

SHOOT

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SCREENWORK

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Your Understandable All-News Cable Network: TV Land

Theodore Melfi-Directed Spec Comedy Spot Puts *Brady Bunch* Spin On Economics

By Robert Goldrich

We appear to be in for a heavy dose of talking heads during an all-news network program in which a serious moderator interviews two politicians: Sen. Bob Bitterman (R-TN) and Congressman Alan McFleener (D-NJ). The scintillating topic is the proposed tax cut.

The self-important, borderline pompous feel of the program titled *Politics Today* is subtly undermined, though, by the news ticker running across the bottom of the screen. The first ticker item reads, "Terror Alert: Insane."

The anything but understandable political speak begins with McFleener "explaining" that rates will raise on the 30-year treasury bill "to the point where we see negative quarterly/long-term growth on an inflation-adjusted basis."

A split-screen three shot shows the journalist and Bitterman totally confused by McFleener. Clearly they—and we—have no idea what this supposed expert is talking about. However, all is not lost.

Simplifying his explanation, McFleener parallels the economic theory to when Jan ordered that silver platter for her parents' anniversary and thought she could have the platter engraved for 85 cents—but it was 85 cents a letter.

Suddenly, the convoluted hypothesis becomes crystal clear for all thanks to *The Brady Bunch*-inspired analogy. The moderator and Bitterman now get it, at which point we see the TV Land logo, promoting *The Brady Bunch*, *Get Smart* and *Gilligan's Island*. A slogan for the network reads, "Comedy To Live By."

We return to the three-way split screen where the two politicians are singing *The Brady Bunch* theme song ("Here's a story about a man named Brady who had three boys of his own..."). Meanwhile, the journalist appears to be shedding tears of joy from his walk



down TV's memory lane.

Accenting the comedy is the aforementioned news ticker with such late breaking items as Bin Laden to release his next anti-American rant on DVD, and President Bush discusses "economic strategy to assimilate growth." (Finally, a politician we can "understand.")

Other touches accent the 24-hour news network show parody, including the graphic constantly reminding us that what we're seeing is "Live," accompanied by the time of day (Pacific Standard Time). A generic news network logo is reminiscent of the Fox News channel signature.

This comedic spec spot was directed by Theodore Melfi, whose spotmaking roost is Area 51 Films, Santa Monica. The spec piece was co-produced by Area 51 and Goldenlight Films, Los Angeles. Executive producers were Area 51 Films' Phyllis Koenig and Preston Lee, with Kim Quinn serving as producer. The DP was Blaine Brown. The concept came from Jim Landsbury who was the hybrid jack-of-all-trades creative director/art director/copywriter.

Sheila Moreland edited for Goldenlight Films. Colorist was P.J. Marsiglia of Company 3, Santa Monica. Brian Schneider of Ring of Fire, West Hollywood, was visual effects/Inferno artist. John Myers executive produced for Ring of Fire. Audio post mixer was Rick Tetzlaff via The House, Los Angeles. Tetzlaff also served as music composer.