

# The agony of life and death in Beirut

# TV

## CHOICE

WAR and its debilitating effects on the population are the focus of *The Last Night*, a sad and touching film on the continuing internal war in Beirut, once the most sophisticated city of the Middle East. Children grow up knowing only the brutality, estrangement and impotence of life in a country torn apart by war.

In this film, a young woman consults her doctor about why she can't conceive another child. Two little children are separated by death when one of them is gunned down by a sniper and the other is tragically injured. Urbane actors and writers relax in their living room discussing the joy of a day without a single shot being fired. Parents attempt to explain the terror of war to young children.

A man is stopped at gunpoint and bashed as he drives home from work. A children's birthday party seems like a hopeless pretence as the parents must wonder who will be there next year. A young married

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**The Last Night: SBS, 9.30pm**  
**Grange Hill: ABC, 5pm**

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*Times and programs may vary*

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couple must endure the woman's nightmares and neuroses after she is raped.

Love and faith in worthwhile relationships is lost as people struggle to maintain normal lives while living in a state of siege. Behind the gunfire the real face of war emerges, the tearing apart of families, neighbourhoods and friends. Going to the theatre, a restaurant, or the supermarket or watching children playing outside is fraught with terror and uncertainty.

By contrast, in *Grange Hill* horribly indulged perfect pests play safely at a school where the worst thing that can happen is a rainy day.

In this series from the BBC Children's Department relationships between staff and secondary school students are exposed and playground politics emerges as votes are taken for the school magazine committee.

Locker room schemes are unhatched, trouble makers are sought out and dispensed with and discipline seems a little eccentric.

This series, when first shown in Britain, revolutionised children's TV. After generations of squeaky clean shows this was the first to come even remotely close to tackling the problems encountered.

At first there was considerable parent and teacher objection to the series. Scriptwriter Phil Redmond – the man who originated the series – tackled sex, teenage pregnancy, bullying, drug-taking and the problems of unemployment in a style that young people accepted as realistic.

— BERWYN LEWIS



A *Grange Hill* 'perfect pest' waits for a rainy day