

CUSTODY WOES

Long gone are the days when children were seen and not heard. Suddenly the little dears are everywhere. At least as far as television is concerned; networks just can't get enough of kids. Latest into the playground is *For The Love Of Aaron*.

Billed as the "true story" of Canadian author Margaret Gibson's battle to keep her 9-year-old son, the docudrama stars Meredith Baxter as the disturbed scribe. Aaron, played by B.C. actor Keegan MacIntosh, finds himself the object of a custody battle between Gibson and her ex-husband, Stuart (Nick Mancuso).

Stuart's claim is based on the fact of Margaret's mental illness, incorrectly diagnosed as schizophrenia. Helped by her best friend Shirley (Joanna Gleason) and a good doctor (John Kapeles), the unhappy writer — is there any other kind? — pulls herself together in time for a happy ending and the final commercial break. (Sun., 9 p.m. on chs. 6, 41).

SWAMP THINGS

Groundling Marsh is a children's drama set in what its producers call "a wondrous world of scrumptious fungus, magical blossoms and endless possibilities." No, we're not talking hallucinogens, we're talking puppets. The five Groundlings live in a swamp, but they're anything but slimy.

In fact they're models to us all; they sing, they dance, they have adventures, they make mistakes and learn from them, they appreciate nature, they give back, they get along, they're articulate, in short they're enlightened. But in a naive and clumsy way.

High production values, terrific puppetry, good tunes and animated segments keep *Groundling Marsh* bubbling along. No, we're not talking swamp gas ... (Tues., 2 p.m. on YTV)

GRITTY CITY

With its cast of 71 main characters and leisurely running time of 26 hours, *The Second Heimat* comes with all the trappings of a television epic. After seeing an episode or two, I think "open-ended" might be a better word.

BEST of the Week

Viewing highlights



Daniel Smith plays mysterious student pal of Henry Arnold as Hermann, a would-be composer, in *The Second Heimat*

Edgar Reitz's lengthy look at *la vie boheme* in Munich in the 1960s is a story without an ending. One instalment leads into the next; friends, lovers, acquaintances come and go.

The nominal hero, Hermann

Simon (Henry Arnold), is a budding composer stuck in a backwater from which he finally manages to escape. He makes his way to Munich, "the city of arts." Just before leaving his village, the overwrought teen gets



Yuppie Tony (Gordon Wolvett) hooks up with hippie River (Stacie Mystysn) in *X-Rated*, from the creators of *Degrassi*

down on his knees to pray: he promises God he'll become a famous composer and never return home. He also swears he'll never fall in love again. Needless to say, the last vow is the first to be broken.

At its core, this is the romance of the struggling artist, the unformed genius, fighting to master his craft and gain recognition. The veneer is a city so gritty, *The Second Heimat* sometimes looks like *The Third Man*, dark, decaying and threatening.

Even though you know that in real life you'd avoid anyone remotely resembling Hermann Simon, he is a compelling character when seen from the right side of a remote control. His justification, if not his redemption, is his music. That's as it should be, but what makes the series so enjoyable is the constant stream of humanity (Thurs., 9 p.m. on ch. 19).

NETWORKING

■ The first rocks will be thrown in the *Scott Tournament Of Hearts*, the women's national curling championship, today. Live coverage from Regina, by commentator Vic Rauter, continues daily until Thursday (Sat., 1:30 p.m. on TSN).

■ The new generation gap, not the old generation gap, is the theme of *X-Rated*, an "offbeat romantic comedy" set in a rundown apartment building. The inhabitants, twentysomething, overeducated and underemployed, have two things in common, their interest in sex and money (Sun., 8 p.m. on chs. 6, 41).

■ MuchMusic/CITY-TV veterans, and we do mean veterans, Erica Ehm and Steve Anthony take a Caribbean break in Montego Bay with *Jammin' In Jamaica '94*. Now that they're longer in the tooth than the hair, the old folks need regular holidays (Sat., 2 p.m. on MM; repeated same time Sun.).

■ The truth about Elvis is that it no longer matters whether he's alive or dead. It's a question of terminology. Let's just say Elvis exists, and leave it at that. If you still want proof, you'll have three chances to check out *Elvis: His Life And Times*, an estate-sanctioned biography hosted by Lisa Hartman and Mac Davis (Mon., noon and 8 p.m.; Tues., 4 a.m. on MM). — Christopher Hume