

Monologue

Historical soap operas not worth watching

By Shelley Ball
Editor In Chief

Now that the term is winding down and everybody is looking forward to summer and the end of classes, I see no point in writing an overly-serious editorial. It's not that there isn't anything interesting to write about, but rather I suspect most students haven't the time or the concentration needed to read a serious one at this point.

The key to taking one's mind off the pressure of term papers and final exams lies in reading about a topic that has no educational value whatsoever--in other words, mindless drivel. And what better topic fits this description than the rash of highly fictionalized historical biographies appearing on television this past year.

By the time this editorial appears in print one such example will have finished airing, CBS' six-hour mini-series "Christopher Columbus." It's bad enough the makers of this junk expect us viewers to stay tuned anywhere

from two to six nights to see it all; yet at the same time we're not even given the true story behind the lives of the historical figures they choose for mini-series.

This week's *Newsweek* seems to sum the situation up nicely with a story on the subject, which touts the headline "TV is hoking up biography with sex and melodrama." The article explains how historical figures like Columbus, and other recent mini-series subjects such as George Washington, Marco Polo and Raoul Wallenberg were all given fictitious love affairs for the sake of entertainment. Likewise, facts are deliberately distorted for a melodramatic effect. Apparently, the melodrama was so heavy in "Christopher Columbus" that the *Newsweek* article describes the TV event as "a kind of 'Falcon Crest' in pantaloons."

Now that's a sad description to what otherwise could have been an informative piece on the life of Columbus,

whose true-life story is interesting enough without all the added hype. Those of us who need to put our brains on hold for a while can do so now by watching television shows such as "Falcon Crest," "Dynasty" and the now Bobby Ewing-less "Dallas." So why does the public have to be insulted by having important historical people and the days of their lives turned into mini-soap operas? Don't we have enough of this kind of stuff clogging the airwaves already?

Unfortunately, because the TV ratings for the above-mentioned nighttime shows are so great, TV producers hope to cash in on such ratings by treating their historical mini-series--what *Newsweek* calls "biovids"--as historical soap operas. The point missed in this greedy grab for profits is that the producers of these biovids could actually do the public a service (and history justice) by educating them on the real-life drama of history's great people. As long as the ratings remain

strong for these historical soaps, which brings to mind the phrase "If it ain't broke, don't fix it," then it's unlikely any changes will be made in the quality of them. One thing is for sure, and that is the public is going to be subjected to more of these biovids. According to *Newsweek*, the lives of Michelangelo, Napoleon, Peter the Great, Hernando Cortes, Joseph Stalin, Benito Mussolini, Emperor Hirohito, John C. Fremont, Sam Houston, Andrew Jackson and Theodore Roosevelt are currently being developed into biovids by the networks.

For those genuinely interested in the real stories behind these and other historical figures, talk with College History Instructor Dr. Donald Epstein. He can recommend shelves of books to read on practically any subject; moreover, the contents of these books will prove to be infinitely more interesting (and factual) than anything that will appear on television in the near future.

Community Corner

By Fritz Wenzel

ADULTS SAY THE DARNDDEST THINGS: From the book "The Experts Speak" come these few quotes from some prominent people commenting on other people. Read on with caution, for your cynicism level is likely to rise quickly:

Of the Reverend Jim Jones: "Knowing of your congregation's deep involvement in the major social and constitutional issues of our country is a great inspiration to me."
-Walter Mondale.

Of Richard Nixon: "Sincerity is the quality that comes through on television"
-The Washington Star.

Nixon on Nixon: "I would have made a good Pope."

Reagan on Reagan in 1973: "The thought of the presidency frightens me. I do not think I want the job."

AFL-CIO President Jimmy Hoffa in 1975: "I do not need a body guard."

Union Army Civil War Officer General John B. Sedgewick's famous last words: "They couldn't hit an elephant at this distance. (I bet you have always wondered who really said that).

GOING TOO FAR: On my way about town yesterday I heard an advertisement on the radio for a local hospital that wanted people to come and have their babies as their (paying) guests. They said it could be a safe, exciting and (here's what got me) romantic experience. Now wait just one minute. I have been present and accounted for at both of my kids' arrival into this world, and it was exhilarating beyond comprehension. I have never, nor do I expect to

ever again be as awed by life as I was on those two occasions, (yes, the second time is as exciting as the first). I was also doing everything that the nurses said I should do (I lose all grasp of common sense under pressure) to help my wife Lisa cope with the event. The births of my children was everything in the world except one: It was not romantic.

Maybe it is just me, but the needles, the hospital bill, the monitors, the crowds of nurses that are streaming in and out of the room, the hospital bill, the being on your feet for 16 straight hours, the blood, the sweat, the hospital bill, the tears, the anesthesiologist, the anesthesiologist's bill; all this stuff detracts from what really gets me into the mood for romance. (Did I mention the screaming?). In fact, it may be hard to believe, but I have been accused of being a less-than-romantic type of guy, yet I have come up with better stuff to do than go to a maternity ward and give birth.

A FEW SNIGLETS FOR THE ROAD:

Rich Hall has a book out that lists a sniglet as any word that doesn't appear in the dictionary, but should. Here are some examples:

-Memnants: The chipped or broken m-and-m's at the bottom of the bag.

-Fenderberg: The large glacial deposits that form on the insides of car fenders during snowstorms.

-Anaception: The body's ability to actually affect television reception by moving about the room.

Cinemuck: The combination of popcorn, soda and meted chocolate which covers the floors of movie theaters.

The Print gladly accepts any letters to the editor. All letters are subject to editing and should not be libelous, obscene or false. Letters must be typed and double-spaced. It must be signed by the author and be accompanied by an address and phone number where he/she can be reached.

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