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Nora Ephron good writer but fails as media critic

By Nora Ephron
©1978, Alfred A. Knopf
157 pages, hardback, \$7.95

Nora Ephron is a good writer. She has cultivated her own voice, and with that voice is able to articulate her impressions in an easy and pleasurable manner.

Unfortunately, impressions are just about all Ephron's latest book has to offer.

The inside jacket flap promises much. "Stabbing, tackling and (occasionally) hugging her colleagues of the press and screen, Ephron reveals her contempt for the Haldeman-CBS episode; her passion for *Upstairs, Downstairs*; her jaundiced view of Brendan Gill on *The New Yorker* and Teddy White on anything; indeed, her fascination with all the various dementias of journalism."

All true. She steps on a lot of feet. That's well and good — a little pain never hurt anybody. But aside from offering an occasional interesting view of "the inside," Ephron refuses to carry her criticism beyond the arenas of wit and pith.

She just doesn't have much to say.

When she does approach making a statement, it is always within the comfortable shelter of conventional journalistic ethics.

Some valid points can be made within such a framework. Granted, CBS blew it when it paid Bob Haldeman \$50,000 to appear on 60 minutes. It's an easy position to

righteously assume. But such criticism ignores the larger problem of the system which bred such a situation.

clusion.

As a book of media criticism, *Scribble, Scribble* falls flat. But it does include several fine essays



By ERIC MALONEY

Scribble, Scribble

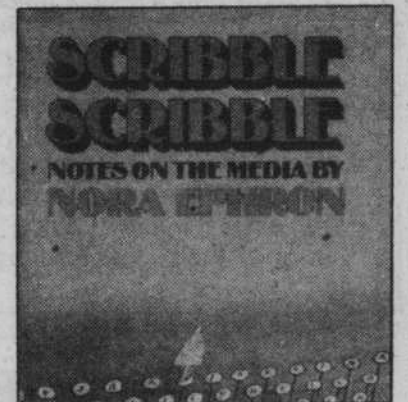
Journalists can argue such points until Armageddon and come away satisfied with the feeling that they have done their part to better the journalistic profession. But what relevance does it have to the average consumer who will open the next day's paper or watch the next evening's news and get the same useless junk? How will it help to change journalism from a self-perpetuating institution to a meaningful vehicle for communication?

Such criticism is well-intended but self-destructive. It concerns itself with hood ornaments when the engine is about to fall out of the car.

"Bob Haldeman and CBS" is one of three essays in *Scribble Scribble* that approach substance. "People Magazine" and "The Boston Photographs" both have possibilities. The former unfortunately does little more than lament the trend away from issues and toward personalities. The latter, about three famous photos of a woman leaping to her death from a collapsing fire escape, discusses the ethical problems of printing such pictures, but wanders from inconclusion to incon-

on people who just happen to be journalists.

Most notable is "The Assassination Reporters," a look at two Dallas Times Herald writers, one



of whom has had the assassination beat ever since JFK's death. Ephron also does a nice interview with Russell Baker, the thinking man's Art Buchwald.

By and large, this is a book for journalists, most of whom will feel comfortable with Ephron's criticism and interested in her tidbits on some of our most prominent media stars.

But for anyone looking for serious analysis of the media and communication, this is strictly minor league stuff.

Thorogood

(Continued from Page 2B)

and John Lee Hooker's "One Bourbon, One Scotch, One Beer." All three are scorches, fully integrated works in which Thorogood's guitar cruises like a finely-tuned car.

The song that shows the most sides of Thorogood is his own "Delaware Slide." Like a good guitarist, Thorogood has the ability to change moods in a song without breaking its continuity, and this piece shows that he has a wit, something many blues artists seem to think has no place in blues music.

Thorogood demonstrates a sensitivity to the nuances of electric guitar. What an instrument doesn't do is as important as what it does, and Thorogood paces himself well, shutting up when the song calls for shutting up, letting loose when the time is right. The result is a nice, clean tempo that carries each song along without getting muddy or boring.

The big question now is what Thorogood is going to do with all of this talent. He tends to force his band into a subservient position to his guitar, an inclination that has been the albatross for a number of fine guitarists. (Roy Buchanan is a classic example, and Rory Gallagher to a lesser extent.) It is important that Thorogood doesn't fall into the trap of making the sounds his guitar can make ends in themselves.

But for now, all indications are that Thorogood is going places. With a style reminiscent of John Hammond, Jr., and the early 60s British Blues invasion, he could become an important figure in rock music.

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