



Clarion Review

Culture

The ABC Movie of the Week Companion

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Four Stars (out of Five)

What do *The Six Million Dollar Man Starsky and Hutch* and *Trilogy of Terror* have in common? If you can answer this question you're probably a Baby Boomer who rushed to the TV each week for the ABC Movie of the Week (MOTW).

Launched in June 1969 MOTW was a “bold experiment destined to become the most successful original feature film series in television” said its creator Barry Diller. The first series of made-for-television movies MOTW ran until 1975. Today it's recognized in the industry as an entertainment art form in television programming and this book details the series' 240 films.

Before MOTW the most popular television formats had been variety shows comedies and dramas—most of which were broadcast for one hour or less. MOTW avoided this cliché and offered a weekly rotation of ninety minutes of entertainment which spanned the spectrum of comedy drama science fiction and horror. Project writers and directors in various stages of their careers meant that the quality of the films ranged from B-grade camp to quality cool. The movie's subjects ran the gambit from the occasional escapist film to familiar topics like drug abuse (*Go Ask Alice* 1973) personal loss (*Brian's Song* 1971) war racism and politics. Many budding actors who eventually became industry icons honed their skills on the series. High-profile examples include Burt Reynolds Sally Field and Nick Nolte. Even old-school Hollywood greats like Bette Davis Olivia de Havilland Milton Berle and Barbara Stanwyck starred in several movies.

The book's first chapters contain a compact history of the MOTW series and information about viewer ratings and star salaries. Remaining chapters list movies in chronological season order. Plot summaries are included along with star interview excerpts black and white photos memorable moments from each film quotes from reviews and trivia.

Slated for MOTW *Love American Style* (1969-1974) never ran because it sold as a series

which ran for five seasons. Dick Van Dyke an admitted alcoholic starred in *The Morning After* (1974) which chronicles the life of an alcoholic. His performance was critically praised and Van Dyke was nominated for an Emmy.

Also noted are the films that were developed into regular TV series including *The Immortal* (1969) which was spun off into a series that ran in the 1970-71 season. *The Night Stalker* (1972) received such a high rating that *The Night Strangler* (1973) was made and eventually a 1974 TV series (which was revived in the 2005-06 season). *Kung Fu* (1972) became a TV series that ran for three seasons and also spawned 1987 and 1993 series.

Michael Karol is a magazine writer editor and author. His previous works include *Lucy A to Z: The Lucille Ball Encyclopedia* (now in its fourth edition) *The TV Tidbits Classic Television Book of Lists* and *Sitcom Queens: Divas of the Small Screen*. This is Karol's seventh book.

This book is a wonderful romp through the land of humorous scary and campy made-for-TV films. Movie buffs trivia fanatics and nostalgia addicts won't want to miss this little book. It would also make a valuable reference resource for libraries and movie buyers. The only disappointment is the amateur cover which features a close-up of the creepy yet memorable Zuni fetish doll from *Trilogy of Terror* (1975).