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"BLACK SUNDAY" DIRECTOR JOHN FRANKENHEIMER MAKES FILM DEBUT  
AS AN ACTOR PORTRAYING A TELEVISION ANNOUNCER AT SUPER BOWL

Director John Frankenheimer plays a television director in his suspense thriller "Black Sunday."

Frankenheimer, one of the most eminent directors to emerge into films from television, makes his debut screen appearance in the Paramount feature. He is seen in a CBS-TV mobile unit at the Super Bowl Game, the scene of the suspense thriller's action climax.

In the tense studio scene, Robert Shaw, as an Israeli commando, enters a TV van on his hunt for terrorists Bruce Dern and Marthe Keller who are trying to blow up the Super Bowl, using the Goodyear TV blimp.

Heated dialogue is exchanged by Shaw, determined to locate the bomb-carrying blimp, and Frankenheimer, pre-occupied with telecasting the annual football event.

Frankenheimer has no dreams of an acting career. "I started off as an actor in summer stock and I stunk," he recalls frankly. "I played the Witch Boy in 'Dark of the Moon' and Bill Page in 'Voice of the Turtle' at the Highfield Playhouse in Falmouth, Mass.

"I was 19 and I was playing a terribly sophisticated character, played on Broadway by Elliot Nugent and by William Holden in the film, to give you some idea.

"I was 19 and a bad actor. I didn't know what to do with my hands, they weighed about 25 pounds each. I saw 'Sunset Boulevard' and there was William Holden, the most sophisticated guy I ever saw, smoking with one hand and the other in his pocket.



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"I went back to rehearsal and--although I didn't smoke at the time-- lit up a cigarette. The smoke blinded me, I tripped over the goddam couch and landed on top of the leading lady.

"The director said, 'I don't care if you smoke, but learn to smoke.' So for the next two weeks I locked myself in my room and learned to smoke-- coughing, vomiting, the whole thing. And the result was, I smoked terrifically, but I was still awful in the play.

"And I smoked for 19 years." (Frankenheimer quit three years ago).

Frankenheimer had great fun in his brief trip to the action end of the camera and is healthily reconciled to his slender acting exposure.

"There are certain things I'm never gonna do," states the high-living director who has raced cars through the streets of Monaco, cooked with some of the great French chefs and commanded a blimp invasion of the Super Bowl. "I'm never gonna pitch a World Series game or win an Academy Award for acting."

Also in the "Black Sunday" scene, playing himself, was Robert J. Wussler, recently appointed president of CBS-TV. Wussler portrays himself as president of CBS Sports, the position he held when "Black Sunday" filmed its principal action footage at the Super Bowl in January.

Playing his nostalgic role on Stage 15 at Paramount Studios, Frankenheimer was reunited with two of his key staff members from the old days at "Playhouse 90."

George Turpin, now a producer at KCET-TV in Los Angeles, who was Frankenheimer's assistant director, plays his assistant director in the "Black Sunday" scene.

Brooks Graham, now Manager of Field Operations at CBS, re-enacts his job as Frankenheimer's technical director. "Black Sunday" marks the first time the three have worked together in 18 years.

Also playing themselves in the Bowl sequence are CBS-TV sportscasters Pat Summerall and Tom Brookshire.

Frankenheimer directed shows on the distinguished "Playhouse 90" series from 1956-60. His other television work includes segments of the "You Are There" and "Climax!" series and the acclaimed Hemingway specials.

His subsequent feature films have included "The Manchurian Candidate," "Grand Prix," "Seven Days in May," "The Birdman of Alcatraz" and "French Connection II."

"Black Sunday" is a Robert Evans production with Robert L. Rosen as executive producer. The screenplay by Ernest Lehman, Kenneth Ross and Ivan Moffat is from the best-seller by Thomas Harris.

Rosen is also a CBS alumnus. He worked there for seven years, in the production of various TV shows and then as executive in charge of production at CBS' Cinema Center Films division.

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