

Family

Over achievers

YTV tips its hat to great kids

for the seventh year in a row *by Mike Boone*

It sounds like an ulcer-inducing assignment: two hours of live television, featuring variety performances by youngsters who are amateurs. Joanne Jackson swears she loves it. The senior producer of the seventh annual **YTV Achievement Awards**, to be telecast **Sunday**, is looking forward to a relatively hassle-free experience and a great telecast.

"It will be two hours of wonderful entertain-

"Unlike other awards shows that have an academy, we at YTV are the academy," says Jackson, who brings 18 years of TV experience to bear on the eight-month process that will culminate in this weekend's telecast. Jackson, who learned the business at Toronto's CITY-TV, has been at YTV since the specialty service signed on in 1988.

Part of her responsibility is the YTV outreach program. It begins, at the grassroots level, with schools across Canada, which receive YTV lesson plans on what it means to be an achiever. The YTV Awards telecast is also copyright cleared. Teachers can tape it off the air and use the cassette in their classrooms without worrying about royalty fees.

"Hey, kids love watching TV in class," Jackson laughs. And in the case of the awards, what they watch may inspire students to match the achievements of YTV winners.

YTV received 1,500 nominations for this year's edition of the achievement awards. Jackson says she was astounded by the diversity and quality of nomi-

Band category winners (from left) Amanda Braden, Lynette and Carla Gillis of Halifax's Plumbtree

nations in the performance categories. "YTV could produce a number of variety shows just using the finalists," she says.

The YTV Achievement Awards haven't spawned any spinoffs. But they have served as a launching pad for some careers. Among YTV Achievement Awards alumni are Barenaked Ladies and Lisa Brokop. And look for a recording, produced by Quincy Jones, from 1992 award-winner Tamia Washington. "We take raw talent," says Jackson, "and the telecast really showcases it in a spectacular way.

"YTV is a commercial enterprise," she adds. "We make money off kids. The Awards are our way to give something back." ❖



ment," Jackson promises. "When you see these kids...they're great."

The producer waxed particularly enthusiastic about the co-winners of YTV's Specialty Performance achievement category: Gods of Rhythm, a 15-member contemporary dance troupe from Montreal ("they'll blow everyone away," Jackson predicts) and Gordon McKee-man, a 13-year-old clogger/fiddler ("with legs like Donald O'Connor" the producer says) from New Glasgow, N. S.

Winners in 15 categories — including Entrepreneurship, Innovation, Bravery (two 9-year-olds from a Native reserve in northern Alberta) and Public Service — get \$3,000 and participate in a whirlwind week of activities leading up to the telecast.

Jackson is proud that last year's edition of the YTV Achievement Awards was nominated for a Gemini — an honor that was not bestowed on any of the other more established awards telecasts.

THIS WEEK'S FAMILY FARE

● **Born Free**

This British movie version (1966) of the late Joy Adamson's classic chronicle depicts life among "tame" lions in Africa.

Saturday; ABC

● **Circus!**

200 Years of *Circus in America* includes Canada's famous Cirque du Soleil.

Sunday; A&E

● **A World of Water**

Biologist Roger Payne forecasts what the world would be like if our oceans were destroyed by toxins.

Saturday; Discovery

● **In Search of the Oregon Trail**

Beautiful photography highlights this documentary on the legendary trail.

Monday; PBS

● **Biography**

Comedians Steve Allen and the Smothers Brothers comment on Abbott and Costello with clips aplenty of their great routines.

Monday; A&E

● **Nova**

Roller Coaster! looks back to the opening of Disneyland in 1955 and forward to new innovations in the design of thrill rides.

Tuesday; PBS

● **Neat Stuff**

Duds to Die For looks at collecting celebrity clothing as a hobby.

Thursday; The Learning Channel