



Aaron Shakra

Notebooks of DJ Serpentine

Media doesn't portray reality

The best drama on television isn't "ER," "The West Wing" or "The Sopranos" — it's your news channel, providing the best drama money can buy, presented in a form available for consumption, 24 hours a day and seven days a week.

Sure, it probably comes as no surprise that the information you take as fact is fiction, a crafted entertainment of the highest caliber, carefully scripted and presented in high-definition widescreen (where available). There's so much money involved in making this stuff look good that you might even confuse it with reality. But overall, there's about as much reality in the news as in any reality television show.

What perhaps isn't as obvious, however, is what you're missing.

There is no doubt that information is being presented by these newscasts. But it's shown in ways emphasizing the visual presentation and not the actual content. This has been labeled "sensationalism" in the past, but whatever it is, its powerful formula has proven reliable and financially lucrative for those funding the shows.

But if you think "the news" tells you what's happening in the world, you're dreadfully mistaken. First, think about this: Say corporation Y owns a news channel and corporation Y also makes movies, video games, releases music, maybe owns a radio station here or there and perhaps even a newspaper. Wouldn't it be silly to consider these various mediums separate from one another? Or not influenced by one another? For all these different products — be it a film or a newscast — the end result for corporation Y is the need to sell you something. Under this edict, why shouldn't coverage of a war look like a video game? Why shouldn't a television news anchor look like a movie star (well okay, not all of them — but most wear at

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but that still doesn't make up for the gross sight of her remains covering the back seat.

The group stops at a nearby farmhouse in order to wait for the sheriff, who picks up the body. The sheriff's mocking of the corpse is comical until it turns out he is part of the family that includes the chain saw-bearing madman, Leatherface. Jessica Biel's character Erin is the equivalent of the 1974 version's Sally, who is left to escape Leatherface and his crew after her friends are slain one by one.

In the original, the deadly family consisted of three men and a decrepit old grandpa; in the new version, the family is a larger clan of weirdos, including a few homely women and a little boy. This is a case where more doesn't equal better. The original characters were classically simple, while the new ones bring an overkill of frightful and shocking moments.

The most cleverly disturbing moment in the film is when Leatherface, who wears a mask of his victims' faces, turns to Erin wielding his chain saw and wearing the face of her dead boyfriend. One moment that stuck with me hours after the film ended was when Erin finds one of her friends alive but missing a limb and hanging from a hook in Leatherface's basement of dismembered bodies. She stabs her friend to death to put him out of his misery.

From the first kill on, the film is a non-stop ride of climaxes, chase scenes and body mutilations. Unlike the original, which has more sporadic high-intensity scenes, the new version doesn't leave enough time between scenes to take a deep breath.

The new film's elaborately gross setting, overdone suspense and graphic killings deliver thrills very successfully. They're more like I-want-to-throw-up thrills instead of exciting thrills, but maybe that's what Halloween is all about.

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CONCERT

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others would be judged. Few have matched the intimacy and soft passion that Smith shared with his fans through his music. He took all those ugly thoughts, the ones most of us pretend don't exist, and dressed them up with guitar and made them into songs so pretty that hearing them makes your heart break all over again. A statement from his label, DreamWorks Records, eloquently states "(H)e was perhaps his generation's most gifted singer-

songwriter. His enormous talent could change your life with a whisper." Smith's music has a comforting honesty that isn't forced or contrived, and that is hard to find.

Last Wednesday I once more turned to his music for comfort. This time, it was the news of his death, at the age of 34, that I needed solace from. The past week I've been noticing people doing the same. The night the news of his death broke, I called one of my friends and I could hear "Miss Misery" playing in the background. A couple days later, at another friend's apartment, I noticed her copy of "Roman Candle" sitting

next to the CD player instead of on the shelf with the rest of her CDs.

Since that first Smith concert, I have been both spoiled and lucky enough to see a great many shows with talented and responsive musicians. However, that show, and Smith's music, were the catalyst for me. And Elliott, I just want you to know that I keep you apart, deep in my heart, separate from the rest, where I like you the best.

Contact the Pulse columnist at helenschumacher@dailyemerald.com. Her opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

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