

Continuity

Jeremy Schlieve

Lights up on BERNARD sitting, spinning in his chair, chewing on his pen. He pauses. Drums his pen on the table. Chews. He produces a small notepad out of his shirt pocket, flips a few pages, and reads.

BERNARD

Ah!

(He places small notepad back in shirt pocket. He picks up larger notebook from the table, opens it, and begins writing and dictating aloud to himself.)

To whom it may concern:

(Pause. He leans back in chair with a satisfied air.)

Towhomitmayconcern: I have been a viewer of your fine Paramount cartoons for over two decades. I feel that your productions are of the utmost quality and that watching them is time well spent.

However, I regret that I must inform you that while watching Popeye last evening I noticed an error in continuity. In last night's episode, whose title escapes me, the plot revolved around Bluto stealing Olive Oyl from Popeye. Bluto was then beaten by Popeye and Olive was gratefully returned. All ends well, or so it seems. The problem, gentlemen, is that AT NO POINT IN THE CARTOON DID POPEYE EAT HIS SPINACH.

(Pauses. Reflects. To himself:)

...at NO POINT...

(He resumes writing.)

This, I feel, is a critical error on the part of the writers. The salient idea, around which the VERY ESSENCE of Popeye is based, is that Popeye is strong to the finish BECAUSE, and ONLY BECAUSE, he eats his spinach. Without the aid of his spinach, Popeye was able to deliver blow after devastating blow to Bluto and deliver him to the threshold of unconsciousness. At one point in the cartoon, Popeye was able to pick up a piano and twirl it on his index finger before dropping it on the head of a sleeping Bluto. This otherwise hilarious entrance on the part of Popeye lost all of its credibility due to a rather serious oversight on the part of your writers and continuity staff.

Though I'm certain that this error was simply just that: an error, I feel

that it is something deserving of attention. Despite the danger of sounding cliché, I feel that we must think about the children. If cartoons such as Popeye are to be sending the message of nutrition and a balanced diet to children, I feel that it is everyone's responsibility to see that the message is crystal clear.

(Pause.)

I look forward to receiving your response. Sincerely, Bernard Felch, esquire.

(He closes notebook, tosses it on table, and spins around on his chair with an air of satisfaction. He pauses, then chews on his pen. He takes the small notepad out of his shirt pocket, opens it and his face lights up.)

Oh! Of course!

(He opens up his letter-writing notebook and begins to write, dictating aloud.)

Dear Friz Freling: I am a great fan of your Pink Panther cartoons as I have been watching them for over two decades. I practically grew up with the Tijuana Toads, the Ant and the Aardvark, Roland and Ratfink, Misterjaw, and the Inspector. I feel that they are quality cartoons which are relevant to adults as well as children.

(Pauses, thinking hard about phrasing of next sentence.)

I do not want to seem like I am nit-picking, however there is a point that I need to bring up.

(Lights begin to slowly fade. Dictation begins to fade with the lights.)

Last evening I was watching your program and during the episode of The Ant and the Aardvark in which the Aardvark interrupts a dinner party hosted by the Ant, there is an error in terminology that I feel must be brought into question. After some difficulty in catching the Ant, the Aardvark swallows him. In the mouth of the Aardvark, the Ant notices a sign near the epiglottis which reads "To Thorax" with an arrow pointing downward. The ant then turns to the audience...

(Voice is inaudible, lights are completely out.)