

'Amerika' expectation led to disappointment

It seems that once a year television comes out with a program that attracts the not-so-pleased attention of a group of people, one which is instantly propelled into the limelight before shooting is even finished.

This year, "Amerika" followed in the footsteps of such greats as "The Day After" and "The Maltese Falcon" (colorized version, of course). Yet even after all the hype and controversy died down, ABC's six-part, 14-hour mini-series emerged as just that — another mini-series.

Months before it aired, opponents condemned "Amerika," saying it portrayed the Soviets in a negative light. Further, the basic premise of the Soviet Union taking over the United States — because we lost patriotism — seemed totally unrealistic. They feared people would develop inaccurate perceptions of the Soviets and this in turn could damage foreign policy relations.

Despite the negative feelings surrounding the show, "Amerika" claimed the number one rating spot on Sunday evening. The first episode beat out both NBC and CBS ratings combined.

The American public, however, proved not to be as passive as the "Amerikan" public. In newspaper response polls and calls to television stations, people realized the plot line was flawed. The idea that the Soviets could just walk in and take over the country without a fight looked as ridiculous on screen as it sounded in opponents' complaints.

Most people watching the show were skeptical of its message. The curiosity inspired by the hype is largely responsible for the ratings sweep of its first episode. But probably the most important response felt by some was a renewed sense of patriotism. It's a very basic concept, but one the mini-series conveyed quite well.

Overall, "Amerika" was just another mini-series. And not a very good one, at that. Aside from the plot line, the first episodes were long and boring. Viewers had to sit through hours of tape while ABC set the scene and introduced the characters.

All the hype about a propaganda program led to a big disappointment. Any message ABC hoped to communicate was lost in the set up.

This is not to say the point of "Amerika" is not valid. Sure, Soviets invading the U.S. is unrealistic, but the Soviet Union has taken over other countries. A change in governmental systems and ideologies is a serious matter. Even if the chances of a take-over happening in America are slim, it is important that we realize the impact one can have on a country. "Amerika" had the chance to do this and failed.

Unfortunately, shows that do effectively convey the fears and emotions involved in destroying an old government and establishing a new system haven't received half the attention "Amerika" did.

"A Children's Story," for example, is to "Amerika" what "On the Beach" was to "The Day After." The impact conveyed in the one hour long "A Children's Story" is ten times more powerful than all 14 hours of "Amerika." Anyone who has seen the show knows and remembers the emotions produced when a classroom of children cut up the American flag.

"Amerika" was viewed by more people than will ever see "A Children's Story." The potential it had to be a powerful and important mini-series, however, was lost in a lengthy, superficial production.



Letters

Research

With a reputation like the University's, why would it even consider allowing classified research? President Olum who worked on the Manhattan Project — the classified project that gave the world its first atomic bombs — can't even remember the difference between classified and proprietary research.

Oh yes! There is a difference. On Jan. 28, 1987, at the Riverfront Research Park Commission, Charles Minshall of the Battelle Corporation — one of the ten largest defense contractors in the United States — presented the Battelle Feasibility Study for the Riverfront Research Project. He said, "Certain people have classified and proprietary research mixed up. However, they are two different things."

He also said that this "project" could not survive without classified research (sound familiar?). Do you suppose Battelle does any classified research? Would you think that Battelle would have any interest in prompting classified research for our park? You couldn't imagine a more unbiased feasibility study, could you? Of all the

companies that do feasibility studies, I wonder why (how) this company was chosen?

Minshall used the Silicon Valley as an example of "prospering" semi-conductor industry. However, what he forgot to mention is the high rates of business failure, the high unemployment and the polluted environment surrounding this prosperous, clean industry.

As a matter of fact, few of the kinds of companies that Battelle recommended locating in the park are making a profit. Maybe that's why the park can't survive without classified research. Only those "research" companies (like Battelle) that are dealing with the Department of Defense are making any money.

Richard Gold
Senior, English and geography

Cheap claim

Oregon Commentator Editor Duane Dungannon's remarks at a forum titled, "Campus Media: Editors and Dialogue," subsequently quoted in the Emerald, were full of factual errors and misperceptions.

Dungannon, under whose tutelege the Commentator has become the most knee-jerking conservative paper at the University yet, described the founders of the Commentator as "reactionary-minded." Unfortunately for Dungannon's credibility, this is obviously not true; early copies of the Commentator and discussions with the founders and others would bear this out.

I was the key co-founder of the Commentator and am about 90 percent libertarian. The other co-founders of the Commentator, Richard E. Burr, Mike Rust and Bob Davis, also were not reactionaries, except perhaps to the extent that Rust is a former liberal.

Dungannon also claimed that the paper has "evolved" to now including journalism students on its staff. A check of old student directories will show that almost everyone on the 1983-84

staff members were.

In short, Dungannon's comments show incredible ignorance about his newspaper's past and/or a blatant attempt to dishonestly "win points" with the University community.

Dane S. Claussen, president
The Press, Ltd.

Misquoted

In response to Alex Gardner's letter (ODE, Feb. 11), I would like to make a few comments.

With just a 250 word-limit, it is not possible to give you a physics lesson. If you care to debate a point, you must not ask what it means. Instead, give me your interpretation. You misquoted me. Granted, I left out a word that I intended to type; however, you left out four words. Don't you hate when that happens?

"...the Second Law (of Thermodynamics) was not always the case." You misquoted me here, too — I corrected it for you. Where did our planet come from? Is it conceivable that an ENORMOUS amount of energy in space created a complex solar system? That's a major negative entropy change — bad news!

And what caused the energy? Where did the material come from? Was it "just there"? Do atheists have more "faith" than theists? The Law isn't a law, or at least it hasn't always been one.

Also, an update to Professor Dodds' claim (ODE, Jan. 29) to the \$400 being offered for an irresolvable conflict between Christianity and secular reasoning. We regret that Dodds did not write in himself to withdraw his claim. I took the time to go to his lab and explain to him where he was mistaken, and he did admit that he was wrong.

Understand, what we regret the most is that he doesn't seem to show much respect for anything but his own pride.

Brian Frary
Biology

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