

# AT's gimme it play head a subtle balance

THE recent horrific events in Jonsson have given a grim topicality to Roy Kinnear's play, *The Children of the Gods* (ITV, Saturday January 6, 8.10pm), by indicating the extremes to which religious cults can go.

Mr Kinnear has structured his play so well that we are given no special information but, by learning the truth as the characters do so, are thoroughly involved in the drama as it develops.

Nothing is black or white. In the beginning the cult group (The Ones of God), which the girl Emma joins, seems to be benign, even attractive, but, as events develop, we begin to see its evil and vicious side and come to feel with her parents the desperate necessity to rescue her from its influence.

The arguments on both sides are vividly presented with force and emotion, culminating in the penultimate scene when the local vicar, played with power and intelligence by Ray Masrden, wrestles figuratively and almost literally for the girl's soul.

Mary Peach and Peter Jeffrey, as the distraught parents, played with great subtlety, depicting every gradation of agony and frustration.

John Wetherbrook, as Emma's sympathetic boyfriend, brought in to de-programme her but finally and irreversibly drawn into the cult itself, and Kenneth Watson persuasively presented the bland and smiling face of the commune's leader.

Janet Maw (confirming the impression she gave in BBC's *A Matter of Easterbridge*) that she was a very good actress indeed made Emma totally believable. A great deal of the part was written on one note, but Miss Maw's combination of sensitive response and sheer technique gave her the ability to round out the character into a painful reality.

Colin Rogers' production of this single play from ATV was rich in visual and verbal impact. Director Darve Bennett balanced the emotion and the argument most delicately and, by expertly building up its climaxes, kept our absorbed attention unflinching for 90 minutes.

## Scofield seems to have pulled it off

If my memory is not at fault, they got it right. That most evocative of all theme tunes took me back instantly to the late 40s when, every Monday to Friday at 6.40, homework was shoved aside, while absolutely everybody listened to Dick Barton, Special Agent (ITV, Saturday January 6 and Sunday January 7, 5.15pm).

The breathless tones of the narrator set the scene as Barton and Snowey (Jack has yet to make an appearance) plunged straight into the action with a dope (not drug) addict crooner and someone with a 200 taking pot shots through the window.

Snowey's affectionate repression

## REVIEWS

— by Hazel Holt

is full of the atmosphere of the original. Writer Clive Exline, his tongue wedged firmly in his cheek, has written some superb dialogue. Can old trick but effective enough? The acting, too, was straight out of the original. Tony Vogel, apparently carved out of fine old oak, in trench coat and snap-brim trilby, is deviously clean-cut as Barton, aided by Anthony Heaton's Snowey, from a suitably lower class, and Fiona Fullerton is a charming damsel in distress.

The fights are of the good, clean, zesty and grim variety, all done to proper "hurry up—music."

Producer/director Jon Scofield does seem to have pulled it off, though he must guard against clamping it up. To work properly it must be done absolutely straight. Still, I am glad to see that the temptation to expand each episode into 30 minutes has been firmly resisted — 15 minutes is exactly right.

One word of praise to Lewin Lugin's designs, which were nicely researched and executed and helped no end.

## Already has the look of success

TO escape from the rat-race and find a more relaxed and simple way of life is a contemporary urban man's most persistent fantasy. Both *The Good Life* and *The Fall and Rise of Reginald Perrin* have examined the proposition in comic terms, now Telford's Change (BBC-1, Sunday January 7, 7.15 pm) takes an altogether more serious look at the problems involved.

This first episode is devoted to showing exactly what Mark Telford is escaping from and by the end he has decided to trade in his life of multi-national, multi-lingual jet-setting, as one of the top executives of a major lending bank, in exchange for the job of bank manager at his home branch.

We were taken on a daunting tour through three days of his life — from Cologne to Brussels to Oxford to Dover to London to Paris, by plane, by boat, by car, by hovercraft.

Mark Shivas's lush and stylish production was visually enthralling (a film cameraman was Neil Crosby). Brian Clark's script was frighteningly accurate in its exposition of high finance, social chat and time-wasting committees, and director Barry Davis didn't miss a trick of emphasis or pace.

The whole thing gleamed with the gloss of high technical excellence, but what will undoubtedly make Telford's Change compulsive viewing and will raise it, in its forthcoming nine episodes, above the level of up-market soap-opera, is of course, the performance of Peter

Barkworth.

No-one can suggest exhaustion and defeat as he can, very few can project the sort of humanity which immediately engages our sympathy so that we care very much indeed about any character he may be portraying. He is both distinctive and distinguished in every part he plays. Here he is beautifully balanced by Hannah Gordon at her most attractive and appealing, with just that touch of acidity to give an edge to the relationship.

This week we also had a performance of great charm and perception from David Markham, a nicely judged display of irritability from Julian Holloway and a splendidly urbane study of a multi-national tycoon by Martin Benson.

The music, which contributed in no small measure to the mood and pace, was by John Darkowich. (I don't think I am sticking my neck out too far if I say that I can smell success — certainly I can't believe that I was alone in enjoying every minute of it. And, let's face it, nowadays money is a more fascinating subject even than sex and violence.)

## Saga that promises to be forgettable

THERE is an old Icelandic myth that tells of a producer who, when flying across the sky to fetch the souls of the dead to Valhalla, raped a thriller by the name of *Boyle*, which he swooned on and carried away, but the poor thing failed to adapt and pined away into nothingness.

Running Blind (BBC, Scotland, Friday January 5, 9.25 pm), adapted by Jack Gerson, follows the rule: think of a country that hasn't been "done" and set a thriller in it. But, apart from the scenery, it might just as well have been Cyprus, Cologne or Croydon, no special Icelandic feel at all, not a rod in sight.

The storyline (former agent, pulled out of retirement by hard boss to carry important package halfway across Iceland — but there's dirty work about... ) and script were as uninteresting as those lackeyed pseudo-Peckinpah slow-motion replays of all the violent bits. The moment when the hero demonstrated his Fundamental Niceness by almost a palpably unloaded rifle at his boss was highly significant, since the general effect of the programme was that of being threatened with an empty gun.

Shari Wilson did his best with the rather dull hero and George Sewell was good, though largely wasted, as the Intelligence boss. Heidi Stenroos, sister of the hero's girlfriend, was most ornamental and spoke her banal lines in English as

impeccable as that of Magnus Magnusson.

There was good travel-brochure photography by Alex Scott (Iceland is a more beautiful country than one could imagine), but William Brayson's direction lacked all variety of pace and mood.


In the remaining two episodes we can look forward to Vladimir Shevtsov as the KGB man, and perhaps some more idyllic Icelandic scenery, but what else?

With money said to be so short it is perhaps reprehensible to waste all that easily Icelandic location filming on such mediocre material — not to mention the huge charges on that expensive Mannlicher rifle.

## WEEKEND

### TELEVISION COURSES

Weekend — Saturday and Sunday — courses explaining the 'do's and don'ts' of television acting are held at the Television Training Centre. They are cheap and informal. We train television production personnel but you would be working under a professional director with many years experience in BBC and Independent drama. The first morning consists of a lecture/demonstration which will explain the more obvious mistakes you could make when you get your first TV contract. In the afternoon, a short drama — designed to demonstrate these points — is cast and rehearsed. The second day is for Camera rehearsal, recording and playback plus the instructor's comments and advice. The fee for the two-day course is fifteen pounds inclusive. You have to be an Equity member or a past or present student at a full time drama course to be eligible. First course 21st/22nd January, 10-5 both days. Write to "Drama Section" T.T.C., 18 Grosvenor Street, W.1 for an application form.



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## REVIEWS ————— by Hazel Holt

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The fights are of the good, clean sock and grunt variety, all done to proper "hurry up" music.

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A final word of pleasure at Lewis Logan's designs, which were nicely researched and executed and helped no end.

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**BBC1 6.4**

on



**MEL H**  
THE JOKER