

Dear Friends

28 May 05



In response to this leaflet available in our local library, I am taking the opportunity to plead for some real entertainment for the older generation of viewers, a body described in a recent article I read supporting a similar cause – a captive audience. Circumstances inevitably caused by age, health, outside factors, mobility confine them to their homes for many hours. This is particularly felt in the evenings.

Terry Wogan in one of the women's magazines supported this view and some time a younger person in TV Eye, the Times TV programme guide, seemed incredulous at the way TV ignored their captivity.

We don't seem to get any good musical shows at all, in spite of the seeming talent in the country. Choirs, young and old, brass bands, young and old members again, are out there anxious for recognition. Even well known artists like Rod Stewart, have high selling CDs of the standards, many others have followed suit, even Wet, Wet, Wet. A feature of old TV both in America and here was the hour or half hour long shows by well-known singers and their guests. Thankfully Songs of Praise provides some good singers and choirs. Oddly enough we had to go to the BBC Four channel for the Broadway musicals series and Gracie Fields story.

Unfortunately recent events make me fear the worst. The Saturday night dance fever programme is a far cry from the Come Dancing of yesteryear and the ghastrly, garrulous Graham and the screaming rent a mob a complete turn off. It seems more like a tatty commercial station outpouring. Not much quality or elegance on display, the original dances were more like the Bordello Bounce!

The recent announcement that Mark Thompson had "snapped up" a n American, Caryn Mandabach, to realise his forecast that the corporation's future lay in comedy, is rather foreboding. I fear this dream may become a nightmare, there is not much evidence of comedy of any sort on TV. She says that the young are turning off altogether from reality shows in America. Many of our generation have already turned off TV and found sanctuary in the old fashioned radio, the success of Saga radio, Classic FM and the old stagers of Radio 2 is proof indeed.

YOURS magazine has for years run a competition to find the best entertainers drawn from the Senior Citizens with heats spread all over the country, all well attended and culminating in a "full house" usually in Southport's Floral Hall for the final. I can't remember any of these events ever being covered by TV.

I watched the various programmes on the Chelsea Flower Show to my disappointment. Each succeeding year seems to be devoted mainly to the "attention seekers," as one of your presenters actually remarked - not much on flowers, three minutes in the first programme. More time should be spent in the main marquee where we are led to believe are these most wonderful displays of flowers, fruit and vegetables. Do we really need the irritating Jenny Bond?

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I hope these remarks are not taken as carping criticism for I want the BBC to be the symbol of quality, elegance and taste which it used to be and so much admired by my American relatives who had to suffer the poor quality, in their words, of the BBC's counterpart.

The outstanding I Claudius and similar drama programmes are a lasting memory. How about the Herries Chronicles (Walpole) with characters like Rogue Herries and Vanessa set in the Lake District? I've always felt it might be a successor to the famous Saga you did so well but perhaps Walpole is not fashionable!

Yours faithfully,

*R Book*