



boston.com News

your connection to The B

GREATER BOSTON BOSTON GLOBE EVENTS YELLOW PAGES

SEARCH BETA

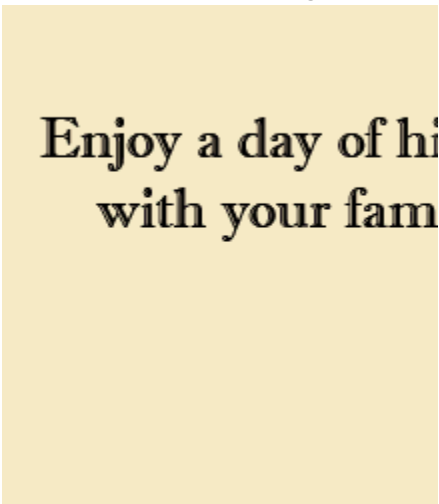
Home News A&E Business Sports Travel Your Life Cars Jobs Real Estate Yellow Pages Sign In

Today's Globe Local Politics Opinion Magazine Education NECN Special reports Obituaries Traffic |

HOME > NEWS > BOSTON GLOBE > LIVING / ARTS

ADVERTISEMENT

Reality shows draw feminist ire, but female viewers, too



Flesh-heavy reality shows like "The Ultimate Coyote Ugly Search" are gaining a surprising number of female viewers. (tony phipps/wireimage)

By Erin White, Fort Worth Star-Telegram | June 13, 2007

Amy Watts works two jobs, regularly watches the news, and spends a chunk of her free time tuned in to the History and Discovery channels. Then, there are the hours she devotes to "The Ultimate Coyote Ugly Search" when it's in season on CMT, a program whose plot revolves around the search for a new "femme fatale" to dance on the bar and pour drinks at one of the chain's locations.

Mallory Neil sometimes gets sucked into "The Girls Next Door" -- an E! Network show that follows Hugh Hefner's girlfriends -- in and out of his house.

These shows, and others like them -- with titles such as "Pussycat Dolls Present: The Search for the Next Doll" (on CW), "Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders: Making the Team" (CMT), and even "America's Next Top Model" (CW) -- feature scantily-clad

ARTICLE TOOLS

- PRINTER FRIENDLY
- E-MAIL TO A FRIEND
- LIVING / ARTS RSS FEED
- REPRINTS & LICENSING
- SHARE ON DIGG
- SHARE ON FACEBOOK
- SAVE THIS ARTICLE



females in what many would say are situations that degrade women and turn back the clock on generations of feminist work.

powered by [Del.icio.us](#)

Yet it's women who are setting aside hours at a time to watch.

The CW network says more than 70 percent of viewers of its "Pussycat Dolls" hit are women. That's roughly the same breakdown for the CMT shows, too.

The female-skewed ratings surprised CMT executives, says Mary Beth Cunin, vice president of programming strategy.

"We thought it would be pretty evenly split," she says.

Perhaps that's because some women wouldn't want to be caught watching -- at least not by anyone who isn't a fellow fan.

Neil can't help but look slightly ashamed when she admits in front of a sister and a friend that she watches "The Girls Next Door." "I feel like I shouldn't be watching it because I feel guilty," she says.

The women on the show aren't stupid, but the program doesn't focus on their intellectual assets.

"Cheerleaders" does show the athleticism and dance ability necessary to make the squad, but it still works in the booty shot.

So why are ladies hoarding the remote during these shows?

"It's mindless television," Watts, of Fort Worth, says. She likens her "Coyote Ugly" viewing to a summer beach read she can blow through in an afternoon.

The drama created from the tossing together of strong personalities on reality competition shows -- she's a fan of "Project Runway" for the same reason -- draws her in. On "Coyote Ugly," choreographer Jacqui Squatriglia creates the seductive routines that bartenders perform on the bars at Coyote Ugly saloons, and she has an outsize personality made for enticing television. A producer's dream, she tosses off quips like, "It's about rock and roll and sex," and pushes the contestants until they're exhausted and emotional.

"You get a bunch of young women together," says Watts, "and there's going to be drama."

Watts says the scenarios are so far removed from her own life, she thinks of the participants like characters in a sitcom.

But those conflicts bother Elayne Rapping, a media critic at the University at Buffalo, who studies pop culture and gender issues. She says such shows reinforce the idea that women can get ahead only by putting other women down.

"What they encourage is the old-fashioned pre-'60s competitiveness among women. In those days it was because women didn't have jobs so there was catfighting over men," she says. "This is a somewhat different version. It's 'Who's going to get the prize?' But I think it brings out the nastiness in women."

The ABC reality show "The Bachelor," in which 25 women compete for the heart of one single guy, gets the same criticism. The 10th season, which wrapped up last month, saw women bickering over "alone time" with the bachelor, gossipping about others to him, and

BOSTON.COM'S MOST E-MAILED

- ▶ [Must see: Clemens in 2057](#)
- ▶ [With new design, foam follows function](#)
- ▶ [It's Ducky: He set a world record](#)
- ▶ [Emerson College to expand its Hollywood](#)
- ▶ [Own 2 homes? Be careful when you decl residence](#)
- ▶ [See full list of most e-mailed](#)

SEARCH THE ARCHIVES



All Globe stories since 2003 are now FREE

- ▶ [More search options](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

▶ **Mesothelioma Lawyer for those expos**
We've won millions for clients.
<http://www.weitzlux.com/>

▶ **Get 50% off Boston Globe home delive**
Order now!
www.bostonglobe.com/articlelink

▶ **The best classifieds in Boston**
are now all together in one place
www.boston.com/classifieds

even snickering about a woman who claimed to be a virgin. Yet watching it is a guilty pleasure for millions of women.

Erica Espiritu, who periodically watches "Cheerleaders" and "Pussycat Dolls," says she understands why a mother might not want her 10-year-old addicted to such programs. But she disagrees that they're anti-feminist or exploitative.

"Yes, I've got problems with society telling us all we have to have a certain look," she says. "But if you're comfortable with yourself, I say go ahead." ■

© Copyright 2007 Globe Newspaper Company.

Ads by Google

what's this?

Effects of Media Violence

Browse the book "Our Faith in Evil" Explore new side of media debate
www.gregorydesilet.com

Jewel Television

Today's Top Choices for Jewel Television on our site.
www.genieseeker.com

Large Anti-Porn Library

Hundreds of articles on impact of porn on people and communities
NoPornNorthampton.org

MORE:

[Globe front page](#) | [Boston.com](#)

SIGN UP FOR: [Globe Headlines e-mail](#) | [Breaking News Alerts](#)

 PRINTER FRIENDLY
  E-MAIL TO A FRIEND
  AVAILABLE RSS FEEDS
  MOST E-MAILED
  REPRINTS & LINKS

SARATOGA

Perfect From Start to Finish

[Health, History, Horses
and more...Plan your
getaway to Saratoga,
New York](#)

**Worlds away
has never been
so close.**

[Nova Scotia](#)

events

[Find something fun to
do!](#)

boston.com
cars.com

[Search new & used
car listings and special
offers](#)

[feedback form](#) | [help](#) | [site map](#) | [privacy policy](#) | [rss](#)

© 2007 The New York Times Company

**Home delivery for as
little as \$1.75 a week!**

