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# Today's mindless TV shows reflect those of years past

I don't watch a lot of television. Occasionally some Comedy Central at a friend's house, an odd episode of "The Simpsons," some CNN for kicks or the Fox News channel for laughs. That about sums it up. Never seen an episode of "Survivor." Never sat through "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation," "Fear Factor" or "The West Wing." The intricate human dramas of "The O.C." and "Smallville" remain unseen by these eyes.

Is this some sort of statement? Maybe some rebellion against the homogenization of society? Will I be living in a shack in Montana by the end of the year, typing poorly spelled anti-authoritarian manifestos and mumbling incoherent phrases about the Industrial Revolution? I doubt it, as would anyone who has spent winter gnawing undercooked squirrel meat in a poorly insulated wooden structure in the middle of the woods. Eventually you lose your revolutionary zeal and return to a comfortable life of warm food, toilet paper and shampoo. But I digress.

So why this fatwa against television? Not malice, for sure, and certainly not some kind of intellectual pretense, as I've never really seen myself as "too good" for anything, except maybe UPN. It might have something to do with the fact that my television doesn't pick up any channels, but if I were really serious about it I could fix that problem in a few minutes using nothing but copper wire and duct tape like McGyver.

No, the solution is not that simple.

It might have something to do with the fact that I find most of what I see on television to be insufferably boring crap of the most questionable entertainment value. Yeah, that might be it. Television today suffers from the fact that it is essentially an



**Ryan Nyburg**  
Budget rack

advertising supplement and programmers are more interested in getting viewers than creating anything of quality, substance or artistic merit. Not that this is any better or worse than before. Some people have this odd belief that society in general is degrading and that somehow if we all pull together we can make it better and more like it used to be.

This strikes me as a suspicious assumption, especially when talking about television. There is a lot of talk about the beloved shows of the past like "The Honeymooners," "I Love Lucy," "The Gong Show," etc. Because these shows are talked about so much they are taken as the programming norm for that era. The

majority of programming is forgotten because the majority of programming sucked. Tell me how "The Love Connection" is any better or worse than "Joe Millionaire." Is "7th Heaven" of more or less cultural importance than "The Beverly Hillbillies"? Do you remember "My Mother the Car"? Have you ever sat through an episode of "Hee Haw"?

What I am getting at is the idea that television has always been bad. It tends to reflect the worst values of society, and our worst values have remained pretty awful for quite a long time. So, having lost all hope for television, I make no effort to watch it. I will watch on occasion, but I don't go out of my way to do so. This might seem like an odd choice for someone who has chosen to write about entertainment, but I'm more concerned about my sanity than my career. And if you can prove to me that television as a whole can and will give anything positive to our culture, I might be willing to reassess my opinion. Until then, the only serious television I'm going to take in will be through indirect methods, i.e. old "The Twilight Zone" and "Mystery Science Theater 3000" DVDs. That's about it.

Hope you all come back now, you hear?

Contact the senior Pulse reporter at [ryannyburg@dailymerald.com](mailto:ryannyburg@dailymerald.com). His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

## 'Shattered Glass' details decline of successful magazine writer



Courtesy

Hayden Christensen and Peter Sarsgaard star in 'Shattered Glass.' Christensen plays Stephen Glass, a journalist who fabricates stories.



Courtesy

(Left to right) Christensen, Chloe Sevigny and Melanie Lynskey share a scene in 'Shattered Glass.'

The film, based on a true story of a fallen journalist, will begin its Eugene run at the Bijou on Friday

By **Helen Schumacher**  
Pulse Columnist

We've all told them — those little lies that begin harmlessly enough, but snowball to epic proportions when we try to cover our tracks after suspicion has been aroused. And once the snowballing starts, there is no stopping it until there are no more lies left to tell.

This is what happened to writer Stephen Glass in 1998. As an associate editor for the prestigious magazine The New Republic, Glass fabricated 27 of the 41 stories he wrote for the maga-

zine. The film "Shattered Glass" tells the story of this charming and bright journalist as he first wins the loyalty of The New Republic staff and is eventually exposed by an online news site.

In the beginning of the film, Glass, played by Hayden Christensen, seems to be at the top of his game. He's a 25-year-old reporter for The New Republic, the "official in-flight magazine of Air Force One." His co-workers love him. Editors at other magazines such as Harper's and Rolling Stone offer him freelance work. Glass even gets accepted to Georgetown University's law school.

However, the very thing that makes him popular — his fascinating stories, with colorful leads and too-good-to-be-true details — also becomes his undoing. One of his stories, "Hack Heaven," catches the eye of Adam Penenberg (portrayed by Steve Zahn), who writes for the Web site Forbes Digital Tool. After Penenberg is chastised by his boss for getting scooped by

Glass and his "Hack Heaven," he does a few simple Internet searches for Jukt Micronics, the software company mentioned in the article. The searches turn up no matches for a supposedly giant software company. From here, things begin to crumble for Glass.

The movie does a praiseworthy job of tackling journalistic integrity without all The New York Times/Jayson Blair brouhaha of this past spring. It reveals how easy it is for people to be swayed by charm and also how quickly they panic under pressure. The cast — which also includes Hank Azaria, Peter Sarsgaard, Rosario Dawson and the always remarkable Chloe Sevigny — delivers nuanced performances that contribute to this great newsroom drama.

"Shattered Glass" opens Friday at the Bijou Art Cinemas, located at 492 E. 13th Ave.

Contact the Pulse columnist at [helenschumacher@dailymerald.com](mailto:helenschumacher@dailymerald.com). Her opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

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