



LICKS #6 (August 1992) is written and produced by Rob Hansen of 144 Plashet Grove, East Ham, London E6 1AB, for the 220th FAPA mailing
© Rob Hansen, 1992.

Eney: "Avedon seems to be running a paradigm of the Sick-Left effort to find some new reason for Hating America. Much intellectual (so to speak) effort would be saved if she just got a copy of **The Protocols of the Elders of Zion** and went thru it making changes in the attribution as necessary to update it and alter the names of the participants."

My first reaction on reading the above, Dick, was to wonder what you'd been smoking since your reaction to the comments I attributed to Avedon in LICKS #4 seemed waaaaaaay over the top. In fact, Avedon loves her country and is one of the most patriotic people I've ever met. Needless to say, she has no patience with those jerks who imagine that moronic jingoism of the 'my country right or wrong/America: love it or leave it' stripe is what patriotism is all about. No, real patriotism bears no resemblance to that stuff, which is the same sort of blind fanaticism that Nazi Germany was built on. Real patriotism, which Avedon has in spades, is about being justifiably proud of all that is good and positive about your country without being blind to its faults. Above all else, it's about opposing all those who betray your country's ideals and who allow it to be less than it should be, even when those people happen to be the government of the day. Avedon is fiercely proud, as all Americans should be, of those principles on which your country was founded as enshrined in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, and just as fiercely opposed to those who blithely ignore those principles and trample on people's rights in their holy War On Drugs, or whatever else happens to be their cause of the moment. The Constitution and Bill of Rights are America's Crown Jewels, and as someone who possesses no rights his government couldn't abolish tomorrow if they so chose I'd swap them in an instant for those baubles we keep in the Tower of London.* If they are to have any meaning, however, then the performance of those in power has to be constantly measured against them. Should the government fail to measure up then it is in no way disloyal to criticise them, it is in fact your patriotic duty to do so! Hell, those taking the Oath (as opposed to the Pledge) of Allegiance swear to "...support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic". Much as the US government, like governments everywhere, would like you to believe the government interest and the national interest are one and the same, often they are not. Those taking the Oath are swearing allegiance to the laws and Constitution of the US rather than to its government, which is as it should be. Those in power whose 'patriotism' is no more than a cheap perfume worn to divert attention from profoundly anti-democratic actions, who see the Constitution and Bill of Rights as inconveniences to be circumvented, should be sought out, exposed, and brought down. As those on the Right are fond of pointing out, the price of freedom is eternal vigilance. Quite so. And the object of that eternal vigilance should be those who rule over us.

With specific reference to Avedon's comments on recent US military adventures, which you thought "a Sick-Left effort to find some new reason for Hating America", is it really so unreasonable to assume the US defense industry and US military have a vested interest in seeing further such conflicts? Remember, it was Eisenhower - hardly a liberal dove - who first warned of the dangers of the

* Except for the Second Amendment, of course, which you can keep.

military-industrial complex, and I for one have no intention of calling him unpatriotic for having done so.

Speer: Yes, Britain does have 'a welfare class' (hardly surprising given the lack of jobs out there and the current economic situation) and tenants in public-housing do scrawl graffiti on buildings. As to what more tax money could do to solve fundamental problems....

A couple of weeks ago, there was a very interesting TV documentary over here on policing that asked the question why, if the Tories have spent more and more money on policing since coming to power, the crime rate has gone on rising faster and faster during that same period. Like conservatives everywhere, being 'tough on crime' is a central plank in the political manifesto our Tories wheel out every election and, also like conservatives everywhere, by being 'tough on crime' they mean wielding a bigger and bigger stick. As the programme makers pointed out, this strategy clearly isn't working, either here or in America. When asked to explain rising crime, conservatives inevitably blame declining moral values and the permissiveness born of the 1960s. In order to see if these excuses held water, the programme makers looked at the crime rate in countries which also had experienced the permissiveness of the 1960s and which remain more permissive than either the UK or the US, namely the Scandinavian countries. Their crime rates were much lower. So much for conservative theory. However, comparing welfare and social provisions that helped alleviate poverty in each country they found a direct link with the crime rate. Those who made the best provision had the lowest crime rate, while those who made the least had the worst. This really should come as no surprise to anyone. Indeed, the head of Britain's Police Federation - which is hardly our most liberal institution - recently got into trouble with the government when he pointed out that the crime rate shadowed the poverty rate and that graphs plotting the two over time were nearly identical. His reason for going public was that the police realised they couldn't stem the tide and that only by alleviating poverty will the government make a dent on crime. They won't do this, of course. "What can more tax money do to 'tackle fundamental problems'?" you ask, Jack. I would have thought it was obvious. As someone famous once pointed out, taxes are the price we pay for civilisation. It's a price I'm willing to pay, as long as the taxes are directed where they'll do the job. While our leaders continue with the delusion that more police cracking more heads is the answer crime in both our countries is only going to get worse. The situation in Britain will become more like that in America with each passing day, while that in America's inner cities gets closer and closer to Hell on Earth.

Incidentally, I feel distinctly uncomfortable with a term like 'welfare class' since it seems to suggest that there are people who are innately rather than situationally dependent on welfare. Over here they used to talk about a 'criminal class' as though criminality was innate, believing that if you could remove those people you could improve society. Two hundred years ago the experiment was in effect tried, and thousands of people from Britain's 'criminal classes' were shipped to Australia, where they became the ancestors of most of Australia's present-day population. Had the theories of two centuries ago had any validity, Britain would now have a tiny crime rate and Australia would have the highest crime-rate on Earth. As you may have noticed, this is not the case.

Sanders: Edge of Darkness was recently repeated by the BBC and Avedon and I got to see it for the first time. You say "that the conclusion of Edge of Darkness follows naturally from the film's premises is shocking. We are used to thrillers that gladly sacrifice logic for the sake of a safe ending...Edge of Darkness leaves its audience miserably frustrated." Not me. I prefer an ending that arises naturally and organically from the story and the tacking-on of innappropriately happy endings in order to 'reassure' an audience (something

Hollywood is particularly fond of) drives me up the fucking wall. It's been pointed out many times before that British fiction and films are usually more downbeat than their American counterparts, so it's no great surprise that Edge of Darkness garnered awards in the UK and bombed in the US, but downbeat fiction is not necessarily any less satisfying than upbeat fiction is. I think Orwell's 1984 is wonderful, even though the world it describes is horrible. Yeah, I like films and books where the square-jawed hero saves the day as much as anyone, but I know that he's often not there in real-life and I'm perfectly happy with fiction that accepts that aspect of things, too. In the recent series of the wonderful L.A.LAW there was an episode where Grace van Owen defends a famous sports star accused of rape. When he describes to van Owen, the night before he's due to take the stand, what happened it becomes clear that it really was rape, even though the sports star was too stupid to realise that his victim saying 'no', her struggles, and her fleeing afterwards weren't just part of normal love-making. Even knowing her client is guilty van Owen has to try and get him off, and does. Afterwards, the prosecuting attorney tells her that the jury was so star-struck all they were probably thinking of was getting the sports star's autograph after the trial. Later, van Owen takes the sports star a list of addresses for the counselling he agreed to take on belatedly acknowledging that he had committed rape, but having got away with it he's no longer interested. Now this is hardly a happy ending but it is what happens in far too many cases in real life. Really, it would have been a cop-out if he had been found guilty, and if even one person is made more aware of the situation then it achieved more than just being superb drama.

Indick: I'm not that much of a playgoer myself, having been to no more than four or five in the dozen years I've lived in London, even though I enjoyed most of them. Nonetheless, I read theatre reviews and follow coverage of the shows on the various arts programmes on British TV. About a year or so ago I read a review of an Alan Ayckbourn play that used the stefnal concept of mindswap and was sufficiently intrigued that I decided to see it. Unfortunately, Ayckbourn always debuts his plays in the North before bringing them to London and that one has yet to get here. In TIME magazine of 18 May 92 is a review of another Ayckbourn play, **A Small Family Business** which demonstrates that my comments to Joe Sanders in respect of books and films also apply to plays. Reviewing the Broadway production of the play, critic William A. Henry III, who had seen the London production, complained that the Broadway production muted its satiric elements, concluding that it was "a mere echo of a deeper work that is nowhere to be seen". Then there's Ariel Dorfman's **Death and the Maiden**, which you mention in your BEN'S BEAT in mailing 219. As I'm sure you're aware, the New York Times critic, whose name escapes me, complained in his review of the Broadway production that it was nowhere near as harrowing as the London production, and that the play's political content had been watered down. The BBC's Late Show picked up on this and the show's presenter Michael Ignatieff interviewed Dorfman and asked him what he thought of the Broadway production. Dorfman replied that he approved of the changes, and that the play wouldn't have been a commercial proposition in the US without them, that American audiences wouldn't support something as hard-hitting as the original. Ignatieff, as an American, was appalled by this, and said something like:

"Are you saying that American audiences are incapable of dealing with sharp political content and powerful negative emotions?"

If I was American, I'm sure I'd share Ignatieff's outrage, but it does seem to me that there are people out there who have decided that the American public can't handle this stuff and so shouldn't even get the chance to see it. So you get the watered down versions. I think these people are wrong, but then I don't have to stake large sums of money on that belief.

Rodgers: Yeah, I saw and enjoyed STAR TREK VI: THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY too, but regarding the TV series, I have to say that I prefer THE NEXT GENERATION to the original STAR TREK. As far as I'm concerned, with the exception of the first series of ST:TNG, these are the best STAR TREKS there have been. I have no great problem with the fact that the crew are 'stuffer', as you put it, than the originals and find the idea of a time when humans have matured to the point when they're less prone to anger and when ethnic and gender differences are no longer cause for prejudice and conflict to be rather appealing (even if the idea of vegetarianism doesn't particularly turn me on). That such a future would be a secular humanist one, as the future of ST:TNG obviously is (and as Gene Roddenberry confirmed in interviews) seems to me to be self-evident.

Eisen: We have NORTHERN EXPOSURE over here (the first series has just finished) but we don't get MURPHY BROWN. Oh it's broadcast, but on Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB satellite channel, and we don't have a dish. Most of the stuff you see on Murdoch's Fox Channel over there goes out on BSkyB over here, which means we've also never seen shows such as IN LIVING COLOUR and THE SIMPSONS, nor are we likely to. When STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION debuted it was first sold straight to video over here on condition that it couldn't be broadcast until they'd had three years to make as much as they could out of video sales. So the first episode wasn't broadcast over here 'til Wednesday 26th September 1990. However, they did then show the first three series straight through, back-to-back, and the first episode of the fourth series so as not to end with a cliffhanger, ending the run in May this year. Why they didn't want to end with a cliffhanger has recently become clear. BSkyB has bought the rights to show repeats of those first three series and for no new episodes to be broadcast until they've finished doing so. This means that, although the BBC intend to broadcast the fourth and fifth series back-to-back, they can't start doing so until mid-1994. As you might imagine, all this TV sales and programming politicking is beginning to get really irritating.

Brandt: "Since you're not from around here, I'll explain that all hell broke loose in Los Angeles when a jury acquitted several L.A. cops of assault charges after a passerby had videotaped them pummeling a black motorist with nightsticks as he lay on the ground". Richard, Richard, I would have had to be from Mars not to know about that story. The videotape was shown around the world when it was first released, and as for the riots.... Britain is eight hours ahead of the US West Coast, so when I awoke at 8am and sleepily turned on the TV to catch the news I was greeted with live feed from L.A., where it was lam, and the news that the jury had found those police innocent. I was stunned, both at what I was seeing and that anyone could have found those scumbags innocent. According to the news there were three people known to be dead at that point, but throughout the day while at work I caught the hourly news on the small radio I keep in my desk to follow fast-breaking stories (I'm a news-junkie) and shook my head in disbelief as the death-toll rose with every broadcast. Avedon's sister, Sally, lives in Los Angeles and is scathing in her criticism of how the police dealt with the situation, which was to defend their station houses and to let the citizenry fend for themselves. Her route home takes her past a police station, but that night the police had barricaded the street and so directed her down another street, one where buildings were ablaze and where looting and rioting were taking place. In other words, they put her life at risk rather than let her drive her usual route. Unbelievable. They obviously think their motto 'to serve and protect' applies to themselves. Sally's husband is black, and while that had never been much of a problem before the riots they've taken a lot more shit since for being an interracial couple. What a world, eh? See you all next mailing.

.....Rob Hansen 12 July 1992