

# 'Inventor' brings science, tears to TV

Produced by Simon Cowell, "American Inventor" (8 p.m., ABC) offers an entertaining blend of "American Idol," a science fair and a TV shopping network.



Kevin McDonough

After casting calls in seven major cities, a panel of four judges evaluates both new inventions and the men and women behind them. Passion and salesmanship count as much as the gadgets themselves.

Don't expect "Inventor" to be all math and science, calculators and slide rules. The judges get misty on more than one occasion, and ABC, the network behind "Extreme Makeover" and "Miracle Workers," expects you will, too. Caution: There will be hugs.

Over the course of the two-hour debut, the judges will evaluate a new-fangled shovel created by a handyman; an air-conditioner for car-bound dogs; a peculiar suit that doubles as a personal portable urinal; a portable, personal gym; edible snow globes; and a parade of bathroom-related gizmos.

The judges include Doug Hall, an engineer and inventor given to Hawaiian shirts; Ed Evangelista, an advertising executive with a New York accent as thick as a pastrami sandwich; Mary Lou Quinlan, a marketing consultant and founder of Just Ask a Woman; and Peter Jones, a telemarketing wizard from the United Kingdom.

Members of the panel often clash and have genuine differences of opinion, as opposed to the contrived banter on "American Idol."

Neither the judges nor the folks behind "Inventor" are terribly clear about what exactly counts as an invention. An angry punk rocker develops a new way of plugging in his electric guitar. Is this an invention or merely a modification? Nobody bothers to explain.

A mother develops a series of books and a furry doll to teach young children about behavior and character development. Despite a heart-tugging story, she doesn't pass muster. But the judges don't tell her that her books and character are not inventions but intellectual property.

I'm no lawyer, but I know that if you invent a new mousetrap you go to the patent office. If you devise the next rival to Mickey Mouse you get it trademarked or copyrighted. It's not a difficult distinction, but "Inventor" never bothers to make it.

"Extreme Yachts" (9 p.m., HGTV) profiles floating mansions, some with helicopter pads. These seafaring symbols of conspicuous consumption can fetch up to \$80 million.

"Confrontation" (10 p.m., A&E) recounts true tales of "Restorative Justice," a new method of bringing emotional healing to crime victims by allowing them to confront, and often for-

give, those who had wronged them.

Jennifer, a mother of five, was only a teenager when her father was stabbed to death while she slept in the next room. She gets a chance to talk about the murder with her father's killer, Billy.

Jennifer's husband accompanies her, but he cannot bring himself to forgive the man who robbed his children of their grandfather.

## Tonight's other highlights

• The NCAA Basketball Tournament (7 p.m., CBS) begins. A second game follows at 9 p.m., time approximate.

• A baby-sitting nightmare on "Everybody Hates Chris" (8 p.m., UPN, TV-PG, D, L, V).

• A gift for dad (Beau Bridges) on Mothers Day on "My Name is Earl" (9 p.m., NBC, TV-14).

• Marissa and Volchok grow closer on "The OC" (9 p.m., Fox, TV-PG, L).

• Bring-your-children-to-work day on "The Office" (9:30 p.m., NBC, TV-14).

• Weaver mulls hip-replacement surgery on "ER" (10 p.m., NBC, TV-14). Armand Assante guest stars.

## Cult choice

Tab Hunter stars in the 1963 Navy adventure "Operation Bikini" (10 p.m., TCM) with Frankie Avalon and Jim Backus.

## Series notes

A fetching temptation jeopardizes Sam's big opportunity on "The Loop" (8:30 p.m., Fox, TV-14, D, L, S) ... Mom's surprise visit on "Love, Inc." (8:30 p.m., UPN, TV-PG) ... An ultimatum on "Eve" (9 p.m., UPN, TV-PG) ... A devil of a hunch on "Supernatural" (9 p.m., WB, TV-14, V) ... Negative feedback on "Cuts" (9:30 p.m., UPN, TV-PG).

## Late night

Charles Barkley and Catherine Keener appear on "Late Show With David Letterman" (12:35 p.m., CBS, subject to delay due to basketball coverage) ... Jay Leno hosts Jodie Foster, Herb Alpert and Ozomatli on "The Tonight Show" (11:35 p.m., NBC) ... Amanda Peet and Bradley Cooper chat on "Late Night With Conan O'Brien" (12:35 a.m., NBC).

Kevin McDonough is a TV columnist for United Features Syndicate.

## THURSDAY EVENING

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Table with columns for time slots (7 PM, 7:30, 8 PM, 8:30, 9 PM, 9:30, 10 PM, 10:30, 11 PM, 11:30) and rows for various TV channels (WTTV, WRTV, WISH, WTHR, WFYI, WNDY, WTUW, WHMB, WCLJ, WXIN, WIPX, WTBU, A&E, AMC, AP, BET, BRAVO, CNBC, CMT, CNN, COM, DISC, E!, ESPN, ESPN2, FAM, FNC, FOOD, FOXMV, FOXSM, FX, HALL, HGTV, HIST, LIFE, MSNBC, MTV, NICK, NORY, OX, SCIFI, SPIKE, TBS, TCM, TLC, TNT, TOON, TVL, USA, VH1, WE, WGN, DISN, ENC, HBO, SHOW, MAX, TMC, STARZ) listing their respective programs.

## ACCENT ON PEOPLE

The Associated Press

### HONG KONG Aging action hero wants to play firefighter

Jackie Chan says his dream role would be portraying a firefighter, but he thinks he's too old to play one.



CHAN

"My wish is to bring my heroes to the big screen, and many of them have already appeared in my films. The firefighter is the only one I have yet to put in a film," the 51-year-old Chan said in a posting on his Web site this week.

"I have dragged this idea on for so many years, even if I want to make it, now I feel that my age makes me unsuitable."

Chan, who recently served as ambassador for the World Firefighters Games in Hong Kong, has suffered numerous injuries from performing his own stunts.

His screen credits include roles in the "Rush Hour" movies.

LOS ANGELES

### Singer takes case to court to stop tape sales

Former Creed singer Scott Stapp is suing in an effort to stop a California company from selling or promoting a sex video featuring himself, Kid Rock and four women.



STAPP

The federal lawsuit, filed in Los Angeles on Tuesday against World Wide Red Light District, is similar to one Kid Rock's lawyers brought last month in Detroit.

A U.S. District Court judge there has signed a temporary order barring the company from distributing or promoting any portion of the tape, including a 40-second preview clip that was previously displayed on Red Light District's Web sites.

Stapp's lawsuit states that two tapes, described as a video diary of his 1999 concert tour, were stolen from a safe at his house.

By DAVID BAUDER

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

## NEW YORK

Mike Wallace, the hard-driving reporter who has been with "60 Minutes" since its start in 1968, said Tuesday he will retire as a regular correspondent on the show this spring.

A television news legend who was the last person an accused wrongdoer would want to see on his doorstep, Wallace said he'll still do occasional reports for the show. CBS News President Sean McManus referred to him as a "correspondent emeritus."

Wallace, 87, has often said he'll retire "when my toes turn up."

"Well, they're just beginning to curl a trifle, which means that, as I approach my 88th birthday, it's become apparent to me that my eyes and ears, among other appurtenances, aren't quite what they used to be," he said.

Wallace has said for years that he was cutting back, but he's still done six reports in the current season, including a profile of actor Morgan Freeman and a story on soldiers who lost their limbs in Iraq.

It was a significant step last fall when Wallace relinquished his position as the first face viewers

## Veteran reporter will retire from '60 Minutes' this spring



AP PHOTO

Mike Wallace, an 87-year-old "60 Minutes" correspondent, said Tuesday he will stop being a regular contributor for the show.

saw after the ticking stopwatch on each show. Ed Bradley now has that distinction.

Wallace said that CBS is not pushing him and that he'll keep an office at CBS News headquarters.

"It's hard for all of us to get used to," said Jeff Fager, "60 Minutes" executive producer. "It's a sad day,

but it's also a chance to celebrate an incredible legacy and an amazing guy."

Even as age slowed him down, Wallace was still able to prod interview subjects in a style all his own. Fager remembered an interview with Russian President Vladimir Putin last year where

Wallace said. "This isn't a real democracy, come on!"

Wallace's television career dates back to the late 1940s. He acquired his reputation as a tough interrogator with "Night Beat," a local news show in New York that was a series of one-on-one interviews.

But he was also a game-show host and a commercial pitchman for cigarettes. He became a full-time newsmen for CBS in 1963, saying the death of his 19-year-old son, Peter, in an accident made him decide to stick with serious journalism.

Late last year, Wallace, to promote his memoir, sat for an interview with his son, Chris Wallace, a Fox News Channel anchor. The son asked his father, "Do you hate getting old?"

"I had my hearing aid fixed today so that I could properly hear you," the elder Wallace responded. "I can't see as well. I now have — this has stopped me from smoking — a pacemaker, have for about the last 15 years. No, I don't like getting old."

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Advertisement for SHOWPLACE 16, listing showtimes for March 16 for movies like V for Vendetta, Failure to Launch, and The Hills Have Eyes.

Advertisement for AMC GreenWood Park 14, listing showtimes for movies like V for Vendetta, Failure to Launch, and The Hills Have Eyes.

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