

BEST Reality Show EVER!!!

My favorite shows are on tv Thursday nights, and last week's episodes of both shows were really good. The Lost episode and the Office were up to par for sure, if not even a little better than usual. And some great news we got while watching ABC – it seems we won't be entirely without tv this summer since they're bringing back our favorite reality show, the best one ever in my opinion, The Mole! This show revolves around 12 contestants who perform various tasks. In past seasons the tasks have involved navigating around strange countries and scavenger hunt-type things. The contestants work together to try to add money to the "pot"; except for the twist: one of the players is a saboteur, the Mole, who tries to work against the other players, trying NOT to get money added to the pot. Obviously the Mole cannot be obvious about his or her identity because if he or she is the last one left, then the Mole wins the game. Each week, the contestants take a quiz about the Mole, and the person with the fewest correct answers gets eliminated. There has been 4 seasons of the Mole, the first 2 being hosted by Anderson Cooper, the CNN anchor, and the next 2 being celebrity editions hosted by Ahmad Rashad. The show has not aired since 2004, and I have missed it! It is very entertaining, and I am VERY excited it's coming back to tv, especially since I will be going into Lost and especially Office withdrawl this summer!

Especially compounding the tv withdrawl this summer is that the episodes of my favorite shows were extra good last Thursday! Lost actually answered more questions than it asked, they actually continued some of the hanging plot lines instead of giving us new ones to ponder, and no new characters were introduced! Part 2 of the season finale airs in 2 weeks, and last night's episode really whet my appetite for this season's cliffhanger!

The Office was back to being utterly hilarious this week. The

plot line with Toby's replacement being under the impression that Kevin is "special" was my favorite. I was also glad to see the return of Jan, though part of me was disappointed to discover it wasn't Michael's baby (according to Jan anyway – maybe a twist to look for next season?). Michael's new "love" for Holly was sweet and intense, but he actually might not be too far off this time – she seems like she might be a good match for him. I loved the part where he breaks into a Yoda impression after she says yoga, she just stares at him like he's bizarre, but then she breaks into a Yoda impression of her own. This might be a match made in heaven! But then again, Michael had to be an idiot and gloss over Holly's invitation to get dessert... typical Michael Scott behavior! I can't believe we're back to waiting months for the show to come back on again! At least The Mole will keep me busy with tv – I highly recommend it!

Academy of Country Music Awards Night!

Awards time was upon us again last night! Overall, I had a good time during the Academy of Country Music Awards, not as much fun as actually being there like I was in 2000, but a good time! There were some disappointments for me though, as you will read in my play-by-play of the awards below:

Carrie Underwood opened the show – I like Carrie Underwood; even though she's a country crossover, I think she has an amazing voice. By the way, very early in her season of American Idol – when I still watched it – I predicted that she would win and also that she would be a very good country singer. Just had to get that in there to boost myself after I

did so horribly at predicting this year's ACM awards. But her new song isn't country enough for me, and it made it seem like she is trying to cross back over into pop or rock. Was not a big fan of her performance.

Next Reba McEntire made a funny joke in a beautiful blue dress with a classy fit. The joke was about 1986, and she said, "Back then, Roger Clemens wasn't even interested in country music!" The audience oohed and ahed, I guess it was kinda controversial, but I liked it. The joke was in reference to the affair that took place years ago and just now came to light between a married and much older Roger Clemens and a teenage up and coming country star named Mindy McCready, who unfortunately is better known these days for controversy than for country music. Reba's jokes were actually pretty funny tonight, I liked the Kenny Chesney song reference: "she thinks my *fracture* is sexy" and also when Reba was talking about the correlation between #1 hits and birthdays, she said, "I have 33". Her delivery made that joke pretty funny, and I do like her as a host.

Next up was a live performance from Toby Keith. To his credit, many of the performers seemed off pitch tonight, could there have been some issue with the sound system? That aside, his new song is simply awful. Quite possibly the worst country song ever. The lyrics are terrible, and hearing it off-key was even worse.

Time for the first award! SINGLE RECORD OF THE YEAR – I guessed Don't Blink by Kenney Chesney, and hubby guessed Stay by Sugarland. Other nominees were Miranda Lambert, Big and Rich, and Gary Allan -Slow start – hubby is one up on me already since the winner is Stay. Gotta give him some credit, it's a nice song.

Next is a live performance from Brad Paisley – his new song is ok, I like it, but he seems off key too. Hubby says, Brad Paisley? He's always off key on the live shows. I don't remember this being the case, Is he?

Next, Taylor Swift wins TOP NEW FEMALE VOCALIST – no surprise there – hubby is 2 for 2, and I am on the board with 1.

Miranda Lambert's live performance – alright.

Now the award for NEW DUO/VOCAL GROUP – Never even heard of any of the nominees since I listen to Kidsongs in the car now; I no longer get to listen to country radio, so all the new stuff on the awards show tonight was truly news to me. Quiz me on Kidsongs episodes though, and I'd win every time!

Rodney Atkins gives an off key live performance. Not that this song about kids swearing sounds that great on the radio either. It's an ok song, but he has a crackly country voice, and live singing just makes it worse.

TOP NEW MALE VOCALIST – Hubby guesses Luke Bryan I guess Jake Owen, and the nominee not chosen by either of us wins – Jack Ingram.

Live performance from Kenny Chesney – I'm never a huge fan of Chesney, but he wasn't off-key, so I won't complain.

Live performance by Geroge Strait – I was not crazy about his new song but at least he wasn't off key either. Live performance duet – Kenny Chesney and George Strait – Chesney went a little off key, but I don't like this song Shiftwork anyway.

Next was a world premiere of Sugarlands new single, which I really liked! The woo-oohs were a little corny, but the song reminds me of 80's country and it was a very catchy tune.

ALBUM OF THE YEAR was won by Miranda Lambert – and nobody in our household guesses this category correctly.

Live performance by Brooks and Dunn – not off key

SONG OF THE YEAR – I guessed Kenny Chesney, hoping he would win this instead of Entertainer of the Year, but I was

disappointed because Hubby guessed Sugarland's Stay would get this award.

Taylor Swift gave a live performance – a little off key until it started raining on her on stage. That was pretty cool, but did they turn off her mic and let her lip sync? Would the mic even work in the rain? She got pretty wet and was suddenly on key, so I wonder...

TOP VOCAL DUO – Brooks and Dunn – We both guessed this one correctly – EVERYONE WINS!

Trace Atkins live performance – pitch problems

I have to comment on the baby puking commercial that aired here. I believe it originally aired during the Superbowl. But it shows a baby talked into a webcam, and all of a sudden, he spits up. I just love the irony of the baby talking like a normal adult, then all of a sudden spitting up like a baby. You have to see it and probably have kids to appreciate it.

Now finally, after stringing us along all night, it was time for the Garth Brooks tribute. Garth used to be my favorite country singer, way back when, until he sold out, retired a few times, became Chris Gaines, etc etc. But he still has some great music in his library, some of which he treated us to tonight in a live performance. Reminded me of the 3 times I got to see him in concert. He was a GREAT performer, and even though he has aged a little, he can still give a good concert. I loved how when he went off key, he covered by pretending he was just having fun with the song and meant to have pitch problems – yeah right! And he did mess up the words in The Thunder Rolls – he came in too early. But a good concert by him overall, even if he was a bit rusty. He also included the following songs in his montage: Callin Baton Rouge, Friends in Low Places, We Shall Be Free, The Dance, Just Ledoux, In Another's Eyes (special guest duet with wife Tricia Yearwood. Not to be rude, but I was POSITIVE Garth was

going to be announcing some baby news – Tricia looked extra puffy. He didn't say anything though, so I guess I'm just a jerk for noticing and saying so. Being in the public eye must suck!), More Than a Memory, Rodeo, and the finale Ain't Goin Down Til the Sun Comes Up. Then, Garth was given the Crystal Milestone Award of which he is deserving, despite all the selling out he's done. And when he called Reba Ms. Yearwood, it was hilarious, but since it was followed by "I love her", I can see why he mixed up the names to say that about his wife – aw!

Next award – VOCAL GROUP – Rascal Flatts

Keith Urban live performance – liked the song, but what's with the do doo's? This is the second do doo's song tonight!

David Spade's long joke was funny, but I have yet to understand his presence at country music awards?

Rascal Flatts live performance was off key.

Eddy Arnold tribute – Carrie Underwood and Brad Paisley sang one of Eddy's songs as a duet, and it sounded magnificent. Awesome tribute.

Kellie Pickler live performance – off pitch, like so many others before her.

Trisha Yearwood comes out to present MALE VOCALIST – kudos on the costume change, shouldn't be any baby rumors due to this dress. I have Kenny Chesney, Hubby has George Strait. Paisley wins.

Lee Ann Rimes – live performance – not off key, but the band is way loud.

Carrie Underwood wins FEMALE VOCALIST and puts me within one point of tying up the contest between my husband and me!

Montgomery Gentry – live performance off key – sounds horrible

ENTERTAINER OF THE YEAR – Wait, my ballot sheet says we still have Video of the year and Vocal Event of the Year, what happened? Some research on the internet shows I lost both those categories, ugh. I guessed Brad Paisley and Hubby has Keith Urban – Chesney wins AGAIN!!! I should have seen it coming, I was just hoping that with the new voting system this year – they let the fans vote for Entertainer of the Year – I thought the fans would take away Chesney’s monopoly on this category. His joke about thanking his parents for doing what they did so many years ago that led to his creation was kinda funny, if a bit unexpected.

So, you can see where my disappointments lie – mainly with the entertainer of the year award, losing to my husband, and not liking many of the new songs that were performed. But like I said, I had fun watching, and now I know I will have to do more research before the next country awards in the fall so I can get more correct guesses. I’ll have to find a way to take back control over the car radio for starters!

Sunday Afternoon

It turned cooler here today, and rather blustery. I spent a good portion of the afternoon at the High School’s performance of “Once Upon a Mattress”. After the show I spent some time tearing down the set. I don’t often help tear down sets I didn’t help build or wasn’t part of the production in one form or another. In this case I was just a volunteer with an electric drill.

Normally, I get a bit down when tearing down a set. There is a lot of work that goes into making a play ready for an audience. Tearing down the set is the final goodbye for that

show. As an actor, there is always that part of you that wants the show to end. On some shows this feeling is stronger than on others. At tear down the feeling that you have of not wanting the show to end shows its head. There are many emotions that go along with this. You can feel relief, sadness, and happiness all at the same time. You feel that it is good that the show is ending, but hating the fact you won't have this same cast again. Yes, I've worked with the same actors more than once, but in 10 years, I've never been with exactly the same cast. Sometimes it is hard to leave that behind.

After getting way off track, I'll try to get back to my point. I had none of those feelings today. It was just a mechanical thing getting the set down, and the stage cleared. Not a big deal at all. When the set was down, it was just time to go. No seating in the theater talking about the show. Where things were messed up, were the audience just didn't get the joke. All the in and outs that make theater fun. We were done, I was tired and hungry, and I just wanted to go. I like the other feelings better. Maybe it was different for the students in the show. I'll have to ask the one I know.

Please Mr. Columbus Turn This Ship Around

Some of my fondest memories spent as a student at Bowling Green State University were spent as a member of "America's Finest Singing Machine" the [BGSU Men's Chorus](#). To become a member was one of the most harrowing yet rewarding experiences I have ever had to undergo. Because it was so painful if I had

to divulge the requirements on this blog I would have to do something drastic. The best part of the group was the Spring Break Tour in which the chorus travels to either the north Atlantic coast and eventually New York City itself or south to Florida. L000000NG hours were spent on a Lakefront charter bus to drive to and from various schools and churches to perform not to mention the gracious host families who provided a bed, shower, and food to 120 men and one female accompanist. Thank goodness for VCR (this was before the infancy of DVD) and euchre cards.

My second year (1996) as a member was the New York recruitment tour. I just hated it. The highlight of the tour was three days spent in the Big Apple. The first afternoon, after standing in line to get tickets for a show at the TKTS booth on Broadway, a bunch of us decided to make our way to the Ed Sullivan Theatre to see about stand-by tickets for the Letterman show. Believe it or not, there were none to be had. However, instead of taking the advice of the doorman and going across the street to the Winter Garden Theatre to watch a bunch of performers dressed as *Cats*, **SOMEONE** came up with the bright idea of starting to sing and entertain the crowd gathering around the building. At 5pm, the taping for the evening's Letterman show started. At about 5.35 PM, a doorman came out and told the choir to come inside. Apparently, one of the audience members inside was either totally disgusted with us and wanted the police called or else we were awesome. Word traveled during the first two commercial breaks and finally, Dave gave in and said..."OK, bring on the choir." Then, our 30 seconds of fame arrived as we sang the tag to our rendition of the BGSU alma mater. After our brief segment, Dave introduced us as the BGSU Men's Chorus from Bowling Green, **KENTUCKY? WOOLY SHEEP!!!**

The next morning, an even larger contingent of the chorus ventured over to Rockefeller Center dressed in our penguin suits. After one of Al Roker's weather forecasts, we sang our

barbershop rendition of the National Anthem.

So, as you can clearly see, I had a dreadful time in New York City.

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Now on to other thoughts...

My youngest is growing up, she is now a Junior in High School, and in her Second to last High School play. She only had a small role, but to me she was the loveliest lady in waiting on stage. I tried to follow her every time she appeared on stage, and every time I felt a pain in my heart. This is another one of those times when I hate being a widower. Her mother should have been there to watch this.

This is not the first show my dear wife hasn't been to, and knowing my daughters it will not be the last. It startles me every time I watch them perform. Every time I feel that same sadness in my heart. Knowing it will come doesn't seem to help much. While I don't break down into tears much anymore, the emptiness is still very real. I can't be both parents, I can only be the Dad. I try my best, but that isn't always good enough, at least not for me. Not a lot more to say on this right now as I wonder what the next time will bring.

A sensitivity test

I went to see my daughter in the high school play. This year they put on "Once Upon A Mattress". I won't comment much on any of the singing. I can't sing, and I am no judge of the singing of others. What sound good to me may not sound good to other people.

I will comment on the performances of the actors (students). I've been involved in community theater for quite a while now, and I'm finally beginning to understand what it takes to make a good show. (some of my friends may argue my last statement, but this is my blog. I saying what I want.) The young people did a wonderful job getting into there roles. Even the ladies in waiting and Knights of no lines. While on stage, they all acted the part they were given. Except for a few small present day items thrown in for humor, most of the time the actors were in the "Middle Ages" (fairy tale style of course). People on stage were reacting to (not just standing and ignoring) the other action on the stage. In times where lines were missed (I'm not sure how many people actually noticed this, but as I said, I've been on stage before) the actors covered it with grace and the ability to stay in character. A well performed play for such young talent.

The lead actors seemed comfortable with the songs, lines and character. The Queen really stood out during one very long monologue. It seemed like she ranted and raved for a good 10 minutes, barely stopping to get a breath in. If you know the show at all, this is exactly the way the Queen should be. The Prince played the perfect momma's boy through the show. Princess Winifred played a very strong second to the Queen. And finally the Lady Larken and Sir Harry gave a good backdrop to the reason behind getting Winifred to the Palace. As I said early the smaller roles and the chorus roles held their own. It didn't look like they were added just to be a

chorus. They performed their parts and kept in their characters the entire time on stage.

Since this is a High School performance I won't comment much on the directing or the stage handling of the show. I'll leave it said, that if this were at the community theater, I would make comments on the dance routines, and the way the stage was handled. Some good, some bad – I think the students followed the direction given to the best of their abilities.

I am going again tomorrow, and I expect to be just as entertained as I was this evening.

One boy for sale

Or rather, just over 100 boys and girls in the production of [Oliver!](#) I saw last night. There was a boy, a former student in the 4th/5th grade class at my church who invited me to come. His older brother, also a former student, helped out by running a spotlight. How could I say no? Even though *they* never saw *me* when *I* was in *Oliver!* just two years ago... I was so disappointed then that not a single student from my church came, or at least told me they came if they did. I advertised this to them for a few weekends, but nothing. Oh, well.

This rather large production is apparently typical of [Christian Youth Theater](#). This organization started out west, but became a reality around here when someone moved to my wonderful state and received permission to branch out here. Now there are many branches just in the Chicago area, all under the [CYT-Chicago](#) umbrella. This isn't ordinary community theatre though. In order to be allowed to audition for a show the kids are required to take one of several theatre classes through this organization. Obviously not a deterrent at all

judging by the size of these shows, and even in the number of CYT shows some of them have been in according to the program. The quality wasn't bad at all. The characters for the most part were very convincing and if there were any slipups I didn't notice. I did have a couple of issues with their Fagin, but of course since I played the part myself this is only natural. I wish I could remember what those issues were now. Anyway, the boy who I came to see, Brian, played an orphan at the beginning of the show, then appeared twice more later during chorus numbers. During [Food Glorious Food](#) he nearly slipped up when he saw me in the audience, front and center. Interesting spot they sold me- I guess it pays to come by yourself and get those prime spots when groups fail to completely fill up a row!

I was a bit disappointed at a couple of things though. First off, the show was shortened quite a bit. The running time was about 1:55, and that included a 20 minute intermission, making the actual running time 1:35. Since the original show has a running time of well over two hour you can see a lot was not there. I Shall Scream and [Oom-Pah-Pah](#) were two full songs that were cut, and were probably the most obvious to go considering the group. Bill Sykes's song, My Name, was cut in half for some reason too though the one who played him did a fine job. Many scenes were abbreviated as well. Ones I noticed most (again having been *in* them before) were some scenes in Fagin's Lair. However, these weren't the only places shortened. The scene where Noah Claypole is introduced was snipped (Oliver just leaves right after [Where is Love?](#)). The scene at the end where everything goes south for Sykes and Fagin's gang was shortened to the point where Sykes doesn't even get killed (Nancy still does though), and the scene at the end of Act I where Oliver goes out with Dodger to pickpocket, then gets falsely accused was missing entirely! Well, that whole thing aside I was also disappointed that for a production so well done they for some reason chose not to have a live orchestra. Everything was sung to recorded

music. I'm sure they must have had a reason for this, but even so this took something away from the show. Outside of this, and I should stress that shortening the show sounded much worse in writing than it actually was, it was a very good production. Christian Youth Theater is something that should be considered for many other areas.

In any event, if you want to know why I didn't post yesterday this was why. ☐ Interesting thing: according to Brian he was considered for the role of Oliver, but at 12 years old he was a little tall in comparison to their pick for the Artful Dodger. Instead they cast an 8-year-old who did a fabulous job considering his age. This brought my thoughts back to a certain [Little Shop of Horrors](#) production where their original pick for Orin, who later dropped out, was actually shorter than me so when considering who would play Seymour they went with someone smaller and I got stuck with being the understudy. However, I should be happy with that because had the show not been sabotaged by a distraught producer who though he should have been director I wouldn't have been considered at all as I was still kind of a weak actor at that point. Did I get all of that right, O great admin who directed this show? ☐

To Boldly Go To Infinity And Beyond

Because I know all of my faithful readers have been dying to learn the answers to last Saturday's tagline quiz (aside from the one who provided additional clues to the answers), I will now reveal the correct responses.

1. [The Fly](#) (1986 remake starring Jeff Goldblum and Gena Davis)
2. [Jurassic Park](#) (which was pretty much a gimme... again with Jeff Goldblum... purely coincidence)
3. [Star Trek: The Motion Picture](#) (rather plodding kick off of the movie franchise which will be relaunched [Christmas Day, 2008](#) and is being directed by "Lost" creator J.J. Abrams)
4. [Aliens](#) (the best of the Sigourney Weaver starring quadrilogy... I have yet to try the two Alien v. Predator films)
5. [Toy Story](#) (a third is in the works... interesting)
6. [E.T. – The Extraterrestrial](#) (again, a bit obvious. Harrison Ford was married to the screenwriter, Melissa Matheson at the time of its release and was supposed to have a cameo as a school principal. Steven Spielberg felt that the actor's presence would be too distracting to the cast and crew and his scene was cut. Did not hurt either the movie nor Mr. Ford's career in the least).

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Two of a kind

I keep meaning to mention this bit of info. Or maybe I already did but don't remember. In any event, I was at a middle school doing PE, but you already knew that. Unlike Thursday's PE, we actually got to go outside. Well, there were two periods of sixth grade health, but that's why I specified PE, didn't I? □ So, for PE 8th grade played kickball and 7th grade played soccer. We used the baseball

diamonds to play kickball. The first class went fairly well. They chose to play boys versus girls which worked out about as well as you would expect, being the girls at that age are more, well, feminine than a few years ago. This of course is not meant to be sexist as there *are* many female athletes, most, if not all, of which can wipe the floor with me as I am a non-sports guy. However, when talking about eighteen girls, most of them react to sports like kickball as one might expect. It should be noted that they **wanted** to do boys versus girls. I was skeptical about it, but if even the girls wanted it than I wasn't going to stand in the way. They outnumbered the boys too, so I figured it wouldn't hurt. Except the boys still issued the girls a major defeat. The second class I didn't even let get to the point of suggesting boys vs girls. As soon as we were on the field I randomly picked two students as captains and had them pick teams, alternating boys and girls as long as possible. This class was the goofiest of the day, though not matching the two classes I mentioned Thursday. They just didn't take the game seriously. Well, I guess if I was going to be in high school in just a few weeks I might take advantage of a nice day outside with a sub too. I didn't let it bother me- I just wrote it down for the gym teacher to read when he gets back.

But where does the title come in? Well, it has to do with 7th grade soccer, which went quite well by the way, excepting the fact that the goals were not placed across from each other which I only noticed after a student informed me that the point I was about to place the ball wasn't center. I looked back at the goal I was using to center the ball and it was centered as best as I could tell. I looked at the other goal and I was putting the ball at a point that wasn't even between the two goal cones. What the...? Unfortunately I couldn't move the goal because the teacher this morning had drawn goalie boxes . Oh well. There were no sidelines anyway so no big deal. The second 7th grade class is where the title *finally* comes into play. How often is it one finds two students at

the same school, in the same grade, and on the same team with the same name? And by this I mean first and last name. I actually noticed this issue weeks ago. It was when in one class I noticed there was a boy named Peter who sounded like a student I knew from church. Once class started I looked at him and he wasn't the one. Another day I noticed the name again, and found it was attached to a different boy. Huh? This boy did look familiar. It took another couple times subbing for this grade before I realized the two were on the same team though rarely in the same class for some reason. At least the classes I subbed in. My guess is they were purposely given different schedules to aid the teachers. However, when it came to PE, there was only one time available per team so both Peters were in the same gym class, though different teachers. Well, for soccer the two classes combined and I took the boys out on one field while she took the girls out on another field. So, you guessed it: Peter vs Peter. They aren't really two of a kind other than their name. They look different, and in soccer one defended while the other played on offense.

Oh, and only one was the Peter I knew. He goes to a different church now, but he did attend mine a few years ago. ☐

First look at WorldWide Telescope

After spending a couple of days looking at WorldWide Telescope from Microsoft. This is a very fun program to run. The pictures from NASA telescopes are simply beautiful. There is a lot more there than I can uncover in just a few days, but here is what I found out.

It is a good tool for use in the classroom. By using this, you can actually place some of the wonderful NASA pictures in the night night sky. I'm not sure it is good for planning night view sessions at the telescope, but if you have a computer driven scope, it will allow you to point at specific night sky targets. Trouble with this is that it likes to be online. While it does work offline, it seems to be slower. Getting data/photos on-line do take up space on your hard drive. I'm not sure how much space yet, but I will again keep looking into that.

For me, this is a good addition to other software I have, but I don't think it will replace anything. More to come.