

Reality TV

"Ratings, not quality, matter most to network executives. Until CBS' recent emergence as the reality TV network, Fox had cornered the market. The network had perennially relied on no-brow verité to lure viewers. Long before *Who Wants to Marry a Multi-Millionaire*, the network's bread-and-butter was the likes of *Cops*, which followed cops on the beat, staking out suspects, and making busts. The show debuted in 1989 and remains on the schedule. In addition to its regular timeslot, the show's often used as filler programming when Fox cancels other series.

"Ratings also reveal that America wants *America's Most Wanted*. The show, another Fox staple, dates back to 1988, and ranked first in its timeslot in the summer of 1989. Host John Walsh, whose son Adam was kidnapped and murdered, presents information about fugitives and re-enactments of their crimes, with the intention of tracking down the suspects. To its credit, the show has helped apprehend 618 criminals.

"CBS experimented with this format more than 30 years earlier, with *Wanted*, which ran from October 1955 through January 1956. Host Walter McGrew outlined the crimes of fugitives and interviewed their relatives and law enforcement officers working on the cases.

"But the granddaddy of the reality TV genre is *Candid Camera*, which has been on television on and off since 1948 (yep, almost since the dawn of the medium itself). The show actually has its roots in radio. Allen Funt originally taped and broadcast the complaints of fellow servicemen on Armed Forces Radio and took his idea to network radio in 1947 as *Candid Microphone*. The television version followed a year later. Funt was still active in the show when he died in 1999. His son, Peter, has taken over for him on the CBS series.

"While Candid Camera 'caught people in the act of being themselves', *America's Funniest Home Videos* caught parents shamelessly exploiting their tumbling toddlers and costumed cocker spaniels for the chance of winning \$10,000. The show, which debuted in 1990, has spawned several spin-offs, all equally contrived.

"Given television's long history of reality-based programming, why all the fuss now? Two factors immediately come to mind: money and fame. The money part is obvious motivation. The sole *Survivor* survivor takes home a million bucks (apparently it's worth money to dine on rats and beetle larvae). Then there's the fame part. The shows have made instant celebrities out of regular men and women who would've likely endured in anonymity forever if they hadn't made the cut. Will their lives change? Maybe for a little while, but can anyone name anyone from the first Real World?"

<http://www.infoplease.com/spot/realitytv1.html>

Product Placement

"Product placement is a promotional tactic used by marketers in which characters in a fictional play, movie, television series, or book use a real commercial product. Typically either the product and logo is shown or favourable qualities of the product are mentioned. The product price is not mentioned nor are any negative features or comparisons to similar products. Very generally, product placement involves placing a product in highly visible situations. The most common form is movie and television placements.

"Product placement on television dates to its earliest days. In movies, an early example is in the 1982 film *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*, which helped launch *Reese's Pieces* from Hershey Foods Corporation. The film *The Truman Show* explores the idea of a 24-hour on-air reality television program funded entirely by product placement.

"Product placement can be seen as a modern version of the exhibit displays seen at world's fairs, concerts, sporting events, or anywhere that large numbers of potential customers gathered.

"The most basic form of product placement is the inclusion of a product name or logo in the foreground or background of a scene. Payments are based on exposure, including the number of times the product is shown or mentioned, the duration of that exposure, and the degree of inclusion of the product in the story line. If the product is actively used (such as when a leading character can be clearly seen to take a drink from the bottle or can), placement fees are higher. Producers seek out companies for product placements as another revenue stream for the movie, and in exchange for advertisements tied in with a film's release, a show's new season, or other event.

"The most common products to be promoted in this way are automobiles. Frequently, all the important vehicles in a movie or television serial will be supplied by one manufacturer. For example, *The X-Files* used Fords.

"The James Bond films were pioneers of product placement; the 1974 film *The Man with the Golden Gun* featured extensive use of AMC cars, even in scenes in Thailand, where AMC cars were not sold, and had the steering wheel on the wrong side of the vehicle for the country's roads.

"A variant of product placement is advertisement placement. In this case an advertisement for the product (rather than the product itself) is seen in the movie or television series. Examples include a *Lucky Strike* cigarette advertisement on a billboard, or a truck with a milk advertisement on its trailer.

"Product placement is also being used in books (particularly novels) and video games.

"Some believe product placement is out of control and has become all-pervasive in today's society. One group known as *Commercial Alert* asks for full disclosure of all product placement arrangements. They feel that most product placements are deceptive and are not fully or clearly disclosed, advocating notification of embedded advertisements before and during a television program. One justification for this is that it allows greater parental control for children, who are said to be influenced greatly by product placement. "

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Product_placement