

Evening Standard (London)

January 5, 1994, Wednesday

## Plugging into Christmas

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ITV's not-very-special Christmas policy might make sense in the counting-house, but the result in the ratings was a fairly spectacular cooking of the commercial-channel goose.

In terms of viewing hours, as important at the festive season as audiences, the Barb figures reveal that the total BBC share for the week ending 26 December was 50.7 per cent, whereas ITV's was down to 34.3 per cent.

The figures for 1992, when ITV introduced its effortless-Christmas plan (the rationale is that viewers cannot buy goods advertised with the shops shut), were BBC 49.5 per cent, ITV 37.6.

The combination of expanding shopping hours and an ongoing consumer recovery might cause ITV to reconsider its policy for Christmas 1994.

Especially as the BBC achieved its festive figures with precision programme targetry, rather than the old blunderbuss technique. **One Foot In The Algarve**, shown on Christmas Sunday, was top of the tree with 20 million viewers, a twig or two above the Only Fools And Horses special. The special Saturday edition of EastEnders bagged 23 million, but this figure includes 5.65 million for the omnibus segment.

Birds Of A Feather, Keeping Up Appearances and the Sunday episode of Casualty also did well. Even a repeat of the 1977 Morecambe and Wise Christmas show pulled in 10.42 million, and at 11.15pm on Christmas night.

BBC2, however, played little part in Auntie's success: indeed the viewing share was down from 9.6 per cent to 8.5. However, without repeat editions of its most popular programmes, the BBC2 Top 30 looks a little different from usual - that is, Bottom has gone to the top, cheek-by-jowl with Rab C Nesbitt, while Have I Got News For You (albeit an end-of-series special) slips to number four.

Fashionable comedians Newman and Baddiel's Christmas special - screened on 20 December - did less well, though Nick Park's latest animated story The Wrong Trousers zipped up to number six.

No seasonal fattening for Coronation Street - indeed Bruce Forsyth's Christmas Generation Game took a lump out of the usual Friday audience - but Michael Barrymore's Strike It Lucky continues to do well.

The good news for ITV is that switching the third episode of The Bill from Saturday should benefit the flagging Friday night figures: the audience for the first show back in its old Friday slot was slightly higher than the previous week's Saturday audience.

BBC1

EastEnders (Sat/Sun)23.04

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One Foot/Algarve (Sun)20.00  
Only Fools/Horses (Sat)19.59  
EastEnders (Thu/Sun)19.48  
EastEnders (Tue/Sun)19.43  
Birds of a Feather (Sat)19.39  
Ghost (Sat)18.53  
Keep/Appearances(Sun)17.07  
Casualty (Sun)17.03  
Neighbours (Thu)16.69  
News/Weather (Sun)16.66  
Neighbours (Mon)15.88  
Neighbours (Wed)15.38  
Neighbours (Tue)15.12  
Neighbours (Fri)14.32  
Back to the Future (Sat)13.74  
Noel's Xmas (Sat)12.72  
Hunt/Red October (Fri)10.49  
Morecambe/Wise (Sat)10.42  
Crocodile Dundee (Wed) 9.76  
Telly Addicts (Mon) 9.71  
Question/Sport (Tue)9.54  
2 Point 4 Children (Mon)9.12  
Antiques Rdshow (Sun)9.09  
News/Weather (Sun)9.02  
Xmas Generation (Fri)8.75  
Gdnight Sweetheart (Thu)8.58  
Chef (Fri)8.47  
Life in the Freezer (Thu)8.43  
Superman III (Sun)8.32  
BBC2

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Bottom (Tue)5.26  
Rab C Nesbitt (Thu)4.50  
Food/Drink Xmas (Tue)4.28  
Have I Got News (Fri)4.26  
Star Trek (Wed)3.84  
Wrong Trousers (Sun)3.26  
40 Minutes (Tue)2.77  
Karate Killers (Thu)2.74  
White Christmas (Sat)2.62  
Travel Show/Special (Wed)2.62  
Christmas in Vienna (Thu)2.56  
Newman/Baddiel (Mon)2.48  
White Palace (Fri)2.47  
Rolls-Royce Chllnge (Mon)2.41  
One Spy Too Many (Tue)2.35  
An Affair/Remember (Sun)2.35  
Stark (Wed)2.28  
Wartime Kchn/Grdn (Fri)2.26  
Gleaming/Cube (Mon)2.17  
Reindeer Rock (Sun)2.11  
Top Gear Rally Specl (Thu)2.07  
Roman Holiday (Sun)1.95  
Delia Smith (Wed)1.94  
Catchword (Mon)1.82  
Peter and the Wolf (Sun)1.79  
Inura The Dingo (Fri)1.76  
Delia Smith (Tue)1.70  
Carols From King's (Fri)1.70  
Timewatch (Mon)1.66  
Ghost Story/Xmas (Fri)1.64

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ITV

Coronation St (Mon/Wed)20.38

Coronation St (Wed/Fri)18.50

Coronation St (Fri)15.11

Strike It Lucky (Mon)14.57

Prime Suspect III (Mon)14.03

Home And Away (Fri)13.75

Battle/Gladiators (Sun)13.69

Home and Away (Mon)13.19

Home and Away (Tue)13.04

Home and Away (Wed)12.97

The Bill (Tue)12.78

Emmerdale (Tue/Thu)12.62

Home and Away (Thu)12.62

The Bill (Thu)11.89

Family Fortunes (Fri)11.30

News at Ten (Mon)10.93

The Bill (Fri)10.91

Upper Hand (Thu)10.51

Crime Story (Wed)10.43

Des O'Connor (Wed)10.12

Wish You/Here (Mon/Tue)10.10

Jewels (Tue)9.96

Jewels (Tue)9.87

Emmerdale (Thu)9.73

Early Evening News (Fri)8.30

News at Ten (Tue)8.25

Lose a Million (Wed)7.93

Hollywood Women (Thu)7.83

World in Action (Mon)7.77

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News at Ten (Wed)7.55

CHANNEL 4

Brookside (Fri/Sat)4.85

Brookside (Mon/Sat)4.66

Brookside (Wed/Sat)4.48

Crystal Maze (Fri)4.37

Fifteen-to-One (Fri)4.02

Fifteen-to-One (Thu)3.61

Fifteen-to-One (Tue)3.53

Crystal Maze (Wed)3.50

Fifteen-to-One (Wed)3.42

Fifteen-to-One (Mon)3.36

Tina Turner (Wed)3.34

Roseanne (Tue)3.27

Tina Turner (Fri)3.23

Desmond's (Mon)2.47

Oprah Winfrey (Tue)2.45

Oprah Winfrey (Wed)2.30

Take That (Sun)2.17

Oprah Winfrey (Thu)2.05

Different World (Mon)2.03

Camp Christmas (Fri)2.02

Mork and Mindy (Tue)1.99

Models (Thu)1.90

Secret Cabaret (Wed)1.90

Trinians/Robbery (Sat)1.81

Saved by the Bell (Sat)1.68

The Word (Fri)1.64

Gamesmaster (Thu)1.63

Dispatches (Wed)1.59

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Ru Paul (Tue)1.58

Wildlife Photo (Thu)1.55

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