

Davey, who watch a horror movie on the telly one night . . . and next day find incontrovertible evidence of vampires beneath the neighbouring graveyard. Stu and Co organise a hunt, but exorcism proves difficult. John Goldschmidt, Prix Italia winner with *Spend, Spend*, *Spend*, directs. And then: *Missing* (BBC-1, 10 15) which finds Jack Pizzey and director Harry Weisbloom teaming up to track down some of the extraordinary stories behind the thousands of people who go missing in Britain each year: they concentrate on three cases, including a businessman who turned up in a new town with a documented new identity.

And if that doesn't quench your thirst for blood, a quick switch brings you the opening of a three-night re-run of *Count Dracula* (BBC-2, 10 20), with Louis Jourdan, Frank Finlay, Jack Shepherd, though a rather solemn dramatisation of Bram Stoker, Philip Saville directing. Earlier, *Man Alive* (BBC-2, 9 30) looks at the dilemma facing women about the Pill and its alternative.

Elsewhere, the return of *Strangers* (ITV, 9 0), the slick but slightly implausible series about three detectives drafted to a Northern force to work undercover with the locals. It seems they're still keeping their aliases intact. Then, rising documentary-maker Michael Whyte turns his attention away from tough social themes to come up with St. Trop-ish profile of ace fashion lenseman Helmut Newton (ITV, 10 30).

Frankie Vaughan in *The Good Old Days*: BBC-1, 9 25

Friday

IT'S a bit like coitus interruptus, if you'll pardon my French, but here comes the re-run of the very final episode of *Pennies From Heaven* (BBC-2, 10 15-11 40) some of us were poised for before Christmas when the Beeb's little local difficulties blacked it out. Better late . . .

Before it, there is a profile of Kent Opera (BBC-2, 9 25), ahead of the Saturday night presentation of its production of Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, done for them by the ubiquitous Jonathan Miller. He's seen in action here, along with the resident team.

Otherwise, much depends on how you took to the first episode of *Running Blind* (BBC-1, 9 25), the three-part version of Desmond Bagley's Iceland-set spy thriller. Nice scenery but a few too many clichés, some might think, but it's that or the routine American stuff in *Vegas* (ITV, 9 0). Most of the Beeb's main channel is given over to a combination of that *Wonder Woman*, (BBC-1, 7 10), and the endless multi-sport capering of *The Superstars* (BBC-1, 7 55) back for another run, jump, and press-up.

Observe, though, that the return of the BBC-2 early evening wheeze gives the chance for some prime repeats of *Horizon* (BBC-2, 6 0) starting with the story of man-power flight — and failure.

PETER FIDDICK

took his place has long been an admirable Colas he was decidedly off form until he came to the final turns. The Lise of Lesley Collier has also long been admired; her dancing is faultless and she has reserves of technique to allow her to play with the choreography. She is having a fine season but I think at times she ventures dangerously near the thin line that separates the confident from the cocksure.

No complaints at all about Ronald Emblen's Widow Simons, a loveable old dear especially when she wipes her eye after giving her blessing to the love match. All possible complaints about the stage management for sending the pony and cart on before Alain's solo in act 1. The pony kept angelically still—but did anyone succeed in watching poor Alain?

TELEVISION

Peter Fiddick

Running Blind

I SUPPOSE it was a bit much to expect it to hit us like *Le Carre*, or even like *Frederick Forsyth*, but *Running Blind* (BBC-1) did seem to have a fair ration of the necessary ingredients. A brisk start in a remote Highland estate, as the evident young hero (Stuart Wilson) gets the screws put on him by his ex-spy-master from our intelligence lot (George Sewell), a chap with a brisk line in persuasive technique: do one more special little courier job, or we'll tell your old

KGB enemy where you've retired to.

So it's off to Iceland (and his fishing-season mistress), only to find the Russky welcoming party is waiting anyway — and that the local Brit agent seems curiously slow to do the cavalry act.

All good stuff for three Friday nights, especially if you don't find Vegas any kind of escape. Given that Jack Gerson is adapting the Desmond Bagley book, and that it really is a location job (including Heida Steindorsdottir, as the girl, and supporting cast sibilant with "—ssons") there seemed to be good reason to hope. Nor does it look at all bad.

But the problem turns out to be, astonishingly, getting past the script, inexplicably cobbled out of every cliché in the genre, enough to defuse the decent start to B-feature movie level well before the pair got on the run. That's where we are now, with the first body on their hands, but I can't say I'm agog for the next thrilling instalment.

There was a markedly more hopeful start, though, the night before. *Galton and Simpson's Tea Ladies* (BBC-1) was launched, as is the BBC's comedy custom, without benefit of preview, but I shall not let that stop me coming in now to record a warm and anxious welcome for it. It's set below stairs in the H-s- of C-mm-ns and the new comedy partnership seems set for some fair mischief at the expense of topical themes in general and politicians in particular.

If G and S now merit Garbo-style single-name status, the same surely goes for their three main ladies:

Sugden, Hayes and Nichols. Mollie Sugden, as the lobby-sweeper, had the thin end of this opener, an uneasy soliloquy to Churchill's statue that needed a different touch but Patricia Hayes and Dandy Nichols opened their tea-room with what was virtually a 15-minute two-hander, absolutely full-face and static, but played with such impeccable deadpan partnership that a copy should go straight into the archive.

RADIO 4

Edward Greenfield

Downes

IT TOOK just a few seconds of the *Flying Dutchman* Overture to be reminded that Edward Downes is a formidable Wagnerian. It was he who was the first Englishman since the War to conduct a complete Ring cycle at Covent Garden — allegedly the fastest ever — and here again his manner was brisk with urgent storm music and snappy sailors' music set against the tenderness of the *Senta* theme.

These days on Thursday nights BBC streaming gets turned round, and it is Radio Four which gets the symphony concert. If that means more people listen, I am all for it. This concert, relayed direct from Birmingham Town Hall with Downes conducting the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, was as conventional as could be: nothing to frighten the cautious, but the playing presented a good omen for the orchestra's future.