



Newsbreaker Buck Owens is filmed in the back of a limousine while he reviews hidden camera footage and talks to Central Command just after a bust Feb. 28 in Rochester.

When News Breaks, We Bust It

The Newsbreakers Brand of Media Criticism

The limousine stops a hundred yards south of the Keating Federal Building in Rochester, New York. Outside, reporters and cameramen scurry pink-faced in the frigid February wind, preparing to break news of the city's \$33 million purchase of the Fast Ferry. They have no idea what is coming.

Inside the limo, 12 members of the Action Team fidget with their disguises and foam microphones.

This is the tenth attempted mission of the Newsbreakers, the next generation of media critics, months-old and itching for another on-screen protest of network TV's "dog-lick live shot." One Newsbreaker ties a bandanna around his nose. Marlene Dietrich glasses block his eyes, but his bouncing knees reveal his anticipation. Another sets down the camera to throw on a Mexican wrestler's mask. Buck, the leader of the group, fingers the corners of his moustache, either making sure it won't peel or pondering when to strike.

But it was only 11:52 — too soon.

Only one member remained unconcealed. His wife's nylons balled up in his jittery fist, he says he's worried about the getaway driver. "Let's just circle," Buck called up to the driver, ignoring him.

"We're looking at 11:55, 11:58."

Minutes later, word comes from Central Command that News 10 is going live and the Action Team pours out of the limo. A dozen plastic-faced reporters swarm WHEC's Berkely Breen, shoving Newsbreakers microphones in his face. The cameramen from the other stations turn their eye on the mayhem behind them. The Newsbreakers have become the story.

News 10 quickly cuts to other footage. There was miscommunication. The Newsbreakers were too early, or too late. By the time Breen goes back live, law enforcement officers have told the clowns to get out of the shot or get arrested. Buck rallies the team, and soon a dozen voices yell variations of a familiar Newsbreaker query: "What's the mood? What's the mood

Brandon Swanson