

TV TIME
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REVIEW

'Buzz'

► BY STEVE SCHNEIDER

BACK IN THE heady days before WWI, a group of Italian artists banded together in a movement called Futurism. Led by Marinetti and Boccioni, the Futurists declared their devotion to, and exaltation of, machines and speed. As-tutely, these young Italians saw that ours would be an age of machines and speed.

Jump cut to 1990: millenarian spirit grips the air. We are racing toward the end of a century, of a *millennium*. There is still so much to say and do—too much. Even the clock's ticks seem to be accelerating.

Buzz is the coughing smokestack of the millen-

nium, the revenge of the age of information. It is television disgorging itself, a vision of culture as a blender: give us this day our daily barrage.

It is a collage, spewed at hyperkinetic speeds, of international appropriations, taken from tourist films and music videos and Jenny Holzer and the Harper's Index and informal interviews and glitzy commercials and media and media and media.

nism or reliance on cultural clichés. But when a Ghanese man articulates his fear that his native traditions are facing "extinction" from "cultural imperialism," you stop, and maybe you shudder. He is saying this *on MTV*. *Buzz* is the electronic media's embarrassment over its own power, yet it uses this power to make its points.

A theme arching over all the *Buzz* words is the perversion of personal

This is an extreme example of what happens when the media becomes the message

About the only things *not* swarming through *Buzz* are highlights from Dan Quayle's dissertation on logical positivism.

It is also a half-hour series on MTV: this brings problems. The show's jiving jetsam congeals around themes like racism, femi-

truths by public deception. Everyone knows racism, sexism and cultural stereotyping are wrong, but everyone participates in these appalling biases at the hands of the media. Wait a second: The media are telling us that the media are the enemy. Not to worry: It's just the media flexing muscle again.

As media manipulators since Hitler have known, information delivered electronically is nearly irresistible. The form of the message, however ugly, gives it almost overpowering force. Thus the media exalt form over content—and can let form become a substitute for content: style conquers substance. Look at MTV. Look at *Buzz* itself.

Through their overwhelming manipulation of machines and speed, the media have indeed created McLuhan's global village

MTV

Premieres Sunday,
April 22, 9 p.m. ET

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*The show is a Futurist
nightmare: overload as a
publicity gimmick.*

