Summer TV is usually the season for reruns and fillers, a time when we all get to see what we missed intentionally or otherwise, or just plain get stuck with. This summer TV season, however, has been slightly different—one might even think of it as political—and not without its own share of reruns, as low a political pun as that may sound.

The season was kicked off in June with the Liberal Party's leadership convention, a spectacle indeed, if not quite spectacular. When it comes to write the book, A Thousand And One Nights of Great Television, who among us will not want to include the Liberal Party's farewell tribute to Pierre Trudeau? The show featured every trick in the book, from songs and dances to speeches to film clips to interviews to handkerchiefs wiping the corners of puffy eyes. Live TV at its absolutely kitschy best, and all done to the tune of I'll Be Watching You, one of the all-time great paranoia tunes.

Nothing was missed here. Rene Simard tap dancing their way through a thank you to Pierre for doing such a great job; Norman Jewison, Rich Little, and Paul Anka who probably thought that even an Ottawa arena could take on the hyped ambience of a Vegas showroom given the right combination of lights and a tan that just didn't quit. But a revised version of My Way read off the back of an envelope?

In a way it seemed only fitting that the Prime Minister who had made the most use of television during his years in office be sent off in television style, and Trudeau rose to the occasion. His resignation speech, of course, the climax of the evening and for a man who will not be remembered for his oratorial powers, it wasn't half bad. He obviously gave this one a lot of history was out there watching and, like a trooper, he went out with a flourish.

For the confessed convention addict this may seem a much lesser cause than watching the reaction shots of the leadership candidates: John Turner eying the monitor in his box and fixing his bemused smile, though if Richard Nunn was knowing history was out there watching and, like a trooper, he went out with a flourish.

As the Serra Pelada gold slaves feverishly work their tiny claims, tiered one above the other from the bottom of the pit, the fabulous cinematography conjures up Dante's Inferno as well as the Klondike gold rush of 1898. The film gives sketchy background information via brief interviews with prospectors voicing their dreams of wealth (which often come true), and some narrated details of the workers' shelters/hovels, feeding, and the ban on liquor and women.

However, Gold Dust dissipates its energy by side-trips into other areas—the suction mining of the Amazon, building the railway through the jungle and discovering iron ore, tin and bauxite in the process. The film takes on a meandering, repetitious air, and sorely needs further editing.

There's no denying the fabulous visuals of the toiling human ants in the Serra Pelada open-pit mine, but the film should have been shorter and stuck to this one subject.

REVIEW
Tierney On Television

It was once believed by some that television would be good for democracy, but sometimes it seems as though democracy has become good for television. Will that be any less true after more than 200 hours of CBC coverage of another major summertime political event, the XXIII Olympiad?

Kevin Tierney

Closeup On Calgary

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