

AS I SEE IT



Pat Costa

The last time I praised the work of a television newsman, he was shortly ousted from his position as a co-anchor and sent into the field as a roving reporter.

Thus it would seem the wiser part not to take up the qualifications of one Mort Nusbbaum in this space. But Mr. Nusbbaum, having already been fired after 13 years as stocks reporter on WROC-TV, has little to lose from a discussion of his merits here.

Some 11 years ago, when I was a daily TV columnist, I wrote that if Rochesterians wanted to see and hear what a professional television newsman looked and sounded like they should tune in Mr. Nusbbaum's brief nightly report on Channel 8. In the intervening years the market analyst's performance has only reinforced that original opinion.

Even if the viewer didn't own a share of Kodak or Xerox he could appreciate the crisp, concise and informed news and analysis that the reporter imparted each evening.

Mr. Nusbbaum never saw fit to smile when there was nothing to

smile about, to attempt an idiotic sally to cover up incompetence or inadequate preparation (for of course he had no need to) to beleaguer the viewer with his own saccharine homilies.

Now Mr. Nusbbaum's too brief moments on the air have been eliminated to extend the sports segment of the Channel 8 news.

This pandering to the lowest common denominator is perhaps the single most identifiable characteristic in programming policy among Rochester's three commercial stations.

At a time when the economic state of the nation is so precarious as to cause anxiety even among the least knowledgeable among us, the stocks reporter is fired — ostensibly over the results of a survey.

In a city the size of Rochester — a city second only to Washington in the number of professional people it employs, a city which houses universities, colleges and seminaries — it is safe to assume there is an audience for something more than box scores.

But where, for instance, are the nightly editorials the FCC says are due us? Why are the natural resources — the minds that run this city's Blue Chip industries and its institutions of higher learning — not tapped on a regular basis? Where is the innovative programming — the attitude that holds that just possibly the viewer doesn't know what he needs, wants or will enjoy until he is exposed to it.

Where are all these features? Buried under the single minded attempt to best the next station in the sportscast ratings.

At Home With The Movies

THE PROFESSIONALS
[1966]
Thursday, Dec. 12

This is a solid, straight-action shoot-'em-up Western trailing four soldiers of fortune (Lee Marvin, Burt Lancaster, Woody Strode, and Robert Ryan) hired by a ruthless rancher (Ralph Bellamy) to go down into old Mexico to rescue his young wife (Claudia Cardinale).

Ms. Cardinale wants to be rescued from her brutish kidnapper (Jack Palance), but she doesn't really want to go back to hubby, who beats up on her occasionally. Thus, the adventure boils down to a three-way tug of war.

The film depicts the revolutionary days of Pancho Villa with swift and telling detail, but it is full of brutal action and coarse language and situation (somewhat spruced up for TV).

A-III

WALT DISNEY FILMS
Saturday, Dec. 14

NBC has packaged three Walt Disney entertainments for family viewing. First, there's a featurette, Arizona Sheep Dog, whose title explains itself. The feature movie is The Three Lives of Thomasina, which is about a little girl and her beloved but mischievous cat, Thomasina. We always thought cats had nine lives, but we won't quibble. A closing filler will be a fifteen-minute short documentary about how it's Tough to Be a Bird. Frivolous fun for all.

A-I

THE ADVENTURERS [1970]
Sunday, Dec. 15

Sprawling soap-opera based on the Harold Robbins novel, encompassing too much ground to produce any effective drama or depth of characterization.

We follow Dax (Bekim Fehmiu, in the adult role) from childhood in a revolutionary South American country, through adolescence to early middle age; from the toughening sights he witnessed as a child (a rape and murder of his household), through orgiastic, playboy youth, revolutionary ex-patriot and lover of his people. Brutality, pillage, rape, voyeurism, sadism, lesbianism, and adultery are all exploited as characters wander in and out of the story. Motivation is frequently sacrificed for action or just pretty photography.

Candice Bergen lends her usual hypnotic charm, and Ernest Borgnine maintains a certain consistency and enduring presence, but more than this is needed to make a good motion picture.

B

Fund Drive — No Money Wanted

Ithaca — St. Catherine of Siena parish is running a fund campaign that involves no money contributions. "A painless process," the committee calls it, because donations are a by-product of normal grocery shopping.

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START THE REVOLUTION WITHOUT ME [1971]
Monday, Dec. 16

Dismissible, if superficially promising, period comedy about two pairs of twins (Gene Wilder and Donald Sutherland) switched at birth, around whom, narrator Orson Welles tells us, the whole course of the French Revolution might have turned.

The brash aristocratic pair are summoned to the aid of the dottering Louis XVI (Hugh Griffith), and in the process become confused with the cowardly peasant twins who are unwilling members of the revolution led by Jack McGowan. There is a good deal of palace intrigue concocted by Billie Whitelaw, playing Louis' queen, and by Victor Spinetti as the Duke d'Escargot. Ewa Aulin is introduced for obvious purposes.

Bud Yorkin's direction is remarkably dull, with its heavy slapstick routines, inane dialogue and its poorly staged attempt at a spoof on the old swashbuckler films.

A-III

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