

Well tried formula

FOR the first five minutes, *The Aphrodite Inheritance* (BBC-1, Wednesday January 3, 8.5 pm) looked as though it might please someone else besides the Cyprus Tourist Board. The faintly recognisable theme music by George Kotsonis accompanied a thrilling sequence culminating in the ill-fated Barry Collier's (Barry Halliday) plunge over a cliffside to his death. After that, everything went downhill.

Adhering to a well-trying formula, Michael J. Bird employed a familiar scenario in which swarthily sinister figures peered around corners, mysterious ladies made even more mysterious advances and no-one but a fool would trust anyone else.

In the midst of it all, our hero – the dead man's brother David (Peter McEnery) – conducted himself with a somnolent naivety that only a charitable suggestion of jet-lag could explain. Mr McEnery's performance so far is not distinguished – but one must take into account the material with which he has to work.

As Helene, Alexandra Bastedo (stunningly but impractically dressed for a trip to the mountains) is certainly alluring and may develop her personality in due course. Stefan Gryff fared better with the devious Charalambous (a dab hand with the tomato juice) and Godfrey James is to be commended for a solid portrayal of Inspector Dimas.

As the plot ground on, potential troublemakers, led by the ingratiating Hellman (Paul Maxwell) lurked in the background and provided some small incentives for future viewing. "How much further?" enquired the hapless David after an apparently endless drive in Helene's car through the comparatively featureless Cyprus countryside "We've been driving for an hour already". It seemed longer.

There was no excuse for this prolonged and tedious passage. If it was designed to attract visitors then, for one viewer at least, it was counter-productive and dramatically quite without justification.

There is nothing overtly wrong with *The Aphrodite Inheritance*. Terence Williams' direction is competent and acting reaches an acceptable standard. It simply lacks a heart.