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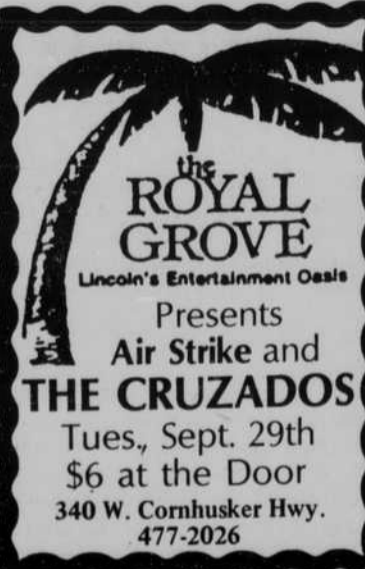
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More oldies, goodies?

OLD from Page 6

let them. The most interesting shows came during the last season (1968) when Frank Zappa (who for some bizarre reason took a shine to the Monkees) appeared in one episode dressed as Mike Nesmith. Nesmith dons a snarled black wig and goatee a la F.Z. and tells the psuedo-Mikey that his band is banal and insipid. Other later shows reveal our favorite helpless puppets striving for some sort of progression (paisley shirts, beads, Dolenz sporting an afro), but look closely and Nesmith's obvious contempt for the entire proceedings still is quite evident. The trademark of the program: a flurry of jokes and wisecracks (some good, mostly bad) in a blatant aping of "A Hard Day's Night." Theme song: 2.

"I Spy," weeknights, 2 a.m., ch. 16.

The first real prime-time TV show to star a black man (Nat King Cole failed in the 1950s when he couldn't maintain sponsors) and one of the more witty and intelligent secret agent/action shows of the time. Robert Culp and Bill Cosby are a great team, and the show eschews the usual cardboard sets for filming at exotic locations around the world. A couple of shows that dealt with civil rights were downright militant for prime-time TV in the '60s. Bitchin' theme song, too.

"My Favorite Martian," weeknights, 12:30 a.m., ch. 9.

Like many sitcoms, the entire show relies on the fatuous premise. This time it's a Martian landing on earth and getting some bland earthling into all sorts of hilarious predicaments. Awfully predictable, but reliable character actor Ray Walston (as said Martian) rescues this from total mindlessness. A harmless burn of 30 minutes during your late-night Pop Tart.


"The Mickey Rooney Show," weeknights, 12:30 a.m., ch. 15.

Mickey Rooney plays a 33-year-old kid (he still lives at home with Ma and Pa) who is an usher at a local TV network. Another turbulent chapter in the career of America's favorite exploited kid star. A curious programming choice at CBN since "The Mickey Rooney Show" ran only one year and there are probably only about 40 or 50 episodes. Worst of all, it's painfully unfunny and, justified or not, is included in the book "The Worst TV Shows of All Time."

"The Rifleman," Sundays, 9:30 a.m., ch. 9.

Western TV shows should only be a half-hour long. Don't pad out an hour of valuable viewing time with horses, ranch hands with bad hygiene doing shots o' redevye, or horses. If I was that enamored with the critters, I'd be squandering my dough at the race track.

Hence, we got a nice, compact little western show. Lucas McCain (Chuck Connors) is widowed and raising his son, Mark, all by himself. He's a big, sensitive guy who's also pretty darn pious and handy with an automatic rifle. Bad guys taunt him. He doesn't want to kill 'em, but he has to. Like Billy Jack and Palladin, all he was sayin' was give peace through violence a chance! Great fast-paced direction by Joseph Lewis. The very first episode of "The Rifleman" features a young Dennis Hopper.



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