

JAN 31 1996

MOTION PICTURE, BROADCASTING
& RECORDED SOUND DIVISION

BOXOFFICE

1/25/96

Mr. Murphy:

I regret that BOXOFFICE is a magazine strictly dedicated to theatrical motion pictures, which unfortunately precludes me from having an "expert" opinion on the subject of television preservation. However, since preservation of visual media is a subject I have strong feelings about, I thought I would write to you just the same.

I think we can all agree that the vast visual and auditory history that has been generated by the creative media in this century is a precious national resource, one that it would be unfortunate, and even tragic, to squander. These preservation debates tend to revolve around issues of "quality," i.e., the notion that it's more important to preserve a perceived masterpiece like "Citizen Kane" than it is to salvage an episode of the Colgate Comedy Hour from the '50s. This has always seemed to me to be a particularly wrongheaded attitude.

It's my opinion that only a small portion of the value of archival audio-visual materials comes from their success as works of art. It's the detailing -- the anthropological elements of time, place, and period which are embedded in the stories each era tells to itself -- that is among the most valuable attributes each work bequeathes to the future. Self-conscious artistry often contains the least information about the ways people actually thought and spoke and laughed and cried at a given moment in time; by allowing works of inferior artistic merit to languish, we effectively censor the history that passes on to the next generation, a generation that should be allowed to decide for itself what is of value within the audio-visual record of those who came before.

It is all worth saving, from "Kane" and "Casablanca" to "Tom Terrific," "Captain Video," and every gameshow and soap opera ever broadcast. Let future generations see us as we really were, not as the more gifted among us wished us to be.

I thank you for your time and effort on this important issue

Sincerely,



Ray Greene
Editor-in-Chief
BOXOFFICE

- 68 -