

Debate does well on local TV, even during sweeps
By Rick Orlov

It didn't have the draw of, say, "American Idol" or "Extreme Makeover," nor the drama of a car chase, but last week's televised debate among the city's top five mayoral candidates drew a larger-than-expected audience for KCAL (Channel 9).

More than 185,000 people watched last Monday's 90-minute exchange between Mayor **James Hahn** and his top four challengers, Councilmen **Bernard Parks** and **Antonio Villaraigosa**, former Assembly Speaker **Bob Hertzberg** and state Sen. **Richard Alarcon**, D-Van Nuys.

"We are very pleased with the numbers," station spokesman Mike Nelson said. "We didn't do this for ratings. We didn't have any commercials during the debate, but we were glad with what we did and the audience we did get, particularly during sweeps month when the other stations put out their best products."

Nelson said the audience was comparable to what the station normally draws for its newscasts at that hour, and it was particularly high among younger viewers. Of the total audience, 40,000 were in the 18-34 age group.

Two more major debates are scheduled among the major candidates: 7 a.m. Tuesday on the "McIntyre in the Morning" show on KABC radio, (790 AM); and 6:30-8 p.m. Feb. 28 on KCBS (Channel 2).