

Abductees against 'Nova'

Set your phasers on stun, boys. An upcoming WGBH program about UFO abductions has several participants howling betrayal, claiming they were sandbagged by "Nova" producers who ignored



MACK

all evidence supporting their tales of dances with aliens - and whose film portrays unwitting abductees as "weak-minded patsies," in the words of investigator Budd Hopkins.

Hopkins, author of "Intruders," and John E. Mack, the Harvard shrink wrist-

slapped by the university for ministering to the saucer-assisted, are two of the featured subjects in "Kidnapped by UFOs?," which airs Tuesday. Hopkins had high hopes when he invited a "Nova" crew to Florida, where he debriefed a family (including two small children) about their extraterrestrial adventures. Now a seething Hopkins has ripped off a letter accusing producers Denise Dilanni and Paula Apsell of "mangling the truth," "tampering with evidence" and sensationalizing the results to score rating points. He says

Dilanni and Apsell "should be ashamed of themselves."

Mack's office is preparing its own rebuttal to the "Nova" show, arguing that it's hopelessly biased, heavily reliant on naysaying scientists (like Carl Sagan), with no clinical experience in the area and that it disregards "the potential psychological harm to this population," meaning the abductees. Meanwhile, Mack and his lawyer personally served notice on WGBH execs yesterday that they will sue for defamation if portions are not excised before broadcast. The hot-button footage concerns Donna Bassett, who surfaced in Time magazine two years ago when Mack's book "Abduction" appeared. Bassett, a self-proclaimed investigative journalist, posed as an abductee with the intent of exposing Mack as a charlatan. Mack supporters counter that Bassett is a well-documented wacko whose prominent role in the "Nova" film is "reflective of its overall sloppiness," according to Mack attorney Eric MacLelish.

Residents of Planet WGBH were not returning calls late yesterday. However, the flap can only whet viewer appetite for one more bite of Big Mack and company.

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