

## Title Sequence

IT SEEMS AN AGE AGO NOW, and it was. Between 1972 and 1982 I wrote a regular weekly column about television for the London *Observer*, and by the end of my stint I preened myself as being fairly clued up on the subject. I signed off with a confident prediction that although the American production centers, having fed their shows to the networks, might go on picking up secondary earnings by flooding the world with stuff priced low because it had already made a profit in the home market, the droll sarcasm of the desk sergeant Phil Esterhaus (Michael Conrad) in *Hill Street Blues* would be about as clever as their effort would ever get. Seriousness, sophistication, and the thrill of creativity could be supplied only by the older, wiser, more mature nations. For a couple of decades it looked as if I might be right, and then the American cable channels, arising out of nowhere, suddenly outflanked the