fortune* (Ch 5) and *The Weakest Link* (Chs 5 & 8) were also introduced. The format and content of these gameshows are generally engaging and entertaining. Broadcasters should be commended on their creative efforts to give these pre-formatted programmes a local flavour by having the shows centred around a local theme,

inviting local personalities or featuring characters from popular local TV series to compete for a charitable cause.

10 Chinese local dramas and comedies have continued to be more successful and of a better standard than their English productions given that the former are backed by a longer history and enjoy a greater following among viewers. It is commendable that broadcasters are making the effort to develop new English sitcoms and dramas such as Ch 5's *Living With Lydia* and *Heartlanders*. Still, it was felt that they have generally not been as successful when compared to *Under One Roof* (Ch 5) and *Phua Chu Kang* (Ch 5).

11 To better reflect the multi-cultural make-up of our society, broadcasters have also made notable efforts to include a multi-racial cast for local productions such as *First Touch* (Ch 5) where minority races are given key or supporting roles and are not depicted in a stereotyped manner.

12 Although interactive Digital TV has yet to take off, it is commendable that broadcasters are finding creative methods to have more interactive programmes. It is observed that with the help of existing mobile technology of Short Message Service (SMS), viewers have been able to send their National Day greetings via SMS and have them displayed on TV during the telecast of the *National Day Parade* on CNA. Another instance is *Star Struck* (职场大明星) aired on Ch U where viewers were able to vote for their favourite contestant via SMS.

13 In the quest for ratings, it was observed that there was a tendency at times for broadcasters to reach for the lowest common denominator. There have been topics and presentations that veered towards the crass (e.g. the quest for the “sexiest goddess”, where bust size was an important factor, in *SNAP* (全星总动员), Ch U's variety programme) and the very direct and graphic depiction of events in docu-dramas (e.g. the portrayal of the Adrian Lim murders in *True Files* which featured too many gory details).

Arts and Cultural Programmes

14 For arts and cultural programming, it appears that the introduction of competition in the broadcast industry has not led to additional platforms for such programmes to be telecast. Arts Central and Passion 99.5FM were still relied upon to carry the bulk of arts and cultural programming.

15 Nonetheless, Arts Central continues to impress and provide a good line-up of programmes. Over the past year, it had selected and scheduled a good mix of serious arts programmes for the arts connoisseur, and more accessible, commercial offerings for those who are less well versed in the arts.

16 Of noteworthy mention are the quality movies telecast on Arts Central. Critically acclaimed films such as *Dancer in the Dark*, *Delicatessen* and *Children of*

Heaven were shown as part of the themed-programming on 'Film Art' and 'Print To Screen'. Evergreen musicals such as *Mary Poppins* and *Singing in the Rain* were also shown.

Info-Educational Programmes

17 As a whole, it was felt that there was an overall improvement in the quality and standard of info-educational programmes on TV. The PAC especially applauded CNA's effort in consistently producing good and engaging local documentaries from an Asian perspective. CNA is encouraged to continue producing quality documentaries that are relevant and appealing to local audiences.

18 It is also commendable that in response to the PAC's feedback, CNA widened the potential reach of non-English arts and cultural programmes by providing English subtitles. The channel adapted quality Indian and Malay cultural programmes such as *Vannangal (Colours)* and *Semarak Budaya (Culture Alive!)* for viewers who do not comprehend Malay or Tamil. By doing so, it not only helped to promote inter-cultural understanding, but also enriched the viewing experience of Singaporeans.

19 The committee observed that while locally produced documentaries are generally rich in content and well researched, they tend to suffer from a lack of interesting and relevant visuals. It was noted that documentaries do not work when they contain too many wall-paper shots, talking heads or lengthy interviews.

20 It was also observed that there are a number of programmes based on true-life stories of people with family, emotional, or psychological problems that mix reenactment with useful counseling advice from qualified social workers. Examples of such programmes include *Crunch Time* (转捩点) on Ch U and *Mind Matters* on Ch 5. It was felt that these programmes provide useful advice and highlight avenues where people with similar problems can turn to for help.

Programmes for Children

21 For children's programming, it was observed that broadcasters have maintained the range and quality of programmes. For info-educational programmes targeted at children and youths, shows like *Pet Ventures* (a series on pets and pet care) and *Green Crusade* (an environmental series) were excellent in conveying messages, like responsible pet ownership and respecting the environment, in a fun and interesting manner. For local children's dramas, real and pressing issues faced by children, such as peer pressure, stress from schoolwork and relationship with family members, were explored. These dramas also conveyed sound moral values like the importance of responsibility, discipline as well as care and concern for others.

22 However, it was felt that local broadcasters still lacked the expertise in producing programmes for pre-schoolers. The committee noted that few local pre-school programmes were produced and what was available lacked visual appeal. The programmes also conveyed concepts and used terms that were beyond what the target age group could comprehend.

23 The PAC also referred to the Children's Karaoke Grand Finals segment on Ch 8's *Weekend Delight* (欢乐周末夜) where a four-year old contestant took off her coat and skirt, revealing a skimpy outfit as part of her performance. It was highlighted that the segment was reminiscent of a strip tease show and was distasteful and exploitative. The PAC was of the view that broadcasters should act more responsibly, and care should be taken to protect the interests of child performers.

Sports Programmes

24 When it comes to sports programmes, it was felt that there is still an insufficient number and range of such programmes on FTA TV. In addition to the lack of coverage of sports events, broadcasters also failed to make a conscious and concerted effort to push sports programming to the public.

25 However, it was commendable that there was an improvement in the quantity and quality of info-educational programmes with a sports theme. Some fine examples of programmes which examined sports in an intelligent and engaging manner included CNA's *Home Teams* and an episode of *TR Report* (特写) (Ch 8) featuring former national sportsmen who excelled in their current careers.

Radio Programmes

26 In the case of radio, there were few significant changes to its programme range and quality. Nonetheless, local radio stations, especially English entertainment radio stations targeted at youths, should strive to improve their radio talkshow standards and not be overly dependent on frivolous banter, sexually charged or loose humour, and sensationalistic content to attract listeners. Radio DJs should recognise that they have a great influence on an impressionable youth audience and hence need to be more socially responsible when hosting programmes.

27 It was also noted that Passion 99.5FM had made improvements. In particular, the addition of a Mandarin programming belt on the station has proved to be popular and helped filled the dearth of Chinese cultural music and programmes on radio.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Broadcasters to Help Enhance Inter-Cultural Understanding Among Different Races

a. In the aftermath of the US Sep 11 incident and the more recent Bali terrorist attacks, it is especially important for broadcasters to help build better understanding among the different racial and religious groups in Singapore. To this end, PAC recommends that broadcasters provide more programmes which examine and explain different cultural and religious beliefs / practices. Such programmes could enhance people's understanding and appreciation of other cultures and religions, as well as help dispel suspicions and avoid misunderstandings arising from ignorance and prejudice.

Make Quality Programmes Accessible to a Wider Audience from Different Language Backgrounds

b. It is recommended that broadcasters make quality info-educational, cultural, and children programmes accessible to the widest audience possible. For programmes which may have limited viewership because of the language medium, broadcasters should consider dubbing or subtitling them in other languages so that more viewers could enjoy them. Since current technology also allows for the provision of dual language tracks, broadcasters should make use of the technology to provide an additional language choice in popular dramas. To keep viewers informed, various media should highlight in their TV listings whether a programme is subtitled or has dual sound. This could help create greater awareness and interest in such programmes and attract viewers who normally would not watch them if they were only telecast in an unfamiliar language.

Allow Dialect in Certain Categories of Programmes Incrementally

c. The PAC felt that as most young people are now effectively bilingual, ie. in Mandarin and English, allowing dialect programmes should not have an adverse impact on the Speak Mandarin policy. Dialect could be introduced gradually and incrementally. Besides operatic performances, there could be some good dramas in dialect in non-primetime hours. This will widen the range of programmes for viewers, especially older viewers.

Have Tighter Standards when Producing Local Programmes Dealing with Crime

d. The committee felt that local TV programmes depicting crimes committed in Singapore might have a greater impact on local audiences compared to acquired programmes depicting crimes committed abroad, because local viewers are likely to relate more to the characters and incidents that occur in a local context. PAC recommends that broadcasters be mindful of the impact of local programmes dealing with crime, and observe tighter standards when producing such

programmes. For instance, broadcasters should not give too many details of the modus operandi of criminals as criminally inclined individuals may copy the methods and behaviour.

Inject Creativity and Local Flavour into Formatted Gameshows

e. While it is worthwhile to produce local versions of international formatted gameshows, members felt that local versions should not, as far as possible, be straight copies of the original. But broadcasters should continue to adapt these gameshows to suit local viewers and introduce creative special editions to add value to the programmes and to make them more interesting.

Improve Range of Sports Programmes on FTA TV

f. It was observed that there is an insufficient range of sports programming on FTA TV with most of the existing coverage focusing on football and golf. To promote sports awareness, the PAC recommends that broadcasters give coverage to other forms of sports in addition to the popular, mainstream ones. Broadcasters should emphasise local sports more and actively encourage and promote interest in local sports. For example, broadcasters could provide news coverage of the local sports scene even though it does not come with a pedigree name, and give prominence to promising local athletes.

Devote a Dedicated Time Belt for Sports Programmes

g. Currently, sports on FTA TV seems too “ad-hoc” and sports fans who do not subscribe to Cable TV, thus feel deprived. This is because there is no dedicated time belt for sports programmes. PAC recommends that broadcasters allocate a dedicated time belt for sports so that sports fans can access sports programmes easily on FTA TV. This will also help erase the impression that the coverage of sports is sorely neglected on FTA channels.

Produce More Programmes featuring Cross Cultural Influences on Art Forms

h. The PAC observed that arts and cultural programmes tend to focus on a particular ethnic group and in a particular language. To avoid compartmentalising arts and cultural programmes and limiting these programmes to any particular ethnic group, broadcasters should produce programmes on how various cultures influence art forms. These programmes could, for example, showcase inter-ethnic participation in different art forms (eg mak yong, dikir barat etc), look at their development across different countries and evolution over time and space, and explore how rich, cross cultural artforms can be. Such programmes would also highlight the common cultural interests and similarities amongst different races and people.

Screen More In-Depth and Informative Arts and Cultural Programmes

i. While the PAC appreciates the good spread of arts and cultural performances available on TV, it is felt that broadcasters should not shy away from producing and acquiring in-depth and analytical programmes on arts and culture. Such programmes should go beyond just showing a particular concert, opera, or musical, but dwell on the finer points of the art form. This can help the public cultivate a deeper interest and understanding of the arts, allow for greater critical appreciation of the arts, and raise the general standard of arts literacy in Singapore.

Protect the Interest of Child Performers

j. The PAC observed that in some instances, producers were pushing the limits of good taste and exploited children for the sake of entertainment. In the production of the ‘Kids Karaoke Grand Finals’ on the variety show, *Weekend Delight* (欢乐周末夜), children were made to perform acts which were tasteless and not suitable for young performers. It is recommended that broadcasters protect the interest of child performers and have minimum production standards and guidelines for producers to observe so as to avoid such occurrences.

Factor in More Research for Programmes Targeted at Pre-schoolers

k. The PAC notes that the lessons or messages in some programmes targeted at pre-schoolers may be beyond their comprehension. It is strongly recommended that broadcasters acquire greater knowledge about the cognitive development and psychology of pre-schoolers in general and their interests and intellectual abilities in particular, so that programmes intended for them may be more appropriate to their age group.

Go for Depth and Variety in Children’s Programmes

l. While programmes may introduce interesting topics such as racial harmony, it is noted that the content coverage is often lacking in depth, reflecting perhaps, inadequate research. It is recommended that info-educational programmes should be content-rich. The PAC recommends that more financial resources should be allocated to children's programmes to bring programmes up to international standards. Perhaps to inject more variety, broadcasters could also involve children and youths in the production of programmes because they may have ideas and know what appeals to their own peers. A good example is *Hear Me Out*, a programme aired on Nickelodeon that had youths as presenters and featured interesting stories submitted by both children and youths.

Adopt Consistent Quality Programming and Scheduling Strategies

m. Noting the many viewer complaints pertaining to the frequent and sometimes last minute changes to schedules by the two competing TV stations, MediaCorp and

MediaWorks, the PAC felt that the broadcasters should refrain from such practices. The PAC recommends that broadcasters adopt clear and consistent programming and scheduling strategies that will enable them to meet the needs of their target audience. Over time, this approach will help build up strong viewership support and loyalty to their programmes and stations.

Schedule Quality Dramas in More Accessible Timeslots

n. The committee would like to reiterate their recommendation made last year that broadcasters should consider scheduling quality productions with solid content and high production values at a time that is more accessible to viewers, instead of airing them at late night timeslots. This is so that a larger number of viewers can have the opportunity to watch these quality dramas.

Radio Presenters to be Sensitive when Handling Callers with Problems

o. Members noted that some radio stations have phone-in segments where callers can share their problems or air their grouses. Radio DJs must be sensitive to the problems of their callers and should avoid brushing off or trivialising the callers' problems. It is recommended that whenever possible, the station should invite a counsellor as studio guest during such programmes. If that is not possible, DJs should remind the listeners that what they can offer is merely friendly advice and refer them to counselling service hotline numbers if necessary.

PAC's Choice of TV Programmes

28 The PAC would like to highlight some quality programmes on TV which it has observed, and to recommend to broadcasters to produce and acquire more of such good programmes for telecast on their channels. Titles illustrative of PAC's choice of quality programmes are given in Annex A of this report.

CONCLUSION

29 In multi-racial, multi-cultural, and multi-religious Singapore, the broadcast media has an important role to play in educating and uniting the nation. Especially in a climate when terrorism threatens to destabilise our way of life, broadcasters need to take on the responsibility of enhancing and promoting inter-cultural understanding through the programmes they telecast.

30 Generally, broadcasters are doing a commendable job in providing information and entertainment for the different language groups. However, there is a need for free-to-air broadcasters to move beyond the mentality that it is sufficient merely to cater to a particular language group. Broadcasters need to recognise Singapore's multi-cultural nature and are therefore encouraged to produce programmes that will not only appeal to specific language groups, but also those that will reach out to audiences of different races and cultures. In addition,

broadcasters should make an effort to telecast programmes with cross cultural elements that reflect the nation's diversity. These efforts will not only help different racial and religious groups dispel any apprehensions they may have of each other, they will also encourage and enhance an appreciation of our multi-cultural environment.

31 Opening up the broadcasting landscape to allow competition has enabled viewers to have more choice in terms of the number of channels available. While it is commendable that broadcasters try to serve the interest of viewers with new and innovative programming, the greater choices that are made available have not resulted in higher programme quality and variety. Competition tends to degenerate into a "ratings war" where broadcasters compete head-to-head on viewership figures rather than the quality of their offerings. If this undesirable trend should continue, the viewers will be the worse off.

32 Instead, broadcasters should strive to compete on quality rather than quantity. By producing quality programmes, they will whet the audience's appetite for even higher quality programmes. This would help raise the standard of programming in Singapore and allow local broadcasters to compete on the global stage.

PAC'S CHOICE

The PAC recognises the presence of quality programming on TV and would like to applaud those titles of worth aired during the period March 2002 to February 2003. Listed below are programmes of notable quality observed by the committee, and broadcasters are recommended to produce and acquire more of such good programmes for telecast on their channels.

It is to be noted that the list is not intended to be exhaustive. It also does not attempt to strike a balance by language type as there are other PACs looking specifically at Chinese, Malay, and Indian programmes. While the list is not arranged in any order of merit, it is sorted by their genre and production source (ie. local or acquired) for easy reference.

CHILDREN

Kids Express (Kids 快车) (Ch 8, local production)

Kids Express is an info-educational magazine programme featuring 2 hosts on a hunt for clues that will eventually lead them to their final destination. It is noted that the series contains engaging content, is well-paced, and the young presenters perform credibly as show hosts.

Under My Sun (Kids Central, local production)

This general knowledge series packages educational content in a fun and humorous way. It takes children on a road trip around Singapore riding on the vehicle of a rag-and-bone man. Through their travels and adventure, the children find out interesting facts about Singapore. Although the host is quite a new face on TV, he succeeded in conveying information in an entertaining and engaging manner.

Chutti Ulagam (translated as 'Children's World') (Vasantham, local production)

This informative and well-produced programme takes kids to different destinations like India, Sri Lanka, and Bali to give them an insight into each destination's unique culture and interesting locales. It is highly commendable that a children's programme takes that extra step to provide content that goes beyond the Singapore context.

Hear Me Out (Nickelodeon, local production)

A collaboration between SCV's Creative Classroom, a school initiative that aims to make learning an adventure, and the kid's TV channel Nickelodeon, this excellent news magazine series features teenagers as hosts and roving reporters. It presents stories of interesting events and developments in schools that are chosen by the teenagers themselves.

Kids United Sr 2 & 3 (Kids Central, local production)

Now in its third season, this children's drama centres around a group of friends and how they handle day to day issues like schoolwork, peer pressure and parents. The series has continuously improved and remain popular and relevant to its viewers by injecting new characters, guest stars, and also looking at issues from a fresh perspective.

Who is No 1 (谁是No. 1) (Ch 8, local production)

This drama series explores the real issues facing children today. It examines the pressures that kids today encounter from parents and school. It is commendable that a series takes a serious look at these pressing problems and present them from a kid's point of view.

Jejari Hidup Sr 2 (translated as 'Fingers of Life') (Suria, local production)

The second season of this drama revolving around the experiences of four children attending the same school and sharing the same experiences is an improvement from the first. As the characters develop, they become more realistic and identifiable. Production quality and scriptwriting has also improved making this programme a draw to viewers and also a choice pick by the PAC.

Pirai (translated as 'Crescent') (Vasantham, local production)

This drama follows the story of a three-generation family living under one roof and from the perspective of the eleven-year-old protagonist. It shows how a family survives and bonds through various problems and family crises such as the father losing his job and the death of their grandmother. Commissioned by MDA.

Champs (Kids Central, local production)

This dramatised series profiles the winners of the Champions of the NKF Award which honours youths that exhibited heroic and inspiring acts of compassion, courage, filial piety, determination and mental strength. The programme is commendable as seeing how the youths survived and succeeded against all odds serves as an inspiration to all viewers.

CULTURE

Art Nation (Arts Central, local production)

This lively and entertaining arts magazine programme features local artistes and upcoming events in the arts fraternity in Singapore. Compared to the earlier series, it is commendable that the programme has improved tremendously by being more focussed and critical in its subject matter. It is also encouraging to see the host's involvement in the artforms that are being featured.

Artistik Asia (Suria, local production)

This well-researched Malay programme examines the musical and cultural heritage of Asian countries and highlights artistes from those countries who made significant contributions. In particular, the on-site visits to the various countries give viewers an in-depth and enlightening behind-the-scene look at art forms and their influences in the different regions. This quality programme deserves a wider viewership than the targeted Malay audience.

Infusion (Arts Central, local production)

Infusion takes a refreshing approach by providing insight into the lives of artistes and the different genres of performing arts by letting the artistes take on a new arts discipline. This not only provides viewers with an interesting cross-disciplinary experience, it allows an appreciation of the different art forms by emphasising to viewers the precision and effort needed to cultivate good art.

Self-Portraits (Arts Central, local production)

This documentary takes an in-depth look at the life and works of prominent figures in the local arts community. By delving into the thoughts of the artists, this series gives viewers a glimpse of how the artists' life shape and impact their works. The employment of first-person narration also gives greater immediacy and authenticity to the programme. Commissioned by MDA.

On The Trail Of The Phoenix (Arts Central, local production)

This six-part documentary takes an insightful look at the history and culture of Peranakan communities. It is felt that this well-produced, in-depth documentary is something that can be marketed to an international audience. Commissioned by MDA.

Art TV (艺 TV) (Ch 8, local production)

This popular, accessible Mandarin magazine-style arts programme introduces the different arts and cultural activities taking place in Singapore. The series has a good pace and presents art as a fun and enjoyable pursuit, and shows it is not an elitist pastime.

Oviyam (translated as 'Art') (Vasantham Central, local production)

This educational six-part Tamil series highlights and promotes young budding artists and also features expert opinions and professional guidance on art. Using engaging and appealing commentary, the series feeds the viewers with useful information in a manner such that they want to know more about the arts; a perfect induction to the arts. Commissioned by MDA.

Inside the Actor's Studio (Arts Central, acquired production)

Hosted by offbeat, drama professor James Lipton, an actor is placed in front of a studio audience while the host interviews him with interesting and revealing questions. It is felt that through the interesting discussion, interviews, and interaction with the audience, the featured actor reveals his craft and inspires those

who wishes to pursue the craft of acting. In a way, the series also gives a human face to actors that normally appear behind a glitzy, Hollywood persona.

INFO-EDUCATION

SecretWorlds (Ch i, local production)

This impressive nature documentary was well-produced with eye-catching opening titles and beautiful camera work. In addition, the programme was informative and examined the fauna of Singapore from interesting angles. Commissioned by MDA.

Singaporeans In China (打拼在神洲) (Ch 8, local production)

This informative programme catered to Singaporeans who are curious about China and took an in-depth look at the entrepreneurial spirit. It also illustrated the business opportunities available there and provided insights on what it takes to be successful in China by featuring Singaporeans who have carved a niche for themselves in the China market. Commissioned by MDA.

Itsy Bitsy Singapore (标出新加坡) (Ch U, local production)

This series features the top 50 icons that best represent Singapore. Although the programme came across more like an info-tainment rather than an info-educational programme, it was refreshing that the producers of the programme took such a creative approach. The programme also allows viewers to vote for their favourite icons and helped to inculcate a sense of identity among Singaporean viewers. This series is commissioned by MDA.

Mosaic (CNA, local production)

Although the treatment of this series is similar to that of *Extraordinary People*, this heartwarming series takes a look at the relationships enjoyed between Singaporeans from different racial backgrounds. Commissioned by MDA.

Contact China (CNA, local production)

Contact China examines the main business issues affecting companies operating in China and Chinese companies venturing out of China. This current affairs series competently combines strong research with interesting and relevant visuals.

Beyond the Facade (CNA, local production)

This documentary on conservation is not only architecturally educational, it also succeeds in engaging viewers by weaving into the narrative interesting historical information such as the background to the buildings and famous people associated with them. Commissioned by MDA.

Green Detectives (Arts Central, local production)

Combining archival footage and re-enactment, this local environmental series looks at nature areas and issues concerning the environment. Clever use of graphics complement the talking heads well in the various episodes.

Timeline Singapore (CNA, local production)

By focusing on personal stories and through clever crafting of visuals, this engaging series tracks the beginnings and charts the future of historical heritage areas in Singapore. It also explores the roots of different communities and their heritage.

Mind Matters (Ch 5, local production)

Mind Matters is a three-part docu-drama series focussing on common mental illnesses in Singapore. Using re-enactments and interviews with medical experts, the series aims to address the myths and misconceptions of mental illnesses and to bring about a better understanding of victims of mental illnesses.

Chapters Of Life (Arts Central, local production)

This documentary series, featuring stories of ordinary people, pays tribute to those who have battled and triumphed against challenging odds. With effective re-enactments where necessary, it celebrates the courage of those who have excelled despite adversity, and the gracious magnanimity of others who have gone out of their way to help them.

The Commanding Heights (CNA, acquired production)

This 6-part documentary looks at the new global economy and what it means for individuals around the world. Built around in-depth interviews with world leaders and thinkers, including Singapore's Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew, it explores the new reality, new rules, and new winners and losers in the battle between government and marketplace.

ENTERTAINMENT / INFOTAINMENT

Blueprint (Ch 5, local production)

The *Blueprint* script-to-screen concept of transforming winning entries from MDA's Script Writing Competition to actual TV productions is noteworthy, providing a good platform to showcase and nurture budding, independent scriptwriters. The scripts are well developed with creative elements and the overall final product is refreshing, offering storylines with new perspectives and ideas. *Blueprint* should be encouraged as an annual affair. Commissioned by MDA.

First Touch (Ch 5, local production)

Into its second season, *First Touch* is recognising its full potential and fast reaching the quality standards of a credible medical drama. Well-researched, the series engages with its realistic medical and social issues, where subject matters are sensitively treated. There has been greater character development as viewers are given deeper insight into the professional and private lives of the medical team. The

storyline of *First Touch* also allows for the natural context of sustaining a multi-racial cast.

Beautiful Connection (九层糕) (Ch 8, local production)

Beautiful Connection is about a domineering mother's relationship with her three daughters, their conflicts and how they ultimately learn from their mistakes and reconcile their differences. Through each flawed but likeable character, the series explores issues very close to the hearts of Singaporeans. This humorous and heart-warming series is one of the best locally produced social and family dramas to date.

Springs Of Life (春到人间) (Ch 8, local production)

This is a heart-warming story tracing the life of ordinary folks through the '60s and '70s eras of Singapore. It is an entertaining and well acted drama series which older viewers can readily relate to and share with younger members of the family.

Happy Rules (开心就好) (Ch U, local production)

This informative lifestyle series touching on a variety of subjects eg fashion, décor, entertainment outlets, hobbies etc entertains viewers with its lively presentation. The interaction between the hosts, the various personas they take on and the interwoven skits add humour and charm to the programme.

Yummy King (优选美食王) (Ch U, local production)

In every episode, *Yummy King* introduces eating locations serving up the best of Singaporeans' favourite hawker foods as voted by viewers and taxi drivers. The chemistry between the hosts and the elements of wit add to the interest and entertainment value of the series.

Makansutra (Ch i, local production)

Makansutra reinvents the tried and tested formula of a food travelogue and has maintained its quality and entertainment value since its debut season. With its own brand of humour, *Makansutra* proves to be informative, offering a comprehensive guide to diverse eating places. Each episode takes on a different theme and is a good platform for bringing out interesting aspects of local culture.

The Amazing Race (Ch 5, acquired production)

Fast paced and exciting, this quality Reality TV series, into its third season, constantly intrigues with its combination of creativity, competition and drama. *The Amazing Race* is also educational as it introduces viewers to various global destinations and offers interesting bits of trivia.

Judging Amy (Ch 5, acquired production)

This consistently powerful and thought-provoking courtroom, social and family drama centres on the work of Judge Amy Gray in her hometown and her strong bond with her mother and young daughter. Emotive with witty elements, the series

plays out moral and social conflicts and dilemmas which viewers can readily identify with.

CSI (Crime Scene Investigation) (Ch 5, acquired production)

CSI, a forensics detective drama, is intellectually stimulating with its intricate and unpredictable plot lines promising to fascinate and engage. Tastefully produced, the series manages to deal with macabre topics with sensitivity.

Kindred Spirit (真情) (Ch U, acquired production)

This long running Hong Kong series is an endearing and engaging family drama with many twists and turns in its multifaceted plot. The interaction of the characters, each with his or her own story to tell and the situations that unfolds, involves the audience from start to finish.

Scrubs (Ch 5, acquired production)

The comedy series, *Scrubs*, follows the lives of three medical interns and their professional and personal relationships with other hospital staff. The quirks and idiosyncratic traits of each character and the interwoven ‘fantasy’ sequences make each episode hilarious without being slapstick. *Scrubs* manages to explore issues like death or friendship well, adopting a light-hearted but non-trivialising approach.

Titus (Ch i, acquired production)

This sitcom is about Titus, his relationship with his dysfunctional family, all presented in a light-hearted vein. Through seamless flashback sequences, viewers understand how he copes and reacts as a result of his unconventional upbringing. Despite the apparent differences Titus and his half-brother have with their father, they are ultimately filial sons. This show entertains with its edgy and sharp humour.

SPORTS

TR Report (特写) (Ch 8, local production)

One episode of this documentary series featured former national sportsmen who excelled in their current career after retiring from sports. In addition to being a well produced episode, the inherent message of this programme is very encouraging. It examines the idea that spending one’s youth pursuing sports does not equate to sacrificing one’s future career, for the sports industry is not just restricted to professional athleticism, but include areas like retail, coaching, media etc. In fact, the sportsmen featured on the programme commented that the qualities acquired through participation in sports, eg. focus and perseverance, contributed to the success in their current careers.

Health Care (都市保健) (Ch 8, local production)

This programme aimed to impart correct knowledge on exercise to the public. Topics covered include basics of physiology and anatomy in relation to exercise, proper nutrition, benefits of consistent exercise, the right way to exercise to prevent injury, and how to sustain the habit of exercising. The programme is commendable for successfully imparting correct knowledge on sports and exercise to the public in simple terms, making it easy for the laymen to understand. English subtitles were also provided so that it can reach a wider audience.

Home Teams (CNA, local production)

This excellent documentary featuring sporting tradition in various families encourages people to participate in sports as a family. It highlights how family members can offer each other encouragement in their pursuit of sporting excellence. The series is commissioned by MDA.

Tiger Skins Golf Event (Ch i, local production)

Although the production quality of this programme is a bit raw, it has greater entertainment value compared to traditional golf programmes for it contains interviews with players during the game, provides excitement on each hole as there is prize money attached to it and allows for interaction between the field spectators and players. Overall, it is a good attempt by MediaWorks at producing and covering major sporting events.

English Premiere League (EPL) Weekly Highlights (Ch i, acquired production)

As the only window to the EPL on FTA TV, this weekly highlights programme is a great service to football fans who cannot afford cable TV. It is also appreciated by those who have missed the matches during the weekend. After running for a while, most football fans now know that Monday midnight is EPL night on Ch i, and hence it is a good example of how a regular fixed timeslot for sports programme would be appreciated and remembered by viewers.