## General Information

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## Description

A rare look behind the scenes of a presidential debate. The viewer is allowed a glimpse of how even podium height can make a difference in a debate, as advisors for Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter negotiate the details of sound, lighting, production and make-up that will create an image for millions of viewers.

## Keywords


## Citation

MLA

Behind the Scenes at Ford-Carter Debate

JOHN CHANCELLOR, anchor:
What you are going to see tonight is the two candidates on the stage before an audience of about 500 people. But at the same time everyone knows that the audience at home is the really important audience involved in all this, and that audience would number in the millions. So both campaigns have made an extraordinary effort to guarantee that their man looks good, John Hart has some fascinating details on this.

JOHN HART, reporting:
The thin man with the blue jacket and searching eyes is Bill Carruthers, Mr. Ford’s cosmetic advance man. He is searching for risks, anything among the lights, the cameras, the podiums, the equipment, the atmosphere that might distract Mr. Ford. He’s at Ford’s podium now rehearsing the sound system. Yesterday the stand in candidates could not hear the stand in panelist or each other and sometimes the loudspeakers howled.

Mr. DICK ARONSON, Audio Engineer: This is a bad mike?
HART: The candidates will walk in with their miniature mikes already on.

Mr. ARONSON: Candidates will be pre-miked by the White House with lapel mikes and cables coming right down through their jackets and down their pant legs and hanging outside their pants.

HART: By the time their pants legs are plugged in tonight, the sound system ought to work right. The bearded man with the blue jacket and searching eyes is Barry Jagoda, Mr. Carter’s cosmetic advance man. He’s searching for inequalities, as he has been for weeks in meetings with Carruthers, bargaining, disputing, negotiating away any possible disadvantages in the lights, cameras and podiums.

Mr. BARRY JAGODA, Carter Media Advisor: I was a little concerned about the height difference between the two candidates. Ford as you know is three or four inches taller than Carter, and I thought that could of made a difference in some sort of gross overall image.

HART: Jagoda wanted no podiums at all, just chairs, both candidates sitting, the president prefers to stand. The compromise: tall chairs and low podiums. Jagoda wanted Ford to sit while Carter was talking,
and Carter to sit while Ford was talking. They will sit or stand as they please. The height of the podiums was negotiated: waist high, but the same height. Each candidate was measured from belt buckle to floor and the difference was averaged. Time cues are electronic, on cameras behind the panelists. Both candidates have the same number of lights, but each man’s lighting is different, tailored to him by a New York lighting designer, Bill Klages.

Is there a way to make a man look more presidential with lights?

Mr. BILL KLAGES, New York lighting designer: No. No, I certainly would think that anybody who said that was true—really, that’s not true at all. There’s no way.

HART: This is what the candidate will see: lights, blazing out of the darkness where the audience sits unseen. This is what the theater audience will see: an island of light and two figures speaking quietly. The sound is still bad up here and encouragement to keep quite and listen.

Late today the candidates tested this electronic environment themselves, the light-skinned Carter coming out the stage door with a touch of makeup on. Later, Ford left his screen test with a light coat of pancake over his tan.

It is theater with the speakers required to perform naturally in an unnatural place. To be on a stage yet speak intimately with each one of the 90 million or so people watching in their homes. Carruthers who doesn’t talk for cameras believes people remember what they’ve seen better than what they heard. In this ancient theater who’s first performance was a circus, Carruthers and Jagoda have caged all known visible risks accept of course what the candidates will do on the air on their own. John Hart, NBC News, Philadelphia.