

PAT COSTA
As I
See It



"Have you seen 'Sarge' yet?" Father Bob Kanka asked me a couple of months ago. The assistant pastor at St. Peter's and Paul's in Elmira had stopped in for a quick cup of coffee on his way to a meeting in our neighborhood.

I hedged. We had seen the two-hour premiere of the NBC series about cop turned priest complete with bombing which claimed the wife of the former law officer.

Frankly, it hadn't turned us on and Father read my face pretty well.

"It's pretty good sometimes," he continued undaunted and then poked a little fun at himself. "Of course, maybe the character of a middle-aged, slightly overweight priest only holds a fascination for other middle-aged, slightly overweight priests."

"Take a look anyway," he urged. I promised to do so but it was sometime before I got around to channeling in on blond, pudgy George Kennedy. By the time I did, NBC had already announced the cancellation of the series effective in January.

The particular show I chose was an unhappy selection. The TV Guide said that the series was "taking a light turn" with this particular story.

We watched for an hour as Arlene Golonka (Millie of "Mayberry RFD") and Monte Markham messed around with a horrible script about marriage, divorce, bigamy and violence while George refereed.

"Good heavens," somebody

commented, "If this is a 'light' script I'd hate to see a heavy one."

Fortunately, we decided that perhaps this show wasn't representative of the series and we turned it on again the following week. Jackpot!

The script by Walter Black was a winner. Father Cavanaugh (Kennedy) subs as a chaplain at a Marine base when he discovers that a tough sergeant is giving a recruit an unduly tough time. (I gave Kennedy two extra points just for pronouncing harassment correctly.)

Setting his sleuthing powers into gear, Father Cavanaugh discovers that the drill instructor, a man from the hills, dislikes young men whose origins are similar. They remind him of his own failings.

When the young recruit turns up AWOL, the priest sets out to find him and discovers he has been kidnapped by the sergeant.

Kennedy gets to throw a couple of punches, deliver a couple of throw-away lines with expert ease and develop his character a little more before he saves the boy.

With this show, the viewer gets the idea of what "Sarge" is or could be all about. If the idea of a cop turned priest is a gimmick, and it is, then it is a gimmick that could have worked well. But, and it is a huge but, such gimmicks require strong plots, strong character development (the drill sergeant) and skillful writing on a regular basis to back them up. This gimmick obviously didn't get them.

At Home with the Movies

THE COMIC (1969)
Thursday Dec. 9 (CBS)

Dick Van Dyke stars in a poorly-received film about an old-time silent-film comedy star who hit the skids and is attempting a comeback. There is an attempt to analyze the man's character and adult life, but the Carl Renner-directed film keeps slipping into slapstick and playing for the quick laugh instead.

The Catholic film office rated it A-3, unobjectionable for adults.

HOW TO STEAL AN AIRPLANE

Friday, Dec. 10 (NBC)

This is a made-for-TV film about an adventurer who is hired to go to South America to retrieve an airplane that the playboy son of a dictator bought but can't quite pay for.

Stars of the film, for which there is no rating, are Rochester's Peter Duell, Sal Mineo, Julie Sommars and Claudine Longet, Andy William's wife.

THE BIG COUNTRY

(1958) (Part I)
Saturday, Dec. 11 (NBC)

A panorama-type Western which may not have the impact on the small screen that it did on the theater screen. It's bas-

ically the same standard plot about ranchers feuding over water rights, but beefed up with some great actors: Burl Ives and Charles Bickford as the ranch owners, Gregory Peck as a man from the East who is about to marry into one of the families and get involved, Charlton Heston as a ranch foreman who doesn't take a liking to Peck, Carroll Baker as Peck's fiancée and Jean Simmons as a girl he takes an interest in.

One of the big factors in the action is the soundtrack, which features music you'll recognize from a later cigaret commercial (remember those?).

This will be shown in two parts, tonight and Monday, Dec. 13.

The Catholic film office rated this A-2, unobjectionable for adults and adolescents.

HURRY, SUNDOWN (1967)

Sunday, Dec. 12 (ABC)

Many critics have placed this film, directed by Otto Preminger, on their list of all-time worst movies.

The film is filled with stereotypes: a bigoted white judge, black sharecroppers who sing a Hallelujah spiritual in 1930's style, and "all the whites are black and all the black white,"

as one reviewer put it.

The Catholic film office condemned this film as "prurient" and "superficial and patronizing in its treatment of racial attitudes and tensions."

WILL PENNY (1968)

Sunday, Dec. 12 (CBS)

Although you may never have heard of this film starring Charlton Heston — it had a miserable promotional effort — it is generally conceded by critics to be one of the most outstanding Westerns ever made.

There are no cliches; this is an expertly-done portrait of an aging cowboy who is beginning to realize his way of life is becoming outmoded and who becomes involved with a young woman (Joan Hackett) and her little boy.

The scenery and the acting and the script (by director Tom Gries) are brilliant. Try not to miss it.

The Catholic film office rated it A-3, unobjectionable for adults.

THE BIG COUNTRY

(Part II)

Monday, Dec. 13 (NBC)
See pre-view for Saturday, Dec. 11

Once Over Briefly

Ratings from the Catholic Office for Motion Pictures on the audience suitability for current movies:

BEDKNOBS AND BROOMSTICKS — Everyone — A delightful Disney fantasy about the way to win a war.

BLACK BEAUTY — Everyone — A sadly uneven remake of the Anna Sewell classic.

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

CRY UNCLE — Condemned — Occasionally screamingly funny but mostly nothing but a paunchy private eye's fornicating his way through a blackmail case.

DESPERATE CHARACTERS — Adults, with reservations — Adult drama about the high emotional cost of urban living.

DRIVE, HE SAID — Condemned.

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

FANTASIA — Everyone — Disney classic that's been drawing older folks back to the movies.

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

GOING HOME — Unrated — A man returns from prison to a house filled with bitterness.

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

IT ONLY HAPPENS TO OTHERS — Adults — A shattering drama about the death of a child.

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

KOTCH — Adults — Old fashioned sentiment without the treacle about an unwed mother.

MILLHOUSE — Adults — An honest if uneven documentary-satire on the career of Richard Nixon.

MAN IN THE WILDERNESS — Adults — Survival saga set in the old northwest. An area critic called it "murky."

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.

SHAFT — Adults — polished and exciting entertainment about a black private eye caught between the Mafi a and the police.

RAILWAY CHILDREN — Everyone — A charming film with lots of the "old" values based on a favorite Victorian novel describing life in a household after daddy gets taken away by the police.

SOMETHING BIG — Adults — An inept Western with a lot of doubles entendres and killing, all in the name of clean fun.

SUNDAY BLOODY SUNDAY — Adults, with reservations — An unpleasant film about a homosexual, ambisexual and heterosexual triangle.

SUMMER OF '42 — Adults, with reservations — An American initiation rite.

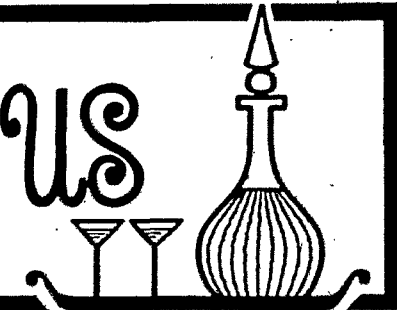
THE FRENCH CONNECTION — Adults — An inhuman cat and mouse game. NCOMP called it one of the "most exciting, as well as one of the most harshly realistic detective movies in recent years."

THE STEAGLE — Objectionable — Walter Mitty Meets the Cuban Missile Crisis; but it's a sadly uneven and offensive comedy.

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.

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