

Network 7 (1987-88)



Sunday Productions for Channel 4, 3/5/1987-7/10/1988
44 x 2hr edns in two series, colour

Executive Producers	Keith MacMillan Jane Hewland
Series Editor	Charles Parsons
Producer	Janet Street-Porter

Reporters: Magenta De Vine, Sankha Guha, Tracey MacLeod; Psychologist: Oliver James

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Sunday news magazine programme presented by and for young people.

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Arguably the most influential of all programmes aimed at a youth audience, *Network 7* signalled from its opening credits, with their jumping frames and transmission 'noise', that a radically independent entity was taking over Sunday afternoon Channel 4. The presentation style, with edgy camerawork, a transparent acknowledgement of the production process and obtrusive graphics, also marked it out from more conventional productions.

Into its two-hour Sunday lunchtime slot it typically crammed over ten items on issues of the day and of general interest to a youthful audience, although it differed from most offerings in this genre in that it followed a current affairs/topical magazine agenda, without any of the musical performances that were a fixture elsewhere. Most items were presented live, though there were also pre-recorded inserts, some provided by separate production companies and separately credited.

The programme's most startling innovation, though, was the constant use of information captions - precursor to the now ubiquitous 'infobar' - which gave background and supplementary information to the reports in progress. The effect of this was to speed up the rate at which information was provided and to free the reporter to cut to the essence of the piece, which often involved 'doorstepping' politicians, industrialists or other public figures. Other features included rolling phone votes on the issues under discussion, an animated insert, 'Dick Spanner', provided by Gerry Anderson, and star interviews in 'Room 113'.

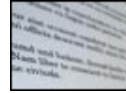
The brainchild of Janet Street-Porter and Jane Hewland, *Network 7* chose its presenters for their youth and spark, and several careers emerged from it, notably those of Sankha Guha and Magenta De Vine. Street-Porter herself, though in her forties, became the guru of British youth television, and was almost immediately headhunted by the BBC to head up its entire youth output, which was in desperate need of overhaul. Taking Guha, De Vine and others with her, she created the remarkably similar *DEF II* slot (1988-94). Charlie Parsons, a *Network 7* producer, also spread the programme's influence as editor of Channel 4's *Club X* (1989), which applied much the same approach and visual feel to a late-night magazine with a cultural agenda.

Steve Bryant

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