

Nudist television adds sensationalism to reality TV

The development of reality TV is a function of money, not market demand.

The cost of quality TV drama is high — \$1 million to \$2 million per episode. The cost of an average reality show ranges from \$100,000 to \$500,000 per episode.

Therefore, lots of these shows are flooding the many cable channels that have an almost inexhaustible demand for product.

Of course, two things tend to be sacrificed: quality of the idea and quality of the execution.

The result is even less quality TV than we were getting, which is difficult to imagine.

Oh, where have you gone Newton Minnow?

He was the 1960s FCC Commissioner who will live on as one of the first to decry the "vast wasteland" of television.)

Because reality shows are cheap, there is little risk in trying something daring or on the fringe.



BILL SCHROER

NOTHING TO HIDE

If it doesn't work it goes away and if it does, syndication follows and there tend to be spinoffs.

Take the "Real Housewives of ..." which has naturally led to the "Real Husbands of ..."

Seriously.

Or "The Bachelor" and of course, "The Bachelorette."

Where is "The Dumped Boyfriend?"

Want drama without ceremony?

"Bad Girls Club" or "Sister Wives."

There are the "dumpster diving" reality shows, the junkyard dog offspring of the nicely

done PBS series "Antiques Roadshow."

So, "Hardcore Pawn," "Auction Hunters" and "American Pickers" allow us to vicariously live downscale via 21st century foraging through pawn shops, unclaimed storage units or auctions.

Well this is all fine and I don't watch any of it, but now that they have started filming nude TV reality shows my antennae go up.

Nudists have a tough enough time being seen as normal without "Naked and Afraid" and "Naked Castaways."

Lots of sensationalism is attached to dumping two strangers nude (always an attractive man and woman) in an alien environment with a challenge to "survive."

These obvious nude spinoffs of "Survivor" seem more ridiculous than the original (also ridiculous).

And "Buying Naked" is the spinoff of one of the many versions of "House-

hunting" shows.

Now, there is, naturally enough (no pun intended) going to be a nude dating show "Dating Naked."

The Hollywood Reporter interview with the producer describes it this way: "We created this show based on marrying a provocative idea with a back to basics philosophy.

"With all the dating options in the world, what happens if you take one man and woman and strip them of all their pretenses?"

Bad ideas often spring from some good concepts.

Real nudists wouldn't be scandalized by meeting someone for the first time nude.

And since naturism de-sexualizes the environment, it actually is a great way (if you are a nudist) to find out if you have shared interests, values and enjoy the personality of the potential partner you are meeting.

This TV show will do the opposite, taking non-nudists ("textiles") and put them in the uncomfortable position of being nude (traumatic enough by itself for many non-nudists) and adding the stress of meeting a potential partner.

The problem with all of this is producers are using nudity as a sensationalist element to titillate an audience satiated with dating shows, survivor shows, etc.

Why not do "Nude Real Housewives" or "Nude Dirty Jobs"?

There really isn't any idea a cynical TV producer couldn't lift from the schedule, take everyone's clothes away and start filming.

I was interviewed by a reporter from the Washington Post this week who wanted an official nudist organization response to the trend of nude reality TV.

My response suggested sometimes "daring" ideas such as nudism

actually do have an intrinsic interest for viewers.

If the subject is treated reasonably seriously and viewers become more familiar with an idea it no longer seems so far-fetched or unrealistic.

That is the good news. Some reality shows treat topics like nudism seriously. Others play it for laughs.

No matter which reality show you watch, if the subject stirs your interest (treasure hunting, flipping houses, decorating a la Salvation Army), don't be put off by the unreality of the way it's treated.

Look beyond the reality to see if underneath the veneer of exploitation there isn't something of substance you might want to know more about.

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