

the Beatles? Was there no way to disguise the studio backlot? But what's more important than mere technical virtuosity is the spirit, right? And this movie is full of spirit, energy, fun and screams. In varying ways and through various crises, all wishes come true, which is only right. The Beatles made a lot of our wishes come true.

J.S.

F.M., starring Michael Brandon, Eileen Brennan, Cleavon Little, and Martin Mull; written by Ezra Sacks; directed by John A. Alonzo.

The less you know — or care — about the actual operation of radio, FM or otherwise, the greater are your chances for enjoying this somewhat amusing trifle. It's pleasant to look at; Martin Mull's performance is terrific if you like Martin Mull, and Linda Ronstadt has seldom appeared to better advantage. There's a story, something about a "progressive" station that seems to play only huge Top-40-type hits and no commercials, with a program director (Michael Brandon) and staff who worry about selling out. Several potentially interesting plot threads — Karras as an over-the-hill jock and a conspiracy to hijack a rival station's concert among them — are abandoned midstream to make way for such superfluous padding as Jimmy Buffett singing a song originally written (by him) for an obscure film, *Rancho Deluxe*. Joe Smith, chairman of Elektra/Asylum Records and a former Boston d.j., appears quite respectably as a bad guy. Disc jockeys themselves should love the picture: it supports the popular myth of radio announcer as culture hero and implies that they have scruples and get laid fairly frequently. See what I mean about "the less you know"?

Todd Everett

THE LAST WALTZ, starring the Band, Bob Dylan, Neil Young, and Joni Mitchell; directed by Martin Scorsese.

If *The Last Waltz* is indeed Rick Danko's idea of "... a very honest movie," with "very little backstage footage to pad the performances" (*Ampersand*, May, 1978), Danko's sense of honesty is as warped as his sense of brevity. The film is packed with extraneous footage, including less-than-memorable close encounters between glassy-eyed members of the Band and spaced-out director Scorsese as well as two segments of "concert" footage filmed several months and several hundred miles away. As a record of the Band's Thanksgiving '76 farewell event, the

film's credibility is equally shaky. An unbilled girl singer drifts into Neil Young's number (obviously dubbed in later); others drop in unannounced, play, and leave; songs are heard that don't appear on the soundtrack album (and, even more so, vice versa); poets Michael McClure and Lawrence Ferlinghetti are given embarrassingly short shrift; some of the interview footage is unbelievably sloppily edited; and the staging and camerawork vary from very good to first year film school dropout quality. Even though the album costs four times the movie's admission price, it's a better buy — more music, and less Scorsese. As for *The Last Waltz*, maybe it could be circulated to hygiene classes, as an example of the ravages of cocaine.

Lynne Manor

A DIFFERENT STORY, starring Perry King and Meg Foster; written by Henry Olek, directed by Paul Aaron.

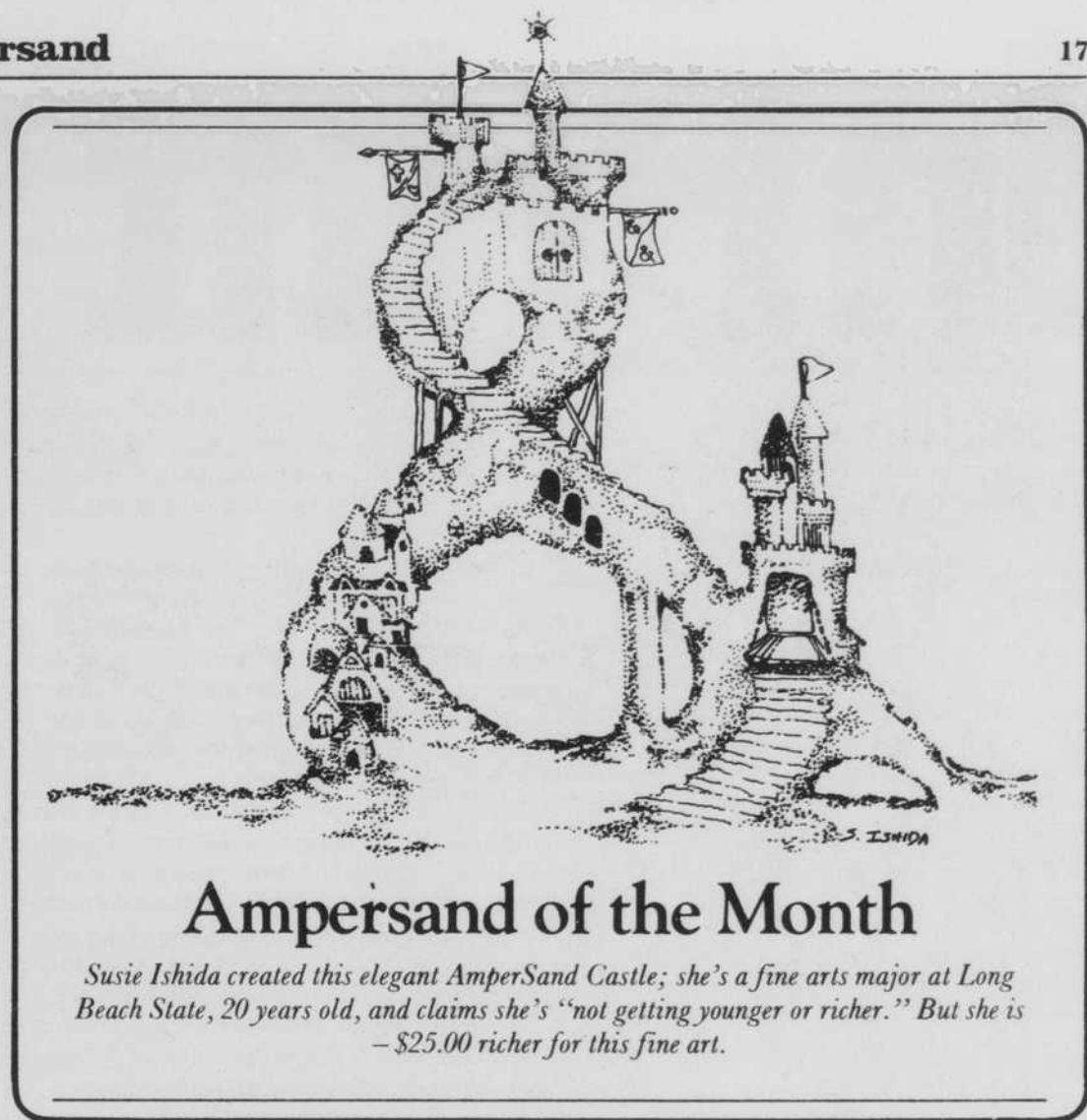
He's a dress designer who likes to cook and sew and is obsessively tidy. She's a real estate agent, a slob who can't cook or keep house. They're both homosexuals. They fall in love, get married and have a child and, you guessed it, the story stops being different. The first hour is a lightly amusing love story that only slightly exploits the stereotypes listed above, but once they're settled into marriage the plot becomes another dull muddle about the trials of marital bliss. He throws himself into his job as dress designer and she, poor housewife (who suddenly has learned to cook), stays home feeding the baby. The burning issue in the latter half of the movie seems to be whether he will cheat on her with a man or a woman. And once he is discovered cheating, will he win her back?

King and Foster are excellent actors who never let us down even when the script does. Although this film will probably offend some homosexuals with its apparent endorsement of heterosexual marriage, Foster's lesbian relationship with schoolteacher Valerie Curtin is handled with sensitivity; they're obviously friends who care deeply about each other. And one small scene in a bathhouse, where Doug Higgins tries to pick up King, is as tentative and restrained as any tender heterosexual advances in a romantic drama.

The dreadful soundtrack music, the worst since Paul Williams discovered movie scores, is by David Frank; you may want to bring earplugs, since it is *very* loud.

J.S.

King & Foster in A Different Story



Ampersand of the Month

Susie Ishida created this elegant Ampersand Castle; she's a fine arts major at Long Beach State, 20 years old, and claims she's "not getting younger or richer." But she is — \$25.00 richer for this fine art.

IN BOTH EARS

Auto Audio

Most auto radio receivers and tape players have skimpy audio power output, generally just a few watts. This power is fairly evenly distributed between two speakers or among four. However, the maximum power output of receivers and tape players is usually accompanied by quite a bit of distortion, with 10 per cent total harmonic distortion quite common. To get better sound you can connect a power booster. This is an audio power amplifier and is inserted between your receiver and the audio output of the receiver or tape player.

Power boosters have no operating controls, so you can tuck them somewhere beneath the dash and forget about them. They are available with different audio power outputs, and 30 watts per channel is quite common, but if you want more you can get it. Just be careful that you don't exceed the maximum operating power of your speakers.

You can also get a bi-amplified stereo power booster. This type of unit has two stereo low frequency amplifiers and two stereo high frequency amplifiers. These separate amplifiers are connected to the woofers and tweeters of your auto speaker system and drive them separately. Unfortunately, most auto speakers with woofers and tweeters have just a single pair of connecting terminals, so for this you will need to buy separate woofer/midrange drivers and separate tweeters. This kind of setup does take some expertise.

You'll also get better auto sound if you have four speakers instead of two, with two speakers in front and two in the rear. A judicious blend of sound between front and

back is much more enjoyable than sound coming from the front only. A balance control to govern left/right sound and a fader control to adjust front/rear sound makes this into an ideal arrangement.

Just adding speakers alone is no guarantee of better musical reproduction. More speakers means you need more audio power, just as switching on more light bulbs in a room means a higher electric bill. So, if you want to go the additional speaker route, consider whether your receiver and/or tape player has enough audio output. It should be able to supply at least two watts per speaker minimum. If not, you might consider adding a modest audio power booster.

The tone controls used in many auto radio receivers are pathetic and may consist of a single control for bass and treble tones for both sound channels. This may or may not bother you, but if you want to do better than that, and you can, you might consider an outboard audio graphic equalizer. An equalizer is an elaborate tone control, but it divides the audio spectrum into a lot of sections so you can get better control of each.

As far as tape players in cars are concerned, most of them are just that — players only. This applies to both cassette and cartridge units. You can take along prerecorded tapes provided you remember that tapes are more sensitive to heat and cold than you are. During very cold weather your tape player may warble. When this happens, turn the player off and give both the player and the tape a chance to get warmer. Don't leave tapes on the back window ledge of the car during a hot summer's day with the windows tightly closed. It's a good idea to get a tape carrier to bring your tapes into your home during weather extremes.

If you like and enjoy earphone listening, don't try to use them in your car if you're the driver. It's a dangerous driving practice and in some states would be regarded as reckless driving. No such restrictions apply to the passengers. However, possibly to discourage this practice, auto radio receivers and tape players aren't equipped with input jacks for headphones.

Martin Clifford

This is the last of three columns devoted to car sound.