

By ROB BAKER

ONE OF THE major video events of 1984 may prove to be today's TV special commemorating "1984," the George Orwell novel that gave this new year such a bad reputation in the media to begin with. "Good Morning, Mr. Orwell," broadcast live from New York, Paris and San Francisco at noon today (locally, on Channel 13), will be the most elaborate avant-garde variety show ever presented on public television, let alone beamed by satellite to and from Europe.

Masterminded by New York video artist Nam June Paik, the one-hour show will feature live performances by the likes of new-wave rockers Oingo Boingo and the Thompson Twins, choreographer Merce Cunningham and composer John Cage—plus a 1974 German videotape of Salvador Dali. "In fact," Paik says with a sly grin, "we didn't get Germany to agree to carry the show until we told them that we were going to have both rock 'n' roll and Merce Cunningham."

Paik believes the event will help to counter the negative ideas Orwell stirred up about television as a tool of totalitarianism ("Big Brother is watching you"—via TV monitors—was a catch phrase in the novel) by showing how the medium can be a means for "interactive global communication... among international artists."

George Plimpton will host the segment from New York, which will feature the premiere of a new videotape by Laurie Anderson and Peter Gabriel, written for the broadcast. Also on hand will be Charlotte Moorman performing Paik's "TV Cello" and a duet by that venerable duo, Allen Ginsberg and Peter Orlovsky.

Beamed by satellite live from the Pompidou Center in Paris will be bits of an indoor piano concert by conceptual artist Joseph Beuys and an outdoor concert for 80 sequin-clad saxophone players beneath a mammoth fireworks display. There will also be a fashion show by Studio Bercot "utilizing unconventional materials, forms and colors with designs based on symbolism taken from works of art." And French pop star Sapho will sing her newest composition, written especially for Orwell.

Paik organized the event in association with Carol Brandenburg, co-director of Channel 13's Television Laboratory, where Paik has been an artist-in-residence since it was founded in 1972.

"This may be the first time high art and mass art get together in this country," says Paik of the program, which promises to be a merry mix of the old *enfants terribles* and the new. "There will be elements of very serious art, like Beuys, and also of just plain entertainment."

THE HOUR will be jam-packed with information, which Paik says will add up to a much more positive statement than normal satellite TV fare. "When a satellite is used exclusively to cover war, that's not the best use of it. It should also be used to cover life. We have such a hunger for deaths and killings, but there is another side to life, and TV should also be used for that."

The event will be recorded by four cameras in New York and seven in Paris. A director in each of the two cities will pick and choose what to play at any specific time during the hour (i.e., either the live performance at the director's own end, or the satellite transmission from abroad). Therefore, Paik notes, the New York and Paris versions of the broadcasts will have "very subtle differences" (or, quite possibly, some that are not so subtle).

Paik, who is now in Paris for the telecast there, will bring back a videotape of that version, which will be shown at the Kitchen in Soho. The Kitchen is also airing the live transmission today and will record it for showing later in the afternoon in a multimonitor setup with all the New Year's Day football games (a collage Paik the video artist would surely adore). The Kitchen will also be presenting the New York and Paris tapes in their viewing room for the rest of the month, and Channel 13 will repeat the telecast Tuesday at 11 p.m.

Cunningham will dance to and Cage will make sounds for the Dali tape, a discourse on music and holography, with Dali sitting in front of a floppy photo of Mao Zedong. Also on tape will be two extraordinary works by up-and-coming video artists from New York.

"Act III" is a computer-graphics tour de force by John Sanborn and Dean Winkler to music by Philip Glass, and "This Is the Picture" is the equally innovative and impressive video by Winkler and Laurie Anderson to the first songwriting collaboration by Anderson and Peter Gabriel.

"I'm moving. I'm turning in time," say the video-hip lyrics to the latter. "I'm catching up. I'm moving in. Jump up! I can land on my feet. Look out."

Television has come a long way since "1984."