

The Twilight Zone *filmmaker could have picked better story material*

by TERRY DUPUIS

The *Twilight Zone Movie* is a theatrical film which pays tribute to the old television series of the same name. The late writer Rod Serling made his most lasting claim to fame when he presented this offbeat series in the late 50's and early 60's. The series has enjoyed a successful rerun in the last few years and it still has many avid fans, much like "Star Trek".

The movie version adapts four of the original *Twilight Zone* stories, with varying degrees of success. Unfortunately, the film includes a framing story with Dan Aykroyd and Albert Brooks which is a bit on the foolish side. The movie is crisply narrated by

Burgess Meredith, which is fitting since Meredith appeared in a number of episodes in the old television series.

I thought that the first story in *The Twilight Zone Movie* was the poorest of the four episodes. It deals with a racial bigot (played by the late Vic Morrow) who finds himself on the receiving end of bigotry in three different historical eras. Morrow and two child actors were killed in a ghastly accident during the filming of this story, and this real-life tragedy casts a gloomy atmosphere over the whole episode. This segment seemed to have a choppy storyline, maybe because some of the scenes were removed and necessitated some re-editing.

The second episode in the movie was directed by Steven Spielberg, and it marks an improvement over the first segment. It deals with a senior citizens home whose inhabitants have an opportunity to be young again. The story and its atmosphere are wistful, nostalgic and sentimental, as befits the maker of *E.T.*

I found the third story in the movie to be disappointing. It was based on a great short story by Jerome Bixby called "It's A Good Life". This story about a boy who terrifies a small-town community with his strange powers has been changed considerably for the screen and played mostly for laughs. Hence it lost a lot of the original story's impact.

But the movie ends with a bang for its last and best episode. It deals with a nervous passenger on a stormy night airplane flight who sees a weird creature on the wing of the plane. The television version had William Shatner in the main role; the movie version uses John Lithgow, but he is very effective in the role. This segment has more suspense than the other three stories, and it is far scarier.

Like most of the anthology horror movies, *The Twilight Zone Movie* is uneven, some segments being better than others. Except for the last episode, I thought that the stories could have been better chosen.

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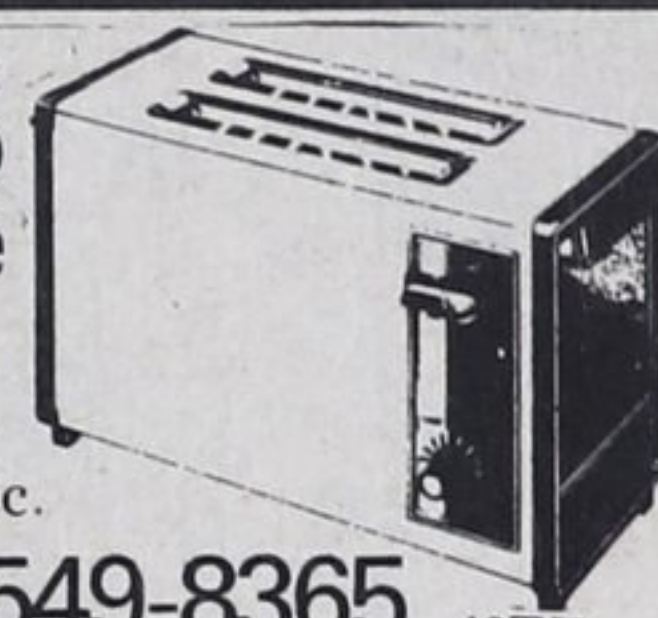
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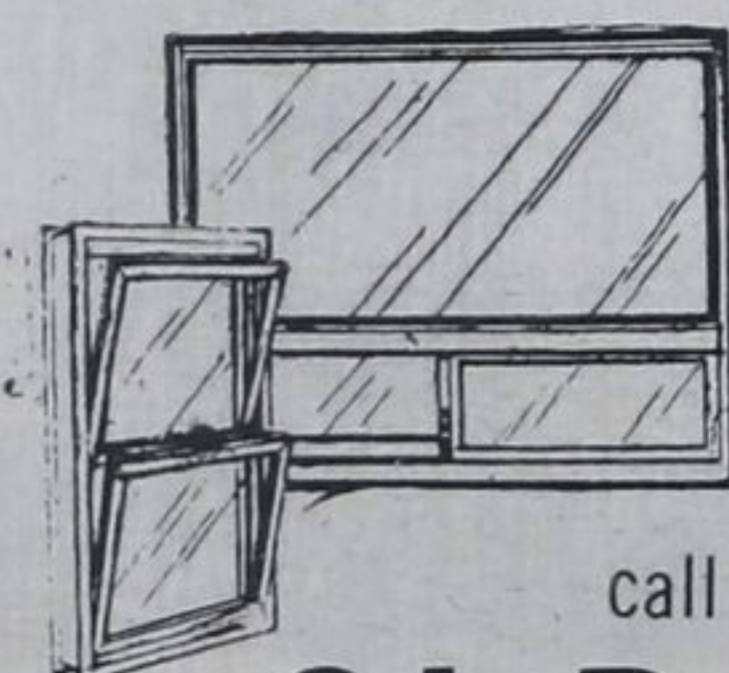
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