

Wake up with **THAT '70S SHOW**; rack up with the Black Widow and friends.



Y MASTERSON (left), ASHTON KUTCHER

# That '70s Show

days at 8:30 P.M. (ET)

drugs do work: Fox's teen  
is one of the few bright  
s in a slow season

**T**HAT '70S SHOW" WAS ORIGINALLY going to be called *Teenage Wasteland*, but Pete Townshend said no. Sure, the eventual title is a tad generic, but as anyone old enough to remember the Seventies knows, a bong by another name smells just as sweet. Ratings haven't yet to explode, despite the series' enviable time slot between *The Simpsons* and *The X-Files*. Still, *That '70s Show* - created by executive producers Bonnie and Terry Turner (*Back From the Sun*, *Wayne's World*) and executive producer David Lee Brazill, and set in that lost decade of the '70s - is a bicentennial blast, an acrobatic, functioning sitcom that's rarely sophisticated about the lives of some high school students in 1976 Point Place, Wisconsin. *That '70s Show* is a show that truly smells like mid-1970s teen spirit - and not just because of the occasional pot innuendo. "It's definitely a character-driven show, and we have the reefer, which is always good," Brazill says with a chuckle. The biggest find is the lead, Topher Long, whom the Turners spotted in a New Hampshire prep-school production of *A Flamingo Happened on the Way to the Forum*. A lot of things happened on the way to TV, because Grace comes across as the real deal: a totally sane young man caught in an incredible decade. Think of a younger, taller Dustin Diamond in *The Pre-Graduate*, tortured but resilient and bearing it. Can't hardly wait for the next season, when punk comes to Point Place, or the fifth season, when *That '70s Show* morphs into the ultimate horror series: *That '70s Show*. —DAVID WILD

# TELEVISION

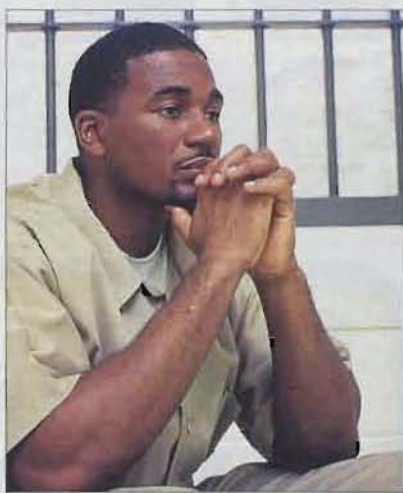
## Snitch

PREMIERES JANUARY 12TH; CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS

PBS  
Filmmaker Ofra Bikel exposes a tragic corner in the War on Drugs

**T**HERE ARE A LIMITLESS NUMBER OF cases you can make against the War on Drugs - it's wasteful, it's ineffective, it's unjust - but few are as moving or horrific as Ofra Bikel's chilling *Snitch*, airing on PBS' consistently excellent news and public-affairs series *Frontline*.

Thanks to strict drug laws passed in the 1980s, defendants busted by the feds for dealing drugs have only one way to bargain down their mandatory-minimum sentences: ratting someone out. In fact, in the last five years nearly a third of defendants in federal drug-trafficking cases have had their prison terms reduced because they informed on other people. And in many of these cases, the person implicated by these snitches was barely involved, if at all, in the actual drug deal. *Snitch* brims with tales of justice perverted. The saddest might be that of Clarence Aaron, a college student from



CLARENCE AARON is serving three life sentences for his minor role in a drug deal.

Alabama with no criminal record who received three consecutive life sentences for acting as a go-between in a drug buy. None of the other people charged - all of whom had criminal records, and all of whom informed on Aaron - was sentenced to more than a dozen years.

Bikel's style is careful, deliberate, spare - so unlike the quick-cut, heavy-breathing, *Dateline* school of "impact" journalism. Her point is undeniable: The War on Drugs is not simply a war on drugs, it's a war on everyday citizens who fall afoul of harsh laws that are zealously overprosecuted by federal attorneys. It is no less than an American tragedy. —WILL DANA



JEANETTE LEE - a.k.a. the Black Widow - does her gangsta lean at the Penn Ray Classic in Arizona

## Women's Billiards

CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS

ESPN2  
Forget those guys in cummerbunds - women's billiards could be the future of TV sports

**I**N THE PAST YEAR, ESPN2'S COVERAGE of women's billiards has blown up into a prime-time cat fight. The assassins of the Women's Professional Billiard Association strut around the table, armed with their skills and their cool nicknames, slicing each other up on the green felt. We're talking stars here: Jeanette Lee, the Black Widow! Vivian Villarreal, the Texas Tornado! Nikki "The Giant Killer" Benish! America's scariest pool sharks clash with champs such as Sweden's Helena Thornfeldt and England's Allison "The Duchess of Doom" Fisher. Strictly biz, they don't play around, they cover much ground, and they got game by the pound. They make men's billiards look like a bunch of dumpy guys in cummerbunds.

The WPBA pros don't come off as groomed for TV - they have a real neighborhood-gal toughness to them, and when they talk in post-game chats about "playing shape" or "side spin," it's like, whatever. Jeanette Lee, one of the truest stars anywhere on TV, rules the ESPN2 roost with her queen-pimp cool, a black-clad punk-rock warrior doing her gangsta lean all over the table. After Lee wins, she tends to thank God and her mom, but while the match is on the line, she's pure evil - Catwoman with a cue. Watching the Black Widow battle the Texas Tornado in September's Penn Ray Recreational Arizona Classic was even better than

seeing the De Niro-Pacino showdown in *Heat*. With the NBA outta here like Dennis Rodman's marriage, and with pro wrestling burned to a crisp, let us now praise the word of TV billiards - every week they make the dull and fussy world of TV sports a little safer for badass flamboyance. —ROB SHEFFIELD

## Richard Pryor Tribute

PREMIERES JANUARY 20TH AT 10:30 P.M. (ET)

COMEDY CENTRAL  
Chris Rock, Whoopi Goldberg, Robin Williams and others honor the singular stand-up comedian

**H**ERE'S A FAIRLY NOVEL AND worthwhile TV notion: an evening celebrating someone truly, tragically great. Tragically, our ailing honoree - a legendary comedic lion in winter and arguably the single most compelling stand-up performer ever - was restricted to a brief view from his balcony box during this taped event at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. last fall. Still, famous friends and admirers like Chris Rock, Whoopi Goldberg, Robin Williams and Richard Belzer do their best to pay richly deserved homage. If you don't believe that Pryor was a singular force, just watch the fantastic actor Morgan Freeman stir-crazy trying to re-create Pryor's old character Mudbone. The thing that's really missing here - and in comedy in general at century's end - is a new, potent dose of Pryor's amazing grace. —DAVID WILD