

Wednesday, February 11, 2004

EDITORIAL

Reality shows keep tradition of exploitation, degeneration

Not much time has passed since the last time we addressed the current state of reality television, but the new shows — and old — have taken a nose-dive for the worst.

Most recently, Fox has continued its noble exploitative efforts with its newest hit, "My Big Fat Obnoxious Fiancé." In this compelling documentary into the human soul, cameras follow a hapless woman as she attempts to convince her friends/family/dog that a "big, fat, obnoxious" guy is really the love of her life.

The kicker is that even in her attempts to fool everybody, she herself is also being fooled; her husband-to-be is an actor, unbeknownst to her.

What results is a woman who constantly fears her fiancé's behavior will embarrass her, a guy who prances around acting like a jackass (the wine-in-the-hot-tub scene is especially classic) and family members who agonize over the fact that their daughter is about to marry Bluto from "Animal House."

But Fox isn't giving up now. A quick browse through the network's show listing on its Web site reveals the upcoming drivel we can expect in the future, including "Divorce Stories." The advertisement states: "Divorce Stories, a new network reality show is casting for divorced men, over 21 years of age who have been divorced in the last 5 years. You could win money!"

Oh boy! Money! It's a good thing this country has such a high divorce rate, or Fox wouldn't get its paycheck. What was that about marriage being a sacred institution, again? Divorce Stories, a new network realContinuing the rapid slide into absurdity is yet another season of "American Idol," and this year Simon swears it's the worst group yet. Given that the only idols the show has produced should be punctured with nails for voodoo purposes so they'll shut up already, we'd tend to agree.

And who can forget the MTV classic, "Nick and Jessica," which is quickly teaching Americans that being filthy rich, having no musical talent whatsoever and never learning how to tie your own shoes can make for great TV!

To supplement the stupidity of the show, MTV challenges readers of its Web site to take the "Tuna or Chicken Challenge" ("Is it tuna? Is it chicken? Jessica couldn't tell the difference, can you?"). Aside from the "burps, farts and food-related foul-ups" last season provided, MTV promises this season will include a compelling look at "the parties, the performing, the love, and of course, the 'Jessica Moments' as Nick and wifey make their celebrity marriage work...."

It's a good thing they take their marriage seriously enough to get it on film. God forbid they use it for monetary gain and prove to us all that it's all a sham. After all, that might give all the decent, hardworking heterosexual married couples the wrong idea!

Reality television on the boob tube isn't showing any signs of improvement, but we have yet to see the trend subside. For the good of society, we hope that happens soon.

EDITORIAL POLICY

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com. Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submission must include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.

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Panhandling predicament

Every day on campus I'm approached by panhandlers looking for spare change — a quarter here, a dollar there. Most of the time I stick my hands in my pockets and do a quick search, but I usually don't come up with anything besides pocket lint.

I say, "Sorry I don't have any," and walk on by. Then I feel guilty for the next block. What if they really needed medicine? Or food?

As recently as December, Oregon was leading the nation with an unemployment rate of 7.2 percent; the national average was 5.7 percent for the same month, according to the United States Department of Labor. High unemployment rates lead to a drop in consumer purchasing, including purchasing of food.

Not long ago, I decided that I would give change to everyone who asked. I carried around a couple of dollars in change in my pockets and doled out dimes and nickels whenever approached. Then one day when I was walking to the grocery store to buy rice and beans for the week, an older man who very much looked like he had been sleeping in a gutter asked me for change. As I repositioned my bag to reach in my pocket, he made the comment that a buddy of his had just "scored some really dank green buds." I suddenly didn't

have any money.

I don't have anything against pot, but I'm not going to give anybody part of my food money to go buy a sack; and to think, I thought he was hungry.

After that, I had a harder time giving away change. I switched to food, because I



Aimee Rudin
 Five feet of fury

thought it was more direct and a better use of resources.

According to the Oregon Food Bank, in 2003 the number of people who relied on emergency food banks to put food on the table increased for the seventh straight year. The OFB provided an estimated 780,000 people in Oregon and Southwest Washington with emergency food boxes between July 2002 and June 2003.

Oregon soup kitchens and emergency shelters also provided 4.4 million emergency meals to people in need.

I gave away probably 15 peanut butter sandwiches over the course of a month. I just carried an extra one with me in my lunch, but then I had a woman ask me for change and when I offered her a sandwich she just sneered and said, "I don't want your leftovers."

According to the Oregon Center for Public Policy, Oregon's high hunger rate stems from four main conditions. Housing costs have soared while wages have remained static, the gap between rich and poor families grew four times faster in Oregon than elsewhere in the nation during the last decade, there are fewer family-wage industrial jobs and more low-wage service jobs in Oregon than ever before and seasonal employment is on the rise.

I can't do anything about any of these problems, and I've already tried giving away change and sandwiches. I want to do something, but I'm running out of ideas.

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

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Protest that which really kills

This letter is in response to Jacqueline McDonald ("Abortion takes away a choice," Register-Guard, Feb. 1) and I have to say I agree that those mean boys yelling nasty things at you for protesting was not very nice! I'm sure it felt like they were judging you for an isolated character flaw, and they hadn't even heard your pro-war stance.

Since you do most likely align yourself with some other Judeo-Christian beliefs,

I'm positive you raced right home and said a little prayer for those boys. In fact, I'm saying a prayer for you right now! On my yoga mat, I ohm and urge my higher power to kindly show your hypocritical religious ass a good dose of reality!

The reality is, you've never been through an agonizing decision if you've got the nerve to light a candle and protest someone else's. Besides, if you're going to be so fanatical, why don't you line the driveways of all the SUV drivers (who spill gallons of pollutants into our air each day, killing people who are truly

alive) with candles and hymnals? And if you truly care about innocent people losing their lives, why aren't you protesting the war? Is it because some rich white guy who claims to be godly says it's for our own good?

Here is a novel idea; try supporting those agencies who are teaching medically accurate sex education, and give up on this lunacy of "abstinence only." It might save you some candles!

Adrienne Stuart
 senior education