

Does sex sell? Not so much

By **BRIAN URIE**

Parents Television Council

Hollywood has been pushing the “sex sells” theory as long as I can remember.

This is the idea that the entertainment industry fills its products full of profanity and sex because the audience wants it. It is accepted as common knowledge. The problem is that it isn't true. New Nielsen Co. research reveals that PG-rated movies with the least profanity make the most money at the U.S. box office. In fact, movies that scored an average 0.8 on a 10-point profanity scale collected an average of \$69 million. Those that averaged 2.8 for profanity averaged \$38 million. All PG movies averaged 2.3 on the profanity scale. Surprising?

Add to this revelation years of data proving that G-rated and PG-rated movies drastically outperform PG-13 and R-rated films at the box office. Why, then, are R-rated movies produced at such a higher rate? The Dove Foundation recently honored the best family friendly movies of the year. Compare their winners to the Oscar nominees for best picture this year and you will see the Dove films grossed \$536 million, while the violent and “edgy” Oscar nominees pulled in \$295 million.

Sex sells, right?

Primetime television has a long history of successful family-oriented lineups. Yet people in the industry have worked hard to discredit the wholesome entertainment their medium was built on. I can remember “Who's the Boss?” and “Growing Pains” giving way to “Full House,” “Family Matters” and “Perfect Strangers” — where has family friendly entertainment gone? There is now only room for shows that focus on sex and violence. To the hundreds of millions of people who tuned out as a result, Hollywood answered, “sex sells!”

The entertainment business



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seize only to find that the greatest success in the entertainment industry has always been of family-friendly material. This is as true now as ever.

Take ABC's Sunday lineup of “Extreme Makeover: Home Edition” and “Oprah's Big Give.” These two shows center on helping out the less fortunate in the community and are receiving phenomenal ratings. “Oprah's Big Give,” where 10 contestants strive to become the best philanthropist, was fourth in its second week on the air while “Extreme Makeover: Home Edition,” in which a deserving family gets its dream home, came in at No. 7.

The type of redeeming content found in these shows is only part of the story. Take a look at the competition these shows are up against. Sundays have become the night where networks bring out the worst of the worst in terms of pandering to the lowest common denominator; supposedly in the name of profits. On Sundays, CBS airs “Dexter,” a deplorable, violent show in which the audience is compelled to root for the serial killer “hero.” I think this is the most appalling show to ever make it to broadcast television.

Fox airs “Family Guy,” an animated series often marketed to children that regularly touts the worst language and sexual humor ever seen. This doesn't win viewers over from ABC. NBC has two of its long-running “Law & Order” programs that have consistently dipped deeper into the garbage pail to find ways to try to titillate and shock the audience into watching. The CW throws in the sitcom “Girlfriends,” that uses pornography and kinky sex practices for cheap laughs.

From week to week, ABC's Sunday night lineup is commanding the highest

“American Idol” for the overall top spot. For some reason, most TV shows have yet to notice where the audiences have gone and still try to add more sex, violence, crude humor or language. The Parents Television Council's study of the family hour last year revealed there is an instance of violent, profane or sexual content every 3.5 minutes, and it gets worse as the night goes on. Why does Hollywood continue to reject what would make them more successful?

Families must keep speaking up against the dreck on most of TV since Hollywood producers can't seem to notice the obvious and improve on their own. What does the audience really want? We know one thing: It doesn't appear that it's sex or profanity.

Urie is Salt Lake City chapter director of the Parents Television Council (www.parentstv.org).

thought it was chasing the
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ratings, not just for that night
but challenging shows like