

Rock Hudson Story: reaction was better than miniseries

The Oregonian's Peter Farrell assured readers that it was "not completely sleazy." New York Times critic John O'Connor warned that "gay men and their lives...are likely to rile more than a few viewers." And TV Guide's Susan Littwan promised that the TV biography of movie star Rock Hudson's gay lifestyle depicted "frankness not yet seen on prime time."

Well, yes and no.

If you caught ABC's miniseries on Hudson's life aired January 8, you know what I mean. Typical network approach to gays leaves most characters as one dimensional. Thomas Ian Griffith, who hired a publicist to make it clear to reporters and critics that he is very much heterosexual, did a credible job depicting Hudson. But his performance was hampered by the cadre of writers, producers and attorneys who made certain that not too many viewers would find the characterization offensive.

Griffith does not let Hudson come across as a very sexual person, despite the fact Hudson in real life was considered promiscuous. Viewers get to see Hudson hug his lover Marc Christian and in bed at a safe distance but that's about it. The entire two-hour production came across awkward from a gay viewpoint. Hudson gets to kiss his wife, but he doesn't even once get to smooch his lover.

But the miniseries was rather boring when compared to reading the critics' reviews. The New York Times worried that Hudson's poolside party scene would convey a gay stereotype that all queers are good looking. Yet anyone with brains would understand that any rich stud in Hudson's position would understandably pack his party with good-lookers, male or female.

The San Francisco Chronicle critic John Carman called the show "a current test of network nerve on the topic of gay love" and concluded that since "TV is willing to show little...the (sexual) revolution hits a snag in the clutch."

And over at the San Francisco Examiner, Joyce Millman wrote that "sometimes you just have to laugh out loud at the excruciatingly discreet depictions of Hudson's love life."

Well, the first gay show of the new decade was better than nothing. And since viewers

did not flood TV station phonelines, the next attempt at portraying Rock Hudson may get a little more frank. Let's hope so.

... Between the Lines ...

BY JACK RILEY

Injustice against one, injustice against all

Despite what you may personally think of the City Nightclub and its controversial owner Lanny Swerdlow, we should all be outraged that the city is considering shutting down the teenage gay nightspot under Portland's so-called Drug House Ordinance.

Prompted by "numerous complaints from parents about activities on club property," no less than a dozen uniformed Portland Police officers accompanied by officials from the Bureau of Buildings raided the club December 14.

The cops detained all 100 patrons inside the club, searched 10 and then arrested three on charges of possessing illegal drugs.

The Drug House Ordinance gives the city power to seize the assets of anyone who allows drugs to be sold on his property. Officers at the scene believe Swerdlow allowed such illegal activity in his club to "increase attendance."

Swerdlow, of course, denied all the allegations. And it should be noted that the local cops have had a hard-on for Swerdlow for some time (he's operated other such clubs in years past).

What is also alarming is that the police singled out a number of patrons in the club that night and photographed them. It's a tactic that is getting a little more than overused in Portland. (Last summer, Asians and Blacks complained about random vehicle

stops and photo sessions aimed at identifying suspected gang members.)

Don't allow any cop to take your photograph for any reason. If he or she arrests you (obstructing, disobeying or whatever) then there exists a right to photograph you during the normal booking procedure.

These photo-taking tactics are aimed at harassment and intimidation and have no right in a modern democracy. The FBI attempted to use cameras against anti-war demonstrators during the late 60s and early 70s. God knows to what evil purpose such photos were used. But it did not stop the demonstrations and it won't stop gays from gathering either.

Swerdlow may sue the city.

AIDS patients clogging nation's emergency rooms?

The Weyerhaeuser Company's in-house health publication HealthWise claims that "gunshot wounds, stabbings, drug overdoses and AIDS patients" are taxing the resources of today's public and private hospital emergency rooms nationwide.

Quoting one E.R. physician: "You can be a banker and bring in six figures, but you'll have to wait your turn in the emergency room if you have a car accident. You can have all the money in the world and not get good care."

First of all, I highly doubt that AIDS patients are taxing any emergency rooms here in the Pacific Northwest and, secondly, where does this E.R. physician get the conviction that a well-heeled person should deserve any better attention than someone else in any emergency room?

Just another "cure" for homosexuality

Eli Siegel founded a philosophy he called "aesthetic realism" back in 1941. Essentially, his teaching emphasize three principles:

(1) Man's deepest desire, his largest desire, is to like the world on an honest or accurate basis.

(2) The desire to have contempt for the outside world and for people and other objects as standing for the outside world, is a continuous, unseen desire making for mental insufficiency.

(3) The world, art and self explain each other: each is the aesthetic oneness of opposites.

Well, to make a long philosophy short, Siegel's teachings purport to allow an individual to change "negatives" in life, including loneliness, depression, boredom, learning

difficulties, pain in marriage and even homosexuality.

In a two page spread in the New York Times, the "consultants" and "consultants in training" of Aesthetic Realism offered testimony from Edward Palumbo, Ph.D., who claimed: "After spending many years desperately looking for a way to change from homosexuality, I at last learned...it is caused by contempt for the world and women. Because of what I have learned, my attraction to men ended, and I changed from homosexuality in six months."

It should be noted that Dr. Palumbo is a co-author of the book *The Aesthetic Realism of Eli Siegel and the Change from Homosexuality*. I have not read it, but if you want more information about Aesthetic Realism, contact the "consultants" at 141 Greene Street, New York, NY 10012. Personally, I was born gay; I like most women; I have no contempt for the world; and I have absolutely no idea what Palumbo or Siegel want from you, except your mind and your money.

Boys in the Band: 20 years of memories

Let's see, 20 years ago we were fresh out of the Army and getting real convinced that we were actually gay. Summer weekends in Seattle gave me my first experiences in so-called gay culture.

A warm July evening in the Pioneer District put being gay in perspective 20 years ago. I was sitting on a barstool at the Doll House all by myself just watching people pass the doorway.

Since this was my first visit to the Doll House, I didn't think it odd that I was the only person sitting at that end of the bar. Everyone else was either down at the very dark end of the bar or sitting at tables in the very dark far corners of the place.

Unfortunately for me, I was to discover that the Doll House was one regular above ground stop on Seattle's famous Underground Tour. Gay bars were still oddities then, so it would happen on that night the tour of gawking out-of-towners would stop just six feet from my barstool.

"This is one of Seattle's notorious gay bars!" the guide shouted into his bullhorn, "Step inside if you dare." And the crowd surged toward the darkened doorway for a better look at me. Perhaps the first gay person they've seen face-to-face.

With my fresh Army haircut, bluejeans and T-shirt, I imagine they were a little disappointed. I hope so.

It's also the 20th anniversary of the play *Boys in the Band*. Wouldn't it be nice to see a local revival this summer? It may be filled with stereotypes and flawed characters, but it is very much a part of our gay culture and a reminder that some things have changed over all those years.

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