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## THEATER/FINE ARTS

Tuesday, July 5, 2005

**Wing-It improv crew gives reality TV a mostly funny dose of its own medicine**By [JOE ADCOCK](#)

SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER THEATER CRITIC

Lack of time is no longer an excuse. Nor is lack of cable. Or lack of a TiVo. Even the mere fact that your home is a TV-free zone is no excuse for ignorance of the most important cultural innovation of the early years of the 21st century: reality TV.

Their show is funny. Mostly. Ponderous, complicated elimination contests can be irritating and dull in real reality TV. Wing-It's satirical versions also can be a little irritating and dull.

The ludicrous pomposity of the phenomenon, however, is mercilessly lampooned. The bombastic music, the synthetic suspense, the bogus solemnity, the melodramatic pathos and the stern taskmaster are all there.

In this latter role, Ethan Newberry is every bit as obnoxious as the highly paid TV prototypes. His manner is harsh and contemptuous. He bullies. He contrives portent and suspense. He wears a wide white belt. He is hilarious.

No two improv comedy performances are identical. So what you might see in the future will of course be different from what I saw last Thursday night. But the constants -- the format of "Reality World" and the talents of the Wing-It performers -- are predictably attractive.

The format borrows from "Survivor" and "American Idol" and a good deal more. Preshow audience input determines the characteristics each actor displays. As the Thursday audience would have it, Annette Auger was the resident bitch. Mike Christensen personified alien invasion paranoia. Ryan Miller was a cheesy third-rate actor. Missy Meyer was terminally perky. And the amazingly ingenious Doug Willott was a cheery immigrant from Eastern Europe.

Based on Newberry's capricious verdicts and boisterous displays of audience preferences and aversions, Willott emerged triumphant. The audience, by the way, is referred to as "America." Nice touch.

Though the realities of "Reality World" are different at different performances, the show, by its very commendable nature, creates and destroys the preposterous

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pretensions of reality TV -- and no commercials.

*"Reality World" plays through July 22 at Historic University Theatre, 5510 University Way N.E. Tickets are \$8 to \$10 at the door or [www.ticketwindowonline.com](http://www.ticketwindowonline.com).*

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