

At Home with the Movies

CHAMBER OF HORRORS
(1966)
Thursday, Dec. 31 (CBS)

A synopsis for this film begins: "In turn-of-the-century Baltimore, a madman forces a terrified minister to marry him to the corpse of a woman he has strangled with her own hair." And that's just for openers.

It gets gruesomely worse, as the villain (played by Patrick O'Neal) is caught, sentenced to hang, escapes (but not before chopping off his manacled hand), and spends the rest of the film getting revenge, mainly with the help of a wooden hand stump that can be fitted with murderous hooks, scalpels and meat cleavers.

To toss in some extra sex, he employs a curvy girl as a sex lure to entrap his victims.

The national Catholic film office rates this A-3, unobjectionable for adults.

TARZAN'S THREE CHALLENGES (1963)
Friday, Jan. 1 (CBS)

Jock Mahoney is Tarzan in this 34th film in a series that

began with another actor named Elmo Lincoln 44 years before. He leaves Africa to go to a Thailand-like land to help a young boy take his rightful place as spiritual leader of his people, despite the dastardly efforts of his uncle (Woody Strode, in an excellent performance) to put his own boy on the throne.

"Jane" is no longer around, and Tarzan has become "a kind of one-man Peace Corps with loin cloth," as one review put it, but this was viewed as one of the best of the genre. NCOMP rated it A-1, unobjectionable for all.

AN AMERICAN IN PARIS (1951)
Saturday, Jan. 2 (NBC)

Gene Kelly dances up a storm with "I Got Rhythm" and there is a long ballet finale in this lavishly-produced M.G.M. musical filled with the melodies of George Gershwin.

Leslie Caron is the love interest and Oscar Levant is there for laughs. Some critics consider it a classic film musical. NCOMP rated it A-2, for adults and adolescents.

SPARTACUS (1960)
Sunday, Jan. 3 (ABC)

Kirk Douglas plays a Roman slave who leads a valiant but unsuccessful revolt against the emperor's legions in the century before the coming of Christ — a revolt that has historical truth.

The revolt proves unsuccessful — Spartacus and other followers who survive the battle are crucified along the Appian Way — but the foundations for future freedom are there: notably through Spartacus' common-law wife (Jean Simmons) who bears his child in freedom.

This is a rather violent film (both in battle sequences and portions dealing with the training of gladiators), but devoid of Roman-epic clichés and featuring some fine acting, particularly by Peter Ustinov (who won an Oscar here for best supporting actor), Laurence Olivier, Charles Laughton and Tony Curtis.

NCOMP rated this A-3, unobjectionable for adults. The film will be shown in two parts: tonight and Monday night, Jan. 4.

SPARTACUS, Part 2
Monday, Jan. 4 (ABC)

See preview for Sunday, Jan. 3.

EYE OF THE CAT (1969)
Monday, Jan. 4 (NBC)

A shock-suspense film, with undertones of an aunt-nephew unnatural relationship, this is not for kids — or for lovers of cats, which take on ominous meanings in this rather complex story.

The hero (Michael Sarrazin) has been talked into returning to the mansion of his wealthy aunt (Eleanor Parker) by her hairdresser (Gayle Hunnicut) so the aunt may be induced to put Sarrazin back into her will, after which the old bag can be done in. But there are all those cats with all those suspicious eyes who roam around the mansion causing trouble. After you see this, if you do, be sure to put the cat out before you retire.

NCOMP rated this A-3, unobjectionable for adults. (Judith Crist was one of the very few critics who liked this film, but most were intrigued by the interesting opening credits.)

As I See It

Don't Overlook TV Actors

By Pat Costa



A friend of commercial television writing in the New York Times recently took issue with those critics who find it easy to gush eloquently over an actor doing his thing on educational television but can never seem to see anything of merit on commercial TV, even if the same actor is involved.

Noted actor Pat Hingle, who received unanimous kudos for a part on NET and only silence for his performance on another network, was the example cited.

In addition, said the writer, actors in regular series weekly give bravura performances—all to no avail—at least as far as the critics go.

He mentioned Raymond Burr of "Ironside" and Lucille Ball and Carol Burnett among others.

I quite agree. Too often, we are privileged to watch quite a number of admirable performances on commercial television, sometimes night after night and never blink an eyelash in tribute.

Part of the trouble is the saturation. If you're watching two to three hours in a row (and I bet a great many more people do than will admit) you may find yourself so stupefied you can't discern anything more subtle on the screen than simple movements.

Yet the talent is there. At least one instance I can think of is Hal Holbrook's "The Senator". Holbrook won raves on Broadway for his Mark Twain portrayal. I don't think that he's won anything as the senator but he's at least as convincing as he was as Twain.

"Gunsmoke", mentioned by the Times writer, is another of those shows which, weekly grasps the viewer with powerful performances. Casting of guest roles is superb and the acting often formidable.

Tony Randall and Jack Klugman of the "Odd Couple" are not only stars, they are extremely talented actors. I wouldn't give two hoots for some of their material but when they are thrown a decent script, watch out. It's as good as anything the movies or Broadway have ever offered in comedy.

Also in comedy efforts there is the work of the whole acting crew on the Mary Tyler Moore show. The meshing of talents

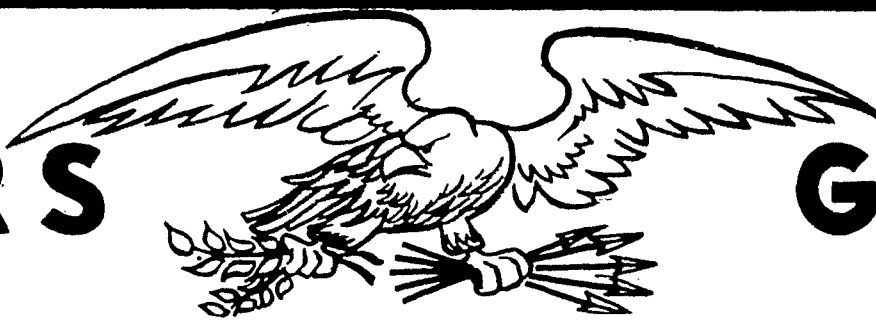
and timing are at least as good as they were on her former TV entry with Dick Van Dyke.

Poor premises and rotten scripts can louse up a lot of very talented people. Herschel Bernardi in "Armie" is one good example.

Getting lost in a continuing bit part is another way to blot out a light. James Daly in "Medical Center" loses that way. His lines are all written to spotlight Chad Everett.

Nevertheless the talent is there and lots of other places on commercial TV. All you have to do is take a good look.

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