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EDITORIAL

Reality shows give viewers sorry reality

Ah, the world of reality television. Another year goes by, another network hunts down some of America's, er, less intelligent citizens and exploits their usually grave personality defects for the masses. Typically, the masses don't immediately realize that what they are watching is often a sad misrepresentation of — drumroll — reality.

Of course, the subject of criticizing reality shows has itself inched toward the cliché. It's common for the media to brutally question whether Ruben really deserved to be an American Idol, or why Nikki McKibbin, the worst catastrophe in music since Hanson, wasn't ditched sooner.

Yes, that's about as heavy as it gets.

Our reasoning for joining the fray and weighing in on this entertainment phenomenon is the devastating "reality" that viewers will have to watch reruns of Jessica Simpson making a complete idiot of herself. The season finale for MTV's "Newlyweds: Nick and Jessica" — which features millionaires Jessica "Are buffalo wings made of buffaloes?" Simpson and her new husband, Nick Lachey — aired Tuesday, and all those people who weren't in on the joke will cry because the show's intense drama and exploration of the human pathos will end. That is, until next season.

But the show is not unique. E! Entertainment already used the idea of exploiting moronic celebrities when it gave us "The Anna Nicole Show," wherein Anna Nicole Smith slaps a permanent "poor me" look on her face and flounders around the most gaudily decorated house ever constructed.

"Newlyweds" has basically the same premise except for a few extremely key details: Jessica Simpson can't do her laundry, she can't take out the trash and she thinks chickens swim in the sea.

But what about "Survivor," the popular reality show that helped spark the craze on major networks? We think after seven seasons the American people are generally convinced you can pretty much live through anything. "Survivor: Pulau Tiga," "The Australian Outback," "Africa," "Marquesas," "Thailand," "The Amazon" and "Pearl Islands." Soon we'll see "Survivor: R. Kelly's House" or "Survivor: Oregon University System," where students brave deep state budget gaps and class cuts while dodging Department of Public Safety vehicles as they attempt to graduate.

That would be our reality. Trying not to get voted off a show based solely on how fake you can be as a person, sadly, is not.

Possibly the most amazing thing about reality shows, however, is their audience. Basically, the bizarre genre of reality television draws two sorts of nuts: those who laugh and those who dream. The laughers religiously pursue the shows purely for their humor and debate for weeks about just how in the hell the network managed to get anybody more dimwitted than the last show's sorry lot of miscreants. The dreamers, on the other hand, not only pursue the shows, but fervently incorporate them into every aspect of their lifestyle, constantly hoping that, someday, they too might have the opportunity be duped by a plumber. Hence, a new American dream is born — white picket fences are out, going to an island with dozens of beautiful women and trying to overcome the temptation to cheat on your girlfriend is in.

See you next season, Jessica.

EDITORIAL POLICY

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one party / divided

This Monday, former first lady Barbara Bush called her son's potential Democratic opponents for the 2004 presidential campaign a "sorry group" on NBC's "Today" show. Sadly, I must agree with her — even if she did spawn the beady-eyed, calculating offspring of Lucifer himself.

In a poll released in early September, nearly two-thirds of those questioned couldn't name even one individual seeking the Democratic Party's nomination for president.

Now, despite having amassed roughly \$95 million in campaign contributions, the nine Democrats vying for their party's nomination still have failed to pique the public's interest.

Amazingly, no candidate has been able to separate him- or herself from the others with a positive, powerful message that grips the public. Compared to the widely varying views of these candidates, our current president looks strong and focused — even if he isn't. You don't win elections with smear campaigns.

That being said, if you can't beat George W. Bush, you should be officially disbarred from participating in all other life events. The faces of every person ever to lose to Bush at anything should have their pictures mounted on giant billboards for all the world to see.

That grubby little worm wears his frigid, blackened, unbeating heart on his sleeve, yet more than half of Americans still approve of his performance.

But Howard Dean, John Edwards, John Kerry and Dick Gephardt haven't distinguished themselves much from their pulseless adversary. Instead of separating themselves from the twisted worldview of the Republicans, Democrats are playing right into their hands with lame and ineffective character attacks.

Not only are these candidates failing themselves, they're letting down the Party and millions of Americans who are just waiting to see some real leadership from their flaky and spineless party.

Four of the leading contenders have spent a combined \$5.5 million on television advertising in an attempt to sway public opinion. But, judging by a recent USA Today/CNN/Gallup Poll, it's not working.

The poll shows former Republican and military commander Wesley Clark in the lead with support from 19 percent of the nation's left-leaning public. Following



Eric Layton Illustrator



Joe Bechard
 Cultural obstetrician

closely behind Clark are Dean, Joe Lieberman, Kerry and Gephardt with 13, 12, 10 and 9 percent support, respectively.

Although their financial capabilities hardly match up to Bush's \$83 million of campaign contributions, it shouldn't take record dollar amounts to knock a deranged lunatic out of the highest, most respected office in the world. Of course, if the people really demanded government accountability, we would have already driven that degenerate twerp out of the White House with blunt stones and long, sharpened sticks.

But jackass Democrats, unlike their elephant-headed counterparts, are less willing to work together. While the conservative political wing finds more solidarity as it moves farther to the right, Democrats find themselves stranded in an ever-expanding rift of uncertainty and disarray. With the lack of a clear and definite agen-

da, those dopey Democrats are taking their followers on a scenic trip to nowhere. Nothing else could explain the conservative agenda becoming more exclusive despite its gains in popularity.

Supporters of the Democrats can't decide on a unified agenda. Because of this, we have a Republican in donkey's clothing leading the polls, while Jumpin' Joe Lieberman hops on whatever bandwagon rolls through Washington and Dennis Kucinich sets himself up to be the next scapegoat — à la Ralph Nader — for a potential Democratic failure. None of them knows what's going on in their campaigns; because of this, Americans who are fed up with the direction of current U.S. policy have, essentially, a more limited choice.

With the party so divided, Republicans can have their way with the American political system and all Democrats will have is an idea of what they won't do when the next time rolls around.

Either Democrats need to unite under a specific agenda, or the American public should seriously seek to establish a more representative form of democracy than a two-party system.

Contact the columnist at joebechard@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

Tolerate others, don't accept them

I am the epitome of what the self-proclaimed tolerant elements of society cannot accept. I am a white heterosexual male who is Christian and anti-abortion. I am 23 years old and my 20-year-old wife is four months pregnant. My friends and family think that I am more conservative than Rush Limbaugh and Newt Gingrich combined.

GUEST COMMENTARY

My cultural paradigm is derived from a heritage of pioneers that trekked across the plains to help settle the Western states. My way of life is embodied in my very soul. I make no apologies for my culture, which promotes faith in God and patriotism for my country. I only ask that my culture be tolerated,

not accepted. And I reserve the right to observe the same policy with regard to others' cultures and belief systems. I believe, as our forefathers taught, that we are all endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights, among which are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Regardless of belief or culture, all humankind deserves this respect. And I have no ambition or desire to act otherwise.

However, I do not believe that implies we must accept each other's cultures or beliefs. The very act would necessitate relinquishing a portion of our beliefs. I make this point in reflection of "National Coming Out Day."

As human beings, all people regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc. deserve respect and tolerance. However, that does not imply acceptance of practices that

offend or contradict cultural values. I do not have to accept "alternative" lifestyles as a viable alternative. The very act of accepting homosexuality or lesbianism as a viable alternative would negate very important and core beliefs of my faith. The act of accepting my theological discourse would negate the belief in "alternative" lifestyles for those that practice them.

Just as people of "alternative" and "diverse" lifestyles do not wish laws and societal norms that impose undue pressure on their cultural belief system, neither do I. So when "coming out," ensure that you are not demanding acceptance. To do so would be intolerant of my way of life, and that is unacceptable.

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