MY TURN

'Small electrics' give us real big headaches

NE morning last month it became apparent that my electric coffee maker had quietly ascended to the great appliance store in the sky. It just stopped working in the manner of all the other "small electrics," as the discount stores call them. Toasters and irons and hair dryers and mixers are working one day and, with no visible symptoms, the next day they aren't. The big mamas — the dishwashers, the clothes washers, the refrigerators and freezers — go out in floods of glory. They either spew soapy water that loosens all the floor tiles or leak melted ice cubes into the no-longer frozen pizra so the refrigerator smells like a fast-food Dumpster.

There's the lingering feeding that maybe if you'd been nicer to it, if you had vacuumed the lint trap and done everything they suggested in the owner's manual, it might still work. But with such dedication and as rigid a schedule as the maintenance program demands, you could become a concert pianist.

Those big items can usually be repaired, not right away but on the one day that you can't possibly be home. It isn't easy and it isn't cheap — and there is a major computer network maintained by the appliance-repair companies able to figure out not only the day, but the exact hours most inconvenient for the owner to be visited by a repairman.

But the little ones can't be fixed, at least to any practical extent. Presumably you can wrap them up and mail them to Bloomington, Ind., where stacks of burned-out hair dryers and blenders await the cure. If there is any response, it is usually that it will cost you \$37 plus postage and insurance to repair the item, which can be replaced for less than that.

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WHEN you buy a new coffee maker, I discovered ered, you find some remarkable literature packed between the basket for the coffee grounds and the plastic lid for the carafe. First, there is a set of instructions written for hermit families that have never seen an electric socket. This is from the same point of view that prompts airline attendants to explain how to buckle the seat belt.

But the peculiar piece is the "Owner Registration Card" that asks a strange assortment of questions, such as, "If received as a gift, did you ask for this product specifically?"

It suggests a scenario going something like this: He: I'm thinking of a gift for you that is shiny red, has three speeds, is made for long trips, and is convertible. What brand would you like?

She: How sweet. Actually either a BMW or a Jaguar would be lovely.

He: BMW and Jaguar don't make hair dryers you can use on direct or alternating current.

Among their other snoopy questions, the manufacturer also wants to know if I own my house, if I have a college diploma and which credit cards I carry. And they want to know if I've hought a lottery ticker exceedity. If I am interested in warkshop.

nave a coisege disposma and which credit cares in carry. And they want to know my age, income and marital status.

Then they want to know if I've bought a lottery ticket recently, if I am interested in workshop projects and if I have bought anything through the mail in the past six months. Why do they want to know if I own an "appliance mounted under the cabinet" and a radar detector? What are they going to do with all this?

Actually, I don't intend to return the "Owner Registration Card." I don't think these people are really in the coffee-maker business at all. Once they find out I don't own an appliance mounted under the cabinet or a radar detector and that I buy things through the mail, I am going to be swamped with catalogs for all this stuff. And the reason they want to know about lottery tickets is that this will be the new way of assigning repairmen.

Sun-Bulletin stuff writer Lois Tustor believes that small appliances die young because manufacturers infect them suff urrier to a Sunday feature of the Today section that oblous sinffers to comment on the news, issues and life in general.

BEST BET

■ Samean swing: The 22 members of the American Samea Community College Swing Choir will perform songs and dances from the islands of the South Factfic in a series of concerts this week. The choir sings under the direction of Robert Lewis, to the accompaniment of traveling accompanists on piano, guitar and drums.

Performances are:
■ Noon Tuesday at Kapiolani Community College cafeteria, free.
■ Noon Wednessday at Ala Moana.
■ 4:30 p.m. and 8 p.m. Wednessday at the Keoni Anditorium, East-West Center. The first performance is free, but tickets to the later show are \$5 general admission and \$3 for children and senior citizens, available at Ala Moana House of Music. Call 944-7666.
■ 10 a.m. Thursday, Brigham Young University-

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Hawaii, free.

7 p.m. Thursday, Moanalua Congregational Church hall, free.

THE FAR SIDE









rhing? Whatever, it's part of the Bad Art III

SSISTANT art professor
Rick Mills sensed a new conservatism in the community. That meant it was time
for Bad Art III.

"The show hadn't been done in
eight years. The environment in the
art community has changed. It's gotten a lot more sensitive.

Not that Hawaii was ever pushing
the edges of the artistic envelope, but
even here Milis and others felt repercussions from the Robert Mapplethorpe controversy and the new
wave of censorship at the National
Endowment for the Arts.
Sculptor Fred Roster, who organized BAD ARTs I and II in 1973 and
1982, says the works on exhibit now
in the News Building's Advertiser
Gallery 'have more to do with political or social conditions' than previous BAD ARTs.

"The first one had greater reliance
on work that was technically bad.
The pieces were funnier, not as politically loaded as this.
"Several of these pieces go right to
the edge of asking the viewer, what
can I allow myself to see? It's confrontational in that way:

As if on cue, 61 Hawaii Newspaper
Agency employees responded, petitioning to have some pieces of Bad
Art III removed from the gallery.
Their petitions, framed and hung by
curator Sharon Carter Smith, then
became part of the exhibit.
Arguments over taste concern
only one aspect of Bad Art III, on
axia bit through May.

To the disgruntled employees,
this is had bad art. To others in
the art world, the exhibit raises
questions over what makes bad
art good, or good art bad.
To Sanna Deutsch, registrar
at the Hemolulu Academy of
Arts, Bad ART III is none of
the above: 'Since these peopic have no definition of art,
they have no definition of ort,
they have no definition o

ple think about things."

Defining "bad" was left up to the artists who submitted 102 pieces to the juried exhibit organized by Mills in his University of Hawaii graduate sculpture seminar, 48 were selected. "The show covered things that were poorly constructed or ill-crafted," Mills said. Entrants were "to break or disregard the technical things you're trained in in school. "The other parameters deal with local mores or things society has decided are inappropriate to he viewed in an art context."

Language is an issue here too:

in an art context.

Language is an issue here too:

Bad, 'in street terms, has flipped
meanings in the past decade.

'It's equally as difficult to define
what good art is, 'says Mills. 'There's
some good pieces down there by the
previous standard — either they look
good aesthetically or they have a content or sense of communication,
something individual or idiosyneratic.

The exhibit invitation described The exhibit invitation described the goals with this introduction: "BAD ART is back—more questionable, ugly, despicable, culturally rejected, aesthetically inept, creatively catatonic and more insensitive than before. BAD ART III is being resurrected in light of the current art climate of runaway price speculation, questionable decorum and the withholding of public funds for controversial artwork. Art which speaks closest to the truth often offends somebody.

closest to the truth often offends somebody."

Viewers won't find what these artists find offensive — no Center Art Gallery pieces, Mills says.

"Bad art would be psychically numbing art, where the main intent of the artist was to match a rug color," says artist Peter Kowalke. "I was disappointed we didn't have disappointed we didn't have more whales and clowns. Some of it wasn't bad enough." One of the closest com-

closest com-ments on the commercial art scene is Larry Seward's 'This Land.' The Exxon Valdes crosses a bucolic ocean Valdez crosses a bucolic ocean set-ting, spilling thick black oil over birds and across the painting's frame.

"It's a typical over-the-couch motel

has been framed — not Roger Robbit sick bissues at over-the-couch motel
See BAD ART, Page F-3
Aff III work.
That paim tree was once a foiler bowl

Minnie Mouse



'Home Videos' must beware of its mean streak

Artist Peter Kowalke's "When They Control Language Then You'll Censor Yourself, ' has prompted the most criticism.

IFE is about falling down and getting up again, but "America's Funniest Home Videos" only shows you the falling down. That's one of the few discouraging hings about "Videos," one of the TV season's few true smasheroos. The series, which airs Sunday nights on ABC flocally at 7 p.m. on KITV1, has scored such big ratings that it is making CBS, which has long owned Sundays, very nervous. Not only does the abow outscore "Murder, She Wrote" when in its regular time slot, but recently, when the one-hour "Videos" beat champion war horse "60 Minutes."

In many ways, "Videos" is a program-

Minutes."

In many ways, "Videos" is a programming inevitability, just as color TV was a technological inevitability. Somebody was bound to do it sooner or later. "Videos" has many antecedents in TV history, too. Among the more obvious Allen Funt's "Candid Camera" and Fox TV's laborious ripoff of it, "Totally Hidden Video."

Other investment in include Davit Let.

Hidden Video."
Other inspirations include David Let-terman's "Stupid Pet Tricks" and "Stu-pid Human Tricks."
But "Videos" lets viewers be their own Allen Funts, as well as their own stars and directors — and their own stupid humans. It takes advantage of the fact that there are nearly 9 million camcorders now in use throughout the



country by moms and dads and brothers and sisters.
The series brings home video home, and certifies that we are living in a new age of grass-roots television.
How it works is simplicity itself: Viewers send in funny shock of brides losing their petticoath or dads getting beaned by tennis balls or dogs doing flip-flops. A studio audience watches

beaned by tennis bails or nogs uong flip-flops. A studio audience watches them in Los Angeles and laughs and laughs perodded by host Bob Saget. It's good, clean and funny. But in their zest to cram in as many perafalls and bean balls as they can, the producers concentrate on the mishap and almost never on the aftermath. Everything is edited down to tiny bites. We are occasionally reminded by Saget that no one got hurt in the accidents shown on the screen. In a recent interview, Saget said that if there's any evidence of serious injury, a video won't be used on the air. We have to take it on faith that the producers investigate thoroughly enough to

know whether anyone was hurt.

But even with these assurances, the sight of a toddler getting conked by a swing, accompanied by shrieks of laughter, has an ugly side. If only Saget could occasionally produce the victim to prove he or she is OK, that there's been no harm done except to pride.

Already, the producers have been answering charges that the some of the wacky pratfalls are faked so the family can see itself on TV. A weekly best-video optize of \$10,000 and a best-of-season jackpot of \$100,000 are powerful inducement to phony things up.

And it leads to the ugliest possible scenario: Mom and Dad poshing grandma off the porch swing to come up with a funny video. We can only hope such abuses never occur, or that the producers will know them when they see them. Because much about "America's Funniest Home Videos" is positive. At its best, it invites us to laugh not so much at our neighbors as at ourselves.

When we see people doing goody things and suffering the consequences (the touch-football player who knocks an entire fence over as he runs to get the ball), we're reminded of our own foibles, of the klutziness that lurks beneath the surface of even the most seemingly graceful of souls.

"Videos" drives merrily and bumpily over the potholes of life. It's a reminder of the everyday predicaments that help