

It fumbled but didn't fall.....2

SE ENTERTAINMENT
HD **It fumbled but didn't fall**
BY By Antonia Zerbisias Toronto Star
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You spend two years constructing a massive, electronic monster, with used parts and spare change picked up around the country.

Once you get the basic structure, you plant its feet in Halifax, lay its middle in Winnipeg, set its shoulders in Calgary and stick its head in Toronto. The strings, you cast amongst the satellites.

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And then you plug it in.

Newly created monsters lurch and lumber. They don't dance - at least not without some practise.

And so, **CBC Newsworld** took its first clumsy steps yesterday. But it kept on its feet, doggedly determined to keep going through audio failures, technical hitches, and satellite snafus. It faltered, it fumbled. But it didn't fall.

If you were watching on Rogers Cable, Newsworld signed on at 10 to 6 with "O Canada" and pretaped presentations by outgoing CBC president Pierre Juneau, CBC-TV vice-president Denis Harvey, information programming chief Trina McQueen, and Newsworld chief Joan Donaldson.

Six-hour marathon

If you tuned in on MacLean-Hunter Cable TV, you got nothing until after 7.15. The historic sign-on was missed because of connection delays.

At 6 a.m., the whirling violet and green globe Newsworld logo spun into the opening of Newsworld Morning, telecast from Halifax. It's a six-hour marathon of news, weather and sports reports with regular contributions live from the Globe And Mail's business section and pre-taped from TV Guide editor John Keyes.

Co-hosted by Paul Griffin and Beth Gaines, newsreader Jane Gilbert and sportscaster George Boyd, Newsworld Morning is best in bites of 15 minutes or less. Stay with the show more than an hour and it's mind-numbingly repetitive.

But the repetition isn't really a problem because Newsworld Morning is intentionally-designed for people on the go, not for lounging layabouts.

What is a problem is the feeling of immediacy - or rather, lack of it. Gilbert's newsreading was so low-key it was almost soporific. And the set didn't help. She seemed to be sitting in front of an aluminum-sided

wall with a ladder leaning on it. The production sorely missed "cells", those little pictures projected behind anchors that help to introduce stories.

"We didn't build enough cells for today's show," admitted executive producer Sandy McKean. "And we had problems with the rear screen projector. We couldn't get the bugs out in time. But you'll see changes and improvements."

Let's hope we see some warmth too. There was no contact between each player, no friendly rapport, no team feeling. There's something about morning shows that demands camaraderie.

At noon, the switch was to Winnipeg and Canada Live, hosted by the vivacious Anne Petrie. But right off the bat, no sound. Audio difficulties continued to plague this interview and phone-in show for two hours. Satellite problems turned video interviews to picture-less phone conversations. Somebody (in Toronto?) fed the wrong TV Guide report; we got Friday's listings instead of Monday's.

Looking slick and suave was Midday's Sheldon Turcott, who reported from The National newsroom every hour through the afternoon. Fast-paced, glitch-free, and practised, practised, practised. '

'Just not fair'

Turcott and the gang at The National have done this before. The people at Newsworld have not - at least not all together, all at once, all day long. But they will. It just takes time.

"I'm going to give them a week before commenting," said Tim Kotcheff, vice-president of CTV news and information programming. "It's just not fair the first day. The logistics are horrifying and it's going to take a while to get them worked out."

"If only all new ventures in broadcasting started in such a solid way," said Toronto Life publisher Peter Herrndorf, a former vice-president of CBC.

"But you can't judge it by the first few hours. It's not like a Broadway opening, where it all rides on day one. It's how they do on a cumulative basis."

A telegram to Newsworld's deputy chief Michael Harris from Ed Turner, executive vice-president of the U.S. Cable News Network, which arrived at CBC yesterday afternoon, says it all.

"Congratulations," it reads. "As one who has been there, I'm aware of the butterflies and the glitches . . . they never stop."

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