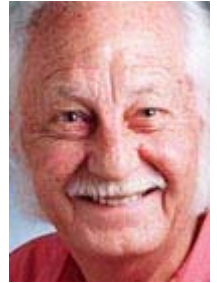




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## Learning about TV in China

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Advertiser Columnist



I learned a lot about television in the People's Republic of China last week. It's easier for a Chinese television team to cover a remote revolt in Africa than it is to shoot Waikiki Beach in sunny Hawai'i.

That's because the U.S. Immigration Service makes it difficult for Chinese to travel to the United States. A four-man TV team from the biggest TV conglomerate in Shanghai waited outside the U.S. Consulate for five hours in the rain, twice, to get a visa.

The chief executive officer of the Shanghai Media Group refuses to travel to the United States because it's too inconvenient.

A cameraman said he doesn't know why U.S. officials are afraid travelers from China will try to stay here. Members of the team said they like the United States but don't want to live here. They all own their own homes, get medical and retirement benefits, and enjoy the excitement of a city of 20 million.

The editorial chief of the group is Zhu Xian Liang, who has covered stories in the United States, Europe and Asia. SMG consists of 12 TV channels in Shanghai, 10 radio stations, a magazine, three newspaper sections listing TV programs, 15 performing arts groups and six professional athletic teams.

Zhu works for the documentary channel of the company, which deals in history, science, travel, arts and culture. Other channels show movies, soaps, news, lifestyle, music, sports and opera. One of the channels beams programs by satellite around the country and to Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Australia. It would be possible to beam Chinese programs to Hawai'i, Zhu said.

The Shanghai Media Group airs 90 minutes of the U.S. Discovery Channel daily and 60 minutes of the National Geographic Channel, trading advertising time as payment.

The team is here through the efforts of former Shanghai resident Michael Zhang, who heads an outfit in Honolulu called the CMC Consulting Group. He talked SMG into 10 days of shooting here to give people in Shanghai a better picture of our culture, scenery and especially our multiethnic population.

I asked Zhu if reality-TV has come to Shanghai. He looked a little pained and admitted that it has, with a Chinese version of "American Idol."

NBA games are immensely popular in Shanghai because the Houston Rockets' 7-foot-plus center, Yao Ming, comes from there. Zhu said his viewers also like American boxing, but don't care a fig for baseball or football.

Members of the TV crew laughed when I asked if the 6,000 employees of SMG are housed in a company commune. They said 95 percent of them own their homes, some more than one. I got the feeling I was talking to a new face of China.

Michael Zhang has brought it here. He has organized a self-help society of young, upwardly mobile Chinese in Our

Honolulu.

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