

Entertainment Outlook

Talking with DANIEL J. TRAVANTI

STAR SPEAK



FRANK SANELLO

Daniel J. Travanti won two Emmys for his portrayal of a stoic police officer, Capt. Frank Furillo, on NBC-TV's "Hill Street Blues."

When that acclaimed series ended its network run in 1987, Travanti continued to earn the critics' praise in a series of TV specials about important social issues. Among them were "Adam," which dealt with child abduction, and "A Case of Libel," about Hollywood blacklisting.



Daniel J. Travanti

Travanti also found time to appear on the big screen with Faye Dunaway in "Midnight Crossing," and with Kris Kristofferson in "Millennium."

A native of Kenosha, Wis., Travanti was a straight-A student in high school and an all-state fullback. But he turned down athletic scholarships to Harvard and Princeton in favor of an academic scholarship to the University of Wisconsin.

After dropping out of Yale's graduate acting department, he immediately found work opposite James Earl Jones in a New York production of "Othello."

Moving to Los Angeles in 1966, Travanti appeared in a series of lucrative commercials. He also did guest spots on "The Man from U.N.C.L.E." and "Perry Mason."

After a much-publicized bout with alcoholism in 1973, Travanti recovered and resumed his career, appearing on "General Hospital" and in various regional theater productions.

The actor was about to return to New York, when he was offered the career-making role of Furillo on "Hill Street Blues."

Now Travanti plays Joe Hynes, who prosecuted a racially motivated homicide in New York City, in the NBC-TV film "Howard Beach: Making the Case for Murder." It will be shown on Monday, Dec. 4.

Q. Do you like making "message" movies such as "Howard Beach"?

A. My agent is always saying, "Let's discuss current headline topics we might develop for you as a film," and I say, "I don't care what the topic is. I don't give a damn what a movie's about as long as it's got a good America is rotten. So what! I'm not being offered the good movie scripts. That does disappoint me, because I had some reason to think I might."

Q. That's a pretty pessimistic outlook. Would you describe yourself as an unhappy person?

A. Absolutely not. And almost any screenplay.

Q. OK, then what's your recipe for a good screenplay?

A. The project has to say something clear and evocative and memorable about the human condition — otherwise, why should I bother? But those parameters are fairly elastic for me. I think "Pec-wee's Big Adventure" qualifies, and so does a good Tarzan movie.

Q. Next to "disease-of-the-week" movies, television seems to love "crime-of-the-week" movies. Does "Howard Beach" fall into that category?

A. This is more than crime-of-the-week. Occasionally, a crime-of-the-week can rise above the formula. Good examples are "Adam" and "A Case of Libel." Most crime-of-the-weeks are instantly forgettable. I hope "Howard Beach" will leave a lasting impression.

Q. Your feature film career after "Hill Street Blues" didn't take off, even though many predicted you would become a major Hollywood star because of your exposure on "Hill Street." Are you disappointed?

A. I've been offered a lot of film scripts, most of which are rotten. I'm not surprised. Most scripts are rotten. Most books are rotten. Most newspa-

pers are rotten. Most of the air in body who knows me would tell you I'm happy. Pessimism is an outlook. I'm talking about facts. I'm not a hypocrite. I just won't agree to the lies so many people agree to live by.

Q. You said in another interview that you were a melancholy person. Were you misquoted?

A. I am melancholy, which is not the same as being pessimistic.... It helps if you're an actor to be a little melancholy and a little angry and a little scared and a little cynical. It enriches the work.

Q. During your heyday on "Hill Street," TV guide listed you as one of the 10 most-overrated actors on television. Did that hurt?

A. When people say they don't like me, I have to remember some people don't like Meryl Streep, either. And they've attacked Brando. There's always been an anti-Olivier contingent. So who doesn't get attacked who's brilliant and wonderful?

Q. Will you do another TV series in the near future?

A. For the longest time, I wouldn't even let my agent bring up the subject. Whenever the word series came out of his mouth, I'd say, "Next!" But my film career hasn't been up to par, and now we are looking for a series. But it has to be good. I can't imagine a worse hell than being stuck for five years in a series you absolutely loathe. That's my idea of cruel and unusual punishment.

Q. What do you think of "L.A. Law," which was created by Steven Bochco, who also gave us "Hill Street Blues"?

A. It's certainly no "Hill Street Blues." I wouldn't have done "L.A. Law" if it had been offered to me. It wouldn't have been a step up for me to do it. I like to go up a half step or more with each successive project.

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Videos can be fun during the holidays

FILMETER



ROBERT DIMATTEO

As the holiday season approaches, it seems an appropriate time to offer a compilation of some of the best video releases of the past year. All would make good gifts, or, for that matter, good rentals to be shown at that festive holiday get-together. Note that the list is deliberately eclectic, featuring several offbeat items that have tended to get lost in the shuffle.

WHEN HARRY MET SALLY (R) Nelson. A charming, good-natured romantic comedy that poses the less-than-respectable-but-still-often-asked question: Can men and women be friends, or does sex color every male/female relationship? Many people love this movie, and there's no reason to think they'll like it any less on the small screen.

THE LONELY PASSION OF JUDITH HEARNE (R) Cannon. In Jack Clayton's 1987 adaptation of a Brian Moore novel, Maggie Smith gives a brilliant performance as a spinster piano teacher who moves into a Dublin rooming house. Bob Hoskins co-stars as the landlady's shady brother, who pursues Smith because he thinks she has money. This is one of those literate, small-scale studies of repressed "little people" that inevitably fails to generate much box office or audience. But it's beautifully done, and Maggie Smith is sublime. And it's perfect for the intimacy of video.

WHITE MISCHIEF (R) Nelson. In the mood for classy nastiness? Try this 1988 release, which offers a picturesque, acid-etched portrait of English colonialism's final days in 1940s Kenya. Based on an actual murder

case that rocked Nairobi and sent shock waves to England, the film pivots on an adulterous affair between Lady Diana Broughton (ravishing Greta Scacchi) and womanizer Josslyn Hay, Earl of Errol (Charles Dance). Gorgeously filmed, the movie blends upper-class satire and silky romantic melodrama.

MASQUERADE (R) CBS/Fox. A B-movie that delivers — the kind of minor, slightly hokey, yet completely enjoyable romantic thriller that makes perfect Saturday matinee viewing. Set in the picturesque Hamptons among the moneyed beach set, the movie gives us lovely, ladylike Meg Tilly as a rich heiress wooed by an enigmatic, pretty-boy yachting captain. The latter role is played by Rob Lowe, in his best performance to date. (Unless you count his other kind of performance in those scandalous videos.)

TRUE BELIEVER (R) RCA/Columbia. In this visceral, moody thriller from director Joseph Ruben ("The Stepfather"), James Woods plays a burned-out, pot-smoking radical lawyer who tries to redeem himself in the courtroom. Woods brings his gift for sardonic volatility to the part, and his grandstanding performance won him long-overdue popular acceptance.

GONE WITH THE WIND: THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION (G) MGM/UA. This is the version of "GWTW" to have — and swoon over. Remastered from three-strip Technicolor reels, and boasting a digitally reprocessed overture, the movie has never looked or sounded better.

LAWRENCE OF ARABIA (PG) RCA/Columbia. A completely restored version of David Lean's masterpiece, this epic deserves to be seen on the big screen, but it is quite stunning on the small one. At 216 minutes, it's a movie to get lost in; you can structure a whole evening around it.

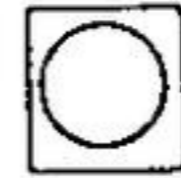
DATE BOOK

Dec. 9, 1989

Today is the 343rd day of 1989 and the 79th day of autumn.

S	M	T	W	T	F	S

TODAY'S MOON: Between first quarter (Dec. 5) and full moon (Dec. 12).



ON AN AVERAGE DAY: 421,643,836 pieces of mail are sent via the U.S. Postal Service.

Source: "On An Average Day," by Tom Heymann (Fawcett Columbine)

TODAY'S BARBS BY PHIL PASTORET

It's nice to be on the winning team. It's even nicer to be on the one that pays off in the point spread.

If science is so wonderful, why can't it devise a theater soda cup that doesn't leak on your lap halfway through the movie?

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