

RANDOM READINGS

Book analyzes Mexico at the

BY KELLY ARTHUR GARRETT
The Herald Mexico

Maybe it's fear of coming off snooty, but a lot of otherwise reasonable people don't seem to mind how overwhelmingly god-awful Mexican commercial television entertainment is. But at least the controversy over the new media law's extension of the Televisa/Aztéca duopoly is in part a tacit recognition of the execrable quality of the programming that the two TV giants have foisted upon a helpless public.

The same complaint does not apply, thankfully, for news and current events on Mexican television — both public and commercial — and radio. Since their liberation in the 1990s, the daily news shows themselves are deeper, bolder and more thorough than those in, say (just picking a country at random here), the United States.

Sure, there's the inevitable dose of trash news and he-said/she-said superficiality, as well as a tendency toward knee-jerk nationalism. But a discerning viewer, armed with a schedule, a remote and patience for more than sound bites, can stay pretty well informed about what's going on in this country just by watching television.

ON-AIR INTELLIGENCE

Helping matters is the quality of the commentary. Just about every day you can spend at least an hour listening to some very smart folks discussing public issues, lively and intelligently. The fare here is broad and deep, often the polar opposite of the superficial shouting

BOOK INFO

"Uno de dos"
"2006: México en la encrucijada"

By Carmen Aristegui
Prologue and forward by Lorenzo Meyer and Miguel Basáñez

Grijalbo (2006)

shows go way beyond the usual coffee klatches. When the talented Víctor Trujillo used his Brozo persona on his morning Channel 4 program, it could be truthfully said without a smudge of irony that there was more worthwhile news analysis coming out of Mexico from a man in a clown suit than was ever seen or heard on U.S. a.m. television.

BEST OF THE BREED

One of the best of the breed is Carmen Aristegui, "author" of a valuable new book entitled "Uno de dos" (One of Two), with the sub-title "2006: México en la encrucijada" (2006: Mexico at the Crossroads).

Aristegui, who hosts a morning radio news show called "Hoy por hoy" (96.9 FM) and a nightly interview program on CNN's Spanish-language station, may be the best-informed journalist about Mexican politics on the planet. Her interviewing style is based on her knowing at least as much about the topic under discussion as the insider she's interviewing. She simply can't be beat when it comes to who said what and when, and what piece of legislation was voted down in 2002 and by how much.

All this precociousness may explain what might seem a curious decision to


likes of Felipe Calderón and Andrés Manuel López Obrador is all in a day's work, and to heck with the truncated shelf life.

But this book is still going to matter months or even years after the July 2 vote. I put the word "author" in scare quotes earlier because in truth Aristegui ranks fifth in "Uno de dos" in terms of word contribution. The two candidates, of course, have plenty to say. But so do Lorenzo Meyer and Miguel Basáñez, who



GIVING PERSPECTIVE: Left to right, Basáñez present their new book

TURN TO BOOK, 8




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