

Network satirizes media...

by Gordon Turtle

After seeing *Network* the first time, I was told by the assistant manager of the theatre that about 500 people had left halfway through the film, and had commented to her about the flippant, disgusting attitude the movie portrayed. Whether or not this was because of the arrogant, scurrilous, and devastating treatment of television don't know, but I do know that *Network* fans best give this a miss. *Network* is practically all satire; its humour comes from words. But writer Paddy Chayefsky's script is not merely a satire; it is a satire of the likes of Lindsay Anderson's *O.M.G.* and *Man!*

The movie begins with television network UBS anchorman Howard Beale, a once-respected but now fired news veteran, announcing on national television that, since his life is worthless, he will commit violent suicide on the air.

Insane. Normalcy is at first retained in the movie by the network bigwigs, and Beale is instantly taken off air. But when programming director Diane Christianson, (Faye Dunaway) notices a substantial increase in UBS ratings, Beale is retained, and the revamped news program becomes America's number one television show.

So where is the satire? America eats up Beale's subsequent angry and patriotic messages; he becomes a "modern-day prophet denouncing the hypocrisy of our times," and concludes each program with a dramatic, but genuine

blackout on stage. Dunaway becomes the saviour of UBS and is received with thunderous applause at network conventions. For Dunaway, ratings are sacred, and whatever else is missing from her life is not lamented as long as she manages to keep UBS at the top.

But one night, Beale oversteps himself and denounces UBS itself. The number one man at UBS, Mr. Jensen, reprimands Howard and forces him to change his outlook. Beale's ratings plummet, Jensen won't take him off air, so Dunaway has Howard assassinated on national television.

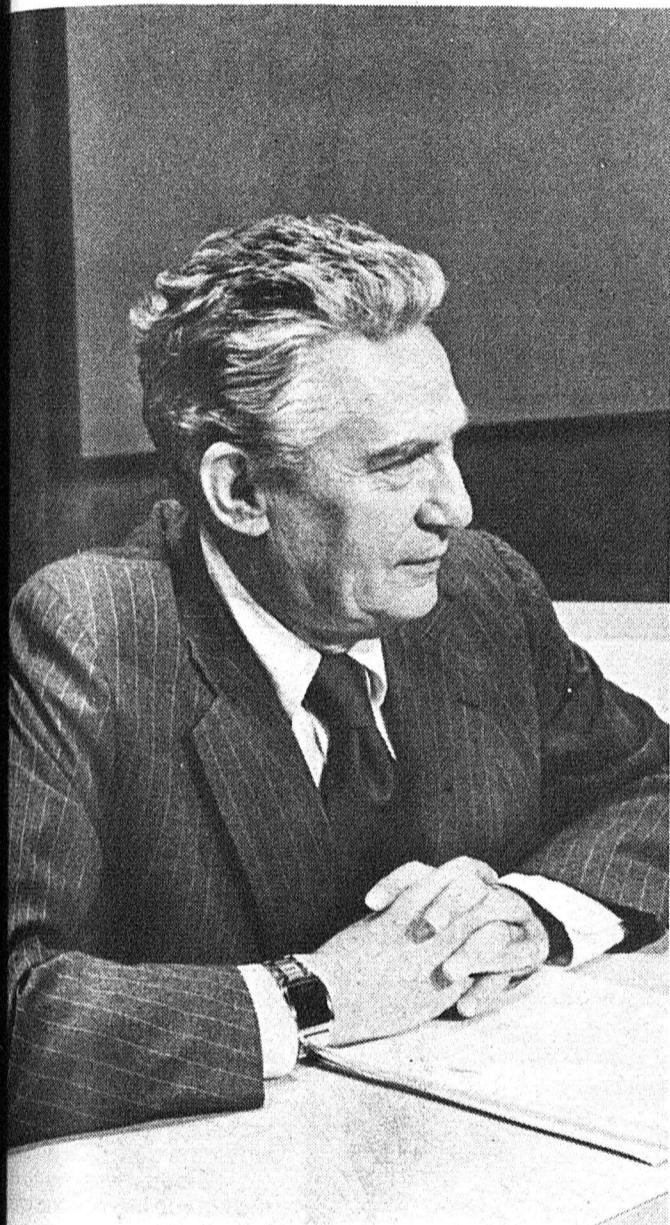
Faye Dunaway is exquisite

as Diana Christianson, and her elegant *savoir faire*, approaching bitchiness, is captured perfectly by director Sidney Lumet, (*Dog Day Afternoon*).

The real star of *Network*, however, is Peter Finch as Howard Beale. Finch incorporates the character of Beale into himself, and he is as believable and real as the more pragmatic William Holden is as the aging news director, Max Schumacher. In one scene, where the fate of Beale's first editorial comment is being discussed by the big powers, Finch sits in unassuming child-like innocence, not aware that he has done anything wrong. The next

day, he appears drenched in pajamas and raincoat, screaming obscenities and doomsday warnings.

Network's success is based on its cynical treatment of our sacred cow, and, if it does not prove that the medium is the message, it certainly makes me a little self-conscious about watching Bob Newhart. For, I can't help thinking that somewhere, Diana Christianson is watching me, rating me, judging me, and manipulating me. She is dictating to me my tastes, and I am drinking Canada Dry, while Canada Dry is negotiating for advertising rights on the national news.



Finch as not-all-together anchorman Howard Beale.



Faye Dunaway discusses programming in *Network*.

...not very well

by Kevin Gillese

Good satire is difficult to create. Satire, by its nature, must be obvious enough so that people will understand it is intended to lampoon a particular subject and not treat its subject seriously. On the other hand, the satire must not lampoon its subject to such an extent that the satire becomes more unpalatable than that which it attacks.

The problem with the movie, *Network*, is that it makes the second error listed above and ends up being at least as, if not more, distasteful to the viewer than the subject it attacks.

Network is about television,

about the mindlessness of popular programming, the banality of television scripts, and the voraciousness of television corporations interested solely in profits. But *Network* itself is mindless and banal and obviously intended by its producers to be a box office smash.

The interesting idea of satirizing today's ultimate mass communication industry becomes, in effect, a part of commercial television programming. Just another TV serial. Satirizing banality by being banal is good perhaps for a 30-second conversation — it just doesn't make it in a two-hour movie.

Various parts of the movie

however are well-done. Strong acting from Peter Finch as broadcaster turned insane prophet and Faye Dunaway as a lady executive one her way to the top rescue parts of the movie, as do some comic scenes, such as the media executives encounter with revolutionaries, and the initial screening of the Howard Beale hour. As a whole, the movie never moves beyond superficial satire because it is created to be just that.

It's true one comes out of a screening of *Network* loathing the shallowness of television — unfortunately, it's also easy to regard *Network* itself in the same light.

Unusual explorations

by J.C. LaDalia

The most unusual concert heard in Edmonton this season was the Dept. of Music's Explorations concert last Tuesday at the Provincial Museum. The Schumann song-cycle (Op. 24) was cancelled due to Harold Wiens' illness, which is the balance of an otherwise 19th-century program, but it lessened interest in what was performed. The program began with Beethoven's *Fantasia Betica*, in honour of his 100th anniversary in 1976. Sandra Munn was the pianist and that is Falla's most important work. *Betica* is the Latin

name for Andalusia, which emphasizes the ancient aspects of that region. A very difficult and powerful work, it was played commandingly by Miss Munn but with too much emphasis on the harsh, savage qualities. Even the few lyrical sections were relentless and loud, providing no contrast. Thus the grating dissonances finally became wearying rather than constantly vital.

The following two works were by John Cage, the American champion of musical indeterminacy. Cage wants us to be alive to the sounds we hear around us daily, and actively appreciate them as we do concert hall events. The first work was *Radio Music* (1956), for six radios

simultaneously tuned to various AM stations by six "players."

Each player follows his own list of stations to be dialed. The result is, of course, cacophony, but with repetitions, overlaps and abrupt silences, one does tend to listen carefully for a grand design. It should be seen to be appreciated, as the sight of six formally attired adults trooping on stage and earnestly dialing is part of the experience.

Next we heard selections from *Music for Piano*. In some of them only one note was played in sixty seconds, so there were frequent pauses and preparations, to which the audience paid close attention. A high point was the word "slush!"

barked across the piano strings, which reverberated vigorously. Paul Rapoport played these with the concentrated authority of a disciple.

Violet Archer's *Suite for solo flute* (1976) was given its premiere by Jonathan Bayley. Writing for an unaccompanied wind instrument is problematic but Miss Archer successfully overcame all obstacles. The suite is in four short movements thus providing contrast, and is ten minutes long, so that the soloist is not over-taxed.

Mr. Bayley's tone was too breathy in *Prelude* but was firmer in the following sections. The frequent wide intervals and long melodic lines of the first and third

movements were well played. The rhapsodic aura of the third and fourth sections is lovely, and the ecstatic end to *Paeon* quite exciting. It is a very attractive work.

The final work was a suite of Andalusian Dances for two pianos by Manuel Infante. Two-piano works inevitably have a delightfully rich sonority and Miss Munn and Ernesto Lejano playing idiomatically balanced well.

The *Dances* seemed a little long considering their predictability but they were still pleasant and made one appreciate even more Falla's complex response to such folklore material.