

NBC's got a gem in 'Jewels'

Steel's story mines drama, romance

By Carl Spinks

With the World Series in full swing, the folks at NBC realize that CBS has a lock on a large, predominantly male audience. But where does that leave the many women and non-sports fans who wouldn't know a home run from a homing pigeon, and don't care, either?

On NBC, that's where. For viewers unconcerned with fastballs and the like, the network proudly presents Danielle Steel's 'Jewels,' a five-hour miniseries airing Sunday and Tuesday, Oct. 18 and 20.

Jewels, Steel's 41st novel, was published in April, and sales quickly went through the proverbial roof. No surprise, though, since Steel is in the Guinness Book of World Records for the feat of 400 weeks aboard the New York Times best-seller list.

As a source for successful movies and miniseries, Steel's qualifications are just as impressive. Danielle Steel's Daddy, for instance, broadcast last October during the Series, ranks as the season's highest-ranked made-for-TV movie. Three notches down that same list, Palomino proved a formidable

opponent for one night's broadcast of Monday Night Football. Other winners in the Steel catalog include Kaleidoscope, Fine Things and Secrets.

The winning tradition should continue with Jewels, a glittering showcase of romance, glamour and powerful human drama. Like past Steel dramatizations, Jewels is brought to the screen with top-notch writing, superlative acting and the highest of production values.

Annette O'Toole (Stand by Your Man) stars as lovely Sarah Thompson, a wealthy young American taken to Europe in 1938 by her parents in order to help her recover from a tragic first marriage. At a London cricket match, Sarah meets dashing William, Duke of Whitefield (Anthony Andrews). Although reticent at first, Sarah cannot resist William's easy charm and self-deprecating wit and agrees to spend her remaining time in England with him. At the train station, they share a romantic goodbye, Sarah fully believing their relationship is at an end.

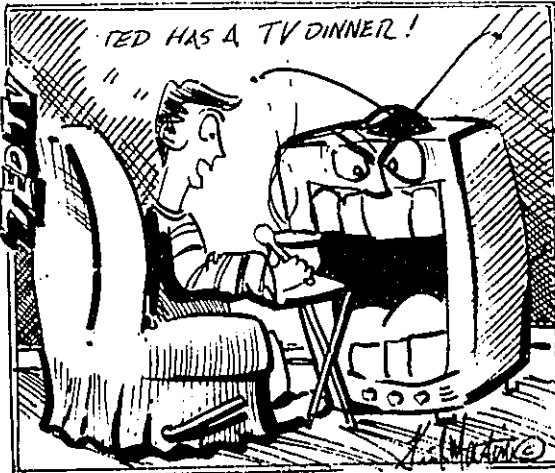
Imagine her surprise when she opens the door of her Italian hotel room to see dazzling banks of red roses and William standing among them, grinning like a schoolboy. "I couldn't let you go," he says.

After a brief courtship, Sarah and William are married. They purchase an abandoned chateau in the French countryside, and Sarah busies herself with its renovation. On the very day of their first son Phillip's birth, England enters the war and William is called into service. Months later, the chateau is taken over by the Nazis for use as a field hospital, and Sarah is not allowed to leave with her son. By war's end, the Nazis are gone and William is home once more, now confined to a wheelchair by injuries suffered in a brutal German prison camp.

Sympathetic to the appalling poverty of their French neighbors, William and Sarah charitable start buying their jewelry and reselling it in the city. As the business expands, stores are opened in London and Rome. All the while, Sarah most cope with the increasingly independent ways of her children (now numbering four) and William's sadly failing health. Through it all, Sarah remains strong and fiercely dedicated to her principles.

Annette O'Toole anchors the miniseries with her strong portrayal of Sarah, though one wishes at times for greater variety in her performance. Anthony Andrews (Brideshead Revisited, Under the Volcano) is perfectly cast as William, a model of British charm and polish. Jurgen Prochnow is memorable in the small role of the Nazi commandant with whom Sarah shares a startling (but chaste) romance.

The supporting cast in Jewels is almost uniform in its quality, from Benedict Taylor's engaging Julian (Sarah's second son) to Corinne Touzel's well-developed portrayal of Emmanuelle, the French peasant girl who becomes one of Sarah's closest allies. One performance, however, stands out for its weakness. Yvonne Scio, though beautiful, is dismally wooden as Julian's treacherous wife.



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