Clarion Review

Culture

TV Gems of the Past for Trivia & Crosswords Puzzles
Ruby A. Sampson
iUniverse
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Three Stars (out of Five)

No doubt the author invested time and effort into compiling more than 600 pages of information that links actors to television roles they performed from 1950 to 1990. It progresses in alphabetical order from A-Team to Zorro and Son with a separate section for hosts and narrators that is easy to miss. The blurb on the back cover assures readers that Ruby A. Sampson "continually checked…using every source available." But she fails to include a list of those sources footnotes or anything that reassures the reader as to the accuracy of the information or her qualifications for compiling it.

The simplicity of the presentation is deceptive; digging out information proves more difficult. The table of contents lists the program names and page numbers for quick reference but fails to specify what kind of programming each item is: soap opera series mini-series play game show or special. Without this detail readers may have difficulty determining whether *Little House on the Prairie* for example refers to a series or to a mini-series or even a one-time event. The omission of little clues such as headings to designate the characters column vs. the actors column lead to initial confusion. The lack of years seasons or any hint as to when these actors played these parts adds to the confusion and frustration. What year did George Clooney appear on E/R? And why did the author choose to list only thirteen roles for this long-running program?

A synopsis run times or even interesting trivia about the program would also be a welcome addition. Of course with such a large amount of information the author must place limits but this listing is obviously far from exhaustive.

Part two the cross-reference section offers an interesting look at which roles several actors played. For example Marlon Brando played the parts of George Lincoln Rockwell on *Roots: The Next Generation*. There is no mention here that he won an Emmy for that role. Lloyd

Bridges played the part of the White Knight on *Alice in Wonderland* Ben Geyser on the *Blue and the Gray* Mike Nelson on *Sea Hunt* and served as host of *Killer Whale*. Readers can only assume the author listed the roles in chronological order but they must already be familiar with the roles to figure that out. Florida Everglades jumps out of this list and is designated as the locale of *Gentle Ben*. Locale information is incomplete and muddies the water about what is included in the cross-reference section.

Before investing 37.95 in a reference book for trivia and crossword puzzles readers should seek a better organized more complete compilation written by a media authority who includes headings more information and a list of sources and reference materials.

Dawn Goldsmith