

Not Your Everyday HOUSEWIFE

Men who watch soap operas defy target demographic

BY STEPHEN WELLS
The Battalion

More and more, things once thought to be strictly the domain of the female have fallen to the advances of men.

Today, the same men who once tried to pick their nose and wipe it on their playmates are showing their faces in delivery rooms, leafing through "better relationship" books and joining focus groups to try to get in touch with their feminine side.

It was only a matter of time, then, until the soap opera — once the most untouchable of female institutions — was discovered by males and assimilated into their belching and barbequing existence. Sometimes men develop an interest in watching soaps after a few chance viewings while channel surfing.

Scott Corby, a sophomore agricultural economics major, said he discovered his favorite drama by watching an episode on a whim.

"It's the most cliché thing in the world to say," Corby said. "But you know how you flip through the channels and start watching something just because it's the only thing on that's worth watching?"

"Then I had to finish watching the show to see how everything turned out, of course. The next time I saw the show while I was flipping through the channels I just started to watch it again. Pretty soon I was trying to keep up with everything that was going on, and it just became routine to watch the show."

For others, the drive to know exactly what is going on in a television show fueled their desire to see more episodes.

David Westall, a junior economics major, said his knowledge of the dynamics of a soap opera helped him ease into watching the show on a regular basis.

"I walked in once when my roommate was watching his favorite show and just sat down out of habit," Westall said. "One of the people was doing something terrible to another one of the characters, so I asked why."

"You know there is never a simple reason for it, so he launched into a big story about

people sleeping with each other and trying to kill each other. It just so happened that we started watching the show more and more, until I knew enough about it to watch it on my own."

Once they begin watching their soaps, men find it hard to turn away from them regardless of outside pressure.

"I get made fun of every now and then, but I can always make fun back at my friends for

ing to fight a big fight the next week. Sure enough, we watched the next week to see the fight."

Sometimes, a man does not make the choice to watch a soap opera but is forced to out of circumstance.

Elana Ruiz, a freshman speech communication major, said her boyfriend watches soap operas because she must watch his programming.

"If I have to watch football on Sunday, he has to watch Fox on Tuesday," Ruiz said. "He pretends he can't stand my shows, but every time one person will do something wrong to another, he is the first one to speak up about it. In reality, he gets into the show even more than I do, but he won't admit to it."

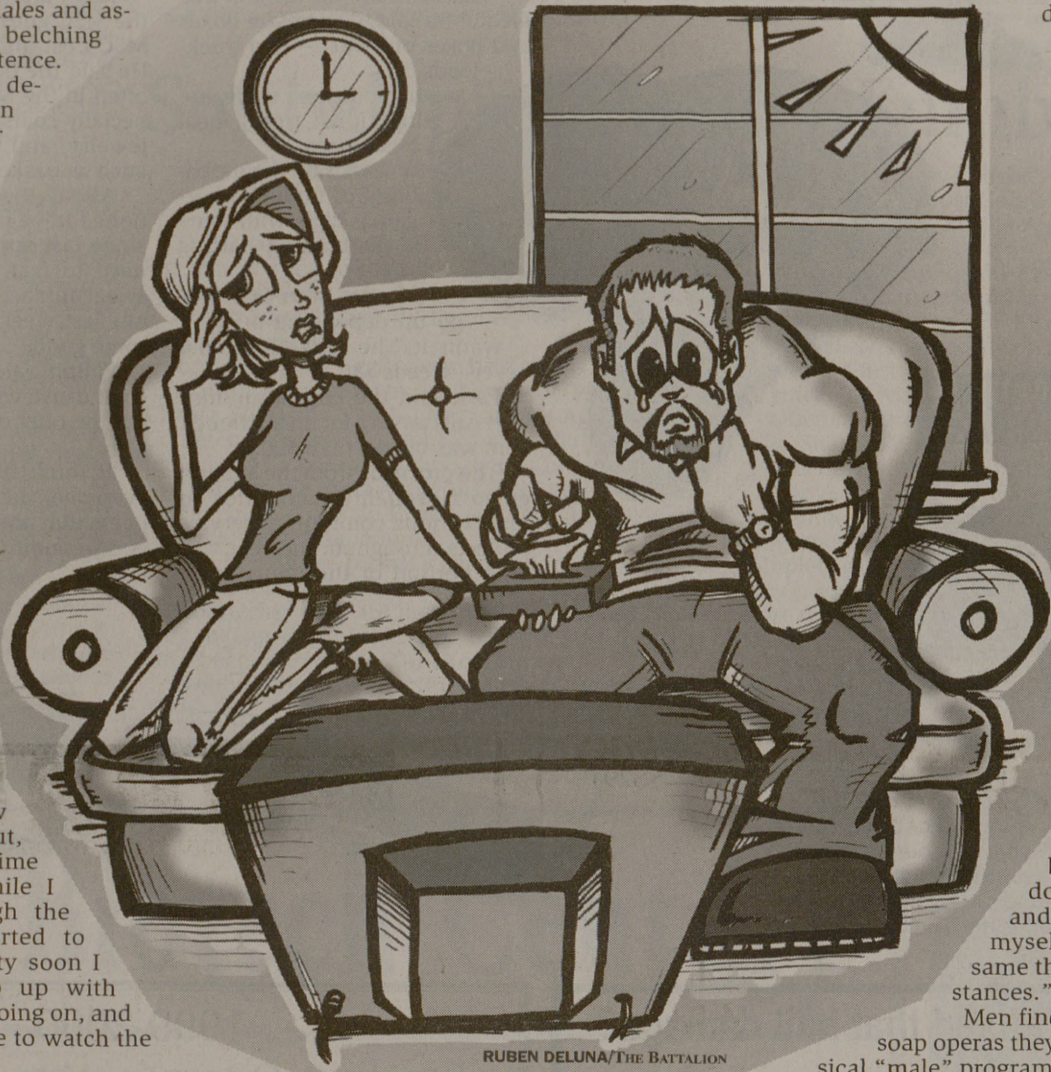
Today's soap opera is more sophisticated than the amnesiac, ultra-rich and debased sexual practice plot lines most male viewers associate with soap operas.

"I think soap operas today try to avoid the old-fashioned things like people mistaken for dead or whatever," Corby said. "It's really more true to life than the old shows like 'Dallas.' People don't just randomly have an affair or pull out a gun and shoot somebody else. Everything is done for a good reason, and sometimes I can tell myself that I would do the same thing in the same circumstances."

Men find a depth of character in soap operas they can not find in the classical "male" program.

"It's hard to get attached to an action program because all but two or three characters get killed or arrested at the end of the show," Corby said. "The only characters who return every week don't develop in the same way soap opera characters do."

"From week to week on 'Melrose Place,' the characters have relationships that change. In an action series, there's always a clear-cut difference between the good guys and the bad guys. In a soap opera, things aren't so clear, so you have to think more, but you can root for the bad guy if the other character is worse."



RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

watching wrestling," Westall said. "But it's kind of hard to stop watching and I don't want to anyway. At the end of each week, something big happens, so I keep on watching week after week."

Such viewer teasing is not limited to soap operas and can, in fact, be found in more testosterone-centric programming.

"I was watching wrestling with my friends and they do the same thing on that show they do on soap operas," Westall said. "At the very end of the show, one guy came out and scared away all the others and announced he was go-

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