

Subjective Subject

By Pete Clark

Whether or not a TV show is perceived to be good or bad depends on the likes, dislikes, biases and world view of the viewer, watching, evaluating, determining, consciously or unconsciously, the worth of the total experience in terms of the time spent watching the production. In the recent past, there has been a strong tendency to create sitcoms based on the close relationships of people who were nasty to one another. Two popular, long running shows of that genre come to mind. I never saw a complete episode of one of the shows. I saw enough bits and pieces of it to know that these were people I would not want in my space. In the beginning, I watched and enjoyed the other sitcom. It was truly funny, but as time went on the acridity began creeping into the dialogue, building up to a point where it became distasteful in the extreme, causing my viewing habits to move on.

There is no bad TV. If a TV program is broadcast for any substantial length of time, there must be a lot of people who like the characters, the plots and the situation, be it comic or dramatic. Sometimes a proposed show is so bad that it does not make it to the small screen. After the end of one of the above mentioned sitcoms, one of its stars was given a series of his own, with all of the hoopla given to series set to begin broadcasting. The series was cancelled and the pilot was never shown. Some TV shows are cancelled after a few episodes and some are cancelled after the first season. If too few viewers watch a show, advertising goes away and the production company's cash flow is gone. The situation is a bit like Darwin's survival of the fittest, the fittest to attract loyal fans.

My taste in TV includes the pure escapism of mindless comedies, like *Gilligan's Island*, *F Troop* and *WKRP in Cincinnati*. I watch other things also, such as westerns and an occasional mystery and specials on PBS. I prefer to exercise my thought muscles by reading and writing, rather the spending too much time with the idiot box.

The most memorable TV show I have seen, was *The Missiles of October* starring William Devane. On Monday, October 22, 1962, I had finished two morning classes at the American Studies Building at Wyoming and walked to the Campus Shop, located on East Ivinson Street. I had planned on coffee and a bull session. That didn't happen. Ralph, the man who ran the place, was standing inside the counter by the door, listening to a radio. I heard an announcer say the President would begin speaking and I stopped, not moving again until after Kennedy finished his message to Nikita Khrushchev. Normally, Ralph would have shooed me away from the door, but he didn't. Each point in Kennedy's address came close to a declaration of war, but in the end, he gave Khrushchev wiggle room and the missiles were soon gone from ninety miles off of the American Coast.