

CINCINNATI'S NEWS AND ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

cover arts music movies dining news columns listings classifieds promotions personals mediakit home

ARCHIVES

Google

Best of Cincinnati for September 11. 2008

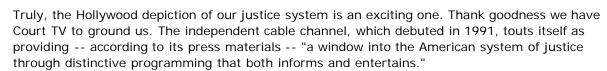
Guilty!

Court TV programming sours integrity with sensationalism

By CHRISTOPHER TOMLIN

If you're one of the millions of Americans who can't get enough prime-time television programming about procedural justice, there are several permutations of the wildly successful Law & Order. If that's not enough, you'll also find Crossing Jordan, The Unit, CSI, NCIS, In Justice, Young Prosecutors, Boston Legal, Conviction, The Evidence and Cold Case, among countless others.

The major networks seem intent to portray lawyers and scientists as new-millennium action heroes, routinely shooting guns, escaping traps, fleeing explosions, running, jumping and generally performing countless tasks which might seem a bit of a physical stretch for most lawyers and scientists in your acquaintance.



Finally, a network that won't talk down to us! A network that will give us the truth! Truly we, as educated television-watchers, have been hoodwinked enough by the over-glamorization of the courtroom battle -- and Court TV shall give us a much needed reprieve, right?

Not so fast, America.

By day, Court TV's programming looks a lot like CNN for law enthusiasts. Scrolling information bars, well-groomed anchors, in-studio correspondents and live coverage of major trials. With the exception of CNN double agent Nancy Grace, who reports every detail with an unnecessary and zealot-like urgency, trusted figures like ex-Texas judge Catherine Crier and high-profile prosecutor Jack Ford deliver pertinent insider information on the proceedings we're watching. And often it actually does offer an interesting glimpse into the courtroom by folks who know what they're talking about.

Daytime on Court TV sees guests guestioning the validity of testimonials, performing entertaining experiments to test the validity of witness' statements and sharply critiquing strategies of the attorneys trying the featured cases.

True, the cases featured are high profile ones: Coverage of the O.J. Simpson trial put the network on the map in 1995, and last year Michael Jackson's trial seemed to be the only thing spoken



THIS

ARTICLE

MEMAIL.

THIS

ARTICLE

<u>Сугійк то</u>

THIS

ARTICLE

Ex-Judge Catherine Crier talks with guests like actor Tom Selleck about cases under scrutiny on Court TV

Also This Issue

SEARCH 🔘 Web 💽 CityBeat

Calendar Listings Better than a day planner

Playing for Each Other Sondheim's Company is revived with an unusual new approach

Pull Up a Chair Make your own furniture -and save money -- with advice from DAAP grad

Where It's At Playhouse's Company is about as alive as theater can get

Total Experience Wicked gives audiences what they want

Gone with Magnolias ETC presents a comedy about filmmaking that's funny from start to finish

Curtain Call: Theaters, Actors, Etc. CINCINNATI SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

Articulations: Inside **Artists' Heads** Rebecca Weller

All Lit Up PAUL AUSTER -- The **BROOKLYN FOLLIES**

All Lit Up EDEET RAVEL -- WALL OF LIGHT

All Lit Up LARRY GROSS --SIGNED. SEALED AND When the sun goes down, however, Court TV *sizzles*! Nearly all the network's validity flies out the window when the nightly prime-time ratings quest begins. Enough of these boring old daytime lawyers, right? They're just standing around talking in a courtroom all day. Let's see some *action*.

Enter *Psychic Detectives*. Enter *Las Vegas Law*. Enter *Hollywood Heat*, *Hot Pursuit* and *Beach Patrol: San Diego*. You've seen prosecutors drone on and on all day, now here's two hours of shirtless fugitives on *Cops*. It's the law -- and it's electric!

By night, Court TV closes the shades on its window into the system of American justice and trots out grisly murderers, casino lowlifes, psychic mediums and hot lifeguards. Terrifying stories of serial killings pepper the evening schedule and daring sea rescues inexplicably replace courtroom objections. Tossing integrity out the window, the network trades bylaws for billy clubs, wiping clean the work it has done all day to bring a valid, technical eye to the justice system and becoming guilty of precisely the sensationalist attitudes it was created to dispel.

As altruistic as the network's endeavors might be, this drastic, nightly change in tone makes it hard to get behind Court TV. The affable, intelligent Dr. Jekyll disappears, and the gruesome, inyour-face Mr. Hyde emerges -- and herein lies the network's greatest injustice. The network's latest slogan is "Court TV. Seriously Entertaining." When all is said and done, at the end of the day Court TV becomes entertainment that's hard to take seriously. ©

E-mail the editor

Previously in Television and Radio

- <u>30-Day Turnaround</u> Morgan Spurlock's series raises issues at FX By CHRISTOPHER TOMLIN (February 22, 2006)
- <u>'Tooned In</u> Cartoon Network's Adult Swim delves into deeper waters By CHRISTOPHER TOMLIN (February 8, 2006)
- <u>Airing It Out</u> Local TV show gives area talent some exposure Interview By P.F. Wilson (April 6, 2005)
- <u>more</u>...

<u>home | cover | arts | music | movies | dining | news | columns | listings</u> <u>classifieds | personals | mediakit | promotions</u>

Privacy Policy

Cincinnati CityBeat covers news, public issues, arts and entertainment of interest to readers in Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky. The views expressed in these pages do not necessarily represent those of the publishers. Entire contents are copyright 2006 Lightborne Publishing Inc. and may not be reprinted in whole or in part without prior written permission from the publishers. Unsolicited editorial or graphic material is welcome to be submitted but can only be returned if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Unsolicited material accepted for publication is subject to CityBeat's right to edit and to our copyright provisions.

All Lit Up CHARLES FISHMAN --THE WAL-MART EFFECT

To Do List Main Event: Not Human

> Join the CityBeat Mailing List

> > » JOIN NOW

MILLER TIMEI Cincy Scene

Back to Top

