

AS I SEE IT



Pat Costa

So you also have been watching some of the new TV situation comedies? And you think your funny bone must be arthritic? Well, you're not alone.

I took a look at three of the new entries and it seems to me I've found more to laugh at cleaning my refrigerator than at these second-season efforts.

"Barney Miller" about a New York police captain and his wife, "Hot L Baltimore" which depicts life as it is lived in a seedy hotel and "The Jeffersons" a spinoff from "All in the Family" are the trio.

Of them, I found "The Jeffersons" about the black family that moves out of Archie Bunker's neighborhood into a fancy Manhattan apartment the least grating. In the show I saw, which was the second episode, the husband George thinks he is descended from African royalty. Since his self-importance is already sizable, his distended head becomes a new source of irritation for his down-to-earth wife Louise.

Mike Evans, already familiar to viewers as their son Lionel, was

given short shrift in this script but Zara Cully as Mother Jefferson, who got the funny lines, showed her mettle both in timing and delivery.

"Barney Miller," with Hal Linden in the title role and Barbara Barrie as his wife who does not like his line of work, demonstrated that it is possible to take two fine actors and render them sterile with a contrived script.

In the episode Miller is held at bay at his own headquarters by a youthful armed junkie. Amusing? Well about as much so as the sight of a handicapped person catching his finger in a door.

"Hot L Baltimore" reminds us that Irma La Douce still lives — unfortunately. I thought happy hookers with hearts of gold were passe or at least relegated to the late, late show where we can view them with a kind of nostalgia and a little scorn for their lack of savvy mixed with a lot of pity for their rotten hours.

No such luck. In the first show one of them named April is being hustled by a man who says he's a big movie producer and promises to marry her. Her colleague Suzy (Jeannie Linero) has to tell her the truth. Amusing? Well about as funny as a handicapped person catching his finger.

PRE-CANA

Dansville — Father Richard O'Connell pastor of St. Mary's, reminds couples contemplating marriage in the near future to attend Pre-Canas sessions. The dates are Feb. 15, 16, 22 and 23, from 7:30 to 10:30 p.m. For reservations call Braxton Middleton, 987-5138 or the rectory, 987-2700.

At Home With The Movies

DIRTY DINGUS MAGEE [1970] Thursday, Feb. 6

Our hero is frail Frank Sinatra, hurling himself halfheartedly into a Western spoof ill-suited to his tough-guy talents. Anne Jackson is both town mayor and madam whose bordello business thrives on a cavalry clientele. George Kennedy is the sheriff she installs and instructs to incite an Indian uprising to keep the cavalry around. Lois Nettleton is the schoolmistress whose extracurricular invitations rival Miss Jackson's, and Michele Carey is the Indian maiden who ambushes Dingus for "bim-bam" in the bushes. Jack Elam is the outlaw ambushed by the townsfolk who mistake him for Dingus. Burt Kennedy is the director who allows all these uncivilized roustabouts to have a field day altering allegiances in a mad cacophony of discordant sequences.

Shoddy in its lack of veritable sets and scenery, juvenile in its attempt to ridicule the "Code of the Old West," and tiresome in its constant leering, Dingus ambles along as a hastily packaged vehicle for the action market.

Boisterous and bawdy in a very dumb fashion, it is hardly the fun movie for a family.

A-III

DILLINGER [1973] Friday, Feb. 7

This is certainly one of the most carefully detailed evocations of the violent era of lawlessness that swept middle America during the Great

Depression. Unfortunately, the film is one of the most relentlessly violent and bloody movies of the already blood-drenched year. Director John Milius (who also wrote the screenplay) may have been trying to criticize America's deadly fascination with guns and folk heroes such as John Dillinger, Pretty Boy Floyd, and Baby Face Nelson who lived and died by them, but he seems to have succumbed to the same morbidity he questions.

Nonetheless, for the strong-stomached, there is a pair of fine performances lurking in the gunsmoke: Warren Oates has just the right balance of swagger and transparent sensitivity to make him a believable folk hero; and Ben Johnson as Melvin Purvis, the ruthless FBI agent who was obsessed with tracking down (and usually killing) the "Most Wanted" outlaws, is an icy picture of the image-conscious "law 'n' order" mentality of the times.

The film is harsh and brutal, beautifully photographed and authentic in period detail — but certainly not for all.

A-III

FRENZY [1972] Saturday, Feb. 8

Old Master Alfred Hitchcock's masterful suspense thriller focuses on a madman strangler preying on women in contemporary London. A kind of Jack the Ripper gone formal, the killer dispatches his victims by means of a characteristic necktie, with accompanying perverse violence. An innocent man whose careless way of living nonetheless im-

plicates him is the point-of-view character, tautly played by Peter Finch.

The question Hitchcock poses and builds his high suspense on is whether the wrong man will be punished for the crime — and we do not find out until the very last moment.

The film has all the horror and fascinating shock value of Psycho, but in keeping with the "permissive" times, Hitchcock lamentably adorns his movie with very explicit violence. Thus Frenzy is a good film of its genre, recalling the best of Hitchcock's work, but it is for the mature and non-squeamish filmgoer.

A-IV

AIRPORT [1970] Sunday, Feb. 9

Here's a typical Hollywood attempt to capitalize upon a literary success, this time Arthur Hailey's best selling novel. Those who enjoyed Hailey's involuted tale of a distraught bomber (in the film version played by Van Heflin) aboard an airborne 707 and of the fortunes of those connected with the flight — the airport manager (Burt Lancaster), his wife (Dana Wynter), his girl friend (Jean Seberg), the pilot (Dean Martin), his wife (Barbara Hale), the airport maintenance chief (George Kennedy), a little old lady stowaway (Helen Hayes), the co-captain (Barry Nelson), the bomber's wife (Maureen Stapleton), etc., etc. — will no doubt find the same fascination with the film that they discovered in the book.

A-III

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