

ON THE CABLE

by ANDREW J. EDELSTEIN

USA's 'Murder by Night' keeps Urich in dark

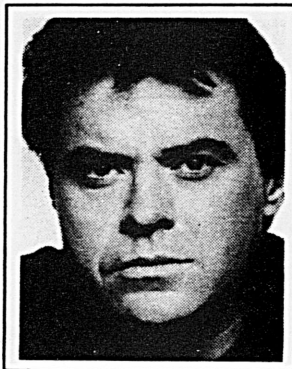
You don't see amnesia as a plot device on prime-time TV much anymore, and in our book it's a darned shame. Time was, you couldn't flick on the tube without running into some guy in a hospital bed, his head wrapped like a Sikh's, groaning, "I can't remember my name. What's wrong with me?" That was your signal to throw a peck of popcorn into the popper, draw off a tankful of soda and curl up for some glorious brain-cell destruction. USA Network returns now to those glorious days of yesteryear with "Murder by Night," airing July 19.

"Murder by Night" starts off with a classic collage of junk TV images that includes a chase in an underground garage (complete with the victim twisting her ankle), an excellent car explosion, and a guy in a hood whacking away in homage to

"Maxwell's Silver Hammer." Cut to Robert Urich's hospital bed. "I can't remember my name," he groans. "What's wrong with me?" Hey, how's that popcorn coming?

The casting of Urich, an actor who never seems to know quite where he is, as an amnesiac is a masterstroke. His wallet ID says he is Allan Strong. He is the sole witness of the latest handiwork of a serial killer nicknamed "Hammerhead" for his trademark method of dispatch. But Strong was conked silly by the explosion and can't recall a thing.

Police psychologist Karen Hicks (Kay Lenz) tries to help. They return to Strong's apartment. He turns out to be a wealthy, reclusive restaurateur. We can see he's wealthy, because his apartment is furnished like the Donald Trump Group Home for Terminally Bad Art. Together,



Robert Urich

they go through his papers, but nothing works.

But pretty soon he starts having these dreams, see, and doggone if they aren't the most realistic things! For example, he dreams of hitting people with hammers, and when he wakes up, there's a deadguy in the room. OK, that's it: No more mushroom pizzas before bed for you, young man!

Is Allan the Hammerhead? If he isn't, who could it be? Anyone who doesn't have the answers halfway through "Murder by Night" should turn in his or her Junior Private Eye badge and decoder ring forthwith. But by the time you turn off the set, put the popcorn bowl in the sink and gurgie off to bed, you'll feel as though you've wasted a perfectly good evening, and you won't mind it one bit.

CABLEVIEW

by DENISE FLAIM

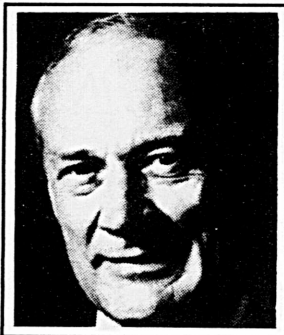
'As It Happened' covers moonshot, 20 years later

This week commemorates the 20th anniversary of an event that made astronaut John Swigart observe that, "If only for a brief moment all the people of the world were united."

Chances are, most of us remember that day's best sound bite — Neil Armstrong's "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

On Sunday, July 16, the Arts & Entertainment cable network is airing "Liftoff," the first part of its "Moonwalk: As It Happened — 1969" special. A&E follows up the historic Apollo 11 lunar expedition on Thursday, July 20, with the eponymous "Walk," and ends with the "Splashdown" segment the following week.

"Moonwalk: As It Happened — 1969" is culled from original NBC



Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin

News footage of the lunar landing. Each segment of the program airs 20 years to the minute after its original broadcast. Luckily, the A&E editors reduced the 32-hour telecast to a total of eight hours and 10 minutes for this three-part "cablecast."

Some of the scenes that made the cut include Buzz Aldrin parlaying the moon's weaker gravity into a playful crater-spanning "kangaroo hop" and the unveiling of the astronauts' stainless-steel plaque, which reads: "Here men from the planet Earth first stepped foot upon the moon, July 1969, A.D."

"Moonwalk" is the second time A&E has rebroadcast vintage news footage; last November 22, the cable network commemorated the 25th anniversary of JFK's death with six hours of unedited NBC

News coverage of his assassination.

• TV is the baby-boom medium, so most boomers recall Apollo 11, even if the telecasts aired after their bedtime. But if over 1,300 viewers age 25 to 45 polled by The Movie Channel are any indication, boomers have retro taste. They rated "Gone With the Wind" the best movie of all time (it also came in on top as the most romantic), followed by "The Sound of Music."

As for best adventure film, respondents chose "Raiders of the Lost Ark," followed by "Rambo." Sly Stallone needn't fear being 'second-best, though — "Rambo" earned the No. 1 spot under another heading: Worst Movie of All Time.



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