

It's no mirage; it is a work of art

Sometimes, the greed of television overwhelms you and you feel like that Greek looking for an honest man. Sometimes, you begin to wonder whether any of it is on the square. And then, in the Sahara of selling, you come upon an oasis where there is honest art and true feeling and a sense of greatness still left untouched by all the slick guys.

Stop at the oasis at 7 p.m. Saturday on Channel 44. You will be refreshed.

Ed Morris, the boss of Channel 44, who used to run public television in this town, has given a group of young producers an hour of exposure and, mostly, they have used the gift well. In their turn, the producers have given us a fresh, sentimental and often moving look at the city.

The tape put together by the Chicago Videomakers Coalition is uneven and sometimes technically inept. But its lack of polish and finesse cannot mar the diamond-like quality of the producers' sparkling insight:

City painters are captured in the predawn light of the Loop. They are painting green stripes down State St. Suddenly, a truculent CTA bus driver insists on pushing his behemoth over the fresh-painted stripes. No way. The painters and the bus driver confront each other in a funny, sarcasm-laden encounter that gives you more of what Chicago really is than a month of Two on Twos. Finally, the whole matter is resolved by a reluctant policeman who convinces the bus driver to



Bill Granger

back up. The painters won and they knew it in that boastful, bragging way that the City That Brags loves so much.

In another slice of Chicago's reality, we sit in the home of two elderly Polish ladies who, in the matter of a couple of minutes, explain the American dream in the accents of the old country. One says: "We look for better here because we were slave under Austria but we work terrible hard (here) for nothing. Much worse life than Europe but I say... I gonna fight—"

Tough stuff.

In yet another facet of this gem of a show, young James Blevins of the West Side lives his "Rocky" dreams of becoming a professional fighter. The camera does not blink as it touches the young man's heart and airs his desires. Finally, we are cheering at the end when Blevins wins his division in the Golden Gloves. It is all rather unsentimental, but it is incredibly touching.

Touching, too, is a little street play put on by gifted members of the Poetry Club of Roberto Clemente High School. In the rubble

of the city, the young men perform a medieval morality story about drug addiction, and the haunting litany of heroin's horrors will stay with you long after the show ends.

There are also successful sequences in which the video-tape camera intrudes on the "happy bus" driver who preaches to his CTA passengers about the love of Jesus and a true-as-nails interview in the County Building with a patronage worker who says, "Patronage workers work their ass off; civil service are the ones who sit on their ass." Lovely and funny and lyrical and so real that the two sequences which fall are forgiven (these involve an artsy, lahuman look at the city by Jim Passin and an overly ironic sequence involving city alienation by Nick Despota).

I warn you again that the technical quality of all the pieces is not the best, but stay with it. Watching Slices of Chicago is like reading Dostoevski—difficult and rewarding.

I drank deep at the oasis offered by these young producers. Thanks to them and Morris, we are all invited to the television feast.

Notes

• THE VIDEOMAKERS ARE Scott Jacobs, Tom Weinberg, Justin Galler, Lilly Ollinger, Denise Zaccardi, Phillip G. McCann, Nicholas Despota, Raul Zaritsky, Judy Hoffman, Ted-william Theodore, Gordon Quinn, John Burds, Jim Morrisette, Tom and Regina Shea, Philip Lee Morton, Jim Passin and Jane Veeder.

CHICAGO SUN-TIMES, Fri., June 17, 1977

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Weekender highlights

FRIDAY

Prince of Central Park: A modern day, 12-year-old Robinson Crusoe is forced from a foster home in the Hell's Kitchen of New York's West Side to build a home for himself and his younger sister in Central Park. With T.J. Hargrave and Ruth Gordon.

7:00 p.m., ②

Price of Peace and Freedom: Documentary offers an assessment of the trends of comparing military strength between the United States and the Soviet Union.

9:30 p.m., ①

SATURDAY

Slices of Chicago: Chicago videomakers offer scenes reflecting the flavor of life in Chicago, including early morning on State Street on St. Patrick's Day, local Golden Gloves action and two women recalling their early days and hard times in Chicago. 7:00 p.m., ③

56th Annual Photoplay Gold Medal Awards: Angie Dickinson and Elliott Gould are hosts. 9:00 p.m., ⑤

Kup: Guests: Chicago authors Studs Terkel, Barbara SchAAF, William Brashler and Leon Forrest.

10:30 p.m., ①

SUNDAY

Baseball: White Sox host Oakland in a doubleheader.

12:30 p.m., ③

Americana—The Great Iowa Bike Ride: Two Iowa journalists' idea of a vacation, bicycling across Iowa with friends, grows into a seven-day adventure with more than 3,000 bicyclists.

1:00 p.m., ①

Baseball: Cubs play the Dodgers at Los Angeles.

3:00 p.m., ②

Nova: Scientist Linus Pauling, only person to receive two unshared Nobel Prizes, is profiled.

9:00 p.m., ①