

# Critics Lash 'Love Story'

## As I See It Fond of Fonda? You'll Like Smith



By Pat Costa

If you like Henry Fonda "in anything" then, no doubt you'll like "The Smith Family", his new ABC series on Wednesday night at 8:30.

The premiere which had Fonda in a role as police officer, arrest his daughter's friend for possession of marijuana was not particularly well written.

It was on a par with nearly all the others of its ilk, lacking in any subtleties and failing to allow any of its cast to do more than walk through their parts.

Starring with Fonda is Janet Blair as his wife and Ronnie Howard as one of his three children. Howard is best known for his long running role as Opie on the Andy Griffith Show.

I don't know of any of the Saturday morning cartoons that are winners but one I find particularly obnoxious is "Penelope Pitstop". Favorite epithet of various characters is "Dum Dum" with which they label each other indiscriminately. Since our 3-year-old has picked it up I've become more aware of the language emanating from the screen. It was never written to impress parents.

If I seem to be writing about

ABC a great deal, it's because that's where the action is. Mid-season replacements have generated some interest, its news department got a shot in the arm with the acquisition of Harry Reasoner and then of course every week there is ABC premiere movie, the series of flickers produced just for television.

Its most recent production "The Feminist and the Fuzz" proved that if nothing else, the filmmakers know how to put together an attractive cast.

David Hartman, who ordinarily plays a doctor on "The Bold Ones", and Barbara Eden released at last from that awful genie series were supported by the very talented likes of Jo Anne Worley, Herb Edelman, John McGiver and Harry Morgan.

The plot was puffy and full of holes but the group managed to sustain a certain charm and mood.

ABC should give a bit more attention to this series. With a little more tightening and more scrupulous care paid to writing and directing chores, it could certainly be their shining star. Particularly if the other networks persist in screening the kind of movies they seem addicted to.

New York — (CP) — At the risk of being struck by a barrage of tear-soaked handkerchiefs, a number of writers in the Catholic Press have been extremely critical of Love Story, the enormously popular film on which is based the enormously popular best-selling novel by Erich Segal.

The criticism has not been levelled at the quality of the film, but against what has been termed "subtle" influences Love Story is having on Christian values regarding love, sexual morality and belief in God.

In the first wave of popularity to greet Love Story, the film starring Ali MacGraw and Ryan O'Neal as modern star-crossed lovers, much has been made of the film's setting a new trend away from sex-saturated movies and toward the pure romanticism of the 30's and 40's.

But now, questions are being asked, and warnings are being made.

In a commentary in The Evangelist of Albany, Father Kenneth J. Doyle, associate editor, cautioned that "the special danger of Love Story" is in its "potentially formative power over young viewers who swept away by the emotionalism of it all, will not be discerning and will accept the two protagonists in the totality of their behavior. The sympathy of the film is on the side of the collegialists in their use of premarital sex."

Critic James Arnold, syndicated in Catholic weekly newspapers, called attention to the fact that in Love Story the young lovers are "negative about the God bit" she even being a lapsed Catholic who agrees to a Catholic burial (when she learns she is dying) merely to please her father.

"But the easy anti-theism is galling," he continued, "not



Ryan O'Neal and Ali MacGraw in a scene from Love Story

even considering its glamor and potential influence for the easily swept-away who will see this film. Most of all, it gives everything an air of emptiness, futility, even cruelty — the film's deeper message is of beauty fraught with despair."

Arnold suggested that the atheistic stand of the pair is not representative of the times, "where the 'God question' is again very big on campus."

An editorial in The Catholic Messenger of Davenport, Iowa, attacked the film's advertising slogan: "Love means never having to say you're sorry."

"Hopefully," said the editorial, "the viewer/reader will be able to see through the falsity

of such a statement. Real life, given human context, is a continual and growing awareness of our limitations. We are constantly having to try, to fail, to say we're sorry, and begin again to deepen our love by such experiences. The act of saying we are sorry is in itself a perfect expression of love..."

The National Catholic Office for Motion Pictures rated it A-3, for adults, and did not seem too concerned about the film's philosophy or impact. "The only trouble it runs into comes from rational analysis or a serious look at the human values beneath the surface. But since everything's on the surface to begin with, why bother to probe?"

## Once Over Briefly

**ARISTOCATS** — A Disney feature-length cartoon about a family of cats that inherits a Paris estate and must contend with some greedy tabbies. People like Phil Harris and Eva Gabor provide the voices in a delightful entertainment for all ages. (A-1; G)

**BREWSTER McCLOUD** — A black-humor film, set in and around the Houston Astrodome, about a boy who desires to fly like a bird and a fallen angel who stops at nothing—including murder—to help him get his way. It's intended as social satire, by the people who made M\*A\*S\*H. (A-3; R)

**CROMWELL** — A fascinating costume drama, especially for history buffs, about the rise to power of Oliver Cromwell (Richard Harris) and his intellectual and battlefield differences with King Charles I, superbly underplayed by Sir Alec Guinness. (A1; G)

**DIARY OF A MAD HOUSEWIFE** — A frustrated housewife tires of being taken for granted by her career-minded, social-climbing husband, who is just as tired of her, and both seek sexual and emotional release outside their marriage. While movie-makers Frank and Eleanor Perry very graphically follow them in this satiric look at modern marriage and materialism. Some shocking language and scenes, but a first-rate performance by Carrie Snodgrass as the wife. (A-1; R)

**FIVE EASY PIECES** — This season's "hit" film, about an educated drifter (Jack Nicholson) who wanders between life with hard-hat laborers in oil fields and his roots; a family of classical musicians. The film consists of a series of episodes, each illustrating the hero's inability to know who or what he really is. A thinking man's film, with some rough language and scenes. (A-4; R)

**GREAT WHITE HOPE** — James Earl Jones gives a highly-acclaimed performance as a Black heavyweight champion patterned after Jack Johnson, who was despised by Whites—becoming champion in the first place—and daring to take a White woman as his mistress. (A-3; GP)

**INVESTIGATION OF A CITIZEN ABOVE SUSPICION** — A very philosophical drama about how power corrupts, centering on an Italian police official who murders his mistress and leaves all kinds of clues, knowing no one would dare suspect a man in his position despite the evidence. (A-4; R)

**LITTLE BIG MAN** — Dustin Hoffman stars as a 120-year-old man who tells in flashback his adventures, which range from being captured by the Cheyenne, urging Custer to the Little Big Horn, becoming a gunfighter

friend of Wild Bill Hickock, and generally seeing the Indian world as noble and courageous in comparison to the White man's world. Faye Dunaway is featured as the smug wife of a minister who later turns to prostitution, and Chief Dan George steals the acting honors. (A-3; GP)

**LITTLE FAUSS AND BIG HALSEY** — Pretentious saga of two motorcycle-riding nuts: Michael Pollard as a mechanic with racing ambitions, and Robert Redford as an up and coming big winner, who capitalizes while he can on the sexual adulation from girls who tag along. The film intends to show that the racing circuit is tough and what America's lust for competition does to people. (A-4; R)

**LOVE STORY** — A four-hankkerchief soap opera, about a boy and girl (Ali MacGraw and Ryan O'Neal) who marry despite his father's objections (she's from the wrong side of the tracks, culturally). She helps him through law school, and just on the brink of a bright future, she dies. Many critics hail it as a return to old-fashioned romance in films; others nevertheless point out its romanticizes pre-marital sex and is rather vulgar all around. (A-3; GP)

**PRIVATE LIFE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES** — A Billy Wilder-made, witty film that attempts to de-mythologize the great detective, even though he was a fiction to begin with. Wilder suggests he was bisexual, could be easily outwitted by women, and even took cocaine. But this is a thrill-a-second, laugh-a-minute yarn that all but the most loyal A. Conan Doyle fans will enjoy. (A-3; GP)

**RYAN'S DAUGHTER** — A major David Lean film, set in 1918 Ireland, about a woman who desires a sexual fulfillment and—not finding it with her much older husband (Robert Mitchum) takes up with a locally-despised British officer occupying the village, setting off a series of tragic events. Trevor Howard gives an interesting performance as the village priest. Objection has been made to a sensual love-making sequence, involving some nudity. (A-3; GP)

**SONG OF NORWAY** — A beautifully-photographed (mostly in Norway) musical biography of composer Edvard Grieg. A hum-drum plot, hardly any great acting, echoes of Sound of Music, but nevertheless an entertaining film. Florence Henderson stars as Grieg's wife. (A-1; G)

**THERE'S A GIRL IN MY SOUP** — Peter Sellers is an aging, sex-obsessed TV gourmet, and Goldie Hawn is a naive but loose swinger in a sex farce that most critics found tasteless and not too funny. (B; R)

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