

AS I SEE IT



Pat Costa

Watching an interview on Channel 21 on a recent Sunday night with actor James Whitmore I was reminded again forcibly that a performer making use of somebody else's words and an actor being himself are quite two different things.

Whitmore who was brilliant in a one-man show as the humorist Will Rogers has again enlivened the stage with his portrayal of President Harry S. Truman. It, too, is a one-man show which is to say that he is the only person on stage.

"One-man show" as we learned from Whitmore, is a misnomer in that the star could not possibly function without a whole army of other professionals back stage. In the course of the 30 minutes he paid unlimited tribute to his producer for conceiving the idea of his doing Truman, for the brilliance of the writing and for the dependability of the stage manager, without whom we were given to understand Whitmore in this particular vehicle would be lost.

Filmed in Hershey, Pa. March 21, at the show's premiere titled "Give 'Em Hell Harry," Whitmore was, I suppose, understandably modest about his work. It has since become an unqualified hit and after having seen portions of it highlighted on the CBS "60 Minutes," I would venture a guess that it is one of those rare meshings of inspired acting, choice subject matter and illumined writing.

Hopefully in the intervening months Whitmore has become less humble. As Truman, the words that rush from his mouth are forceful, certain and, if not marked with a tinge of the mild

egotist, then a self-confidence that seems to have no bounds.

As himself, Whitmore seemed to feel the need to assert that he had done nothing special to capture both the spirit and the physical characteristics of both Rogers and Truman, when of course in reality he had done something very special. He had searched "for the essence" of each man, he claimed, beyond that the wonderful writing, the strong characters of the two men had taken over.

False modesty? Perhaps. But even that label makes him an anomaly in the wonderful world of show business where it is often the norm for the star to dismiss any efforts other than his own as negligible.

Even if Whitmore's humility was genuine I am sorry I saw the interview. I am convinced that it will interfere with my pleasure when I am fortunate enough to see the show in its entirety. I am not sure it will be Truman up on stage as it was when I saw the "60 minutes" portion. Now, it will be Whitmore performing Truman.

There are times when I wish that talk shows had never been developed. At least not featuring the actors who create other worlds for us.

I remember once watching the late Larry Blyden on a talk show in which he was extremely bitter over a domestic or business problem. I never saw him act again that I did not remember the meanness of that previous moment.

John Wayne's political activities have forever ruined his seat-in-the-saddle image for me. He shall ever remain a Nixonist who dons makeup and Western garb to make money. Ditto Shirley MacLaine — just switch parties.

Some actors give away their ignorance on interview programs. Others their profound egos. And perhaps the saddest of all are those who reveal that under the shell of their art, they have nothing.

There are exceptions to every rule. I will never forget separate interviews with Mildred Dunock and Margaret Hamilton. Wise, witty magnificent women, as well as purveyors of art. They are among the rarities.

(Thomas), unfaithful (Peter and Judas).

But what Jesus was doing was gathering a group of human beings to struggle against the sin of the world, original sin or fallen human nature — whatever you want to call it — and replacing it with the Spirit of God, from whom comes charity, joy, peace, patience, etc.

The primary task of parish councils is not to set up budgets or goals or programs but to form a community joined together by the Spirit of Jesus and seeking ways of sharing that Spirit with the wider community. That may sound very idealistic, and it really is; but anything less would be an exercise in futility. I hope your Parish Council will stop in its tracks now and start over in Jesus' way.

THE OPEN WINDOW



Fr. Louis Hohman

Dear Father Hohman, Two weeks ago you wrote about the Diocesan Pastoral Council and your hopes for it [as well as those of the Bishop]. You spoke in what I thought were very un-realistic terms about "sharing in the mission of the Church," "giving witness to the fact that all of us are in this together," etc. Well — I hope the Diocesan Pastoral Council makes out better than our Parish Council [parish to go unnamed]. You should see the in-fighting and the back-biting and the cliques it has spawned. If that is Christianity or an improvement on the Christianity we had in the "old Church", I'll eat my missalette. My question is, "Where do we go from here?" Discouraged

Dear Discouraged, No reason to be discouraged. In the short haul, Jesus wasn't very successful in turning the people in his immediate world around either. Read the record of the first "council", the college of Apostles. It is full of mistaken notions (what it meant to be Messiah), bickerings (over who was greatest), ambitions run wild (the sons of Zebedee), doubters

At Home with Movies

ONE IS A LONELY NUMBER [1972] Thursday, June 19

As a so-called woman's TV soap opera, Number is an easily dismissible bit of nonsense about a sweet young thing (Trish Van Devere) trying to renew her circulation as the result of bad marriage number one.

Number asks us to believe that poor Trish (a) never thought to ask hubby for reasons for leaving, (b) would immediately fall for a second marriagable guy (Monte Markham) in San Francisco on a one-month visit without even inquiring if he was already married, and (c) would hire a divorce lawyer whose sole ability, legal or otherwise, is comic relief. Surrounded by stock characters (Madge Frazier as the concerned girl friend, Janet Leigh as the foul-mouthed, man-hating head of a divorcees' league, Melvyn Douglas as the neighborly father figure), Trish develops from a bewildered, protected little woman into an independent, liberated female.

As a film that pretends to explore the reasons for our 75,000 divorces a year, Number only reasserts what we all knew anyway: makers of "women's pictures" can be as superficial as the people they portray—not to say the people they think they are appealing to.

A-III

COTTON COMES TO HARLEM [1970] Thursday, June 19

This black-oriented detective-comedy probably will challenge the TV network censor more than it will the home viewer, who will be left with the shreds—minus the harsh visuals and dialogue—of a high-powered action story

focusing on a big-time con game up in Harlem.

Directed with great vigor by Ossie Davis, the film stars Godfrey Cambridge and Raymond St. Jacques as the two bumbling-but-canny detectives who unmask the fraud being worked by back-to-Africa preacher Calvin Lockhart. The action is fast and raucous, with a lot of "inside" racial humor and much gore to round things out. For the mature and quick.

AIV

THE BOYFRIEND [1971] Friday, June 20

Impossibly wide-eyed Twiggy throws all of her 95 pounds into this delightful, high-spirited romp through the glittering sets of the old-fashioned Busby Berkeley type Hollywood musical. And for once, director Ken Russell's penchant for extravagance and excess is just what is needed.

The plot revolves around the familiar back stage romance, with plenty of wacky mix-ups and misunderstandings—as well as a plethora of colorful dazlingly staged songs and dance numbers. It's all very colorful, all very innocent fun—and these days, who could ask for anything more?

A-I

MRS. POLIFAX: SPY [1971] Friday, June 20

Lovely and beguiling is the only way to describe Rosalind Russell in her return to the screen as Mrs. Polifax, a novice agent for the CIA. Having no more family commitments, and inspired by a life-long ambition to become a spy (she wears an

American flag brooch and has memorized all the secret agent lingo), she is hired apparently on the basis of her enthusiasm and innocence.

Her first assignment is to travel to Mexico as a tourist, buy a certain book, and return home. The inevitable complications have her kidnapped (with her accomplice Darren McGavin) and imprisoned on a mountain top in Albania, from which by sheer force of her indomitable and clever genius she effects a daring escape.

The film is lively, laced with warm humor and clever situations, and features an utterly winsome performance by Miss Russell that hopefully will precipitate a continued series of such delightful adventure spoofs.

A-II

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