

The Reality Downfall

Contributed by Colleen Boltz

The television is plastered with them. Every year there is a new one set to air. At what point will these shows stop or are these reality shows already losing their luster? The first reality television show, Candid Camera, aired in 1948. Candid Camera pulled pranks on unsuspecting victims, usually ordinary people. This show is similar to MTV's Punked that pulls pranks on celebrities. Reality TV really started to grow in the early 1990's and throughout the past years has grown enormously.

The unpredictability of what one will see while viewing these shows is what pulled in the audience. But that unpredictability has now failed. What once was exciting to watch a group of singers compete for a contract has now turned into what appears as an extravagant stage show with judges that bicker amongst themselves. The survival techniques of humans on deserted islands have turned into racial tribes fighting for superiority. Why has the focus of these reality shows strayed?

The answer is simple. What once was new and intriguing to us is now old and boring. These shows have to go to certain extremes to keep viewers. The shows have gone to such extremes that some could be categorized now as dramas. There are women defecating on the floor while competing for love (Flavor of Love). There is not one normal woman that would do that to impress a man. A father who dresses up in Halloween costumes everyday just for his own entertainment (Big Brother-All Stars). Parents pick new dateable matches for their child to date, while they watch the date with their child's current obnoxious boyfriend or girlfriend (Parental Control). Who would subject himself or herself to letting their boyfriend or girlfriend date someone else, picked out by the parents who hate them, while all this is video taped and aired on television? It is just not real. Another reason can simply be the dedicated viewing audiences are growing up. Reality is about relating to the person that is your equal. We do not put these people on a pedestal and we can picture ourselves in their shoes. The young viewing audience who once longed to be on these shows has grown smarter. Their dream of being a star has now turned into "why would I subject myself to this humiliation and drama?" The idolizing of reality stardom has gone void. Yet, throughout this, these shows in which content seems to be dwindling still have viewership (even though that is lacking). That can be explained because we like to be entertained, that is why we tune into television in the first place. These shows can stay on air but something about calling them reality seems wrong. An online blogger voices his angst about reality television: "I've tried to watch them, but it didn't work. Give me good drama, a comedy, or even some good science fiction. Something with a story arc where I don't have to watch someone humiliate and denigrate themselves or fake love to win money or sing to an audience that may or may not actually get their votes counted for their favorite person." There are many sides to reality television; some of us hate that drama while some of us love it. Through all of this there is one thing that is for sure: Reality television is on a downfall and there might not be much any genius producer can do to save it.