

Sound off

Outrageous talk show sleaze passes its prime

"I've been everything you can't respect — a lawyer, a mayor, a news anchor, and a talk show host. If I sell used cars, I've done the whole cycle."

— Jerry Springer

I remember the good old days when the sleaziest thing on a talk show was Donahue in a women's dress. I can't remember what the point in his little exercise was, but I think he had one.

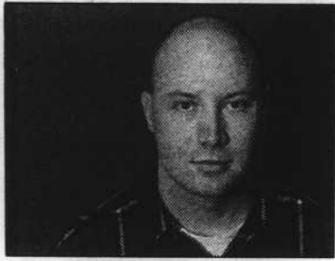
Today's talk show hosts rarely have a point. Each seems to be concerned solely with being more outrageous than the competition. Rather than exploring an issue, they explore their guests' libidos, an area that I think most of us would really not like to go to.

Sure, some of them are funny, and from time to time they even branch over and are entertaining for a second or two. Well, except for Ricki Lake. I can't stand her. If anyone out there can write in and tell me anything she has done that has been intelligent, I'll buy them lunch.

Now, before I get a call or letter about how I should just "change the channel if I don't like what I see," consider some of the facts.

On any given day, there are 23 hours of talk show programming available. If one were to consult the TV listings for Lincoln, they would find that nearly all of these shows are on sometime during the day or night. Many are on during the afternoon hours, when I'm napping instead of getting love advice from Montel.

What's more, consider the number of shows that have come and gone in the last few years: Maury Povich, Vicki Lawrence, Gabrielle, and my personal favorite,



Jody Burke

"Here are some recent show titles: 'Get Bigger Breasts Or Else,' 'He Slept With The Baby Sitter,' and 'He Won't Stop Seeing Strippers To Please His Girlfriend.'"

the All-Time Champion of Smut and "Dweller on the Underbelly of Humanity," Charles Perez.

Do we really need more of these shows? Like anything the TV executives are coming up with will be fresh and invigorating. I don't know about you, but I just cannot wait for the Jim J. and Tammy Faye show.

Here are some recent show titles: "Get Bigger Breasts Or Else," "He Slept With The Baby Sitter," and "He Won't Stop Seeing Strippers To Please His Girlfriend." Notice a trend here? Out of the top 10 topics on talk shows, marital relations and sexual activity claimed spots three and four.

It just seems like such a waste of time to me. I'm not saying that we should pull Ricki (Go Ricki, Go Ricki) off the air. If people are so desperately bored with their lives

that they can only find entertainment in the bizarre and tragic plights of their fellow man, then so be it. I just fail to see the appeal.

What angers me most is that these shows thrive on confrontation. "Let's bring out the boyfriend's lover on the side." Yeah, that ought to prompt a productive conversation. Perhaps when they are done, they can have a chair-throwing contest.

Even worse are the attitudes of these hosts.

Does anyone really believe that Ricki and Charles give a damn about their guests? Sure. They care all the way to the bank. I mean, Ricki Lake has to be one of the most self-serving, shallow people I have ever seen. I want to yell at her: "If you're so interested in human misery, donate time at a homeless shelter or soup kitchen. You might learn something."

It is not the genre that is responsible. I like some of Oprah's and Donahue's shows. Most of the time, they at least try to present something interesting that is actually newsworthy. They don't rely on confrontations between lovers, but usually try to get at issues. They don't always succeed, but for the most part they try. Ricki and Jenny Jones and all their friends dig through the refuse pile of topics, searching for anything shocking.

I would like to think that the talk show format is a passing fad, kind of like Cop Rock, or Models INC. Maybe, just maybe, America will come to its senses, go outside, or read a book in the afternoon, leaving Ricki to her stellar "acting" career.

Until then, Long live Howard Stern.

Burke is a senior English major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

State of Union a real nightmare



Matthew Waite

I had a dream last night. No, make that a nightmare.

After giving a cursory listen to the State of the Union message, and laughing as Newt scowled for the Republican freshmen, I dragged my tired soul home.

After a full day of work, I was ready for a good night's sleep.

No such luck.

My nightmare started with a behind-the-scenes view of the State of the Union message. Clinton was wearing a red, white and blue silk robe with a towel over his head. He was bouncing on the balls of his feet, throwing punches in the air.

Don King was there, yelling at cabinet members. He was sounding like his usual southern-baptist-preacher-on-the-skids.

It looked like something I had seen before. And I don't know how I got there.

And why was Clinton wearing a robe?

My question was answered when the doors to the House floor opened up to reveal a spotlighted ring surrounded by a bunch of old white men smoking cigars.

As I looked across the chamber, I saw a procession of people walking out of another aisle. Leading them was a pair of large gentlemen, pushing congressmen and senators out of the way.

In their midst, in a red and blue robe, marked only by a large elephant on the back, was Newt. He had a red and a blue boxing glove on, and he also was throwing punches in the air.

Tensions rose as a mixed chorus of cheers and boos spilled from the chamber.

Guess what: the cheering was split by party affiliation. Who would have guessed?

And it got worse.

Michael Buffer was the ring announcer.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to tonight's heavyweight bout here in our nation's capital.

"Let's get ready to ruuummmblleee!"

Oh, the humanity.

"In this corner, hailing from Atlanta, Georgia, weighing in at an even 300 pounds with a record of 44-0, with 38 knockouts, the challenger, the Mouth of the South, Newt Gingrich."

The Republican side erupted into raucous cheers. Democrats booed. Newt was unphased. He just rolled his head as his trainer, Al D'Amato, one of New York's great-

"Newt, the shorter, stockier fighter came in on mostly flat feet. The southpaw Clinton danced around like an overweight Sugar Ray Leonard."

est fight doctors, rubbed his shoulders.

"And in this corner, hailing out of Little Rock, Arkansas, weighing in at 325 pounds, with a record of 48-0 with 36 knockouts, the current President of the United States of America, 'Bubba' Bill Clinton!"

Democrats cheered, Republicans booed, Clinton bounced around and threw his hands in the air.

The two fighters heard instructions from the referee, Ross Perot, touched gloves and went to their corners.

Ding, ding.

They lumbered out to the middle of the ring and started jabbing at each other. Newt, the shorter, stockier fighter came in on mostly flat feet. The southpaw Clinton danced around like an overweight Sugar Ray Leonard.

And yes, Marv Albert called the fight.

"Clinton dancing around, throwing few punches, sizing Gingrich up."

"Gingrich jabs, Clinton bobs and — OH!" Alberts yelled.

"I challenge all of you in this chamber, never, ever shut the government down again," Clinton's words echoed.

"A vicious combination from Clinton!" Alberts yelled.

"Yes Marv," George Foreman, making an appearance as a color man, said. "The combination of 'never, ever' really has Gingrich reeling."

Round after round. Back and forth. Clinton landing blows, Gingrich landing blows. By the end of the fight, it looked like a Rocky movie.

After the punching had stopped, things grew quiet around the ring.

Clinton's cut doctor, Secretary of Energy Hazel O'Leary, was working a cut over Clinton's left eye.

Gingrich was receiving congratulations after the fight from his manager, Bob Dole.

And then things got surreal.

The fight judges, the people responsible for the decision at hand, were not common folk. No mom and pop types from all across the land.

The judges were Greenpeace, the National Rifle Association and Steve Forbes.

My roommate said the scream could be heard for blocks.

Waite is a junior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan associate news editor

Real life

Who says every senior wants to find a job?

In the news-editorial laboratory in Avery Hall, there hangs a sign that says: "GET A JOB!"

Qualified by way of a psychology Keller Plan background, I propose that such a statement aims to motivate. Admittedly, the exclamation does little to stir my soul. As I look about from my wee place in the scheme of things, I see no reason why I would ever be so compelled.

But either the impetus prevailed, or I'm a more conscientious student than I ever intended to be. In any case I signed up for an interview during the fall semester.

Life experience No. 37,428.

Sure, I've sought employment before. But this interview involved a resume, composure and a postgraduation livelihood. I was inclined to dress like my mother. After all, she's had a job for as long as I've known her. It seemed a safe bet that she had mastered Professional Dress 101. Ah, my mother, my mentor.

Oh, and I was coached that a baseball cap would be inappropriate. I must admit, it all seemed a bit silly. The serious overtones. The pressure to be something. With graduation fast approaching, those near and dear seemed to have lost sight of the fact that I am just a kid.

A kid with kite dreams that I'm not ready to watch escape beyond the clouds.

Nonetheless, I set aside my sneakers and my flannel for an afternoon. I mustered all the "real-life perspective" I could and arrived for the interview precisely three minutes early.

"So, what type of job are you looking for?" the interviewer asked.

Ouch.

Imagine his surprise when the honest answer slipped out of my mouth.

"I'm not looking for a job, exactly."



Kelly Johnson

"I told him that I imagined I would eventually continue a life's commitment to learning in some sort of professional setting. But I hoped I wouldn't pass one day of this life at a job."

The sailing might have been smoother had the interviewer asked the question closer to the end of our discussion. Some say any life's course is left to luck and timing.

Though he looked puzzled, he allowed me to follow the path my honesty had taken me. I told him that I imagined I would eventually continue a life's commitment to learning in some sort of professional setting. But I hoped I wouldn't pass one day of this life at a "job."

I believe in the power of intention.

Although it's probably unusual, some people spend each day productively seeking self-fulfillment. These are the people employed to work as they are naturally inclined or predisposed, and they give back generously to the world that

teaches them.

Take Minnesota Fats, for example. He lived his passion, which happened to combine the techniques of pool and a knack for betting.

Fats was a master of technique and showmanship. Known as "the sultan of stroke" and the "bankshot bandit," he earned his livelihood with a cue in hand.

Fats never had a "job."

There are innumerable ways to pass the time. And I hope to experience the full gamut of life's possibilities.

Really, I've always wanted to be just like Minnesota Fats. A pool shark. A hustler.

I've become increasingly interested in the dynamics of the game. The speed of the ball. The angles. The various spins.

I'm not particularly social. As much as I appreciate a spot of brew, I must admit, a bar's most enticing, elusive lure is its games. Foosball. Pinball. Pool.

It's probably my dad's fault. He loves pool. I remember watching Fats play Saturday afternoon games on "Wide World of Sports" as a child.

Sadly, television is the only place I will ever watch Minnesota Fats play. The New York Times reported Sunday, "The most famous pool hustler in history died on Thursday."

I'm young and still honing my skills. As I have a way to go before my confidence allows me to hustle, I spend a fistful of quarters on any given trip downtown.

But if I keep passing the time in smoky pool halls, dropping the tokens, maybe some of Fats' inspiration will wear off on me. And then if this writing stint doesn't pan out, I'll have one more alternative to getting a job.

Johnson is a senior news-editorial and English major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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