

At Home with Movies

GENERATION [1969]
Thursday, May 8

Screen adaptation of a Broadway comedy by William Goodhart. Goodhart, who also is responsible for the screen version, has toned down the story about a hippie (the late native of Penfield, Pete Duel) and the daughter (Kim Darby) of a high-powered, ulcer-prone advertising executive (David Janssen) who set up house in an East Village loft and decide to have a baby by natural childbirth — to be delivered by Duel without the benefit of doctor.

Janssen's consternation at his new grandson-out-of-wedlock and the couple's do-it-yourself obstetrical plans, make for some funny moments of adult comedy.

The sharp edges of the play's original statement, however, have been watered down so that what results is little more than a situation comedy that leaves everybody more or less unscathed.

A-III

DOUBLE FEATURE
Friday, May 9

Now it's CBS's turn to throw up a couple of pilot films. In *Shell Game*, John Davidson plays a nice, average con artist who sets himself up in the middle of an elaborate scheme. The idea is to relieve the pompous and sticky-fingered head of a prominent charity drive of some of his operating capital. Color Davidson "Robin Hood."

In *The Blue Knight*, which comes on at 9:30, George Kennedy stars in the by now too-familiar role of an aging Los Angeles cop who has an unerring nose for street action — just like all the other aging LA cops we've seen in this melodrama derived from the Joseph Wambaugh novels. Talk about mileage.

THE GREAT ESCAPE
[1963]
Part I
Saturday, May 10

Thrilling rendition of a fact-based story about an elaborate escape from P.O.W. camp attempted by Allied prisoners during World War II.

Set in a German prison camp, the story traces the multiple efforts of the officers and men to work together as allies in a common effort to outfox their captors — on a grand scale.

The fascination in the film has to do with the careful unfolding of the plan, its evolution and refinement, its scope (250 men plan to take a powder), and the step-by-step details of execution and mishaps along the way. It all builds to a stunning, sobering climax that will tug at your heart and keep it racing.

Among many outstanding performances are those of Steve McQueen, James Garner, Richard Attenborough, and — yes, Virginia — Charles Bronson, in his solid pre-idol days. Part II will be shown Monday, May 12.

A-I

NICHOLAS AND ALEXANDRA [1971]
Part I
Saturday, May 10

This is a Big One, but that's just about all it is — big. Perhaps bloated would be a better word, for as sweeping history concerning the last of the Romanovs to rule Russia, *Nicholas and Alexandra* is pretty squashy. Guys like Lenin and Stalin, for instance, who after all did have something to do with the course of modern history and our present state, get tossed aside after a few one-line introductions.

On the other hand for undemanding audiences interested in the devotion of a pair of foolish, imperious lovers — well-

matched as man and wife, perhaps, but ill-suited to rule the world's largest nation — the romance angle is done up on a grand scale indeed.

All those glittering palace ballrooms! All those mountains of caviar! Those splendid gowns and uniforms! But where's the relevance and meaning of it all?

A-II

NICHOLAS AND ALEXANDRA [1971]
Part II
Sunday, May 11

See Above.

THE GREAT ESCAPE
[1963]
Part II
Monday, May 12

See Above.

BUCK AND THE PREACHER [1972]
Monday, May 12

Western melodrama stars Sidney Poitier (who also directed), Harry Belafonte (who steals the show by way of a hammy performance), and Ruby Dee (who turns in the movie's only creditable acting job).

The loosely structured plot has Poitier as a tough talking, straight-shooting wagonmaster who leads wagon-loads of emancipated blacks to the West's promised lands. Poitier has a price on his head, thanks to some unreconstructed plantation owners who'd like to have the black folks back home in Dixie picking cotton — "just like in the old days." His chief adversary is Cameron Mitchell, who leads as mean and nasty a band of renegades as ever trod the prairie.

Poitier's reluctant partner is Belafonte, the familiar con artist in preacher's disguise, with Miss Dee figuring as the sensible woman Sidney would like someday to settle down with. Things follow a predictable course, with plenty of action and good guy-bad guy confrontations, but the constant references to contemporary racial attitudes (and stereotypes) are a bit wearing on one's patience.

A-III

THE EXECUTION OF PRIVATE SLOVAK
Tuesday, May 13

Rebroadcast of an excellent made-for-television film based on a true episode during World War Two. Martin Sheen stars as Eddie Slovak, a reluctant soldier who wishes only to live out the war and return to the only person he has ever loved and who has returned love to him — his wife (Mariclaire Costello).

The film is presented in a stark, almost documentary fashion, as Slovak's case unfolds: his resistance to join the Army, his betrayal by recruiting officers and a subsequent bureaucratic mix-up that landed him in the front lines in France; his separation from his company and a tranquil period spent with a British outfit before being returned to his own division; his "surprise" arrest and court martial — and, in a shattering climax — the decision made by the court to sentence him to death as a lesson for other misguided but well-meaning soldiers.

Without taking a particular point of view, the film portrays the real drama and agonizing dilemma facing those involved with the case, and the cruel indecision in carrying out sentence right up to the very end. At the end, Ned Beatty brings focus to the entire film by his performance as a priest assigned by Army regulations to administer last counsel. Watch it; weep and reflect.

Unrated.

AS I SEE IT



Pat Costa

I remember my introduction to opera. I had recently started my first job and acquired a record player and some popular works, including "La Boheme."

Late at night I sat in my overheated garret and listened to the Bohemians freeze in their over and over and over again.

Thinking that our brood should have an earlier start than I did I made sure last week when Danny Kaye and Beverly Sills got together at the Met for the "Festival of Lively Arts for Young People" that everybody was in front of the television.

Their father added that he wanted critiques at the end — what had they especially liked, what they didn't care for. The results I suppose are understandable. To paraphrase George Bernard Shaw: Opera, like youth, is too good to be wasted on the young.

They had loved the clowning, of course, and the audience participation. And they even liked the demonstration of the various voice ranges — Rosalind Elias the mezzo soprano, Coloratura Judith Blegen, baritone Robert Merrill etc.

The snatches of various familiar arias they endured rather well also.

Then Miss Sills appeared fresh from her triumph in "Corinth," her Met debut, and after Kaye introduced her as one of the greatest coloratura sopranos of all time, there was a sizable wane in interest.

No matter that Kaye and Beverly, both Brooklyn natives, engaged in some outrageous Brooklynese, co-authored incidentally by Danny's wife Sylvia Fine. Nor did it amuse them when this fabulous actress-singer and

her comic side kick mugged and trilled their way through an unlikely opus dubbed "The Hoarse Opera."

For a switch to the real thing, the Met company and soprano Adriana Maliponte and tenor Jose Carreras performed the aria Libiamo from Verdi's "La Traviata." It seemed a poor choice for the hundreds of children in the Metropolitan Opera House to say nothing of the TV audience it was supposed to attract. Lots of stuffy men and women in evening dress, a somewhat plump heroine and a drinking song duet do not seem to add up to a kid-pleaser.

But then maybe that was the key to the whole hour. Intended for the young set, it must have been a real education for a good many adults. How fantastic it would be to be offered an entire instructional television series on the arts. And yes maybe having Danny Kaye clowning through an explanation of what a painter was striving for here, what a dramatist wanted us to feel there might be just the means to introduce millions to the varied cultural pleasures.

Kodak? Xerox? Anybody listening?

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