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# PERSPECTIVES

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## Television: Now, drunker than ever!

*Even when you're sober you can enjoy the delightfully spinning world that comes with heavy drinking*

**"T**V is good." Thus ABC has assailed us, and thus a large percentage of America seems to think ... still.

Well, I'm not sure about TV, but I have a mantra of my own: "Beer is good." Not just beer, of course — the full range of intoxicants provides hours of cheap entertainment.

Now, I readily acknowledge this is a horrible thing to say. After all, as the University soberly points out in letters and health center bulletins, alcohol abuse is a serious problem, and the misuse of alcohol hurts students, drinkers and non-drinkers alike.

That aside, beer is expensive. (Good beer, anyway.) Television is free.

It has taken the medium a few years to figure that out, but the folks who produce TV seem to have done the math. If television could only achieve the same effects as beer (less the liver damage), it could finally do what

hoards of brewers have been striving to do for generations: control the youth of America.

You don't believe me. You think I'm being conspiratorial again. Or perhaps you already think television has won.

Perhaps. But I see signs on the small screen that a final battle for our souls is being waged; television is becoming intoxicated.

Not intoxicating. The flickering light of the tube has always had the power to draw Americans in, hence television trays, television dinners and television guides.

No, television is now, officially, drunk. Television slurs and staggers and spins in precisely the way the world does under the influence of that former champion, cheap liquor.

It took me a while to notice this; I thought it was simply because I was drunk while watching television. Now, however, I have become convinced that the world of television is increasingly becoming an alcohol-induced haze.

It all makes sense. For the most part, drinking has never been about quality or taste — students swig alcohol to feel reality spin out from under their feet.

Similarly, we all tune into television to discover a world wonderfully separate from our own existence. When you're drunk, every woman looks attractive. When you watch TV, every woman is attractive.

People become more violent after spending a few hours at the corner tavern; people on television arbitrarily shoot each other for ratings. In real life, a disturbing number of "encounters" take place after drinking heavily; at least on television, the characters never get STDs and rarely end up pregnant. Vicarious promiscuity is safer than the real thing.

There's nothing so loud or boorish as an angry drunk man, unless it's a character on a Fox sitcom. And if you think your intellectual capacity is reduced after a couple of pints, you should check out the brainpower of the people on Ally McBeal who allegedly passed the bar.

Until recently, however, television was always a sharp-edged imitation of a drunk world. Sure, the people were staggering fools, but unless your reception was shaky, the world didn't sway in that delightful way it does after you finish off a fifth with a couple of liver-free friends.

Then, praise the gods, along came MTV. Every elementary student cranked up on Ritalin has a longer attention span than the hand-camera holding lunatics who snap rapidly from cleavage shot to sweaty lead singer and then back to cleavage shot. The world may not be spinning, but it certainly isn't holding still in the world of music television.

It took a while for MTV to spread. Eventually, however, the over-caffeinated kitten style of music videos spread like a nasty case of Ebola through every aspect of television. I think I caught a rapid-

fire montage on "60 Minutes" the other night.

Of course, one cannot forget the hand-held camera and its contributions to nauseating dizziness. Remember the first season of "Homicide"? I thought Woody Allen was directing while being chased by a pit bull.

There are more factors, of course. Computer animation with its spinning logos and morphing faces has certainly made for a more fuzzy reality, for example. Add in a testosterone-laden remote jockey and you have a television experience that begins to resemble the net effect of too many shots of bad vodka.

This irritates some critics. They miss the linear story lines and clean camera shots; they would also lament the loss of realism, but that has never factored heavily into television.

Youth, however, are eating it up. Americans are expected to watch the last episode of "Seinfeld" in unheard of numbers, and while Jerry et al might have a still picture they have a very wobbly lifestyle.

The networks are suffering, but television as a whole remains strong. We love our drunken medium in all its variations, from Conan O'Brien acting like a high schooler who sampled the punch he spiked to the Simpsons and their excursions into animated acid trips.

And why shouldn't we? Sure, television distracts us from the political arena and social awareness. Sure, it teaches us about a world that doesn't exist in which happiness is everywhere Visa wants you to be. Sure, television news spends more time analyzing rain clouds than the federal budget. But at least it doesn't damage our liver.

Besides, whenever the television world starts spinning we can hit the off switch. If only it was so easy to recover from yet another night spent with our long-necked, brown-colored beer bottle friend.

*Mike Schmierbach is the editorial editor for the Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the newspaper.*

### Quoted

*"Oceans rise. Cities fall. Hope survives."*

From an advertisement for "Deep Impact." Hype triumphs.

*"It's her world, we're just living in it."*

Taken from an ad for "Woo." Damr, and I thought I was still "Living in Oblivion."

*"It's 'Sleepless in Seattle' and 'While You Were Sleeping' wrapped into one great movie."*

Critic Nancy Jay, quoted in an advertisement for "Still Breathing." It's pain and suffering all rolled into one rough evening.

*"The date-night movie of choice! Funny and touching!"*

Rolling Stone movie critic quoted in an ad for "Sliding Doors." Huh, huh, he said touching.

*"The best date movie this year!"*

John Monaghan, also talking about "Still Breathing." Wait, I'm confused — do I have to go to two movies on my date?

*"Featured will be some of the greatest music to ever hit the stage, including songs from 'The King and I,' 'Oklahoma,' 'South Pacific,' 'Flower Drum Song' and more!"*

From an ad for the Oregon Symphony's tribute to Rodgers and Hammerstein. Hmm ... when was that "Woo" film again?

*"It's one of the wildest operas to ever hit the stage!"*

From the Portland Opera's pitch for "The Love for Three Oranges." It's also the best date-opera of the year!

SOURCE: Friday's Oregonian A&E

### OPINION



Mike Schmierbach

### DRAWING BOARD



### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Research reviews

This is in response to Rob Moseley's review on Tori Amos (ODE, May 8). I found his review to be shallow and inaccurate. If Moseley were a true Tori fan (as I definitely am), he would have known the truth behind this album. Amos suffered from a miscarriage early in 1997, and the loss of the baby is what triggered her to write this new album. The songs talk about loss, anger and the respect for the miracle of life. When she talked about the woman who "could hold back a glacier, but she couldn't keep Baby alive," she is talking about herself and the loss of her baby.

Amos also has many other songs that refer to the incident in her album: "Playboy Mommy," "iieeee" and "She's Your Cocaine." Moseley also made a reference to the song "Hotel." Amos has said this song is about a past love and her struggle to help him out. In her lyrics "I have to learn to let you crash down," she wants to let him go, but a part of her is still connected to him and wants to help him out in his time of need. She recently had

an interview that explained her feelings behind these songs and the album. If Moseley had taken the time to research, he would have been informed of the sadness and love that is very much an important part to this album.

I felt Moseley did not accurately represent the album to his readers. Besides the fact that she deserved five stars and was only given four, Moseley gave ridiculous judgments about the order of her songs. Is there such a thing as a "correct" order to play songs? I felt that she put the songs together in a wonderful and spiritual way. Also, it's true that this album isn't about hate and vindictiveness but is very much about sorrow and respect for nature. Amos is probably the most lyrical and sensual artist around. She is very talented when it comes to music, and with every album, she continues to take my breath away.

Thank you for taking the time to read this complaint. I hope in the future Moseley will research a little more before he gives a review on an album.

Lindan Spromberg  
 Undeclared