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Politics as usual

Bryan Dixon Emerald

Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura has captivated younger voters and captured their votes. But, is the attention being paid to him happening for all the right reasons?



Laura
Lucas

Everyone knows that college students don't vote. Not even when it affects us.

Voter turnout for ASUO elections is in the lower two digits, and nationwide we are hardly a blip on the radar screen. Between studying, dating, planning our futures and partying, we college students don't have a lot of time on our hands. Anyone want to go vote? I'd rather watch the Ducks on TV. Everyone knows that college students don't vote. Not even when it affects us.

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Countless studies try to show we are disenfranchised because we are disillusioned with candidates,

bored with politics as usual or busy with our own lives. Maybe it's because we are untargeted as a voting group. George W. Bush and Al Gore don't get my blood flowing. They don't even seem to try.

And why would they? We don't have money to contribute or taxes to care too much about. All we have are our votes, and since we don't have a good track record of even using them, it's kind of a waste.

Enter Jesse "The Body/The Mind/The (fill in the blank)" Ventura. The somewhat infamous Reform Party candidate, ex-pro wrestler, Navy SEAL and Harley Davidson rider, has sparked the flame of politics in young people everywhere. People are so entranced with him they registered to vote just to vote for him. All good, right?

Well, the attraction is similar to watching those Fox TV "World's Scariest" shows. You know that it's a freak of nature but the drama keeps you interested.

Young people voted in pretty solid numbers because they thought they saw a candidate with the gumption to take on the institution they also loathed. Ventura is the anti-Clinton.

But is Ventura a prophet or a false

god? Is he worth the hoopla, and is he worth the price of getting interested in politics? Some in our parents' generation certainly don't think so.

"I think the very fact that Jesse won because of his celebrity is most distressing," Steve Schier, a political-science professor at Carleton College in Northfield, Minn., said in the Jan. 18 issue of Time. "There was this generational appeal for a wrestler by young voters who never cast a ballot before. It was not clear if they cared whether he could do the job."

We know we are attracted to oddball displays of brute honesty, drama and altogether freakish nonsense. We know we want to be different from our parents. We know we aren't supposed to care. We know the guy who used to wear feather boas and wrestled John Lithgow in a movie will be up for anything. But do we want that in our elected officials?

Well, you judge. He's seemed to perform pretty well so far. His approval rating in Minnesota reached a high of 73 percent in July. But one thing with Ventura is that when he opens his mouth, he inserts his foot. His latest numbers hover at 54 per

cent. You'll see why:

In a candid interview in Playboy magazine this month (November's issue), Jesse "The Interview" Ventura manages to insult organized religion, women who think they have been sexually harassed, people who have committed suicide, Hulk Hogan, overweight people, the media and colleges that make football players go to class. He advocates legalizing drugs and prostitution, thinks an armed guard at Columbine High School could have saved some lives and says he wants to be reincarnated as a 38 double-D bra.

What's missing from the interview isn't lack of intelligence or even logic — you can see why he says what he says without agreeing with him. What's missing is tact. Ventura says he wants to live by the golden rule; he really just wants to live by the golden quote.

And that sounds like politics as usual.

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