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Reality TV – a beautiful antithesis

How we can forget the blues for a moment in a world of complete abandon

Despite the queues of well known former corporate chief executives (especially those formerly employed by financial institutions) lining up for a new paid sabbatical, the makers of ITV's 'I'm a Celebrity' have once again decided to go for a whole heap of 'traditional' celebrities for their new show.

'I'm a celebrity' sees a dozen well (and not so well) known celebrities camping in an Australian jungle for two weeks, during which they undertake a series of grotesque tasks and have the indignity of being voted off one by one through a public poll held in the UK.

If that sounds a little dull, then you can watch 'Strictly come dancing' with more 'celebrities' learning to dance over a three month period and having a new dance challenge each week which is televised in Saturday and Sunday evening shows. The indignity of the weekly vote off is maintained and, as the weeks go by, the less capable celebrities are slowly voted off one by one. That is unless your name is John Sergeant and you can attract such a extensive level of public support so you are continually voted through despite your obvious two left feet. John's experience over recent weeks has seen virtual mockery (by the panel of dance judges) go totally ignored by the voting public and once again, the British love for unbridled stoicism and support for the underdog, has seen him emerge a strong contender to take the title (two left feet and all!)

Then again, if jungles and dancing don't inspire you could be taken by the X-factor, a singing competition featuring a group of 'carefully' selected but unknown singers, who perform a new song each week and come under scrutiny from another panel of judges. The British institution of voting is once again preserved and each week (in theory) the weakest singer will be despatched by a combination of public votes and a final decision of who should stay or go taken by the judges themselves. Here again we have our underdog hero Daniel; described as the 'old man' by my daughter. I pointed out that Daniel 'the old man' was actually a couple of years younger than her own father. She didn't seem to get the point!

Now I could be all cynical and suggest that all this reality TV stuff is all about making money. Votes generally cost 50p each and although sometimes 30% of this might go to 'charity', the amount of non-charity cash being raised each week through millions of polled votes is amazing. It certainly supports the 'pile it high, sell it cheap' philosophy. Volume in this market means millions in revenues flowing into the coffers.

But it does provide us all with an opportunity to escape the cruel realities of everyday life; and if you don't want to add to the millions of profit generated by the shows' creators you don't have to vote (you are probably doing enough by adding to the viewing figures and hence increasing the inherent sales value of each show to the television channel!)

In this case reality is not reality. In fact it's nothing like reality. But if you're grinding away working hard during the day and at the weekends, the shows are timed to enable you to collapse in front of the TV after you return from work.

They require very little mental processing, so not too taxing on the mind; and you can relax and enjoy the relatively brutal treatment of mankind in this 'reality circus' where feelings and emotions are exploited to the extreme.

Recently a reality show had to be suspended. It was based on a concept where a dozen people were selected for a new 'prison'. Six were selected at random to be the guards and six to be the prisoners. Over time and with some encouragement the guards became increasingly unkind, uncaring and eventually quite brutal themselves towards the prisoners; so much so in fact that they had to stop the show in mid tracks.

So we need to be careful. I'm not expecting 'Strictly come dancing' to descend into a bloodbath, although if John Sergeant continues his romp through the competition fisticuffs may result.

Neither do I think the X factor will descend into an on stage riot, mainly because the studio seems to be chock full with burly body guards just in case.

And as for I'm a celebrity, the small delay in TV feed and the retrospective screening would probably enable enough time for the producers to switch away from anything too unseemly.

Despite the escapism of the 'reality' shows, I have a longing for quality drama and documentaries. The BBC of course is charging with producing such material (ergo our licence fees) and has responded with the likes of Russell Brand and Jonathon Ross. You can make your own mind up there!

But I have found reruns of 'Coast' (walking round the British Isles) and a whole myriad of shows on the 'History Channel' quite fascinating. It's a case of therapy and something to distract the mind. If any readers of this blog have additional ideas please let us know. It can't all be doom and gloom and we have to escape somehow!

Oh and by the way, from the helpful Wikipedia:

Antithesis ([Greek](#) for "setting opposite", from *ἀντί* *against* + *θέσις* *position*) is a counter-[propositions](#) and denotes a direct [contrast](#) to the original proposition. In setting the opposite, an individual brings out of a contrast in the meaning (eg., the [definition](#), [interpretation](#), or [semantics](#)) by an obvious contrast in the [expression](#).

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