

The Best Show on TV

by Joe Mulder

"The Office" (NBC) – 2/9/2006 - 4/2/2006
"Huff" (Showtime) – 4/6/2006 - 8/26/2006
"Big Brother" (CBS) – 8/26/2008 - 10/4/2006
"South Park" (Comedy Central) – 10/4/2006 - 11/30/2006
"The Office" (NBC) – 11/30/2006 - 1/14/2007
"24" (FOX) – 1/14/2007 - 4/5/2007
"30 Rock" (NBC) – 4/5/2007 - 4/10/2008
"House" (FOX) – 4/10/2008 - 10/5/2008
"Dexter" (Showtime) – 10/5/2008 - 11/18/2008
"The Shield" (FX) – 11/18/2008 - 11/24/2008
"How I Met Your Mother" (CBS) – 11/24/2008 - present

Some of you may know, and some of you may not, that this undertaking was inspired in large part (okay, in whole) by the glorious [WWE Title Histories page](#), where one can see a list of all WWE Champions dating back to 1963. It's surprisingly easy to waste at least an hour on that page, and I'd urge everyone to try it.

That said, it follows that the title Best Show on TV can – must – be determined in much the same manner as the WWE championship. A quick for instance: when Edge cashed in his Money in the Bank title match at New Year's Revolution in January of 2006, waiting until John Cena had just gone through a brutal Elimination Chamber main event and taking advantage of the weakened, bloodied champ, was it fair? Not necessarily. Was it cheap? Most certainly. But did Edge, in fact, become WWE Champion? Well, [check the list](#).

It was in much the same manner that "How I Met Your Mother" took advantage of a rather desolate end-of-sweeps fortnight and ripped the title away from all other contenders with its November 24th episode, "The Naked Man," which, to complete the wrestling analogy, was the comedic equivalent of a steel folding chair to the back of the head. There are respects in which "How I Met Your Mother" might not quite be The Best Show on TV, but last Monday it most certainly was, and it will retain the title until such title is taken from it forcibly (which could happen pretty soon, but, still).

The show is ostensibly a story that a middle-aged man (voiced by Bob Saget) is telling to his teenaged kids about his younger days, cataloging the adventures of himself, Ted (Josh Radnor), ex-girlfriend Robin (Cobie Smulders, really just a "Mulder" with an "s" on each end), young marrieds Marshall and Lily (Jason Segel and Alyson Hannigan), and unapologetic womanizer Barney (the great Neil Patrick Harris) in today's Manhattan.

Those unfortunate enough to be unfamiliar with "How I Met Your Mother" should know that it has already contributed many valuable words and phrases to the cultural lexicon (extensive lists of such contributions can, [and have](#), been made elsewhere). In this way it is something of an heir to

"Seinfeld," which gave us such concepts as the Close Talker, the Roommate Switch, the Yadda Yadda and many others. "How I Met Your Mother" has, in three-and-a-half short seasons, already introduced us to "Legend... wait for it... dary!," "Suit Up," the Hot/Crazy Scale (with the accompanying Vicki Mendoza Diagonal), the Lemon Law of Dating and, unforgettably, the Slap Bet. And while "The Naked Man" probably won't (and certainly shouldn't) influence real world behavior like I'm sure we all hope "Slap Bet" has, it represented the high-water mark for a show that's certainly capable of missing, but hits big when it hits (it's like the Adam Dunn of TV comedy).

(Adam Dunn is a baseball player who hits 40 homers and leads the league in strikeouts every year)

The Naked Man is a technique pioneered by Robin's blind date Mitch, a technique whereby a man thinks of an excuse to be invited into his date's home or apartment, waits for his date to leave the room, and then disrobes completely. If The Naked Man works as planned the woman is then so disarmed, amused, or impressed by her date's moxie that she sleeps with him. Mitch advises Ted that The Naked Man is best used as a desperation move at the end of a first date when you're pretty sure there won't be a second, and guarantees that it works two out of three times.

Needless to say, when Barney hears about The Naked Man (and finds out, along with the rest of the gang, that Mitch used it successfully on the way-out-of-his-league Robin), he's duly impressed. "This is like the forward pass in football," he gushes. "The slam dunk in basketball. The haircutting technique where they hold it between their fingers and cut right above it; it's a total game-changer!"

Barney insists that he and Ted both deploy The Naked Man that very night, Barney with whichever random bar chick he manages to pick up and Ted with the woman from his office building whom he's taking out in just a bit. Ted declines initially, but calls a naked Barney mid-date to reveal that the woman turned out to be pretty horrible, so he's going for it. This leads to the two of them, naked but for their cell phones, discussing which pose would be best to reveal The Naked Man:

"The Superman"
"The Captain Morgan"
"The 'Oops, I Didn't See You There'"
"The Thinker"
"The Heismann"
"Mr. Clean"
"The Burt Reynolds"
"The Coppertone Baby"
"The Olympic Gymnast Who Stuck the Landing"

While Barney opts for "The Superman," Ted, after getting re-dressed and then deciding at the last second to do The Naked Man after all, simply goes with "Ta-da!"

POOP READING

(one can only imagine the countless hours of fun to be had coming up with other options)

"The Naked Man" is such a good episode that the B-story itself could have carried an entire show; it involves Lily – with help from the rest of the group – putting together a list of 50 reasons to have sex, in order to prove to Marshall that there are more reasons than just "love." Like with Steve Martin and his "big nose" jokes in *Roxanne*, she probably ended up wishing she hadn't committed to listing quite so many. But, like in *Roxanne*, the results are just delightful ("#44 - wingman diving on the friend grenade" is a personal favorite).

It all comes full circle, then, when Marshall is less than amused by the list and Lily decides to cheer him up with her own variation of The Naked Man (the pose she picks? "I've got boobs.").

My wife and I watched the episode together twice, and I could watch it another couple of times without getting tired of it. With sincere apologies to the aforementioned Steve Martin's recent "30 Rock" appearance, "The Naked Man" was one of the best things I've seen on TV in quite some time, and it's the reason that "How I Met Your Mother" now holds the title of The Best Show on TV.

(stay tuned, though; "How I Met Your Mother" is unlikely to hold the title for long. "30 Rock" is as good as ever, I'm about to catch up on "Dexter," and "House" could throw a wrench into the whole thing with the return of the private eye character who showed up earlier this season. I love that guy)
