

JAY CHIAT AWARDS 2014
PBS / CHANNEL THIRTEEN
REGIONAL CAMPAIGN CATEGORY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

How tapping into a cultural truth about the state of TV allowed us to spread the message about the importance of quality programming.

In the summer of 2013, we launched a series of new reality TV shows. Advertising for The Dillionaire (tagline “Life’s a Pickle”), Married to a Mime (tagline “She’s got a lot to say”) and Meet the Tanners (tagline “The family that sprays together stays together”) appeared on the NY subway, on TV and online.

The twist was that these shows were fake: a commentary on the sorry state of mainstream TV from Channel THIRTEEN, New York’s PBS affiliate and the city’s last remaining bastion of quality cultural and educational programming. We mimicked the conventions of the reality genre to deliver Thirteen’s message to a new audience of potential donors who recognized the value of public broadcasting but who hadn’t been motivated to provide the funding that Thirteen badly needs to stay on the air. And we found that by juxtaposing Thirteen’s mission to educate and improve against the reality shows consuming American television schedules and dumbing down American culture, we were able to unlock their residual affection and convert it into action.

OUR CHALLENGE

For over 50 years, Channel THIRTEEN, New York's local PBS affiliate, has brought culture and education into the city's homes. Thanks to Thirteen, New Yorkers learned to count with Sesame Street, had their horizons broadened by Nova and experienced some of the world's great classical music, opera and dance performances with the aptly named Great Performances.

Thirteen's ability to keep this sort of quality programming on the air is thanks in large part to the financial support of its members whose donations supplement PBS's federal funding. But Thirteen's members are a dying breed (literally - average donor age has surpassed 65) and the younger cohort who should be taking their place is less apt to donate.

Thirteen's challenge to us: engage our next generation of members by winning the heads, hearts and wallets of 25-45 year old New Yorkers.

UNDERSTANDING OUR AUDIENCE

Our initial research findings were positive. Over a series of depth interviews with prospective members, we found that this younger audience viewed and enjoyed a number of THIRTEEN shows (Masterpiece Theatre, Antiques Roadshow etc etc).

But we also found that in a world of almost endless content options, these shows live within an increasingly broad repertoire: “I’ve got the whole of Downton season 2 on my Tivo but I haven’t gotten around to watching it yet... so much else to see.” -Female, Manhattan

We also found that on a show-by-show basis, our audience doesn’t necessarily value THIRTEEN’s content above the content available elsewhere: “I enjoy the documentaries they show but I feel like I can watch documentaries elsewhere so probably wouldn’t pay for them.”

-Female, Manhattan.



UNDERSTANDING OUR AUDIENCE

But we saw greater traction when we discussed THIRTEEN's (and public broadcasting's) larger mission. This audience understands and values Thirteen's unique commitment to quality educational and cultural programing: "They don't set out to sell advertising space, they set out to inform and educate, which to me is pretty amazing." Male, Brooklyn

But THIRTEEN's mission never changes and yet these people and many more like them were not donating. The challenge became to unlock their residual appreciation and affection for public broadcasting.

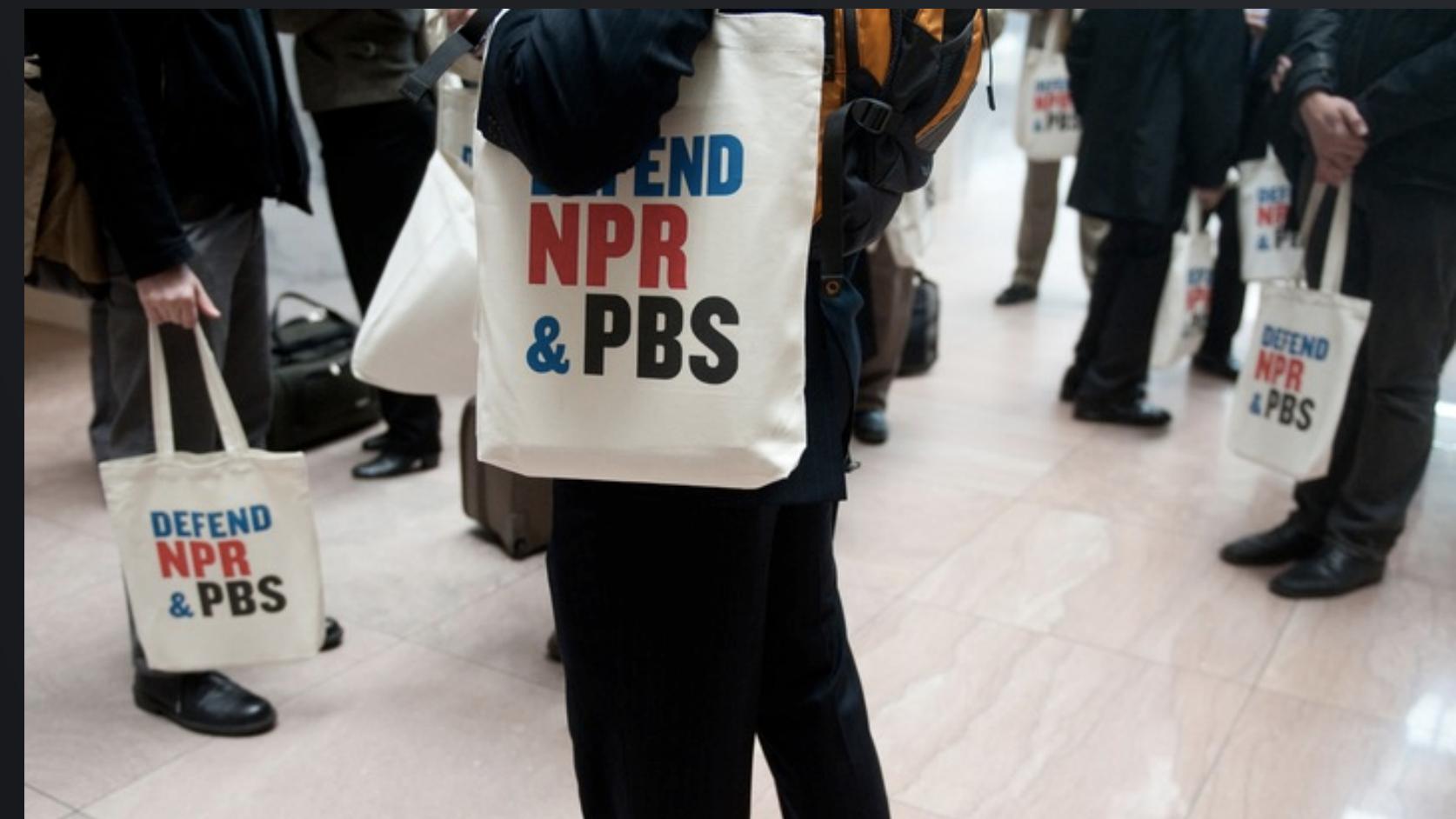
UNDERSTANDING OUR AUDIENCE

Of all the people that we spoke to, only one had ever made a donation to Thirteen, but his reason for doing so was telling...

“A couple of years back, when Congress threatened to defund PBS I thought it was time to step up.” Male, Queens

This impulse to protect PBS from defunding is born out by the data: PBS donations spiked during the first half of 2011 when congress threatened its funding and again in late 2012 when the Romney presidential campaign threatened the same. Much like public libraries and phone booths, people appreciate (and vocally support) that which they don’t usually consider when it is threatened.

But with President Obama comfortably reinstalled in the White House in early 2013 and no immediate threat to public broadcasting in America, what was the “bogey man” that would motivate our audience to act?



CULTURAL INSIGHT

As we explored the TV landscape in early 2013, we discovered the threat to Channel Thirteen – the “bogey man” was TV itself. You see, by 2012, we had seen a decade of rankings consistently dominated by reality TV.

“Reality first made an appearance in the top 10 rankings in 2000, and since the 2002-2003 season has consistently captured the largest percentage of the audience watching the top 10 broadcast programs.” Nielsen

What's so wrong with reality TV you might ask? After all, we all have our guilty pleasures – not least PBS which effectively invented the genre with *An American Family* back in the 1970s.

But reality TV was going beyond a harmless guilty pleasure, with academic research increasingly linking it to bullying and anti-social behavior.

“Reality TV depicts nearly twice the number of aggressive acts as dramas or comedies, research shows in the short term our own concepts of aggression are activated in the brain when we watch these shows, and we are primed to behave aggressively.” Sarah Coyne, Psychologist Brigham Young University.



To make matters worse, networks which were once committed to quality programming had fallen prey to the onward march of reality TV. Once The Learning Channel, TLC is now the home of 'The little couple' and 'Say yes to the dress' while the unlikely stars of Arts & Entertainment (more commonly known as A&E) are the 'Duck Dynasty' family. And of course, The History Channel's grasp on actual history has become more than a little tenuous.

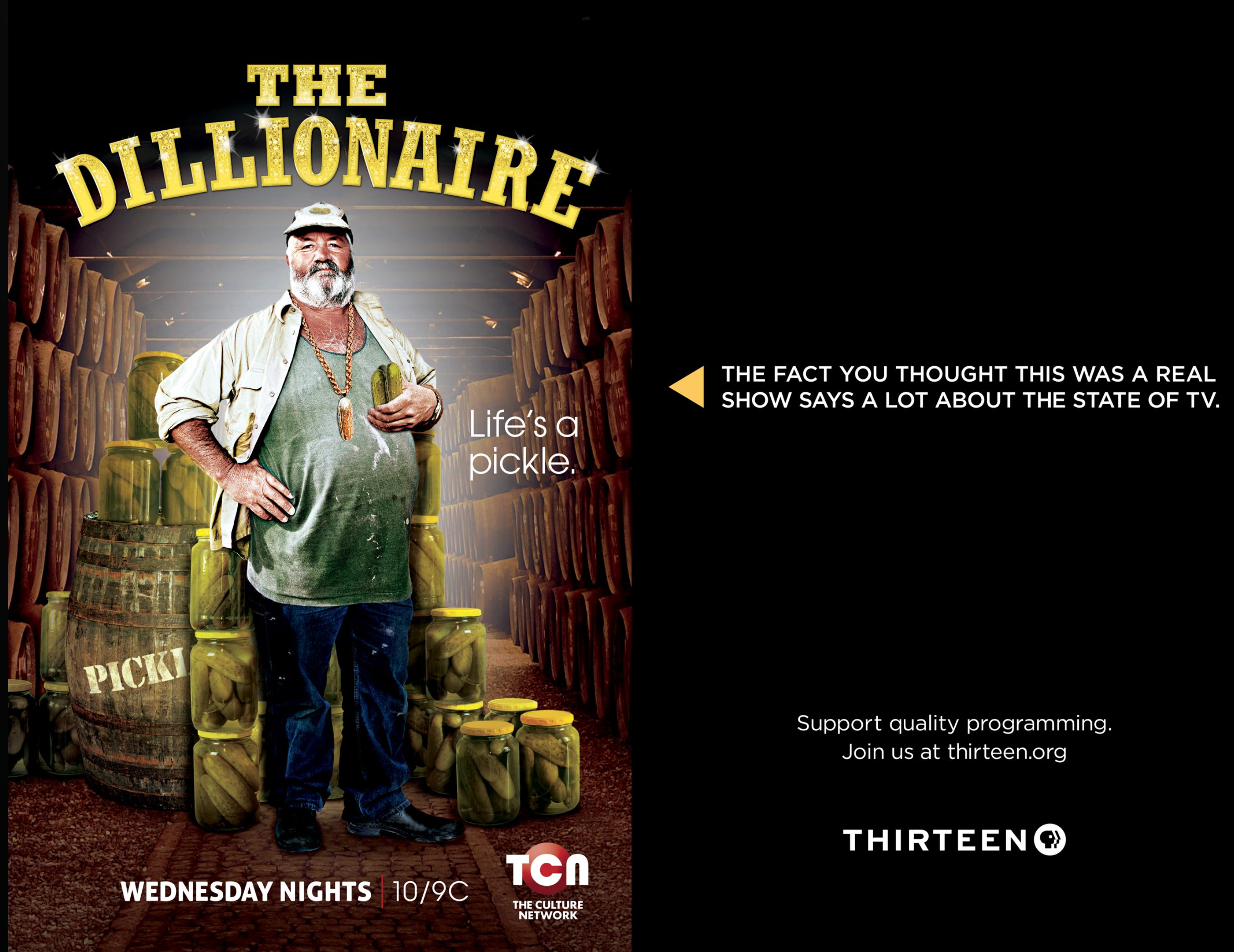
...leaving channel THIRTEEN as the last bastion of quality programming for New Yorkers without premium cable - an island of culture and education in a sea of reality.



OUR STRATEGY

Remind 25-44 y/o New Yorkers of the unique educational and cultural role played by THIRTEEN and create a sense of urgency around supporting it...

...By taking a stand against the tidal wave of reality TV engulfing the American viewer and presenting THIRTEEN as the antidote to it.



◀ THE FACT YOU THOUGHT THIS WAS A REAL SHOW SAYS A LOT ABOUT THE STATE OF TV.

Support quality programming.
Join us at thirteen.org

THIRTEEN

OUR CREATIVE SOLUTION

Rather than hectoring, we wanted to make our point in a light-hearted way, so our creative solution was to play up to the weird and wonderful conventions of the reality TV category.

To demonstrate just how ridiculous TV has become we created a series of fake reality shows under the banner #TVGoneWrong. To land our point, the messaging around each 'show' was accompanied by pointed commentary from THIRTEEN - 'the fact that you thought this was a real show says a lot about the state of TV, support quality programming.'



Emulating the conventions of the category, we set about marketing our shows like Bravo would. We put up posters in the subway and made TV trailers that aired on TV and online. We also created additional content for Tumblr and started fake twitter accounts where our fake reality stars engaged with their real life fans (this were getting meta).

Dave Chalker @DaveTheGame 29 May
I saw "The Millionaire" poster while riding around NYC last weekend, very strong ad campaign concept: insidetv.ew.com/2013/05/28/pbs...
[Expand](#)

The Millionaire @RonPickles 29 May
Glad you liked it. My pickling juices are flowing! [@DaveTheGame](#)
[Hide conversation](#) [Reply](#) [Retweet](#) [Favorite](#) [More](#)

1 RETWEET

12:16 PM - 29 May 13 · Details



Then to engage key bloggers and the mainstream media, we created custom Dillionaire-themed press packets that we sent out during the up-fronts (again aping category conventions).



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From the people who brought you 'The Billionaire' and 'Married to a Mime'

Clam KINGS



SERIES PREMIERE
SEPT 17th 9|8^c
#TVGONEWRONG

WATCH

CLAM KINGS

Series Premiere
Sept 30th 9|8C

When it comes to clamping, these two aren't shucking around. Check out the trailer for the series premiere of Clam Kings, airing this fall on The Wonder Network.

[Watch an exclusive preview.](#)



Meet the
TANNERS

Long Island
LANDSCAPERS

Clam KINGS

**THE
BILLIONAIRE**

**Married
TO A
MIME**



#TVGONEWRONG

The call-to-action across all comms sent people to Thirteen.org where they encountered additional bonus show-footage, a quiz asking them to participate in shaping future story-lines and of course an appeal to make a donation.

GENERATING BUZZ

Right away our commentary on reality TV really got people talking. Almost unheard of for an ad campaign, we reached #1 on Reddit, making the front page twice and we were covered across blogs and mainstream media.

BuzzFeed

PBS Is Trying To Get Viewers By Mocking Reality TV, And It Just Might Work

"The fact you thought this was a real show says a lot about the state of TV."

Forbes - New Posts +3 posts this hour Most Popular Meg Whitman Jolts HP Lists Most Powerful

This Advertising Is Completely Fake And It's Brilliant

NEW YORK NEWS & FEATURES

Today at 3:41 PM | 7 Comments

PBS Wants You to Stop Being So Stup

By Joe Coscarelli

May 29, 2013

HUFFPOST TV

PBS Subway Posters Make Fun Of TV Landscape

EW | Posted: 05/29/2013 9:16 am EDT

GAWKER

PBS Mocks 'the State of TV' with Fake Reality Shows That Could Be Real

The New York Times

MEDIA DECODER

An Ad Campaign at WNET Uses Reality TV as a Punchline

By STUART ELLIOTT
Published: May 26,

FAST COMPANY

PBS CALLS OUT GUILTY PLEASURE PURVEYORS WITH FAKE REALITY SHOW CAMPAIGN

UPROXX The Culture Of What's Buzzing

New York PBS Station Wins At Advertising With Glorious Fake Reality Show Subway Ads

all subreddits www.reddit.com/r/all/

odits FRONT - ALL - RANDOM | PICS - FUNNY - POLITICS - GAMING - ASKREDDIT - WORLDNEWS - NEWS - VIDEOS - IAMA - TODAYILEARNED - WTF - AWW

edit ALL hot new rising controversial top saved

JanSport: Live Outside - The Stone Foxes + friends lay down a track at Slacker Radio H (Youtube.com) promoted by redditads 5 comments share save hide

Another brilliant PBS ad. (imgur.com) submitted 3 hours ago by calmkeever to funny 435 comments share save hide report

Mr. Jackson muthaphukkan delivers! Here's Monologue #1! (youtube.com) submitted 4 hours ago by MrSJackson to movies 1606 comments share save hide report

Kaiser, a police dog, being saluted on his final journey (imgur.com) submitted 5 hours ago by doppelgangland1 to pics 1421 comments share save hide report

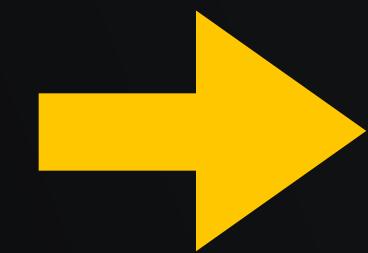
ick traffic (i.imgur.com) submitted 3 hours ago by PhoneDojo to funny 9 comments share save hide report

BUSINESS INSIDER
Advertising

A Local PBS Bets You Can't Tell If These Reality Shows Are Real Or Fake

RESULTS

\$55K
in paid media



182MM
earned media
impressions

60%
increase in new
memberships YOY

The campaign also struck a cultural cord with our #TVGoneWrong hashtag becoming a focus for people's dissatisfaction with reality TV, being used beyond the campaign to criticize actual reality TV.