

Costner, Nolte our post-holiday guests

So, what's a body to do, hunkered down for those long winter nights, kiddies asleep in their beds, and not a dime left in the babysitting account?

The answer, if you are easily amused and without the faintest semblance of a life as are Susan and I, lies in that eclectic collection of videos stashed away in the TV room. The price is right. And there's no outlay of energy required, which is a good thing when you're still trying to recover from the devastation inflicted upon your body by too much of all the wrong foods over the holidays.

Having reacquainted ourselves then with the Stapley video hodgepodge in recent weeks, here's my personal list of "classics." Some, it will quickly be noted, are the type of sappy stuff that would cause fellow lancer Kate Gilderdale to lose her hi-cal lunch. Others are so inconsequential as to make genuine movie aficionados shake their heads in disbelief.

We started out with our newest addition, *Casa Blanca*, which arrived all the way from Vancouver as a Christmas gift from a little-seen relative as part of the family draw. Okay so far?

Then we stuck in *Field of Dreams*, that Kevin Costner make-believe movie where legendary ball player Shoeless Joe Jackson appears and disappears ("I'm melting, I'm melting!") amidst a baseball diamond carved out of a field of tall Iowa corn. Sure it's laid on a little thick. But it's a feel-good flick that makes sons



From Where I Live

Bruce Stapley

like me vow to connect with their aging fathers in whatever way we can. We would have watched *It's a Wonderful Life* next, by hey, there's only so much room in the cornfield. So we moved on to *The Prince of Tides*. I'll challenge anyone to offer up a better performance than Nick Nolte's in portraying a man trapped in the denial of childhood family dysfunction.

Jimmy Stewart had to make an appearance eventually, so why not in *Shenandoah*, a civil war story about a Virginia widower/farmer trying to keep his family and his principles intact while everything around him blows up. It's vintage

Stewart — part tragedy, part comedy, and all old-fashioned hokey values.

We then went from the sublime to the ridiculous, wheeling out *Blazing Saddles* once again for yet another taste of Mel Brooks' politically incorrect send-up of racism in a wild west setting. Naughty to be sure, but an endless feast of hilarious inappropriate one liners.

And speaking of irreverent, our all-time sleeper comes next. Who has ever seen *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*, a peripheral early 1970's parody of organized religion and small town thinking wrapped

around one man's attempt to not only survive, but beat the system back in the flagging days of the old west. Jason Robards and Stella Stevens are brilliant, while David Warner's portrayal of a reprobate itinerant preacher is hysterical. We all have a movie to call our own, and Susan and I have laid claim to this one.

Cat Ballou is right up there as well. After all, Lee Marvin won an Oscar for his role as the always-soused hired gun whose shooting hand suddenly steadies with the intake of a few ounces of whiskey.

Also near the top of our list is

Dr. Zhivago, with its *Gone With The Wind*-like interweaving of history and human drama. There are others: *The Producers*, a '60's flick starring Zero Mostel and Gene Wilder, hucksters who attempt to market a sure-fail play, and *The Return of the Pink Panther*, are both classically comical. And, of course, if we eventually run out of titles from our mish-mash of soppy sagas, western spoofs and occasional treasures, there's always Stapley Family Foibles, a self-edited collection of super eight silents and camcorder highlights of my four kids.

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