

'Happy Days' gives viewer a few unhappy half-hours

Spinning off the inventive and profitable Lucas/Coppola production, "American Graffiti," ABC's *Happy Days* series (Tuesdays, 7 p.m.) is a painful reminder of television's most popular motto: *reducto ad absurdum*.

It is one more example, as if we needed another, that when TV seeks a common denominator it settles on a syrupy pre-Cambrian slime of intellect. By comparison, it elevates old "I Love Lucy" reruns to art.

And more's the pity, because it is inconceivable that this total waste is necessary. Presumably, when the series was sold, it was sold on the strength of *American Graffiti*, a reasonably artistic and sometimes humorous look at adolescence in the 1957-63 period. Filled with

and related factors (Mr. Nielsen, please supply us with some data), do they in any way believe that what they are watching resembles what was going on in the high school set circa 1961?

Great idea

Happy Days is a great idea for a television series. That's why *American Graffiti* made it so big in the theaters. But the movie was filled with the adrenalin, the sweat, and the spermatozoa of a culture. The TV series is *Father Knows Best* without father knowing best. Accordingly, it is never funny. And, when the material which could be used is considered, the whole production seems clinically, pathologically sick.

The *Happy Days* generation is one of the rare watershed generations in American history. They were the 'Children of World War II' or the result of the return of the troops. The television set was a novelty when it appeared in their households. And they were Dr. Spock's first generation.

In high school, the *Happy Days* generation was the last to seriously get involved with their teams' won/loss records. They were the last to seriously go to the prom. And they were the last to be scandalized when one of the girls didn't return to school after summer vacation because she was . . . uh, you know . . . pregnant.

Last attention to teachers

They were the last, also, to pay any attention to their teachers.

And after this incubation period, it was this generation, which first provided the raw meat thought necessary for Southeast Asia and then blossomed into all the crazy, wild, beautiful movers and shakers of the 1960s.

Happy Days, in ignoring all the real elements of that generation's existence, has stolen their story. More than that, the series has excreted all over their story.

This is not exactly a television first.

Be it American Indians, public defenders, doctors, homemakers or truck drivers, television has managed to defile almost every role in history or contemporary life by its common denominator approach. Maybe in 1955, television could do nothing else, but it's 1975. TV is still running through the same maze. What kind of anal retentive thinking is that?

ron wylie

eye of the beholder

a careful blend of the common and the profane, the cute, the monotonous, and the insane, *American Graffiti*, even as it reduced its teenagers to caricatures, fairly represented the personalities and tenets of a culture.

Two Academy Awards

Why, when their pilot received two top Academy Award nominations and pulled in tons of money, would the producers of *Happy Days* opt for a sitcom which could just as easily be retitled *Blondie* or the *Doris Day show*? Why?

Do Coca Cola and Burger King, the show's sponsors, make such demands on the script, do they steal the energy out of characterizations to the extent where rehashed *My Little Margie* scenarios are all that can be screened?

And, what about those barometers of network placement, the ratings? *Happy Days* has survived almost six months. Someone must be watching it, presumably all the people who are not viewing *Hot L. Baltimore* (and that's a lot). Do these viewers, whatever their ages, locations, incomes,

Series to present Czech film

This week's Union Foreign Film presentation is *Black Peter*, a 1964 Czechoslovakian production directed by Milos Forman.

Forman was one of the principal directors who, along with others such as Miklos Jansco and Ivan Passer, helped elevate the Czechoslovakian New Wave film movement to new artistic heights in the early and mid 60s.

Passer also helped Forman write the script of *Black Peter*, a gentle comedy and behavioral

study of a young man's attempts to grow up in the roles that his society has planned for him.

Black Peter was one of Forman's first features, made before his later well-known films—*Loves of a Blonde*, *Fireman's Ball* and his most famous, *Taking Off*, made underground in the United States after he left Czechoslovakia in 1968.

Showings are Wednesday and Thursday at 3, 7 and 9:16 p.m. at the Sheldon Gallery Auditorium. Admission is by series ticket.

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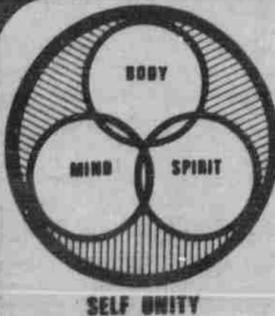
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