

Editor in chief: Jack Clifford
Associate Editors: Jonathon Allen, Jeff Smith
Newsroom: (541) 346-5511
Room 300, Erb Memorial Union
P.O. Box 3159, Eugene, OR 97403
E-mail: ode@oregon.uoregon.edu

Perspectives

Oregon Daily
Emerald

Survive This!

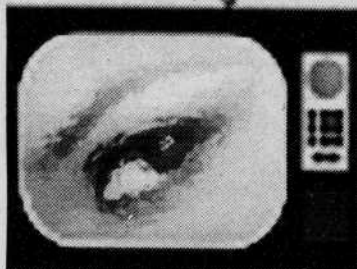


Photo illustration by Azle Malinao-Alvarez Emerald

The ever-increasing trend toward reality-based TV shows reflects everything but reality.

We've resisted the urge until now, but the Emerald is finally weighing in on the whole "reality-based television" trend.

CBS is leading the way with at least two shows — "Survivor" and "Big Brother," which gobble up two hours of prime-time television each Wednesday — and only the TV boobahs know how many more of these programs are headed down the creative flume.

Please, for the sake of humankind, stop the ride now; we want to get off.

The emergence of these two shows has generated endless debate on newspaper op-ed pages, at office water coolers and in normal daily conversation. Even Bryant Gumbel and Jane Clayson, hosts of "The Early Show," CBS' morning "news" program, host a Thursday morning roundtable discussion on the previous night's "Survivor" outcomes.

Are we missing something here? Why do the pertinent questions relate to which loud-mouthed lout was thrown off the island? Shouldn't the questions be more pointed and relevant?

First and foremost: When are we as a society ever going to extinguish our excessive, obsessive desire to peek

into others' lives? Is that asking too much, to just set aside our voyeuristic tendencies and maybe — hey, here's a novel idea — focus our energies instead on a few real problems?

It's sad really, the sometimes ridiculous contrasts brought about by "Survivor."

Millions of viewers got all squeamish when they heard about some idiot on that island recently eating a rat. OK, not to sound melodramatic, but can't we be more concerned about what isn't being eaten?

According to a 1997 report released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, almost 100 billion pounds of safe, edible food — meat and poultry, fruit and vegetables, milk and eggs — are thrown away every year by retailers, restaurants and farmers while 25 million Americans are hungry, including 12 million children.

And we're all in a tizzy because someone ate a damn rat?

Wednesday night's premiere of "Big Brother" was just as disheartening. The show — evoking beat-us-all-over-the-head references to an Orwellian society — is scary because the cameras are never off, giving the house residents zero privacy.

Come to think of it, however, that sounds similar to any civil protest in Eugene: the police are videotaping the protesters, who are videotaping the police, all cameras whirring non-stop.

Why not leave out the Orwellian society part and just stick with the beat-us-all-over-the-head aspect?

We as media consumers possess the ability to throw these shows off our viewing islands, one at a time. Television shows — especially serials — do not stay on the air unless people are watching them.

The fact that "Survivor" has, well, survived and thrived is proof that TV watchers are eating them up. It's kind of like downing that dirty rat. These shows are a disgusting representation of what U.S. society will consume to keep its television habit alive.

So, here's a shift in concept: Turn the damn TV off. Go outside, and enjoy the measly three months of sunshine that we get in these parts. You don't need to identify with characters on television, because if you want, you really can have a life of your own.

This editorial represents the view of the Emerald editorial board. Responses may be sent to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu.

THE WEEK IN THUMBS



To the Eugene police union:

The union dropped its plans to sue City Councilor David Kelly for his comments relating to police actions during the June 17 and 18 anarchist rally. Freedom of speech reigns again.

To Venus and Serena Williams:

The sisters are the main act today at Wimbledon, where they play in the semifinals.



To locust swarms:

Northwest China was under siege but 250,000 workers helped eradicate the pests with a massive spraying program.

To Florida:

The same day the state dropped its law requiring adult motorcyclists to wear helmets, a man, without a helmet, died in St. Petersburg when his cycle turned into the path of an oncoming van.

Second-hand invasion of the mind snatchers

It's 8 a.m., July 1, and I am sitting in the Seattle airport on my way to Orange County for the weekend.

My gripe — besides the fact that there really must be no sun up here — is this:

It's not even 8:15 in the morning yet, and there's a television behind me with sound shrieking from overhead speakers, invading what could be a peaceful morning. There are about 30 people in the gate area, and 20 of them have their eyes, their consciousness and their morning glued to the boob tube hanging from the wall.

As I sit here, my back to the screeching commercials as my only defense, I can't help being just a bit ticked off. Being a journalist who will live on the support of advertis-

ers, I of all people respect the right of commercials and media to occupy a place in our lives.

But, we as consumers have a fundamental right to choose when we are going to expose ourselves to information technologies.

I should have the right to sit here and read my book without the distraction of that blaring box screaming for my attention.

Now, I can admit that the people around me also have the right to watch the TV if they want but forcing that chaos into other people's consciousness is as intrusive as allowing my fellow travelers to smoke cigarettes in this waiting

area. While second-hand smoke is detrimental to a person's physical health, some people find that their mental health suffers when they are forced to be around the TV.



COMMENTARY
Jonathon Allen

We fence off smoking rooms in the airport for people who want to kill their lungs. Why not enclose TV rooms for people who want to fry their brains?

When I first arrived at the airport, there was a little girl sitting behind me with her mother. She had an open book in her lap, but her eyes were fixated on the screen. I can't help but think she would have been reading that book had it been quiet in here. Instead, she was

watching fashion commercials that were masked as a CNN Headline News report.

Well, it's almost 8:30 now, and the number of people waiting for flights has increased. The little girl is gone, but there are plenty of other people sitting around, reading materials in their laps and eyes stolen by an invasion into our lives.

I'm going to try to read some more of my book — a critical analysis of television titled "Channels of Discourse, Reassembled" — but maybe I'll just go find a smoking room to save myself the trouble and the second-hand distraction.

Jonathan Allen is an associate editor for the Oregon Daily Emerald. His views do not necessarily reflect those of the Emerald. He can be contacted at jra2970@gladstone.uoregon.edu.

Letters to the editor

Inaccuracies damage reputations

It was nice that you did an article on Bach's "St. John Passion" and the panel discussion concerning it (ODE,

June 29). It would have been even nicer if the article had been accurate. The names listed below the photo in no way matched individuals pictured.

More importantly, Johann Sebastian Bach's "St. John Passion" is certainly not a "song." It is a major choral work, comprised of some 40 arias, recitatives

and chorales. The work is approximately two hours in length, and features vocal soloists, chorus and orchestra. It is arguably one of the greatest choral masterpieces ever written.

You do your readers a disservice by such inaccurate reporting. There are many people from all over the world

here for the Bach Festival. Those who read this article will certainly carry away a negative impression of your paper. Unfortunately, they may also assume that your article reflects the level of knowledge in Eugene as well.

Ellwood Cushman
University grad, 1970

Word On the Street.

What do you think of last week's Supreme Court ruling that lifted Nebraska's ban on partial-birth abortions?



I would agree with the Supreme Court's ruling because I think that central government doesn't have the right to have that much control and someone who you don't know doesn't have the right to make those decisions in your life.

—Justin Simmons, philosophy junior



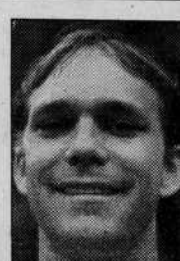
I totally agree with the ruling and I think that it still remains a woman's choice to decide what she wants to do. I don't think it should be a political issue but it seems to be. There's always going to be extremes one way or another and people are going to try to sway opinion.

—Alise Carter, education grad student



It breaks my heart that people are so concerned about civil rights that they don't consider the civil rights of an unborn child. This is a neglected area of our population and people are more concerned about convenience for their family or their lifestyle — often — than they are for children.

—Joan Kelley, grad student for middle school and secondary special education



I think that it's fantastic that a conservative court, like the Supreme Court [is] right now, was able to keep the right to abortion open. I'm actually terrified about what's going to happen when George Bush gets in office and starts putting in a bunch of conservative justices, because we're going to start losing that right.

—Tertius Rivers, chemistry grad student



There are times when people have to make their own decisions about what goes on in their life. I think it's always going to be with us as a controversial issue and I think too many people spend too much time worrying about what other people do with their lives instead of taking care of their own.

—Faye Spidell, campus visitor