

Radio

In the Looney Bin

I suppose it is possible to imagine a programme more dispiriting than Radio 2's *Husband of the Year*, but I find it damn difficult. This "search for the most considerate, the most tactful, the most resourceful and the most loving husband of 1974 in the United Kingdom" exposes three contestants per week, each one the winner of some kind of be unappetizing, but the reality has in everyway surpassed my gloomiest predictions. It's not that the contestants make embarrassing idiots of themselves—on the contrary, and despite the fact that they have elected to make public what seems to me private, they do rather well. The point is that they bring this off in rather the same way as in a lunatic asylum the relatively sane man appears as rational as Socrates. Here they start off from a basis of recognizable human relationship; those wifely testimonials, if not precisely unsolicited, at least seem to refer to some quite satisfactory marriages. It's when the panel gets to work that things go seriously downhill: faced only with that cosy testimonial,

known cliché and stereotype of marriage—from the Manly Breadwinner and his Devoted Helpmate down. This infuses every question, it resounds in every inanity from the Chair, in every conniving laugh from the radio hyena; and finally, God save the mark, it is symbolized in the prize: a second honeymoon in . . . guess where?

The second series of *Where Are You Taking Us?* was also very satisfactory: Brian J. Ford is a presenter with a gift for getting his fellow-scientists to explain themselves without, as far as I can judge, selling his listeners a soft option. His final programme, *A Period of Unrest*, evidently broke through some profound broadcasting taboo by discussing the subject of menstruation and I cannot think of a better taboo-breaker than this level-headed and exceedingly interesting investigation of the associated bio-chemistry and its psychological effects. Just as great, however, was its value as a lead-in to an area which Mr Ford might examine further: the whole question of biological clocks, of rhythm and cycle both internal and external, as important influences on human behaviour.