

AS I SEE IT



Pat Costa

"Cher", Mrs. Bono's new show, is, I learn, from any number of printed sources a hit.

Although I have seen said show (CBS, 7:30 p.m. Sundays) in its entirety at least twice and bits and parts of it on a couple other occasions I am unable to ascertain for myself what merit if any it possesses.

I am handicapped by several things, the first and foremost is a complete lack of objectivity when it comes to variety shows.

After all these years of watching television for both pleasure and for pay I can honestly say that I have come to detest the genre. The banalities inherent in the format, the indistinguishable mediocre skits, the overexposure of the host, whose sometimes scant talent has been sadly diluted through the rigors of a 39 week stand and the introduction into such a format of various guest stars each of whom we are asked to believe is not only a super talent but a super friend of the show's host has rendered me permanently jaundiced.

Recent guests Elton John, he of the flashing lights, Bette Midler, she of the bawdy body, and Nancy Walker who temporarily gave up stuffing paper towels in a soda fountain glass to play Cher's mother in a genuine, authentic

acrylic pile coat only reinforced my yellowish cast.

Cher's dress designer too long ago scandalized us for her costumes to have any shock value left in this the year 1975.

Her voice and delivery, I am told, grow better each year. I find them not unpleasant. Her choice of songs is another matter. They seem to spring from a single plastic mold which no one has the courage to throw away. This seems incongruous when she is able, as we have learned, to do different styles and do them very well.

Her sense of comedy is excellent and when she becomes the super pitchman or the laundry room swinger or the single gal returning from a lousy date she can be superb.

Her intros and closings have suffered in the new show. Instead of the delightful self-mockery she specialized in she has turned to sincerity. It is just a shade ingratiating.

Although Sonny is never mentioned or even alluded to in this new series, it is clear to everybody concerned, that the new effort is more than just another showcase for a solo Cher.

Rather it is a statement of her individuality, her new independence and an argument to prove that she was the major or even the sole talent in that family.

I don't think it quite comes off. Sonny might only have been the frame for her work of art, the chorus to her melody, (although I think there was more there than met the eye) but it is clear that his absence makes for a few holes in the fabric of her style.

At Home With The Movies

**LAWMAN [1971]
Thursday, March 13**

Interesting "failed film." Burt Lancaster, Robert Ryan, and Lee J. Cobb represent respectively no-compromise law, a sell-out, and a reformed gun-slinger-cattlemán. Each, in his way, seeks peace and justice through law. Each, unfortunately, chooses them in a manner unacceptable to the other.

The straight-shooting marshal (Lancaster) spills most of the blood as he attempts to round up seven suspects for an accidental killing which opens the film. Sheriff Ryan, paid to keep peace in a town "owned" by Cobb, capitulated years ago, and cannot contain the righteous Lancaster's fervor.

The Western cannot be reduced so summarily to one common denominator, least of all that of the fastest, surest gun. This film mixes spurring blood and poetic close-ups, zoom shots and quick cuts, and perhaps even good will, with at least one inexplicable murder.

A-III

**THE OTHER [1972]
Friday, March 14**

Director Robert Mulligan has a way with child actors, which he demonstrates in this adaptation of the Thomas Tryon occult-suspense novel. But he encounters real problems in conveying the horror and suspense of a tale about the possession of an innocent child by an evil spirit (that of his dead twin, no less).

Chris and Martin Udvardy are superb as the twins. Uta Hagen (making a belated screen debut) is fine as their primitive, warm babushka granny, and Kiana Muldaur is haunting as

their stricken, widowed mother. The scene is a sleepy Connecticut farm in the Summer of '35, and if the atmosphere is effective, it is only all the more lamentable that the story of let's see, now—patricide, infanticide, attempted matricide, grand-matricide, possible fratricide, cousin-icide, and plain old murder is just a touch unbelievable and more than a touch too gruesome. It's for adults and older teens, and a matter of taste.

A-III

**THE ORGANIZATION [1971]
Saturday, March 15**

This third outing of Sidney Poitier as Lieutenant Virgil Tibbs of the homicide squad does not compare with his original role in the 1967 film, In the Heat of the Night. This one is simply a thriller with no attempt at characterization and little mystery to involve the audience in its fast-paced proceedings.

The title refers to an international dope ring which has agents everywhere including apparently, the police department. Dedicated to destroying the ring's nefarious traffic in heroin stand a group of street people whose nearest and/or dearest have been killed by drugs. Because they are operating outside the law, Poitier is torn by his oath as a policeman and by his desire to apprehend the drug peddlers.

James Webb's rather mechanical script concentrates on the various chases with little in between to occupy the mind, and without any attempt to address the question of the police using extra-legal methods in law enforcement. Don Medford's direction of all this is direct and

vigorous, but quite undistinguished. There is enough violence, both physical and psychological, for parents to think twice about letting youngsters see it.

A-III

**THE OMEGA MAN [1971]
Saturday, March 15**

We'd just about managed to forget this bit of high-priced trash when along comes the network to shove it rudely back into our living room. The sci-fi story about the last healthy man on earth following a nuclear holocaust-plus-ecological-disaster reeks of strained social and political significance. What it is, shallow down inside, is a garden-variety melodrama about, gulp, true love.

Charlton Heston adds wasted class in the title role, as a man who must choose between his own survival or the rebuilding of the human race, even if it does mean that he has to flirt with the only untainted woman around, a girl played by Rosalind Cash. Hollywood does it again.

A-III

**WHAT'S NEW
PUSSYCAT [1965]
Sunday, March 16**

Any movie that teams Woody Allen and Ursula Andress can't be all bad, although the taste level on this screwball comedy is abysmally low.

The plot, such as it is, has to do with the efforts of a demented psychiatrist (Peter Sellers) to sort out his hectic life, which brings him in contact with an inordinate number of looney types (Peter O'Toole, Paula Prentiss, Capuchine, Allen & Andress, for starters) running free and easy in and around Paris.

B

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