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■ In my opinion

Sexy Stunt or Social Revolution?



AILEE SLATER
FURTHER FROM PERFECTION

When I'm considering whether to flip on a TV show, I'd like to think that I look for the basics: good plot, good characters, good writing, good old-fashioned lesbian love sequence...

Once they've run out of common drama (for example, long-lost children returning home as the illegitimate love slaves of their mother's bikini-waxer), TV networks sometimes add a peculiar dimension to their usually scheduled programming — namely, two hot-n-heavy chicks getting it on. Sounds a bit vulgar and offensive, but maybe the whole concept of networks exploiting female sexuality for ratings is itself a bit vulgar and offensive. Oh wait, they've already done that 10 times over with "a few words (and many, many more slithering half-naked bodies moaning about air-freshener plug-ins) from our sponsors."

But my bitterness as a morally unstable feminist can only last so long. I applaud the fact that human sexuality is culturally recognized, even if it is to show the orgasmic potential of Raisin Bran Crunch. Still, the sexual power of the male body is rarely recognized, while the sexual power of the female body is exploited beyond recognition. And the pattern of TV networks using lesbianism to pull in viewers is one of the best examples.

A few weeks ago, FOX's "The OC" introduced a relationship between

haughty-depressed-rich-girl Marissa and wrong-side-of-the-tracks-punk-girl Alex. Although both had been previously involved in heterosexual relationships, love began to blossom between the two right around February sweeps. To FOX's credit, the show handles lesbianism as an issue or way of life in a pretty fantastic manner. Marissa's best friend is supportive of the relationship with Alex; Marissa struggles with being openly homosexual, but is comforted by Alex, and the camera is blunt about their physical attraction for each other, but not tasteless. With the media influencing so many people's opinions on the world around them, perhaps any positive representation of a minority group should be lauded and left at that.

However, television's brand of lesbianism usually lacks realistic images of sexuality. Most TV shows that introduce a woman-to-woman romance portray that relationship as a quick gay blip in lives that are truly heterosexual. Shows such as "Friends," "Ally McBeal," "ER" and others have gladly

given airtime to women kissing each other; however, a sustainable lesbian relationship is rarely seen, especially among main characters or in shows intended for younger viewers.

In that sense, "The OC" is perhaps becoming revolutionary by breaking the trend other network shows have set up. The romance between "The OC" women is a developing relationship rather than a flashy disappearing act, and both women are attractive, popular main characters. I guess happy lesbians aren't allowed to be unfeminine. Then again, according to the media, no unfeminine woman is truly granted happiness.

Yes, a public representation of lesbianism probably is and should be liberating to women whose sexuality is largely ignored by the world surrounding them. But how can media portrayals of lesbianism ever be liberating if the ultimate purpose of this female sexuality is to turn on male viewers?

The goal of this generation's media is to make money, not a statement. And until that paradigm changes, positive yet realistic imagery of any kind will probably be hard to find for any gender or sexuality. In the meantime, we may as well admire the progress of seeing a positive representation of lesbianism and continue to strive for something even better.

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INBOX

LTD holds key to changing negative trend in America

I wonder what would happen if a group of people united and stood up for themselves against an employer and got fully paid medical insurance and a living wage. The group is ATU Local 757, the union representing the workers of Lane Transit District. Do

you think this might help other workers in the area? I do.

We are quick to say, "They are getting to much." Maybe we are not getting enough. Wouldn't it be better to lift ourselves up to a living wage and fully paid health insurance than to drag them down? If we support the workers at LTD we can change a trend in America. If one group can

win, then all workers win. LTD belongs to the people of Lane County, not Ken Hamm or Gerry Gaydos. They do not have to respond to the people; they will keep their jobs no matter what they do to your transit system. If we all stick together, we will all win.

Vernon Bell
Springfield

OREGON DAILY EMERALD LETTERS POLICY

Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged, and should be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com or submitted at the Oregon Daily Emerald office, EMU Suite 300. Electronic submissions are preferred. Letters are limited to 250 words, and guest commentaries to 550 words. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submissions should include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style. Guest submissions are published at the discretion of the Emerald.

■ Editorial

Politicking performers walk the ODE carpet

In light of Sunday's Academy Awards, the Emerald is proud to announce its awards for the best political performances of the week. And the winners are...

President Bush for "Best Double Standard, Health Related": He said he opposes allowing cheap prescription drugs to enter the United States from Canada because they are unsafe, and yet Bush is seeking to expand Canadian beef imports despite two recent mad cow disease incidents, according to The Associated Press. Maybe we are crazy, but wouldn't protecting Americans from diseases rather than affordable medications be a more effective way to keep the public healthy? A side note to any entrepreneurial-minded students interested in starting their own businesses in Canada: Lipitor-fortified steak. Think about it.

AARP The Magazine for "Best Act of Cowardice in Publishing": Editors of the largest circulation magazine in the country bowed down to pressure from anti-drug groups and pulled an article on medical marijuana from its March/April edition, according to a Drug Policy Alliance press release, even though a poll of AARP readers found that more than 70 percent believed marijuana should be legalized for medical purposes. All together now: What is the AARP smoking?

USA Next for "Best Summation of Every Republican Argument": The conservative lobbying organization that brought us the hilarious comedy team Swift Boat Veterans for Truth has been running an Internet ad that shows a red X through a picture of a soldier and a green check on a picture of two guys kissing; it is entitled, "The real AARP agenda." For Republican rhetoricians, two guys kissing is the new Hitler. Surprisingly, this ad was made after AARP came out against the Bush administration's plan to privatize social security. Here is a lesson to all you marketing students out there: It's best not to be subtle when targeting "the American heartland," a fact that USA Next clearly grasps.

Cartoon Characters for "Best Stupid Target for Religious Crusade": Shrek 2's animated cross-dressing bartender is the latest in a series of cartoon characters and puppets to receive the wrath of a vengeful Christian right, including SpongeBob SquarePants, Barney and Sesame Street's Bert and Ernie. Though we would not shed a tear for Barney, this persecution of minority cartoons must stop.

Supreme Court for "Best Letdown in American Jurisprudence": The High Court refused to hear a case challenging the constitutionality of an Alabama law banning the sale of sex toys on Tuesday. Listening to Justices Scalia and O'Connor discuss whips and vibrators would have been the most entertaining moment for Supreme Court watchers since Lawrence v. Texas tackled gay sex. Justice Thomas' insights would have been particularly illuminating.