

Topics

Space, Time and Architecture

Spock Market

Liz Smith reports in The Daily News that Paramount Pictures has filmed the death of Mr. Spock, the emotionless First Officer of Starship Enterprise. It's not certain, but the pointy-eared native of the planet Vulcan may be killed off in the movie "Star Trek II." Given the TV market for Star Trek re-reruns, Leonard Nimoy's famous character can never die. But why terminate him in any form? "Going where no man has gone before" should not require such sacrifice. The cool and deliberate Mr. Spock is a man of peace and we can ill afford to lose him. Trekkies unite.

Fitting the Crime

Embattled RKO General, the broadcast subsidiary of General Tire and Rubber Co. and owner of New York's WOR-TV, can relax a little.

Last year, the Federal Communications Commission found the company

unfit to broadcast in New York, Boston and Los Angeles because of questionable trade agreements with advertisers and a lack of candor about overseas bribery troubles. Now the Court of Appeals has upheld denial of the Boston license but ordered the commission to reconsider the other franchises.

The ruling is reasonable. The advertising practices, while objectionable, were not patently illegal and the overseas behavior of the parent, though not confessed in Boston renewal hearings, was not related to the broadcast operations. These coveted licenses should not be lifted indiscriminately. Fitting the punishment to the offense is good law in communications, too.

Mud

Architects are conspicuous among those preoccupied with a yearning for simpler times. But as two recent exhibitions make clear, it is evidently not enough to renounce modernism for

classical columns and renaissance rotundas. Both shows — a large one called "Earth Architecture" at the Beaubourg in Paris and a smaller one on the "Spectacular Vernacular" of desert building, at Columbia's School of Architecture — focus on how to fashion buildings out of dirt and sand.

Why this enthusiasm for sun-baked brick and rammed earth at a time when structural technology has reached spectacular heights? Is it just another example of the 20th century's continuing love affair with "pure" and "primitive" forms, even as "complexity and contradiction" take their place? Or is the proven energy-efficiency of this kind of traditional construction finally being recognized? Do these timeless and elementary materials serve basic human needs better than steel and concrete?

Perhaps, but we think it all may reflect something more profound. Philosophers have long recognized an urge that sometimes strikes sophisticated societies: *nostalgie de la boue* — a longing for primordial mud.