

'To advertise television in a national newspaper which circulates throughout the British Isles at a time when television programmes operate only within the London Service Area, would have been waste of money,' declared the HMV dealer's magazine ('The Voice') in December 1937. True, but dafter things happen in satellite television.

The story of the promotion of television to the nation is a fascinating story, and some aspects of the copy would not be unfamiliar in our Sky TV age. 'The Voice', approximately quarto size, was published monthly, using black and white pictures, plus features, to generate business go-getting among dealers. Thus, in the later 1930s, it was more likely that you would come upon promotions for radiograms than mention of television, but, as already indicated, the Christmas business of 1937 was somewhat television oriented.

'The Daily Express', a broadsheet at the time, was used for a split-run advertising campaign, whereby copies distributed in the London TV area included a full page advertisement for television, whilst copies destined for lesser parts of the nation had a swap, using a full page promotion for radiograms. There is a connection, by the way. When I lived in Bridgend (Glamorgan) in the early 1950s, a genial neighbour used to play Frankie Laine and Mario Lanza records on his radiogram while looking at his television set, sound turned down as the drama had somehow lost his attention. Stray callers, seeing what they thought was television for the first time were, dare I say, bemused. The full page advertisement, included in some 700,000 copies of 'The Daily Express', was introductory in the style of Sky TV and BSB advertising, with the headline: 'TELEVISION FOR £1 A WEEK ... What does it bring you today?, About a third of the page was taken up with a repro of a boxing match, as seen on television, and below this, three miniature pictures of HMV television sets. Readers were promised 'absolute clarity', and the body copy, in rather small type one must admit, mentioned various attractions, the type matter relieved by an inset pic of the Alexandra Palace TV mast.

At the foot of the advertisement, a 'please fill in and post' coupon invited readers to enquire for further details. Thus, on Friday November 19th 1937, Britain's first full page advertisement for 405 line television was produced. 'The Voice' ran a nice piece about the way that the 'thirteen giant presses' at 'The Daily Express', and the careful scrutiny of members of the Circulation Department ensured that the right issues went to the right distribution, including the trains that left London for the nether regions of Britain at about

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3 a.m. Mr L. Needham, the then advertisement director of 'The Daily Express' and Mr A. S. Radford, advertising manager for HMV, were photographed 'checking the first copies of the television announcement at 2.30 a.m.' whilst an art paper 'pull' of the advertisement was used for subsequent publicity purposes.

Today, of course, advertising agencies do this sort of thing without blinking an eyelash (split advertising runs, that is - but then I write as a former copywriter who once did dockyard cranes as well as pianos, in the matter of publicity). Only a cynic would suggest that people beyond Barnsley might have liked to see the television advertisement, too, if only as a promise of good things to come. As they say, if there's anything good going, you can be sure the London folk will make sure they get hold of it.

Incidentally, dealers in the London area took television seriously, and sometimes arranged quasi concert occasions (television showing plus neat sandwiches) in their heavily carpeted showrooms. But to afford a quid a week for television in 1937 meant that you were somewhat well-heeled, anyway. Some enthusiasts built their own television sets, though this aspect of garden shed hobbyism is somewhat overlooked. But if you could not afford television, and the parlour was too small for a radiogram, you and the missis could always go to bed early. Some radio dealers also sold ..... prams.