

we get one less cable station than everyone else on the same system. We are missing one that tends to show old movies--which I would have liked to see. But instead that station is given over to the township to broadcast Old Bridge news. Never mind the fact that there rarely is any news to broadcast in Old Bridge. Usually

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the sort of thing you see is that the Boy Scouts are going to have a pancake breakfast or the Elks are going to have a buffet dinner. Locally our "service" organizations seem to define "service" as if it meant serving tables. Every service organization from the Girl Scouts on up seem to have answered the call to civic duty by feeding people sugar and carbohydrates and cholesterol. I'm waiting to see just one Boy Scout Gala Brussel Sprouts, Broccoli, Spinach, and Bean Sprout Dinner, but I am not holding my breath.

So I rushed to my television set, telling myself, "Here at last I will make use of that silly cable channel. I knew it would come in handy some day." Now where is that silly station? The cable guide is somewhat less than clear on where to find this "inferstation," or perhaps "infestation" is a better word. But I have forgotten the name of the station it replaces. This clearly isn't working. I turn on the television and start flipping through channels--the old time-honored technique for finding what you want. And there at last it is! Up-to-the-minute Old Bridge news. Right! I can report to my readers that the Elks Club is planning not one but two different dinners as documented on two different computer-generated panels. A local church is going to have a drive-through Christmas story. There was a statement by the Grand Exalted Ruler of the Elks (that's his name for himself. Does it conjure up images of the big stag in B_a_m_b_i? I know he wasn't an Elk, but that's what I see) who is pledging some sort of Elk support for quake victims in California. I didn't have time to read it but they may be sending unsold pancakes to patch the Bay bridge. Well, it is clear that our local station does not consider election results news. Somehow in reporting high school football results the broadcasters dropped the ball.

I guess I have a special problem in getting local news. I actively try to avoid getting the local newspapers. When I was young and delivered the "Shopping News" at a penny a paper--no lie, that's

what I was paid--I had to deliver to the front door, and I always got posh homes at the tops of hills. I don't know what the going rate is to deliver papers these days, but front-door delivery has gone the way of the passenger pigeon and the dodo. I guess the dodo only went recently because, delivering a newspaper to the top of a hill for a penny, I certainly must have been one.

Anyway, most people get their local news from these unmasked-for local newspapers. In these little freebies, finding actual news of interest among the ads is a feat like finding the structure of DNA. Actually, the main function of these little beauties is to keep neighborhood kids employed. Some kids deliver the papers. Some kids shovel driveways after snowblowers get fouled on newspapers hiding inder snow. If you are interested to know what it takes (and costs) to repair a snowblower that tried to eat a hidden freebie newspaper, feel free to contact me.

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One more way these papers keep kids in my neighborhood employed is that they tend to pile up on driveways when people go on vacation, so some neighborhood kids who need extra money for essentials such as beer and drugs always know good places to get it.

You might ask if these little papers are so much trouble, why don't people just have the publisher stop delivery? Try it. "Miss, I have called you five weeks in a row asking to stop delivery and the paper shows up regular as clockwork every week."

"Well, yes, out delivery boys are a_l_l_b_o_y and sometimes they can be naughty. I will tell him again."

Now I have seen this guy delivering the papers. I can't vouch for if he's all boy, but the car he's driving is all car.

If you really want the paper stopped, you don't complain to the newspapers. You complain to the stores that buy the full-page ads and you send copies to the circulation and advertising editors. You want to see an entire newspaper staff snap to attention? That's the way to do it.

So here I am without the local freebie paper that is useful only just after elections. And they are usually delivered on a rainy day. The good news is that they are now delivered in clear plastic bags to protect them. The bad news is the bag fills with water and the newspaper just marinates until it comes apart in your hands.

Well, the papers are no good for election info and the mail is no better. Just before the election the mail is full of literally tons of election propaganda. Do you get one piece of mail telling you the results ? No! I think Federal law should require the winner to send a postcard to every future constituent just to say, "I won."

I think that Kurt Godel, who proved in any system certain propositions will be undeterminable, may have been inspired by election results in my town.

Mark Leeper
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Man invented time to keep everything from happening at once. It isn't working.

-Mark Leeper

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THE MUSIC BOX
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: One of 1989's better films concerns a successful and occasionally unscrupulous lawyer defending her own father against a charge that he collaborated with Nazis and committed war crimes in the Hungarian police during World War II. What made the film powerful was not the question of guilt or innocence but the family relationships under stress. Rating: high +2.

It looks as if most of the distinguished films of 1989 waited until year end to be released. In the case of T_h_e_M_u_s_i_c_B_o_x it seems to have been a miscalculation, because the latest from political filmmaker Costa-Gavras is getting a very lukewarm reception from critics. And that is understandable, since the story is predictable. Nonetheless, I found myself liking the film. In spite of the fact that I knew what was going to happen, I was anxious to see how it was going to happen and how the main characters would react when it did.

Jessica Lange plays successful lawyer Ann Talbot. She is brought up short, however, when extradition proceedings are brought against her father for Holocaust atrocities and he insists on having his own daughter defend him at the hearing. Her job is made all the more difficult by the opposing counsel's apparent over-anxiousness to make an effective case against her father. But what is most disturbing is that as she learns more and more of the sadistic war crimes committed by the man her father is accused of being, she is better able to visualize her father as being the man described. She notices circumstantial similarities. She eventually has to decide if she really wants to fight to save her father.

Costa-Gavras, of course, always has a political message in his films, usually at least a bit left of center. In this case, much of the political message centers around Talbot's father-in-law, who helped find sanctuary for Nazis after the war in an attempt to use them against Communist governments.

The music was provided by Philippe Sarde and, being made up mostly of Hungarian violin music, adds a touch of Eastern European atmosphere to the film. This will not be considered one of the best Costa-Gavras films but I have to say I found it worthwhile. I give it a high +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

[The next paragraph will contain spoilers.]

I find what I liked about the film was not the suspense of whether Talbot's father was guilty. There was never any doubt in my mind that he was guilty. (Well, not much anyway.) I knew that eventually Talbot was going to have to see her father for what he was. When she did she was going to have to make a choice between decency and family loyalty. It was that conflict that I was looking for and I wanted to see how Talbot would react. Lange plays that conflict very well. In a sense, this story is an expansion of the relationship of Adam Kelno and his son in Q_B_V_I_I.

DRIVING MISS DAISY
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: Good but disappointing story (after its reputation) of a cantankerous, aging Southern woman and the chauffeur hired for her over her protests. Good performances but the mechanics of the play that should make us care for these characters and convince us that two decades are really passing are strangely absent.
Rating: low +2.

Daisy Werthan is at war with the world and the world does not even notice it. At 72 she is still desperately holding on to her dignity, but she is having increasing problems interfacing with the world. Her response is to lash out at anyone around and then go back to her lonely, insular world. As the film opens she is preparing to drive herself somewhere, only to end up wrecking her car instead. Her son decides it is time to hire someone to do her driving for her, but she wants no part of the plan. Her son hires Hoke Colburn for the job, but Daisy refuses to give him anything to do, at least at first. D_r_i_v_i_n_g_M_i_s_s_D_a_i_s_y covers in all too short a span of minutes the next two decades of so of the relationship of Daisy and Hoke. We see both reacting to the prejudice around them against each's group: racism against Hoke's race, anti-Semitism against Daisy's religion. Hoke tries to be sympathetic. Daisy does not try as hard. Most of her impulses are selfish.

D_r_i_v_i_n_g_M_i_s_s_D_a_i_s_y seems to be a sentimental favorite for Oscar nominations this year, but in some ways it is a disappointment. The film's screenplay is by Alfred Uhry, based on his Broadway play and it is perhaps his writing that gives the film both its best aspects and its greatest flaws. In the course of the film it is obvious why Daisy, portrayed by Jessica Tandy, is so unpleasant. But the unpleasantness is so rarely relieved that understanding why she is the way she is is not enough. It perhaps is realistic that Daisy is so rarely likable, but it is dramatically unsatisfying. Perhaps she is more than one-dimensional, but she is less than three. Perhaps the story is really more Hoke's story, but here too the writing is lacking. Morgan Freeman does as much with a smaller supporting role in G_l_o_r_y as he does with Hoke in this film. Perhaps at the beginning he is a little more countrified and later he is a little more dignified, but he too seems pretty much fixed in time. Time is shown to pass very awkwardly in D_r_i_v_i_n_g_M_i_s_s_D_a_i_s_y. There is a change of props, a graying in the makeup, but we are told of rather than feel the passage of time. By comparison, in a film like S_a_m_e_T_i_m_e,_N_e_x_t_Y_e_a_r (also adapted from a Broadway play), the passage of time is keenly felt, and in that film the characters do change and are not so fixed in time.

This is not to say that the film does not have its tender moments, but every time Daisy shows some consideration for Hoke, they seem dramatically to be saying it is a major victory, and frankly it just is not satisfying enough. Freeman turns in as good a performance as the story allows him. So does Tandy. Aykroyd turns in his best performance ever as Boolie, Daisy's son, but none of these performances makes for a character one really wants to know, not even Freeman's. There just is not enough to turn this from a good film into a truly memorable one. My rating is a low +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

