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commentary

Is MTV trying to become M(edia) Television?

by Hollywood Rob

Every time I turn on MTV these days I confront some kind of new show or new promo or new something. I'm alright with change - in most cases change is good when taken in small amounts. It's not safe to turn to cable channel 14 though.

Just two years ago I could turn it on and be reasonably assured of seeing some heavy metal hair band blurting out some incredibly banal lyrics with scantily clad women slithering around them. The lead singer would always be using something (guitar, microphone, etc.) as a phallic symbol and it was alright. MTV was like the McDonald's of television - always the same every time you'd visit. It was safe and sane to click over. I knew what was going to be on.

Over the last couple of years though MTV has chosen to expand their horizons immensely. No longer do programs on MTV focus on certain kinds of videos or for that matter even music. A show on MTV used to be Yo! MTV Raps! which featured "those rap guys" strolling straight through the "hood", carrying loaded weapons with their posse not too far behind in back to back videos for half an hour. Tiresome? Yes, but at least it still fit in as "music" (some people would still debate that).

Now programs on MTV don't even really have to do with any aspect of music at all. Now we have sports shows on MTV, and "The Big Picture" - MTV's movie show. I've always kind of wondered whether "The Big Picture" is a show on MTV or just a half an hour of conveniently placed advertising for the major studios on a channel that reaches its target audience of 18 to 35 year olds.

Then there's MTV news which is at least about music some of the time. It's gotten to the point where it's hard to find a video on MTV. I thought it had gotten pretty bad until I heard MTV was putting on a movie awards show.

Okay. It may not seem

like such a big offense that they would do it. After all they saw fit to promote the hell out of *Wayne's World* which brought the movie millions of dollars in free advertising on MTV in the U.S., Europe, and Australia. The network made that movie and others a smash by making them omnipresent to their viewers. But really what business is it of theirs to have a movie awards show? What the hell do they know about movies?

Granted, MTV is running the show under the guise of "you pick the winners," but I thought the People's Choice Awards were for that. On top of totally stepping out of the bounds of what MTV is supposed to be about (in case some of you with short attention spans have forgotten: music) the nominee list reads like a who's who of the people who made truckloads of money last year.

Whitney Houston is being nominated for Breakthrough performance in *The Bodyguard*? Or *The Bodyguard* for Best Movie? The movie was predictable and boring but it was bound to be a hit because it had America's sweetheart Kevin Costner in it. Why should we reward crap just because it's popular?

Of course the selection isn't much different for their video awards shows (i.e. who sold the most records or grabbed the most media attention last year) explaining why most of the artists that derive MTV support for their record sales are disappearing from view. The network is steadily moving away from music and are becoming like a high rotation pay movie service. And unfortunately the record companies are no longer in a position to stop or hinder MTV from what it's turning into - the all seeing all knowing all telling Media Network. No one's gonna screw with them now they control too many free spending dollars.

If you don't believe it ask yourself this: Where were Guns n' Roses before MTV? Red Hot Chili Peppers? Pearl Jam? Nirvana? These bands

would have never made it past cult status into the mainstream so quickly without MTV.

Hell, MTV must be doing alright with the shit they're doing. They ran the '93 Spring break special about fifty times in two weeks and didn't seem to be hurting for advertisers. Their MTV Unplugged show, probably the best show they have, is being killed by reruns of programs that have already been on a million times and are out on videotape. Do we really need to see another rerun of Mariah Carey's Unplugged show when I can go to the record store and purchase it for ten bucks? I don't think so.

But, back to the issue at hand. Not only is it inane for MTV to have a movie awards show in the first place then they make asinine categories for awards such as "Most Desirable Female" and "Best Kiss."

But honestly the worst part is I wouldn't put it past the nominated stars to show up to accept their awards.

Although there are some worthy contenders in some of the categories, do we really need another specialized awards show tailored to the tastes of a mostly brain-dead, television worshipping audience?

The folks at MTV would probably contend that they have as much right as anyone to produce such an awards show which is probably true. *The Oscars are really only a bunch of people who make movies getting together, patting people who they like on the back and shunning those who make more money than some of the other voters.*

Call MTV and let your voice be heard? Give me a break! Your voice is heard every time you buy a ticket to a movie. Why do you think you get clones of every 100-million dollar grossing movie for years down the line. The studios listen to money and so does MTV. At least MTV is donating proceeds from phone in votes to the Magic Johnson's AIDS charity.

Don't be fooled anymore. You have the power to see more of your favorite kinds of movies by staying home from ones you don't like.

Please stop these people from over-stepping their bounds. Don't vote on their 900 number to help fund other activities of this kind. Don't mail in vote and most certainly please don't watch. Help put MTV back in it's place as MUSIC television.

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