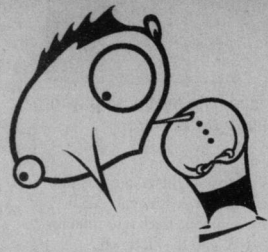


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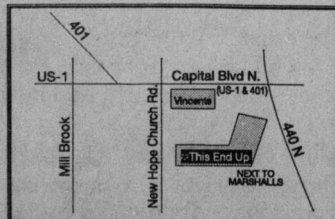
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The Fantasy Behind 'The Real World'

Real World" junkies unite and acknowledge our weakness for real-life soap operas.

What's Eric from New York doing these days? Or Julie from Alabama? Does David have more patience for Caucasians? Did Heather B. get a rap deal? How did ReignDance break up?

Here's how it started: One day back in middle school, I wanted my MTV.

Instead of switching on to find music videos, I discovered a show crafted so well that it not only hooked me the entire afternoon - yes, it was a "Real World" marathon - but has done so now for almost a decade.

Recently it became evident how much a nation can obsess themselves with other peoples' lives, when the concept of the real-life soap opera penetrated prime-time television. Note all the suckers to the largely cheesy hype surrounding the gimmicky "Survivor" and tedious "Big Brother."

This national hoopla, however, came too little, too late. Most Gen X-ers were in on "Real World"-mania years ago. And to think it all started with a group of seven people living in



**SHINDY CHEN
MS. CHEN IF YOU NASTY**

a loft in New York, "to have their lives taped, and find out what it's like when people stop being polite."

As much as "The Real World" intrigues and sucks you into its couch-potato-inducing bubble, it's just not real anymore.

This couldn't be more obvious from the fact that none of the housemates pay rent for the three months they live in the totally phat, complimentary house. The last time I checked, I was responsible for bills and rent, and if that doesn't apply to you then a huge portion of reality is missing from your daily dose of life. College life isn't technically the real world, but neither is

fluffing with Dad's credit card.

After the New York season spawned a legacy of "Real World," and later "Road Rules," each successive group of people picked had expectations and ideas of what lay ahead, affecting what they said or did for the camera and how. The straightforward discussions of serious issues and prejudices became filtered, and artificiality set in.

In the end, how we perceive the exploited "characters" comes from the final edit of the show. Bunim-Murray Productions wants us to see Elka as a religious innocent, Flora as a whiny bitch, Dominic and Ruthie as raging alcoholics, Neil as a lady's man, Puck as an insensitive pig and so on. We're ready to associate these people with others in our lives, and are as obsessed with it as hearing the latest gossip.

It all should have ended with the first season, the most real "Real World." At least I would've saved a lot of marathon-watching time and could have, gawsh, read a book.

Shindy Chen can be reached at shindy@email.unc.edu.

The Average Joe Turns Don Juan in 'Tao'

By ALLISON ROST
Staff Writer

The Tao of Steve is a set of rules that can make any man into the Mac Daddy, the James Bond or the Steve McQueen.

This "Steve religion" instructs its followers to do anything they can to make it seem they want to be "just friends" with a woman, with the result that

they'll have her in the sack faster than you can say "fraud."

In this quirky Sundance comedy, Dex, an overweight kindergarten teacher (Donal Logue), manages to be more than his fair share of women just by following this commandment.

But when he meets the girl of his dreams at a college reunion, he realizes he can't use his rules on her, and, as she points out, "Don Giovanni slept with thousands of women because he was afraid he wouldn't be loved by one."

After graduating from film school, director and screenwriter Jenniphir Goodman decided to base a project on her friend Duncan and his overwhelmingly successful seductions. Her sister, who plays Dex's dream girl, got involved and the three crafted the script for "The Tao of Steve."

And what a brilliant script it is. The dialogue is intelligent and hilarious, and

even though this movie can be classified as a romantic comedy, it is thankfully devoid of the overenthusiasm that tends to mar the films of that genre.

The story does stay true to form in one way, however: There's really no doubt that Dex is going to get the girl in the end, despite the various mishaps that occur as the film veers off track.

Goodman tends to get too ambitious, splicing in close-ups and transitions that distract the viewer from, rather than enhance, the storyline. And the annoying music - which sounds like a rip-off of the "Northern Exposure" theme song - also detracts from the film.

But Logue is perfectly cast as Dex. He's one of those actors who's in everything ("Runaway Bride," "The Patriot") but you never remember his name.

Logue keeps you guessing about whether Dex is being honest or deceitful and nicely surprises you along the way. This performance will hopefully land him some of the leading-man consideration he deserves.

The Arts & Entertainment Editor can be reached at artsdesk@unc.edu.

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The Tao of Steve
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7 SA	"Prog" Day
9 MO	A J CROCE**
10 TU	NINE DAYS
11 WE	EL VEZ
12 TH	Donna The Buffalo
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17 TU	LOW w/ IDA
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27 FR	BIO RITMO
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