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S. Observer.

GOOD sound of the week was on News Review (BBC2): the roar of approval which emanated from the crowd watching some product-plugging tennis tournament when the umpire finally summoned up the nerve to disqualify that posturing bean-brain Nastase. As the tire-some Ilie quit the court, the close shot on his sempiternally simpering features was even less edifying than usual, but the ecstasies of the audience made up for it.

Is television a contracting universe? Could the videospace implode through a black hole, never to return? Astronomers are divided, but on this much they agree: as diminishing finance shrinks air-time, mysterious phenomena crop up in the cathode tube. Weirdest of these is the re-tread, otherwise known as the repeat with bells on. The KGB came back on BBC1, eked out with some fresh interviews featuring guttural silhouettes blowing the usual gaff concerning the dark doings of the ubiquitous agency.

The rest of the show was the same as last time, i.e. excessively unfrighting. Film of an ordinary Russian street with ordinary Russians standing about in it was sinistered-up by a verbal reminder that KGB operatives go in for a good deal of standing about on their own account and are not above disguising themselves to look pretty ordinary when the occasion warrants. All of which was true, but not true enough. It was not made clear, for example, that some of the drugs used in the KGB's hospitals are tantamount to direct, not just indirect, torture. A commentary intended to be piercing came out as patty-cake.

An Open Door (BBC2) programme made by and about the inhabitants of Tolmers Village did miles better. Tolmers Village is a scrappy but engaging area of old London which has thus far managed to stave off the full wrath of the developers, whose Euston masterpiece looms close by. Nevertheless the mere threat of development has been enough to run the area down. The culprits were clearly identified as a hulking outfit called Stock Conversions and Investment Trust, spearheaded by our old pal Joe Levy, who previously gave us—but you guessed—the Euston complex abovementioned.

It was a telling, angry, 'World in Action'-type ploy to show us the exquisitely

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proportioned and meticulously preserved façade of Joe's own home in Grosvenor Square. The message didn't need much spelling out. The programme, billed as 'A Film by Philip Thomson,' did credit to the concerned and imaginative involvement with common life which is the best vestige of the now super-annuated Youth Culture. One lady who has lived in the district for 23 years reckons that the squatters have brought in the only sense of community the area has ever had. It would be nice to think that real life is like 'Passport to Pimlico' and that little streets could fight the great. But in fact it took widespread economic collapse to stop the developers in their galumphing tracks. Indigence arrived just in time, before prosperity wiped Britain out.

A level-headed and absorbing Omnibus (BBC1) on David Hockney clashed with Resnais's film Stavisky (BBC2). It is inconceivable that anybody would have wanted to watch the one who did not also want to watch the other, so naturally they were put on simultaneously, in order to further the BBC's new policy of deploying its constricted resources to least advantage. Starting with 'Stavisky' and quickly finding Belmondo unbelievable, I switched to Hockney, whose work I persist in finding superb despite the fact that everybody agrees with me.

Melvyn Bragg, Hockney's interviewer, is nice to the point of neurosis and would sooner strangle himself with his own hands than ask anybody an awkward question. For once this characteristic was no drawback, since Hockney readily gives what answers he can. Even more valuably, he is disinclined to give what answers he can't, and probably talks less bullshit per square yard about art than any practitioner since Renoir. According to a documentary about Hockney which has recently been going the rounds, his fine picture of an underwater swimmer was abandoned and recommenced because of the emotion engendered by a terminating love affair. According to this programme, he started again because he had been stymied by a formal problem. This was less spectacular news but in