

PAT COSTA
**As I
See It**



Question: Why does the letter G have both a hard and a soft sound when there's already a perfectly good J in the alphabet?

Answer: "I dunno. That's just the way it is."

And with that "The Electric Co.", a spin-off of "Sesame Street", was well into the first program of its new series.

Designed to help children from 7 to 10 gain new reading skills, "The Electric Co." also is likely to attract the student's younger brothers and sisters to say nothing of their parents.

Obviously each age group will get something different from the show but all will come away entertained. Bill Cosby and Rita Moreno head the repertory troupe. Jimmy Boyd, Lee Chamberlin, Skip Hinnant, Morgan Freeman and Judy Graubert make up the rest of the cast which brings us such characters as Julia Growtup (a cook) and Easy Reader.

Utilizing a variety of techniques, the show started off by charming this parent with a Mrs. Malaprop type sketch in which two of the girls confuse such words as giggle, gurgle, griddle, girdle, etc.

Other skits included a soap opera segment, "Love of Chair," a new client for that word detective, Fargo North, decoder, and a lyrical, alliterative work of art about a "glamorous glowworm named Gladys that glitters, etc."

Funded by a large government grant, "The Electric Co." is the result of a great amount of research by the Children's

Television Workshop headed by Joan Ganz Cooney.

Aimed primarily at the inner city child who is having trouble with reading, the show utilizes a variety of techniques and dresses up those techniques in sights and sounds familiar to the ghetto child. Since much of the familiar world is one he knows via television, the series parodies TV. Ditto for the movies.

Thus soap operas, TV chefs, slick-acting gumshoes, background music from "Odyssey, 2000" and the hip character of Easy Reader all help to orient the child and make him receptive to the lesson.

The lesson itself may be delivered by using phonics, rhyme, repetition, alliteration, labeled objects and association of some simple sentences with corresponding action.

How well will it work? Many predict success for the project. At least one expert has gloomily prophesied that "The good readers will become better, the poor readers merely will be confused."

At our house I watched the six-year-old check out a scene in which two balloons were supposed to represent the hard and soft sounds of the letter G. Cosby stood in the middle behind a little stand.

"Are you paying attention?" I asked. "Yes," she said. That box in front of Bill Cosby says Ice Cream."

All of which may mean that the series might add taste to its other techniques.

"Electric Co." can be seen weekdays at 1:30 and 5:30 and on Saturday mornings.

At Home with the Movies

BESERK! (1968)

Thursday, Nov. (CBS)

A horror-in-the-circus story, starring Joan Crawford as the circus owner and ringmaster. The film builds up whodunit suspense as four grisley murders are committed: one in which a high-wire artist is garroted on his own rope, one in which a spike is driven through a man's skull, another in which a tightrope walker plummets toward a field of bayonets, and finally one in which a gall is really sawed in half.

Neither the original film — and certainly not this TV version — had much gore despite the plot. But everyone is mean and a nuisance to be around. The national Catholic film office (NCOMP) rated it A-3 unobjectionable for adults.

BLACK NOON

Friday, Nov. 5 (CBS)

Witchcraft is the theme of this made-for-TV film, starring Ray Milland and Gloria Grahame.

The central characters, however, are a young minister and his wife who travel West in the late 1800's, suddenly to come upon a typical old New England town (like Salem?) in

the middle of a desert. There are no NCOMP ratings for made-for-TV films.

GIGI (1958)

Saturday, Nov. 6 (NBC)

A delightfully entertaining musical starring Leslie Caron as a turn-of-the-century Parisian beauty who is carefully trained in the "art" of romance.

Among those ready to lend advice are her Grandmama (Hermione Gingold), her uncle (Maurice Chevalier) and, last but not least, the young man who is at first disinterested in love but quickly changes his mind (Louis Jourdan).

The plot is one that Women's Lib has learned to hate, but the songs of Lerner and Loewe ("Thank Heaven for Little Girls," "The Night They Invented Champagne," "I Remember It Well," "Say a Prayer for Me Tonight," and the title tune) are beautiful. NCOMP rated this A-3, for adults.

ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST

Sunday, Nov. 7 (ABC)

Greed and murder are the

key ingredients of this violent Western starring Henry Fonda as a gunman and Claudia Cardinale as a dance-hall girl, both separately out to do in a supposedly wealthy rancher. Jason Robards also stars, along with Keenan Wynn and Jack Elam, always a villain, NCOMP rated this A-3, for adults.

MARRIAGE ON THE ROCKS (1965)

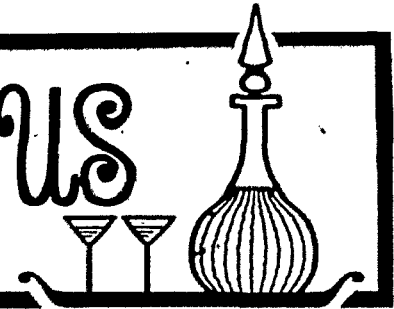
Sunday, Nov. 7 (CBS)

Frank Sinatra and Deborah Kerr play a long-married couple whose marriage is in trouble: Sinatra playing a sex-weary businessman who hasn't time to pay attention to his mate, who begins talking about divorce.

She "accidentally" gets a Mexican divorce and is "accidentally" married to Sinatra's best friend: Dean Martin. Nancy Sinatra plays a teen-aged daughter and Hermione Gingold plays a boozing, bagpipe-playing mother-in-law in this comedy that was just put down as dull by most critics.

NCOMP rated it B, objectionable in part, because "suggestive costuming is gratuitously introduced (mostly bikinis: Ed.) in an effort to shore up this weak comedy."

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Joe Grassi, Proprietor

Once Over Briefly

Ratings from the Catholic Office for Motion Pictures on the moral suitability of current movies:—

ANDERSON TAPES — Adults only — A coarse comic melodrama about a robbery of a New York apartment: unnecessary sex and violence.

BIG JAKE — Adults only — Routine but very bloody Western in which a mean and tough John Wayne invades a bandit lair to rescue his kidnapped grandson.

BILLY JACK — Objectionable for everyone—Conflict between runaway teenagers and people of an Arizona town. Sadistic violence and nudity, obscene dialogue.

BLACK JESUS — Adults — Woody Strode's magnificent portrayal of an African revolutionary makes up for interminable dialogue, slow pace and mechanical plot.

CARNAL KNOWLEDGE — Objectionable for everyone—A satiric reduction of human characters to sex-obsessed caricatures: crude language, explicit visuals.

CONFORMIST — Adults—with reservations—The development of fascism, with Jean-Louis Trintignant as a man so driven to conform that he would become an assassin.

CHROME AND HOT LEATHER — Adults — Militarism, occasional sex and violence.

CLAY PIGEON — Objectionable — Low budget flick about a Viet Vet who tries to break a narcotics ring in Los Angeles.

DARLING LILL — Adults only—Julie Andrews is a spy against the British in World War I. Songs and comedy and fabulous wardrobe, but frothy plot. Not innocent enough for kiddies.

DRIVE, HE SAID — Condemned.

THE DEVILS — Condemned — Warmed over 18th Century muckraking about a convent and its priest engaged in devil worship.

DOC — for adults only—Marshall Wyatt Esp gets involved in a gunfight at O.K. corral. The old-time Western excitement is mixed by making the plot a moralizing allegory about the Vietnam War.

FRIENDS — Objectionable — Daft idyll about a teen-age couple having a baby without either doctor or midwife.

HELLSTROM CHRONICLE — Adults and adolescents—Science-fiction film with various insects starring: the terrible potentialities of insect power.

JOHNNY GOT HIS GUN — Adults, with reservations—Dalton Trumbo's film, based on his own 1938 novel about a World War I "basket case."

LET'S SCARE JESSICA TO DEATH — Adults — a ghoulish psychological thriller with a more than light touch of vampirism thrown in for good measure.

MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE — Adults — Quarts of plastic blood cover distantly related and bloody awful Poe.

OMEGA MAN — For adults — A futuristic look at how the last humans on earth may survive.

ONE DAY IN THE LIFE OF IVAN DENISOVICH — Adults and adolescents — Harrowing recreation of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's magnificent short novel of life in a Siberian labor camp.

PLAY MISTY FOR ME — Adults with reservations — The barely credible take of a psycho girl and the folks she tries to destroy. Long on "ladies" magazine dialog.

SEE NO EVIL — Adults — A blind girl picks up the scent of a killer. Keep the kids away: the tension is pretty bad.

J. C. — Adults with reservations — Bikes, bible quotes, and brutality.

SKIN GAME — Adults — Good comedy entertainment for the non-sensitive on racial issues. James Garner makes a habit of selling his best friend.

THE TODD KILLINGS — Objectionable — based on the true story of the Pied Piper of Tuscon. A lurid sex-murder melodrama.

THE LAST REBEL — Adults — Joe Namath smirks his way through crude language, heavy violence and gratuitous nudity.

THE TOUCH — Adults with reservations — Decidedly commercial Ingmar Bergman with more light on the surface than shadows beneath.

WHO IS HARRY KELLERMAN — Adults only — Dustin Hoffman is a successful composer-singer who has crushed people on his way to the top. As his world crumbles he slips into phantasies of bitter paranoia. Sad, not funny.