

SOME writers for television think Paul Monash is a fink. They said as much when he appeared before about 500 of their fraternity at a Beverly Hills hotel one night last January in what was billed as a television craft forum. The happening, arranged by the Writers Guild of America, West, brought together a panel of veterans from television's gold-plated age of dramatic anthologies to report on what those early years were really like and to examine the present state of the much-maligned art of television writing and its dubious future. In other words it was to be one-part remembrance of sweet things past and two-parts a curse on all your establishment houses.

But Mr. Monash, whose golden era credentials include frequent contributions to *Studio One*, was to show no patience for nostalgia, little use for recriminations that evening. Unlike Tad Mosel, Stirling Silliphant and Nat Hiken, the other members of the panel, he has become a pillar of the television establishment as a hyphenate executive producer-writer, with the emphasis decidedly on the executive. And unlike hundreds in the room, his attitude is no longer puckered by the bitterness of rejection. Instead he delivered a hard, realistic appraisal of television past and present and of the writer's responsibility for much of what has happened.

TV Improvement ■ There was a certain number of peaks in television's old days, Mr. Monash acknowledged, but there also were many profound valleys. Television is better than ever today. It offers the audience a much greater choice than 10 years ago.

A great deal of the responsibility of quality in television was up to them, Mr. Monash told the writers. Many writers forfeit this responsibility, he claimed. They don't extend themselves, don't stick with a show during the functioning part of a production. Instead they over-commit, take on multiple assignments, promise to turn out scripts for several different shows on an assembly-line basis. Don't whine about the conditions of the job, Mr. Monash said in effect, learn how to contribute meaningfully within the bounds of the medium.

Denying an accusation from the audience that he was cynical, contending instead that he's "dedicated, but practical and realistic," Mr. Monash went on to tell the writers: "I love to be loved. I think I will leave here hated by most. I'm trying to say things you should hear, instead of nice things. Television is a tough medium for freedom of expression and a lot of you will be squeezed out by it."

But practical and realistic Paul Monash has not been squeezed out. Since starting as a television writer some 16 years ago—after a wild-oats period of "bumming around"—he has learned

How not to be squeezed out of television

how to fit, work effectively, grow within the framework of the tight little picture that is television, the mover of merchandise, not the great art form. Like all thoughtful producers who have adapted to television and not argued for the medium to conform to their impossible dreams, Mr. Monash has

WEEK'S PROFILE



Paul Monash—executive producer, 20th Century-Fox Television, Los Angeles; b. June 14, 1917, New York City; BA, University of Wisconsin, 1936; MA, Columbia University, 1938; Merchant Marine, 1936-37 and 1939-41; specialized intelligence work, Signal Corps., U. S. Army, 1941-45; studied art in Europe, worked at U. S. Embassy in Paris, 1949-51; wrote novel, "How Brave We Live," 1948; wrote for "Foreign Intrigue" TV series in Stockholm, 1951-52; writer for leading TV dramas of time: "Playhouse 90," "Danger," "Suspense," "Climax," "Studio One," "Theater Guild of the Air," "Philco Playhouse," "Desilu Playhouse," 1952-58; wrote novel, "The Ambassadors," 1954; wrote two-part pilot for "The Untouchables," 1959; created and was executive producer of "Cain's Hundred," 1961; executive producer for MGM TV, 1958-61; executive producer, 20th Century-Fox TV, 1962-present; executive producer, "Peyton Place," 1964-present; executive producer, "Judd For The Defense," 1967-present; m. Caren Lenay of Germany; children—Stephanie, 11; Jessica, 7; awards—Emmy for television play, "The Lonely Wizard," biography of Steinmetz, 1958; Edgar from Mystery Writers of America for "Judd," 1968; hobbies—tennis.

tried to improve the quality of programming, say meaningful things in a modest way through his own productions.

He realizes that an audience that still roars with delight when a comic's pants falls down does not become sophisticated overnight. He knows the message better be sugar-coated with melodrama and entertainment values or it won't be swallowed.

The job he has done with *Peyton Place* reflects, perhaps better than anything else, his philosophy about television. The ABC-TV night-time serial was his first major project as an executive producer for 20th Century-Fox TV after spending three years in a similar capacity for MGM TV. With the possible exception of *The Beverly Hillbillies*, probably no other program has been more often used as a sort of generic way of denigrating television than *Peyton Place*. The very title is usually accompanied by a snort.

Yet it's odds on that most of the show's severest critics have not watched it often if at all. For *Peyton Place* gives consistent evidence of being well-acted, sensitively directed, intelligently written. Indeed, it achieves what it sets out to do—provides a reflection of American morality and values in a melodramatic setting. It's slick, saleable and it communicates.

Going into its fifth season and 450th episode, *Peyton Place*—now thoroughly accepted—will wade into stories of deeper significance. The first Negro family will move into *Peyton Place*—mother, father, two children—and their problems will be related to those of the white characters in the series. In another story, a teen-age girl will question why she doesn't have the same sexual freedom as that of her divorced mother.

Other Project ■ Mr. Monash also is executive producer of ABC-TV's *Judd for the Defense* (he was the series creator), another show that inches forward against the limits of what mass audiences used to accept. Next season, its second on the network ("I tremble for its time period up against movies," says producer Monash), *Judd* will examine such untypical questions as the moral and legal dilemma of heart transplants.

But Paul Monash's sights are set beyond television at this time. He has produced his first movie, "Deadfall," starring Michael Caine, for 20th Century-Fox and will be executive producer of another, "The Sundance Kid and Butch Cassidy," with Paul Newman, that will have a \$10 million budget.

He doesn't think of his movie work as an extension of television. "It's a departure," he says, indicating that it's the direction he'd like to go in the future. "One is greedy in this business," the ever-practical producer points out, "you can't let opportunities pass by."