



FNC SHOWS ■ TOP STORIES ■ POLITICS ■ BUSINESS ■ FOXLIFE ■ VIEWS ■ FOX POLLS ■ WEATHER ■ FOX SPORTS ■

SEARCH

GO

Today's Features

JOB SEARCH

REAL ESTATE

O'REILLY FACTOR

CREDIT REPORTS

FOX Fans Log on Here  
or Register Now.

MARKETS

DJIA 9548.04 ▲ 24.77

NASDAQ 1856.82 ▲ 15.34

S & P 500 1025.59 ▲ 3.6

09-03-03 11:45 AM ET  
Data Delayed 20 Mins

QUOTE

### Kramer's Corner

### PHOTOS

## Harsh Reality

EMAIL THIS ARTICLE

PRINTER FRIENDLY

BECOME A FOX FAN

Tuesday, August 19, 2003

By Hilary Kramer

### FOX NEWS

**DISCLAIMER : THE FOLLOWING "Harsh Reality" CONTAINS STRONG OPINIONS WHICH ARE NOT A REFLECTION OF THE OPINIONS OF FOX NEWS AND SHOULD NOT BE RELIED UPON AS INVESTMENT ADVICE WHEN MAKING PERSONAL INVESTMENT DECISIONS. IT IS FOX NEWS' POLICY THAT CONTRIBUTORS DISCLOSE POSITIONS THEY HOLD IN STOCKS THEY DISCUSS, THOUGH POSITIONS MAY CHANGE. READERS OF "Harsh Reality" MUST TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR OWN INVESTMENT DECISIONS.**

**ADVERTISEMENT** Are you inclined to marry *Joe Millionaire*? Are you, perhaps, willing to accept all sorts of abuse from Donald Trump for the chance to work side-by-side with The Donald on national television? Or maybe you're ready to test your relationship by surrounding yourself with a few hot singles of the opposite sex?

Despite the fact that **reality shows** ([search](#)) clearly are starting to wane, television executives are banking on the idea that viewers still have a secret desire to live vicariously through extremely fit, well-coiffed strangers. In fact, after *Survivor* and *Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire* hit the air a few seasons ago, every broadcast network began airing multiple versions of reality television.

What is it about these shows that seem to mesmerize America? Perhaps it's that they aren't just a reflection of our interests; these shows may also offer a glimpse of us as a society. It's possible that our fascination isn't just our wish to be on television, but that we'd rather watch someone else doing things we don't like to admit we're capable of doing. The shows have increasingly revealed to us the darker sides of human nature, highlighting more than just our competitiveness, but also pettiness, betrayal and greed. And it's fun to watch, too -- as long as it's happening to someone else.

But is that voyeuristic fascination really popular enough for viewers to tune in seven nights a week? Nielsen ratings indicate that viewers' interest in reality TV seems to already be waning, and it's unclear if this copycat programming will continue to keep viewers coming back in the future.

"Reality TV is more of a novelty. It's exciting when it first airs because you don't know what will happen," said Daniel Feiner of Hart Sharp Entertainment, an independent production company. "But dramas and comedies in the traditional formats can be eternally popular."

That leaves networks in a predicament: up the ante by creating more reality shows or go back to the old model of developing original dramas and comedies? The cost of the latter can be huge while reality shows continue to be cheaper to get on the air.

ABC's *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* is a good example of how such bets can turn south quickly. After a phenomenally successful first season, ABC aired this popular and inexpensive program on primetime nearly every weeknight during the following summer. However, the show's ratings tanked almost as spectacularly as they rose.

The flood of reality shows continued nonetheless, but America seemed mostly bored with the offerings. For example, ABC's new reality show, *Dating Experiment* died in its second week with a poor 1.9/6 rating in the coveted 18-49 demographic. Meanwhile, even reruns of the mundane sitcom *8 Simple Rules* beat out another network's entire Monday night reality show lineup for the 18-34 demographic.

There seems to be a perception among proponents of reality TV that because of its unscripted nature, it can reproduce or even enrich any dramatic or comedic feature that traditional writers can come up with. It's a belief in the premise that real-life situations are more interesting than make-believe ones. But the reality of the Nielsen



Click image to enlarge

### RELATED INFORMATION

Kramer's Corner Archive

Show Navigation

This Week's Show

Last Week's Show

Terry Keenan's Bio

mailto:cash@foxnews.com

← Cashin' In Home

### COMING UP ON FNC

DaySide w/ Linda Vester

Wed. 1 pm ET

Are big brand names trying to **sell sex** to your kids? We'll reveal some of the shocking ads, and what schools are doing to stop them.

FNC Schedule

ratings may be implying that the initial shock value of reality shows fade as viewers grow accustomed to the show and its limited iterations. After all, how many different times can we watch a group of women vying to win a marriage proposal from a stranger? And how many households of strangers can we watch trying to co-exist before we grow tired of their similar patterns of behavior?

With traditional dramas and comedies, creative writers have the freedom to develop new scenarios and plot twists for their shows which may not be possible using non-actors in the reality TV format.

"Reruns can be a favorite forever, whereas no one wants to see a rerun episode of *Survivor*," added Feiner.

At this point, though, the concern is that as networks continue to feed the reality trend, they're starving the development of original programming that America has historically embraced. That could leave them with little to offer as cable channels continue to ramp up their dramatic offerings.

The broadcast networks certainly have noticed that cable network HBO recently received 109 Emmy nominations for its dramas *Six Feet Under* and *The Sopranos*, while broadcast networks ABC and CBS only received a combined 92 nominations.

Despite their flirtation with reality television, Americans are still entertained by quality comedy and drama. But some TV executives believe that reality programming is a cheaper method to provide drama and comedy.

The real drama, then, becomes which type of show will get voted off the island first?

**Hilary Kramer** serves as a business news contributor at FOX News Channel. She joined the network as a regular guest on **Cashin' In** in May 2001.

 [EMAIL THIS ARTICLE](#)

 [PRINTER FRIENDLY](#)

 [BECOME A FOX FAN](#)

[◀ BACK TO HOME](#)

[▲ BACK TO TOP](#)

#### ADVERTISING LINKS

Health Plans \$79/Mo  
USS Reagan Cap Free!  
[BUY THIS LINK](#)

DSL Speed \$8.95/mo  
Dental Plans \$99/year  
Lose 5-27 Pounds Now

Best Mortgage Rates  
WebRX:Free MDConsult  
Meet Military Singles

[Schedule](#) | [FOX News Bios](#) | [E-mail Shows](#) | [FAQ](#) | [FOX News Shop](#)

[Find FOX News Channel in Your Area](#) | [Find FOX News Channel Abroad](#)

#### Advertise on FOXNews.com

Jobs at FOX News Channel. Internships at FOX News Channel.  
Terms of use. Privacy Statement. For FOXNews.com comments write to  
foxnews@foxnews.com; For FOX News Channel comments write to  
comments@foxnews.com

© Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Copyright © 2003 ComStock, Inc.

This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

Copyright 2003 FOX News Network, LLC. All rights reserved.  
All market data delayed 20 minutes.