

AS I SEE IT



Pat Costa

Many of the situation comedies that stud the small screen this season, both the new ones and some holdovers, are in trouble. Some have already been canceled, more are destined to be axed.

Yet on a recent Monday I watched two sit coms that are not in ratings trouble and paradoxically asked "why not?"

The shows are "Rhoda" and "Phyllis," both spin-offs of the fantastically successful, and deservedly so, "Mary Tyler Moore Show."

But after an hour of watching the so-called comedy, I discovered I was not only unamused but even a little soured. The problem: characters so conceived and developed as to irritate, grate and eventually turn an audience away. One might almost wonder if the shows weren't bent on self-destruction.

"Rhoda" centered on her sister Brenda, played sympathetically and entertainingly as always, by Brenda Kavnar. The trouble arose from Brenda's boyfriend, the accordion-wielding Nick Lobo, played by Richard Masur. Ironically enough in the doomed Norman Lear comedy "Hot L Baltimore" Masur was cast as a desk clerk in a seedy hotel with a gentle humor that was one of the few saving graces of that disastrous series.

In "Rhoda", however, he portrays an insensitive clod who singlehandedly can put an end to a retirement party, plagiarizes love songs, switches lunch bags when his doesn't suit him and generally makes himself unwelcome where ever he shows up.

Why? I don't know. There was little enough humor in it. What there was was so heavy handed as to make one wince.

Ditto for the episode of "Phyllis" the pseudosophisticate, now widowed and living with her husband's mother and stepfather. The star of the series, Cloris Leachman, was a welcome addition to the MTM show when she would make her brief ap-

pearances. She was the dash of lemon juice pie makers add to an oversweet berry pie.

In her own show, her constant abrasiveness coupled with that of Richard Schal and Liz Torres, is like being drowned in a vat of vinegar.

In the episode I saw, Tony Roberts guest starred as her boss Julie's boyfriend. Everytime he and co-stars Henry Jones and Jane Rose would enter I would draw a mental sigh of relief that the abrasion was going to let up a bit.

Again I asked why. It is not that comedy does not need such an element. The characters of Ted Baxter and Sue Ann Nivens provide it beautifully in "MTM" But neither their attitudes nor their personalities are ever permitted to dominate the mood of an entire show. Again to use a culinary metaphor — they are the seasonings, not the dish.

There is a definite trend in TV toward the unlikeable Likeable. Archie began it, bolstered by the Don Rickles mentality which has permeated other facets of the show biz besides the standup variety. But, I don't have to like it. Or watch it either.



Back on Campus to set up the Nazareth College alumnae gala are Mrs. Thomas Gallagher, left, general coordinator; Mrs. Thomas E. O'Connor, who heads the hostess committee, and Mrs. Warren Urlaub, who is handling reservations.

College Alumnae Set Holiday Fete

Nazareth College vocal and instrumental ensembles will perform Friday night, Dec. 5, for the alumnae and their friends, after a dinner in Lourdes dining room.

Sister Barbara Staropoli will direct the glee club and chamber choir, and Dr. Albion Gruber, the college orchestra and chamber orchestra. Vivaldi's Gloria will be featured in the concert to be held in Nazareth Arts Center. The

candlelight dinner will follow a social hour beginning at 5:30 p.m. in Medaille lounge.

The holiday dinner concert has become an annual event on the Alumnae Association calendar.

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Craft Show

Theresa Schafer and Philomena Drexler are making the final plans for the display and sale of arts, crafts and holiday items, slated for Sunday, Nov. 30 from 2 to 8 p.m. at Guardian Angels School. Also working with them for the event was Dolores Miller.

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