

## MEMORANDUM

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FR: ALAN BROWDY **AB**

RE: "SLIDERS" Recruit-to-View Test

DT: Oct. 6, 1998

### Background

Attached is your copy of the report covering the ICR Recruit-To-View Test which was conducted on two episodes of "Sliders" which aired on September 12 ("Asylum") and September 14 ("Virtual Slide"). Interviews were conducted nationally via telephone over the three days following the telecast.

In light of the importance of this original series to SFC, the purpose of this test was to assess the strengths of this series and to determine the potential impact of various cast changes (specifically the departure of Jerry O'Connell).

The test group was comprised of 214 program viewers, which included 18-49 year olds who get SFC via cable/satellite dish.

### Results

This series enjoys a high awareness level among cable subs, and has a fairly strong level of past viewership. While not a "must see", "Sliders" achieves good scores as an accessible show that is premise-driven. Accordingly, current cast members are not driving viewing interest, and those who participated in this test are inclined to at least check this series out, even after Jerry O'Connell leaves the series.

In this test, "Virtual Slide" was liked to a somewhat greater degree than "Asylum", though results on most other measures showed few differences according to the particular episode seen. While overall ratings of both of these episodes were about average, expressed "special effort" future viewing intentions for this series were above available drama norms.

There appear to be some viewer descriptors of "Sliders" that may provide some fodder for promotional hooks in the future. The strongest hook appears to be the unique premise of this series. "Sliders" was assessed by viewers as a contemporary series that is original, entertaining and intriguing. It received high ratings on special effects and perceived adventurousness. It seems that any of these descriptors can be easily linked to the premise of the series and deliver a credible promotional claim.

Perceived levels of fun, excitement, humor and "coolness" and "buzz" were potential hooks that were not yet linked to this series.

Please call with any questions.

## VIEWER ATTITUDES TOWARD "SLIDERS"

- ◆ National telephone survey conducted by ICR Survey Research Group
- ◆ 955 Cable subs/satellite owners contacted and asked general questions about TV programs
- ◆ 913 qualified for viewing as "genre non-avoiders"
- ◆ 525 were recruited to view at least one of the two episodes which aired on September 12<sup>th</sup> and September 14<sup>th</sup>, 1998
- ◆ 214 did view at least one of the episodes of "Sliders"
  - Re-contacts were 43% male and 57% female
  - 38% were aged 18-34
  - 59% were aged 35-49

## PRE-VIEWING QUESTIONNAIRE

### "Sliders" Awareness/Viewership/Ratings

All contacts (955 respondents) were asked about the TV series "Sliders."

-- A high percentage claimed awareness of "Sliders" upon initial contact (75%). This awareness level was slightly higher among the younger, 18-34 age group.

All contacts were also asked to rate four programs.

-- More than half reported previous viewership of "Sliders."

-- Of those who claimed past viewership of "Sliders," only 16% rated the program as "excellent." The majority rated this series in the "good-very good" range. Women and those aged 35-49 were somewhat more likely to rate "Sliders" as "excellent."

### VIEWER RATING

	<u>Seen</u>	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Fair/Poor</u>
Mystery Science Theater 3000	68%	12%	30%
Sliders	66	16	17
Sightings	64	11	18
Welcome to Paradox	35	18	23

## PRE-VIEWING QUESTIONNAIRE

Source of initial program awareness (among those aware/agreed to watch the show):

Promotional announcement on TV	75%
Just happened to find it while watching TV	70%
TV Guide/TV listings/TV Supplements	40%
Someone told me about it	22%
Newspaper/magazine article/review	12%
Newspaper/magazine ad	10%
An advertisement on radio	7%

Similar to most programs, awareness of “Sliders” was attributed mostly to on-air promos and channel surfing. A sizable minority also mentioned TV listings.

**POST VIEWING**  
**(214 viewers)**

**When They Watched**

Sat 1pm-2pm (ET)	("Asylum")	31%
Mon 9pm-10pm (ET)	("Virtual Slide")	86%
Multi-episode viewing		17%

**How Much They Watched**

	Sept 12 <sup>th</sup>	Sept 14 <sup>th</sup>
	<u>1pm</u>	<u>9pm</u>
All of it	58%	60%
Less than all	36%	38%
"Dislike show"	30%	22%

Viewers were recruited to watch at least one of two episodes of "Sliders." Both "Asylum" and "Virtual Slide" were viewed in their entirety at levels that were on par with drama norms (61%).

-- Tune out due a dislike of the program was comparable to our drama norm (24%) for Monday night's episode, "Virtual Slide." Among those who viewed "Asylum" (note small base size), nearly one-third cited "not liking the show" as the reason for tuning out.

## LOGLINES

“Asylum” (Sat. 1pm): involved the team landing in a post-war California city. After Quinn is injured and comatose, he is forced into the hospital, where Remy falls in love with his female doctor, who is suspected as being a collaborator with the enemy empire.

“Virtual Slide” (Mon. 9pm): where the team is observed by mysterious captors for their special technical expertise, while at the same time, they are seduced by Virtual Reality gadgets which make all of their fantasies seem real.

**PROGRAM RATINGS  
(Among Subgroups)**

"Sliders" (9/98)

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Very Good</u>	<u>Fair/Poor</u>
<u>Total Viewers</u>	<u>12%</u>	<u>34%</u>	<u>23%</u>
"Asylum" (9/12)	9	35	24
"Virtual Slide" (9/14)	15	33	22
<b>Drama Average</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>AVG—ALL PRIOR TESTS</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>34</b>
<u>"Asylum"</u>			
Men	8	32	27
Women	11	38	21
18-34	8	31	26
35-49	12	42	18
<u>"Virtual Slide"</u>			
Men	15	31	15
Women	15	35	26
18-34	19	35	19
35-49	9	33	24

Top-box overall ratings of this series were on-par with our dramatic series average, though overall positive reactions to "Sliders" were above our current norms. The "Virtual Slide" episode scored somewhat better than "Asylum". Negatives were not a problem in either episode.

Overall ratings were similar by gender. Younger adult viewers were more favorable toward "Virtual Slide", compared to "Asylum".

It is important to note that the "average" rating shown above is not a benchmark of success. Only about 20% (or less) of all programs are normally considered "successful", so a "good score" would be well above the average.

## VIEWER DESCRIPTION OF "SLIDERS"

### STRENGTHS

Entertaining  
Enjoyable  
Original/different  
Suspenseful  
Intriguing  
Good special effects  
Adventurous  
Held my attention  
Well written  
Modern/Up-to-date

### MID RANGE

(Not strong/weak)

Really cool  
Exciting  
Fun  
Action-packed  
Well acted  
Humorous at times  
People will watch  
Costs lots to produce

### WEAKNESSES

People will talk about

### NOT A PROBLEM

Moves quick  
Moves slow  
Confusing  
Too many characters  
Hard to understand characters  
Too many shows like this  
Seen stories like this  
Boring  
Ordinary  
Forgettable  
Predictable  
Sappy

\*Note: No major differences by episode seen but "Asylum" performed somewhat better on "special effects" and "adventure/excitement."

\*\* Note: Most comparisons are made to previous tests of dramatic series. Items are listed in approximate order of strength within each category.

## COMPARISON OF "SLIDERS" TO OTHER SHOWS

Viewers were asked to compare this series to other programs of this type on six general dimensions.

On this comparative measure, viewers of "Sliders" felt that this series contained:

- More interesting settings
- More special effects
- About the same amount of action
- About the same number of characters I like
- Less violence
- Less sexiness

Compared to "Virtual Slide", the "Asylum" episode distinguished itself more from other programs on the perceived depiction of interesting settings. Moreover, men were more impressed with the interesting settings, compared to women across both episodes.

## REACTIONS TO THE CAST

<u>Character</u>	<u>Unaided recall</u>	<u>"Excellent"</u>	<u>"Fair/Poor"</u>
Quinn Mallory	51%	24%	13%
Maggie Beckett	48	23	10
Rembrandt Brown	46	34	11
Colin Mallory *	17	17	27
<u>AVERAGES</u>			
Leading Characters	48	18	19
Supporting Characters	20	14	26

\* Please note that Colin's scores are based only on the "Asylum" episode, as he did not appear in "Virtual Slide".

### QUINN MALLORY

Quinn did not pop as a dominant leading character based on this test. Unprompted recall of Quinn was on-par with the norm for a lead, though he was recalled by only half without prompting. Quinn was rated above average, without major negatives. Younger adults gave Quinn slightly stronger overall ratings, compared to their older counterparts.

--Ratings of Quinn did not vary according to gender. Past series viewers were more favorable toward Quinn, compared to those who had not seen "Sliders" before participating in this test.

## **REACTIONS TO THE CAST (cont.)**

Quinn came across as an intelligent character who has good intentions. While women found him physically attractive, his overall scores were about average on this measure among the total.

Though not perceived as hot tempered/impulsive or overly angry, Quinn did not score especially strong on having a sense of humor. However, a strong minority did feel that he added to the fun of "Sliders".

Quinn did not have any believability problems, but his scores on being a strong an independent character were below average.

### **MAGGIE BECKETT**

Maggie's performance in this study was fairly similar to Quinn's in terms of overall memorability, likeability and depth of personality dimension .

Similar to Quinn, Maggie was recalled on an unprompted basis by nearly half, and her "excellent" ratings were elicited by roughly one-quarter of the viewers, which is above average. Her negatives were well below norm and were not problematic.

Maggie's scores were similar across gender subgroups. Younger viewers rated her higher than older viewers, but 35-49's were not especially negative toward her character.

Maggie was widely felt to be an attractive character, and men gave her notably high ratings on sexiness. Her toughness in this series undoubtedly impacted on her weak perceptions as being "feminine and ladylike", but she was not considered "too tough" in an over-the-top manner.

## **REACTIONS TO THE CAST (cont.)**

While Maggie was considered to be an intelligent character on an overall basis, she was certainly not defined by this characteristic. Maggie was seen to be somewhat volatile, especially among women, as her hot tempered scores were above average.

On the negative side, Maggie lacked a sense of humor and viewers did not get the strong feeling that she had a “unique style”. Consideration should be given to enhancing Maggie’s breadth of dimension on these characteristics.

Maggie had no problems with respect to perceived believability, and scores on the negative “annoying at times” trait were also not problematic.

### **REMBRANDT BROWN**

Among the four main characters in “Sliders”, Remy was well liked and he obtained the strongest overall “excellent” scores. However, he did not necessarily emerge as a character who can “carry” this series on his own. Accordingly, his unaided recall was similar to that of Quinn and Maggie.

Remy’s overall top-box/“excellent” ratings were well above norm and were strongly driven by female viewers. His negatives were in the same low range as those seen for Quinn and Maggie.

Remy had the most developed character dimensions, compared to the other cast members. He was felt to have a strong sense of humor, but he was also hot tempered, and not cold and analytical. While not considered especially good looking, women found him to be reasonably attractive. As the character who is an inadvertent traveler, Remy received lower than average scores on intelligence and strong/independent. Remy was also mildly heroic.

## REACTIONS TO CAST (cont.)

There were no believability problems for Remy. Similar to Maggie and Quinn, about half of the viewers expressed a strong desire to see Remy more frequently.

### COLIN MALLORY

Reactions to “Colin” were based on the “Asylum” episode only as he did not appear in “Virtual Slide.”

Colin was viewed as a low impact character who was kind of bland. He did not distinguish himself on any of the personality dimensions measured. Women were somewhat more forgiving toward Colin, compared to their male counterparts.

Top-box/“excellent” ratings for Colin were average, but were below those of the other cast members. It is important to note that his negatives were much higher than other members of the regular cast.

## OTHER PREMISE AND CHARACTER RELATED ISSUES

### PREMISE

The underlying premise of “Sliders” was clear to most respondents. Most (64%) felt that the series involved travel to *different universes*, as opposed to a minority (28%) who described the series as being about time travel (and there were also some scattered mentions which described the series as involving travel through *both time and places*). The clarity of the premise was stronger among men, younger viewers and those who had seen “Sliders” prior to this test.

There was some desire for more background information about the premise of “Sliders”, particularly among those who viewed the series for the first time. Nearly four-in-ten (38%) desired more background information, though the majority felt that the right amount of background information was provided. These findings did not vary according to key demographic subgroups.

### CHARACTER ISSUES

The premise of “Sliders” appears to be strong enough to maintain viewer interest, even in the face of various cast changes.

Viewers were asked if they would check “Sliders” out again if Jerry O’Connell did not return in the role of Quinn Mallory in the next season. More than two-thirds (68%) said they would “probably check out “Sliders” again even if Jerry O’Connell leaves the show”. Among subgroups, the prospect of O’Connell leaving the series had even less of an impact in future viewing interest among men, compared to women.

– Only a small minority had *strong* negative feelings about watching “Sliders” again if Jerry left the series (10%).

It should be noted that past viewers were well aware of previous cast changes, which did cause some mild dissatisfaction. Specifically, most past viewers noted the absence of The Professor in the newer episodes. About one-third felt that the loss of The Professor contributed to a feeling that the series was better in the past. In contrast, Wade’s absence in the newer episodes was noted by relatively few on an unprompted basis.

**PERCEIVED APPEAL OF "SLIDERS "**  
**(Among Viewers)**

**Who will "Sliders" appeal to most ?**

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
More for men	33%	39%	28%
More for women	7	4	9
Both equally	58	53	51

**Which age groups will "Sliders" appeal to ?**

	<u>Total</u>
Young adults	88%
Teens	79
Children	28
Older adults	26

"Sliders" was regarded as a series that has dual gender appeal with a moderate male skew, regardless of the viewers' gender.

This series is clearly perceived to be tailored to a young adult/teen audience across (adult) age subgroups. It was interesting to see that adults perceived this series to have significant teen appeal, despite the fact that this series does not attract a large teen audience. This finding probably reflects a contemporary series perception that includes a fairly strong dose of special effects .

## INTENT TO WATCH "SLIDERS" IN THE FUTURE

Make a special effort to watch	47%
Watch if nothing better is on	34
Probably not watch again	11
Definitely not watch	7

Future interest in watching "Sliders" was fairly strong, as nearly half of those who viewed said they "would make a special effort to watch the program again". This score is above our current drama norm (38%).

There appear to be no major barriers to viewing this series, as strong negative future viewing intentions (i.e. "definitely would not watch") levels were low.

– Expressed positive viewing intentions were somewhat stronger among females, compared to their male counterparts. However, *negative* viewing intentions did not vary much by gender, indicating that men were somewhat more neutral toward "Sliders". There were no differences in "special effort" viewing intentions among 18-34's, compared to older viewers aged 35-49.

–There were no differences in reported viewing intentions according to the test episode seen.

## OTHER FINDINGS

### The Kromaggs

The Kromaggs have some mild appeal as villains, but do not appear to be an essential element in "Sliders". Although slightly more viewers enjoy "Sliders" more when The Kromaggs are explicitly featured as the villains, the majority of viewers felt that their presence made little difference in their enjoyment of the series. The presence of The Kromaggs have even less of an impact on attitudes toward "Sliders" among women, compared to men.

### Suggested Attributes of Quinn's Replacement

Viewers were asked their feelings about the personality traits of the character who may be brought in to replace Quinn Mallory when Jerry O'Connell leaves the series. When given three sets of paired comparisons, viewers in this test felt that Jerry's replacement should be more "street smart" (higher among men) and more "romantic" (higher among women), compared to Quinn. There was a *slight* desire for the new character to be more "scientific", which was driven by male viewers, and those who were less familiar with the series.

### Favorite Episodes

The majority of past viewers of "Sliders" spoke fondly of a particular episode. The episodes mentioned by some of these viewers involved "The era of the dinosaurs", and a few general mentions about episodes featuring "The Kromaggs".

### Fit On SFC

As expected, the perceived fit of "Sliders" with The Sci Fi Channel was nearly universal among viewers.