



**VIDEOT**

Guy MacMillin

**'Wiseguy' is lots of laughs**

Vinnie Terranova has a tough but interesting police job. The principal character on "Wiseguy" (CBS, Mondays) infiltrates criminal organizations run by madmen. The only prerequisite seems to be that the crime boss have a fancy office in a skyscraper and a beautiful sister for Vinnie to play with.

ment was with the Steelgrave syndicate, run by crazy Sonny Steelgrave. Vinnie and Sonny got along well through nine or 10 episodes. Vinnie even fell in love with beautiful Tracy Steelgrave, who wasn't involved in the family business. But all good things come to an end, and Sonny was electrocuted back in November.

when Vinnie was assigned to keep tabs on arms merchant Mel Proffitt and his lovely sister Susan. Proffitt was a real nut case. He'd assume the fetal position and sit in the corner when things went wrong. Once he took off his socks and complained to Vinnie, "Those are weird, at the end of my foot, ten of 'em, like little animals. Sometimes I want to chop 'em off."

Anyway, Vinnie and Susan had a little fling, and then Proffitt was murdered, placed in a rowboat and set afire.

What can I tell you? Crime does not pay.

You may have guessed that this is one of the most violent and bizarre shows ever to hit prime time. In addition to the electrocution and the funeral pyre, we've seen people hit in the face so hard that their skin has split and blood has gushed all over ev-

erything. One fellow had boiling water poured on his head.

"Wiseguy" also contains vocabulary not commonly found on commercial TV, including the ever-popular expression referring to the child of an unwed couple, and the not-very-endearing term that describes the male offspring of a female dog.

But I must confess that "Wiseguy" can be fascinating at times. Ray Starkey, who played Sonny Steelgrave, is a remarkable actor. His performance was brilliant. Likewise, Kevin Spacey's performance as Mel Proffitt will not soon be forgotten by anyone who had the misfortune of seeing it.

Ken Wahl, who plays Vinnie, also grows on you. He's attractive and unflappable, even if his effort to affect a New Jersey accent does make for mysterious moments.

For example, in one episode he met a European gun moll in a hotel room, and she asked, "Wha dee yo come here?" He answered, "Da meet you." It was a cross-cultural delight.

Here's what I think. This can't be a dramatic series. It's got to be a comedy show, right? What other explanation could there be?

"Wiseguy" isn't likely to be around long; the ratings are poor.

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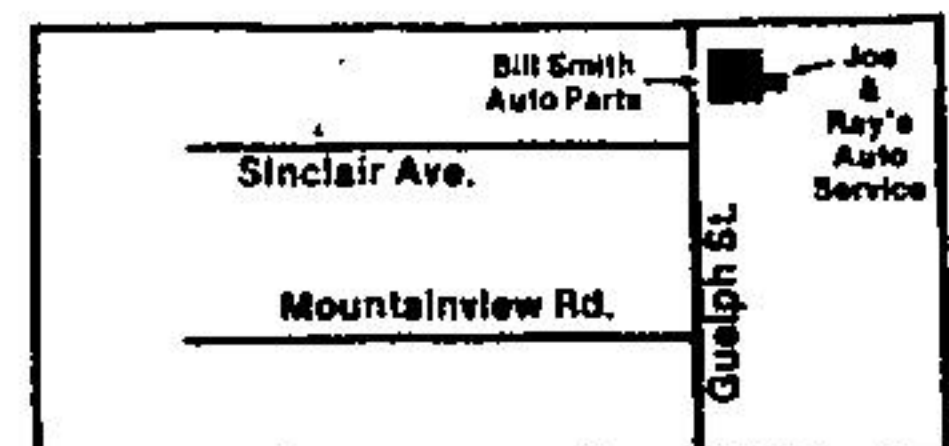
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