

THE MOD SQUAD



REVIEW

by Cleveland Amory

This show offers you a new kind of detective hero—the teen-agent, or bop cop. Not a quiz kid, nor even a whiz kid, but a genuine fuzz kid. Furthermore, you have three of them—a white boy, a black boy and a white girl. This is, of course, in keeping with the black-and-white trend in color shows this season. In trouble with the law for various minor offenses, they were given a choice—either pay their debt to society or join the boys in blue. They chose the latter. However, perish the thought that they sold out *completely*; after all, what would TV's vast kidland think of that? They haven't: they don't carry weapons and they don't make arrests. Furthermore, although they're supposed to turn their old buddies on—in the sense of making them better—they're not supposed to have to turn them in. "I do not fink on a soul brother," says one of them in the opening episode. And, in another episode, the crime involved, like most of them in *The Mod Squad*, turns out to be one in which the seemingly bad-guy young fry were just pawns in the hands of evil adults. And what could be better TV than half-bad, half-cop kids vs. all-bad, anti-kid adults?

The three fuzzy wuzzies are, in law and in order, as follows: first, Pete Cochran (Michael Cole), who is very rich and very Beverly Hillsy. He is an only child who was apparently kicked out by his parents because he was not only anti-Establishment but also anti-everything. His crime: a joy ride in a stolen car. Second is Linc Hayes (Clarence Williams III), who was one of a

family of 13 from Watts and was picked up by the police during the Watts riot. Third is Julie Barnes (Peggy Lipton), who was picked up for having no visible means of support—a charge which in her case seems a pretty stupid one, but never mind.

There are going to be some things that will bother you about *Mod Squad*. In the first episode there was a particularly over-violent, two-against-one fight, and in the second there were two ridiculous chases which went all the way from a mausoleum to a deserted amusement park. Still, this show does have a lot going for it. On the surface these kids may seem to have chosen just to cop in instead of copping out. But underneath, they are searching not only for desperate criminals but also, sometimes equally desperately, for their own identities. As such, they represent and speak for a similar search on the part of an awful lot of kids nowadays.

Furthermore, along the way, they are engrossing to watch, particularly Clarence Williams III, and though his "soul scenes" with Michael Cole are no threat to Cosby-Culp, either as entertainment or, for that matter, as integration, the fact remains that they have more integrity—and this despite the fact that Cole's characterization still bothers us. As for Miss Lipton, we will cop a plea with her any time. She could be a bit more expressive perhaps; but remember, she's playing it the way kids are—not the way you evil adults wish they were. All in all, we say, B for the show and A for the effort.

END