

PRODUCTION & PERFORMANCE

CONNECTED by micro-wave link to a transmitting station some three miles away, the main studio at Television House occupies 1,300 square feet. It is used for live and video-taped locally originated programmes.

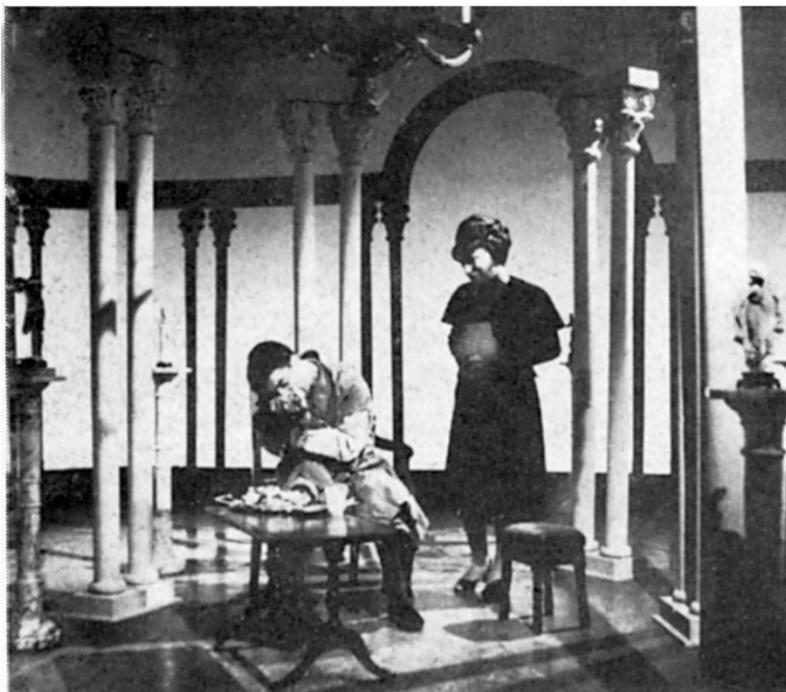
To produce one 45-minute locally originated drama on MTV requires more than 100 hours of advance preparation. Despite these time demands, the company's policy has always been to encourage local drama through its medium since this provides an outlet for Maltese authors, actors and actresses, as well as an audience rating as high as 115,000.

The high proportion of advance preparation time is accounted for by production planning, set design and building, filming, rehearsals and recordings. This latter is made possible by MTV's installation of video tape recording facilities — VTR. This machine tape records programmes, or parts of them and allows directors, producers, actors, technicians the "liberty of error" since errors can be removed. Prior to VTR installation, errors could not be corrected: a line uttered wrongly was beyond re call; a facial expression faultily registered could not be effaced; a gaffe was a gaffe and thousands of viewers saw it as a gaffe since local programmes were "live". What the camera said and the microphones picked up travelled mercilessly to our screens at the dismaying speed of light.

DRAMA ADVISORY PANEL

Drama scripts submitted to MTV are reviewed by the Television Drama Advisory Panel, which judges them for suitability and also assists writers with advice and guidance on the techniques of writing for television. The scripts are judged on the basis of literary and dramatic value, viewer appeal and feasibility in terms of facilities and studio space required. A number of plays are rejected because their length or demand on set space cannot be handled and also because they fail to reach an appropriate standard.

Once selected the play is passed to a producer and casting begins. In casting locally-originated dramas



MTV attempts whenever possible, to introduce new blood in each production. With casting completed the producer begins rehearsals and meets with the set designer to plot scenery.

Drama in Maltese attracts an audience as high as 115,000.

Few stations in the world the size of MTV attempt to produce 90-minute dramas.

It is indeed a forbidding but rewarding task.

STUDIO TIME

With the rehearsal schedule completed and sets designed, built and painted, one major operation remains. This is recording the production on video tape. In other words, the production is not transmitted at the time of the performance.

Crew and cast rehearse part one of the drama, then record it. It is then auditioned. If the audition reveals blatant mistakes, or technical flaws, the recording must start all over again. In all, studio rehearsals and recording for a 45-minute drama can take up to eight hours.

Great attention is paid at all times to keeping equipment in good working order and in purchasing new and up-to-date equipment when needed. In 1970, for example, the Group in Malta spent £80,000 in capital expenditure, a sum which included the purchase of a second TV transmitter capable of broad casting colour programmes.

.0006 PER CENT

It is to the credit of this department that breakdown due to technical failures have been a minute percentage of airtime 10 hours out of 17,000 hours viewing time, they proudly boast. As that works out at .0006 percent, it is a boast of which they can be proud.

Their constant hard work is rarely appreciated, and the public tends to think of them only .0006 per cent of the time! For the remaining 16,990 hours of the year they are, unfortunately out of mind because the TV picture is in sight.

IL-GWIDA No..450 7th' May 1971