

AS I SEE IT



Pat Costa

There is a good argument I suppose for television reviewers to cease and desist until a new situation comedy has two or three episodes to its credits.

The first time I watched the new "Barney Miller" show I found it contrived, and humorless in spite of an excellent cast headed by Hal Linden and Barbara Barrie.

I took another look this past week and discovered I was laughing out loud at a script in which Capt. Miller was coming on strong as the male chauvinist when a young woman is assigned to his precinct.

The humor for the most part was low key and understated; the cast which make up the precinct staff seem to work wonderfully well together, and the overall product managed to be lively, tasteful and fun.

Hopefully this is what will happen to "We'll Get By," the brain child of Alan Alda seen Fridays. The story of a New Jersey engineer played by Paul Sorvino, his wife, (Mitzi Hoag) and three kids was dullsville from start to finish in the series opener.

The daughter, played by Devon Scott (George C.'s offspring), was concentrating her attentions solely on a new boyfriend, a fact most upsetting to her father who attempted to correct the matter by including the boy in some of the family plans.

A lot of shaping, sharpening and better writing is going to be needed if this one is to make the grade.

One unqualified virtue, however, is that we can allow our youngsters to watch without worrying about the content.

Not so with two other new shows I also saw this past week. In "The Bob Crane Show," the star plays a 40-year-old med student supported by his wife. When his mother comes to visit she wants to share a bedroom with her boyfriend just as she does at home—to Crane's vehement protest. This for openers.

A half-hour earlier, at eight o'clock, when I presume half of the nation's children over 7 are still up facing the TV set, we were treated to the "Love Nest" wherein two senior citizens have set up housekeeping without benefit of marriage. The reason: The woman will lose half of her sorely need Social Security payment if they marry.

Says star Frieda Friebus explaining her own distress at the arrangement to a visitor: "All my life I gave to the Church, bought my quota of Girl Scout cookies and now here I find myself shacking up."

As a fairly sophisticated consumer of drama, I am prepared to go to a movie, see a Broadway show and be exposed to such a premise and resultant language being neither particularly upset nor scandalized.

Yet, in our home at eight o'clock in the evening I find the subject matter offensive, no matter how victimized the old people are by the establishment. And I find the term "shacking up" crude. (Compared to Dean Martin's roast of course it is lyrical verse.)

Granted I could send all our kids to bed at 7:30 every night or monitor every single thing that comes over the TV or better yet get rid of the TV.

These are not efficient choices. Certainly, they are not reasonable choices. I do not have to stand over the refrigerator to make sure it does not spew out black coal when I bought it to make ice.

And I see no reason why I should have to monitor the appliance whose airwaves are public and whose guidelines are set by a federal regulatory agency.

As for those disclaimers that the networks run about "mature subject matter" prior to such shows as those described above (and worse) I say "hogwash." This does not take them off the hook.

It is time for viewers, sophisticated or not, moralistic or not, who believe television should not be used as a purveyor of sexual innuendo or as an electronic haven for happy hookers to get off their duffs. The time is now.

At Home With The Movies

THE GIRL MOST LIKELY TO...
Wednesday, March 26

Made-for-television feature concerns an ugly duckling of a gal who undergoes radical plastic surgery following an auto accident, and is transformed (as only Hollywood writers can do it!) into a gorgeous babe.

Alas, her warped personality is unchanged, and she launches a deadly game of vengeance on all those who had ridiculed her when was homely. Stockard Channing plays the girl, and Ed Asner plays a detective who investigates the sudden rash of weird deaths. The tele-play was written by comedienne Joan Rivers.

Unrated

THE EASTER PROMISE
Wednesday, March 26

Many of us already know the Mills Family—little Addie (Lisa Lucas), steady grandma (Mildred Natwick) and embittered but loving father (Jason Robards)—from earlier television presen-

tations of The House Without a Christmas Tree, and the Thanksgiving Treasure.

This fine family program carries on the tradition, and Robards in particular seems ideal in his role as a troubled, widowed man trying to be a good father to Addie but caught in the press of hard times (the late Depression era) and an even harder place (Nebraska at that time). The drama tonight revolves around the whirlwind arrival in town of a famous actress (Jean Simmons)—who has a problem of her own to hide.

Unrated

THE GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD [1965]
Friday and Saturday
March 28 and 29

No matter how it is approached, the pitfalls inherent in making a movie on the life of Christ are many. The very choice of incidents and the selection of the various descriptions found in the Gospels are difficult.

There is also the question of how much freedom of approach a director can assume in his filming of a story that is already so deeply rooted in the mind and heart of many in his audience.

And most important is the manner in which the spiritual is presented in visual terms. While it is obviously not the greatest movie ever made, George Stevens' film has solved these particular problems better than any previous screen version. Stevens' vision of Christ will satisfy the feelings of the greatest number of its viewers. It presents a consistent, traditional view of Christ as the God incarnate. In achieving this, Stevens has used effectively the compelling features of the Swedish actor, Max von Sydow. His believable portrayal of Christ is the most essential element in the film's success. Probably no other actor could have held the viewer's attention for almost four hours over two evenings. Worth your time.

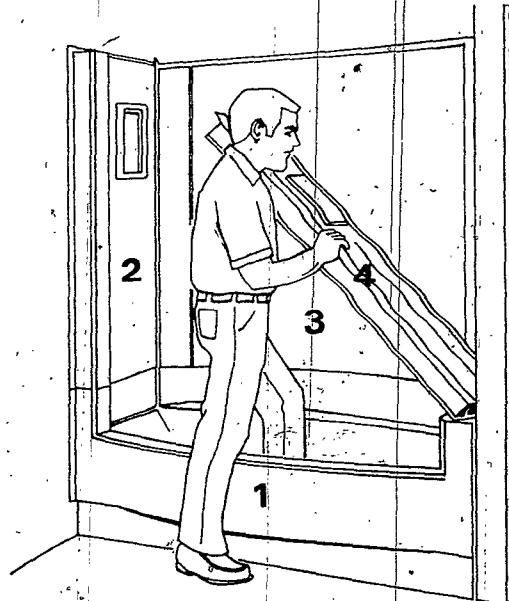
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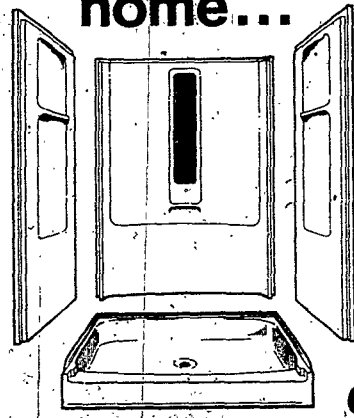


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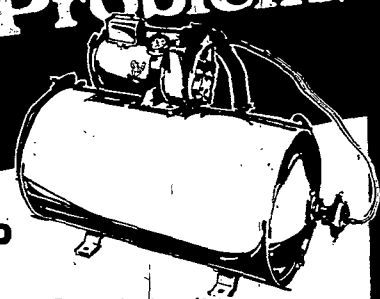
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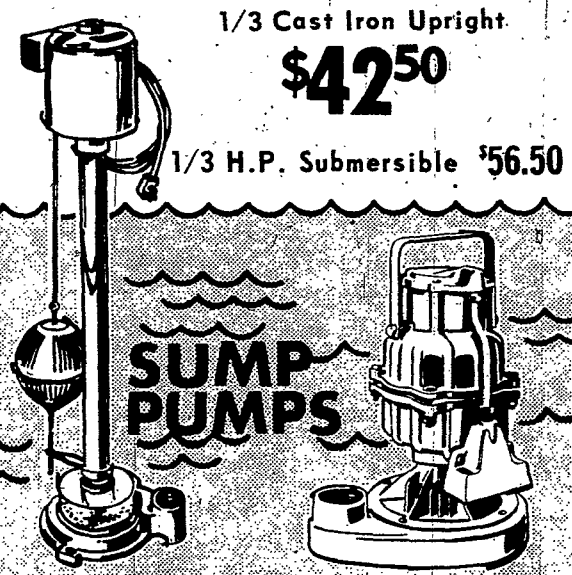
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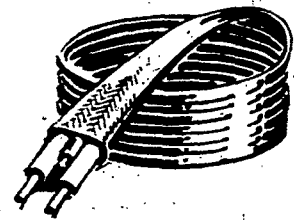


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