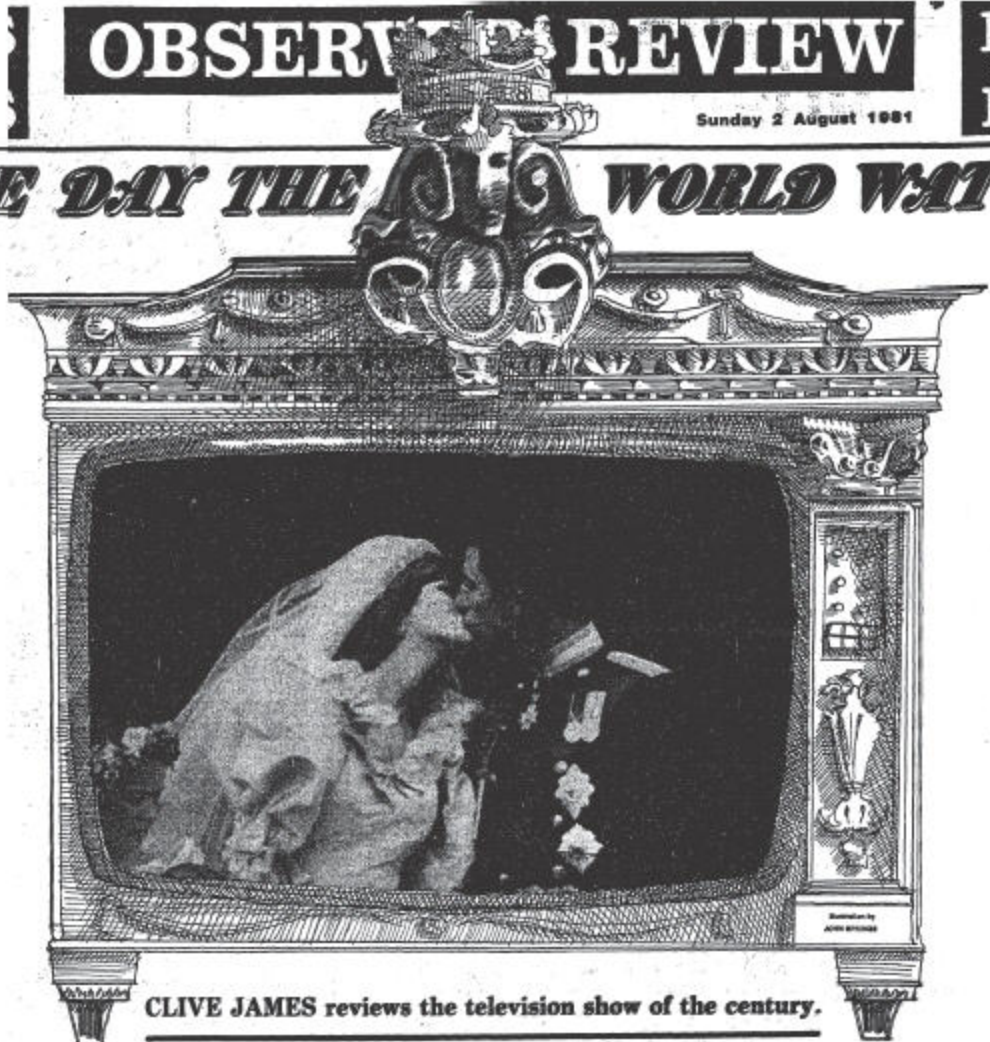


OBSERVER REVIEW

Sunday 2 August 1981

THE DAY THE WORLD WATCHED



CLIVE JAMES reviews the television show of the century.

WITH CAMERA shutters crackling around her like an electrical storm, Lady Diana Spencer, as she then was, had a little crisis. Off she went in tears with all the world's media in pursuit. Perhaps the whole deal was all. Perhaps she would become a star.

Next day in Windsor Great Park Prince Charles told ITV that it was all nonsense about his betrothed not being pious. "Not much fun watching polo when you're surrounded by people with very long lenses pointing at you the entire time." The place to be in such circumstances, it was made clear, was on horseback. "Well, Sir," asked Alastair Burnet, "what makes you play polo?" With the first cliché awaiting the swinging thrack of the Royal mallet Prince Charles was eager to be away, but he gave the question his serious consideration. "I happen to enjoy horse activities because I like the horse."

An hour or so of horse activities duly ended, apparently for the specific purpose of introducing Mrs. Cogan. Prince Charles with the ball... Prince Charles out on his own... playing for England against Spain just three days before his marriage... typically British... you can't get anything more British... and it's there! Prince Charles has scored for England.

It became increasingly clear that Prince Charles had scored for England, Britain, the world, the solar system and the galaxy. Every human freely unwatched by Lady Diana only increased the universal conviction that the entire script was being written by the Brothers Grimm and that the Hair to the throne had picked himself a peach. "Are you looking forward to Wednesday?" the Beeb asked Mrs. Reagan. "I certainly am, but everybody?" The possibility was small that the world had said: "I certainly am not, it's just another wedding but the gentleman was plainly genuine, although she still looked puzzled, perhaps from thinking about the horse activities."

Times News (TV) and Nationwide (BBC) both covered the coverage being laid on by the American-NBC network. "They've managed to log those plain positions," said Nationwide rather bitterly. All the rest of the

Spencer in Conversation with Angela Ripston and Andrew Gardner (BBC and ITV), an all-channel, all-

stanced that children had baked cakes. "Tremendous boost," said Lady Diana tingly from between her

security operations featuring underground bomb-stiffing Labrador dogs at large beneath the city, but

The Beeb's chief commentator, Tom Fleming, clocked on for a long day. "Once upon a time... what you

At least one viewer thought that the dress had been designed to hide the outstanding prettiness of its

Arthur George, shortly to be addressed by Lady Diana as Philip Charles Arthur George, a blunderer which completed the enslavement of her future people by revealing that she shared their capacity to make a small ball-up on a big occasion.

Here is the stuff of which fairy-tales are made," drizzled the Archbishop, adding further fuel to the theory that he's the man to hire if what you want at your wedding is glitzed, served up like scented wafers in chocolate syrup: he's an anonymous divine who'll put unctious in your lexicon. But the soaring voice of King Le Kamas soon dispelled the aura of stale rhetoric. Singing a strop, she even thought to make you forget what may have been the only surviving couple of the Mael national dress.

Spiced at last, the Prince and Princess headed for the door with Tom Fleming's voice helping you measure the details. "The cap-holder appears with cap and gloves," said Tom as the cap-bearer handed Charles his cap and gloves. Off they went down Lodgegate Hill to the ladies. While Tom told you all about the bells of St Clement's ("the bells that say omages and lessons") Alastair Burnet recalled that Dr Johnson had defined happiness as driving briskly along in a post-chaise heels a poetry swoman. By that definition Prince Charles was the happiest man alive, but Tom didn't want the horses to feel left out. "These horses... certainly not reacting to the chaos... and yet perhaps... ITV searched the best shots of the bride. The policemen who were all supposed to be facing outwards appear a lot of times facing inwards. It would have taken a vast net to drink her in." And so, slowly, intoned Tom, the horses find their way home.

In an open carriage weighed down with rose petals and topped up by balloons, the newlyweds headed for Waterloo. The Princess of Wales, wearing the kind of tircorse hat in which Edward VII's Alexandra was wont to wow the public, looked good enough to eat. "It would be good," said ITV's Alastair without any real hope, "if people didn't invade on their privacy at Broadlands."

As the only class train in Britain set off on its journey, the Beeb's