

Erotica

Jeffrey P. Jones

From HBO's early days as a nascent satellite channel to its current status as the most profitable network in television history, the one form of programming that has seemingly fulfilled the promise inherent in the network's popular branding campaign, "It's Not TV, It's HBO," is erotica. As a subscription channel, HBO has taken advantage of its ability to show nudity and sexual situations without fear of censorship. Initially airing uncut R-rated Hollywood movies but quickly offering spicier fare, the network has routinely banked on sexually oriented programming as an inexpensive yet enormously popular form of programming that contributes to the brand's distinctiveness. Through its erotic offerings, HBO has indeed supplied content that cannot be found on network television.

Yet in many ways, its erotic fare—from early usage of soft-core "B" movie imports to the more recent reliance on sex-centered documentary specials and reality series—is very much TV. Although critics want to point to HBO's erotica as a crass form of titillation, exploitation, sensationalism, or outright pornography that panders to its subscriber base, a cursory look across television programming suggests that HBO has no monopoly in these regards (see, for instance, Fox's *The Howard Stern Show* [1987-], MTV's *Undressed* [1999-2002], *Flavor of Love* [VH1, 2006], the FX network, music videos, *Real TV* [1997-2001], or the soundtrack to the poorly scrambled Playboy Channel appearing on an empty cable channel near you). Although HBO can be more overt in its use of language or displays of nudity than other channels, the forms of erotic programming it has offered over the last thirty years are perhaps best seen as a fun-house mirror, reflecting what has also appeared elsewhere on television.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, for instance, the airing of soft-core imports such as *Emmanuelle* (1974) and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1981) positioned the network somewhere between the edited R-rated movies shown on superstations TBS and WGN and the overt pornographic material shown on the competing subscription network, the Playboy Channel.¹ As the network began changing its emphasis from movie channel to original programmer in the early 1990s, it shifted these movies—originally packaged as "HBO After Dark"—to Cinemax. In the process, the move earned HBO's sister network the popular moniker "Skinemax." When reality television began finding its footing in an expanded cable TV universe in the early 1990s with shows such as *Cops* (1989-) and *The Real World* (1992-), HBO offered its own reality specials in the form of *Real Sex* (1990-) and *Taxicab Confessions* (1995-), resulting in two of the network's longest running series.

The success of uncut feature films on HBO and its subscription-only competitors, as well as the popularity of such material on home video, had paved the way for the social acceptance of sexual programming as televisual fare.² Finally, when unscripted reality programming consumed network television at the turn of the century with the likes of *Big Brother* (2000-) and *Temptation Island* (2001-3), HBO took voyeurism one step further with its more bona fide peek into locations of naughtiness—*G-String Dias* (2000; a strip club) and *Cathouse: The Series* (2005; a brothel).³ In short, although HBO is widely known for its erotic fare, this programming has never been too far removed from other television offerings. Network executives position the programming as normal and "respectable" material that "curious" viewers can enjoy (or at worst, put up with). Like other television programming, then, it is fit for the living room (though probably after the kids are ushered off to bed).

Or at least that has been the philosophy of the person most singularly responsible for producing HBO's erotic programming over the last twenty years—Sheila Nevins, president of HBO documentary and family programming.⁴ As the network transformed itself from a movie channel to an original programmer, it was Nevins who financed and executive produced erotic documentaries (as detailed in this volume in the overview of part 4 and in chapter 15). Beginning with *Real Sex* in 1990, Nevins has provided a stream of erotic documentary program-

ming that has included *Taxicab Confessions*, *Sex Bytes* (1997-), *String Divas*, *Cathouse* (2002), *Cathouse 2: Back in the Saddle* (2003), *Cathouse: The Series*, *Pornucopia: Going Down in the Valley* (2004), *Thinking XXX* (2004), *Shock Video* (1993-), *Hookers at the Point* (2002), and *The Sex Inspectors* (2004). "When HBO started," she notes, "R-rated movies were the reason people watched HBO. So I thought, why can't there be R-rated reality?"⁵ She also justified this move toward sexual programming as one of the network's distinctive markers of original programming by noting, "At HBO we knew we could push [the] limits of comedy. There was no reason not to push the form of 'reality' [as] far as we could, into a certain kind of sexual explicitness that was legitimate and safe and funny."⁶

Yet Nevins vehemently resists charges by critics that her inclusion of sex in the spectrum of reality programming amounts to exploitation or pandering to audiences. "It seems very false to say we have a license to do this, and that's why we do it. We do it with grace, with taste, with dignity."⁷ For Nevins, portrayals of sex are not a "dirty" endeavor. "I don't think we've ever been vulgar in our programming," she contends, "other than maybe when we're showing man's inhumanity to man [in the more serious documentaries the network airs]. We may have been energetic when it came to depicting sex, but not in a way that was ever harmful."⁸ Showing sex provides a balance to HBO's documentary programming because life itself, she argues, requires balance. "I'm Chekhovian. I believe it's dark and rainy outside almost all the time and that sex is a big laugh and we're too serious about what's fun and we're not honest enough about what's sad."⁹ Similarly, she notes that "I have respect for people who take a freer attitude toward life, who enjoy sex, who laugh, who aren't cerebral. . . . There's a balance going on. We're all divided somewhere between our brains and our groins."¹⁰

That balance, though, is as much about business as it is a view of life. HBO's profane programming also provides a balance with those documentary offerings that are more serious and profound. "I watch 10 hours of someone taking drugs or something like that, I need to watch 'Taxicab Confessions,'" she says. "This is a business, and it's successful as long as we have a balance. As long as that balance works, I'll do the sex stuff." But she also quickly adds the second important reason for balance: "It's money-efficient."¹¹ The efficiencies come into play because

shows such as *Real Sex* and *Taxicab Confessions* are often cheaper to produce (averaging \$500,000 per one-hour episode) than some of the more serious documentaries (which can cost as much as \$1.5 million per hour), yet tend to garner much higher ratings than the programs that win awards. Spike Lee's documentary about the 1963 church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama, *4 Little Girls*, for instance, brought in 874,000 viewers during its premiere in February 1998, while *Shock Video 2* garnered 1.45 million viewers and *Real Sex 19* was seen by 2.3 million people during the same month.¹² Erotic fare is inexpensive to produce, requires no promotion, and appears in a late night time slot. Nevertheless, it can garner stronger ratings than some of the network's more expensive dramatic and comedic series (*Pornucopia*, for instance, averaged 1.6 million viewers per episode, whereas *Entourage* [2004-] garnered 1.3 million in 2005).¹³ Furthermore, it is this imbalance between cost and popularity that also contributes to Nevins's emphasis on providing distinctive programming that viewers believe is worth paying for and that can't be found anywhere else on television. As she notes, "Extremes are interesting. Extremes are what my audience is paying for."¹⁴

But HBO's erotic offerings, as a special genre of documentary, also assist in the network's efforts to craft its "look" or special appeal. Nevins admits that "there's an HBO spin, though I can't define it." Instead, erotica meets her informal test for what should constitute HBO programming. "I ask, 'Could I see this on free TV? Is it something unexpected? Is there something surprising? Does it have legs?'"¹⁵ Erotica, of course, fits the bill nicely with its unexpected subject matter, which surprises viewers with "activities" that are openly portrayed on HBO but only alluded to elsewhere on television. Furthermore, such programming "has legs." In industry lingo, erotic programming is "evergreen." It never gets old and can be repeated in numerous venues without seeming dated, while always drawing big audience numbers.¹⁶ In short, erotic programming fits within the network's mandate, which has led Nevins to take chances and experiment with this form of programming.

Such experimentation began in 1990 with the program *Real Sex*. Each program is shot as an individual, stand-alone documentary that is shown numerous times throughout the year (with three new releases per year). Produced and directed by Patti Kaplan, a former professor of art

at the City University of New York, the hour-long program (which Chris Albrecht described as a "nude magazine" show) is composed of five segments that depict the often bizarre yet humorous ways in which people explore sex and sexual practices.¹⁷ Sample segments include a visit to a vibrator workshop; the Miss Nude World contest; Penis Puppeteers in New York; a sex circus in New Orleans; London's annual Sex Maniacs' Ball; a couple who sell custom-designed whips; another couple who engage in bondage and discipline games; a female nude-wrestling competition; a visit with Germany's "Sex Shop Granny"; a factory that produces male sex dolls; and Annie Sprinkle's one-woman sex show. Between each segment are street interviews with pedestrians explaining their own experiences or attitudes toward sexual activities. Overall, the programs display little in the way of explicit sex (no intercourse or erections), but offer what one commentator described as a "healthy curiosity combined with a jaunty pluralism."¹⁸ That is, they typically provide a peek into the diversity of sexual activities and sex-related businesses that people engage in throughout the United States and around the world, with an emphasis that ranges from the unusual to the bizarre.

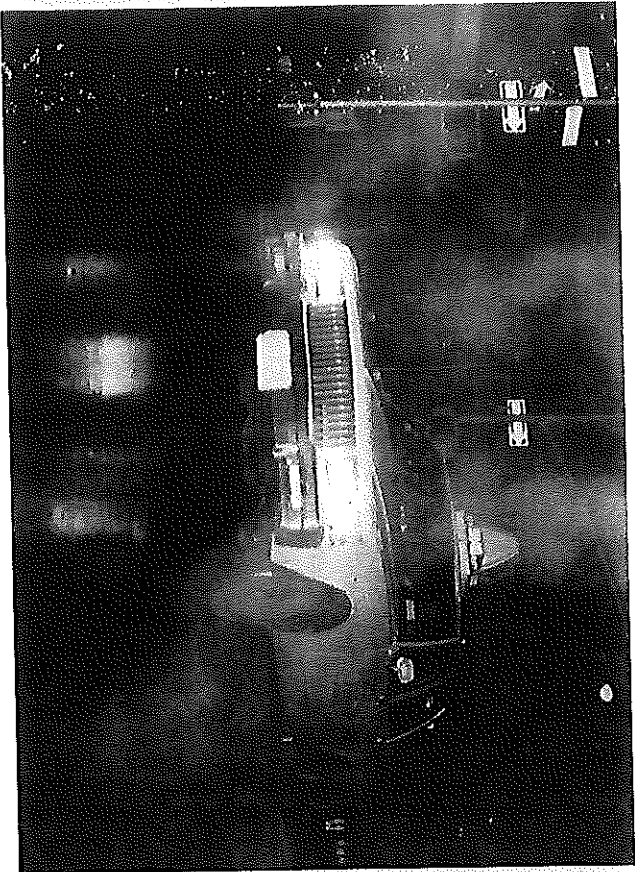
Both Nevins and Kaplan situate the origins of the series in the late 1980s and early 1990s, describing its intentions as a response to the AIDS crisis. "When we did the first 'Eros in America,'" Nevins notes (referring to her first sexually oriented documentary for Cinemax in 1985), "there was no AIDS, and it was a different kind of exploration. Now the need to be funny and to have a good time with sex, and to be free . . . is much more important because of all the terror that surrounds it."¹⁹ Kaplan agrees, saying, "I think a lot of the eccentricity that's available in sexual activities today—the kinds of workshops, the kinds of sex, the kind of no-contact sex—have been spawned in this era of AIDS. Whether it's masturbation workshops or peep shows or telephone sex or computers, there are more ways for people to get turned on than by promiscuity. That eccentricity is part of what makes it funny."²⁰

Kaplan and Nevins also characterize what they document as a form of expression, and they both embrace the freedoms associated with that expression—through sex or simply the ability to display it uncensored on television. "This kind of freedom of expression," Kaplan contends, "is as important as any other freedom of expression. And it has to be treated respectfully."²¹ Likewise, Nevins argues, "These are real people

who are making livings but are enjoying themselves with their sexual freedom. There is a whole subculture in this country of escapees from Puritanism who want to tell their stories."²² And telling stories, especially about people or subjects that have traditionally been relegated to the margins of television, is central to Nevins's conception of the freedom *she* has as a television programmer to facilitate such storytelling. The lack of censorship in subscription TV, she notes, has meant that "people could realize their stories to their full extent and where they could take them, whether the stories were happy or sad or violent or tragic or sexual."²³ And it is this unrestricted continuum of life's stories that shapes her approach to offering both the profound and the profane as different yet related forms of documentary programming.

Yet the manifestation of these stories as documentary narratives has often resulted in an alternative kind of nonfictional narrative.²⁴ Kaplan's intentions are less to expose or explain sexual practices (and the people who engage in them) as much as to allow a performative space for their display. *Real Sex* takes viewers into subcultures they may never have known existed. Indeed, there is an element of "sexual tourism," bordering on voyeurism, in the films of the *Real Sex* series. Viewers may be bounced between subjective positions of fascination, amusement, and disbelief ("Are people really aroused by doing *this* with *that*?"). The films rarely interrogate their subjects, who are ultimately of less interest than the creative or "forbidden" sexual enterprises that they are engaging in. The result, therefore, is what Bill Nichols calls the "scopophilic" pleasure, or pleasure in looking (a form of spectatorship more typical of fiction film, as opposed to documentary's tendency toward "epistophilic" pleasure, or pleasure in knowing).²⁵ Nevertheless, the films are not pornographic, for they are not intended for viewer arousal (and rarely take this kind of approach).²⁶ Instead, the defining aspect of the show is a window into a world of sexual experience and expressions typically beyond the realm of viewer practices.

Yet, as quoted above, Sheila Nevins sees these films as a means for the people in them to tell their stories. The one HBO series in this subgenre that best fulfills that function is the Emmy Award-winning *Taxicab Confessions*. Based on the surreptitious filming of unsuspecting cab patrons, *Taxicab Confessions* provides a unique forum for the intimate first-person narratives of ordinary people's lives. The director-producer



Taxicab Confessions reveals the innermost thoughts and secrets of actual taxicab passengers using lipstick-size cameras hidden throughout the moving vehicle. Photograph by Will Hart.

brothers Joe and Harry Gantz created the long-running series in 1995 by embedding five lipstick-sized cameras and recording equipment in several New York City taxicabs, then watching as late night riders bared their hearts, souls, and (at times) their bodies to the sympathetic drivers. The result is what many critics have claimed are “unexpectedly deep and poetic and moving” stories about ordinary people in their own words.²⁷

First filmed in New York for three seasons, the show moved to Las Vegas for seven seasons after the New York Taxi and Limousine Commission under Mayor Rudolph Giuliani proclaimed the show “unsafe” and denied the producers a permit. After Giuliani left office, however, the show returned to New York in 2003, where it continues to be filmed. Each hour-long episode typically includes nine cab rides, the best of the approximately five hundred rides recorded in a given season.²⁸ Perhaps most surprising is that between 65 and 75 percent of the people recorded

agree to let their stories air. Nevins surmises that “the people who really let their heart out tend to be the ones who willingly sign the release because they want someone to know their story.”²⁹ Harry Gantz believes that “most people really want to tell their stories. The cab has turned out to be the perfect place to capture this.”³⁰ He is correct in this regard, whether because of the intimacy of the small space, the limited eye contact with the driver, a sympathetic driver/listener, or simply that it is late at night and the tired riders let down their guard as they get in “off the cold streets into a warm cab or off the warm streets into a cool cab.”³¹

Whatever the reasons for their telling, the stories can be bizarre, painful, tragic, sad, hilarious, uplifting, and compelling (so much so that Nevins contends the program “is possibly the most spiritual and the most sensual show on television”³²). Viewers have witnessed a woman describing how her boyfriend with bipolar disorder died in her lap from an overdose of cocaine while the police looked on; a woman who performs solo-sex acts on the Internet but rarely sleeps with her fiancé; a lonely thirty-five-year-old virgin who describes giving oral sex to a man while on vacation but not knowing whether he achieved orgasm, despite seeing white stains on her sweater; a hooker who reveals that her partner is a burn victim but doesn’t want to marry him for fear of breaking his heart; a trio of women describing toe sucking and anal sex, including one who claims her G-spot is in her anus; a man who tells of how his father murdered his mother; a woman who propositions the female cab driver; and a young pimp and his friends who describe how to recruit hookers. In the eleventh episode of *Taxicab Confessions* (2005), the last ride consists of two young women and a man who take off their tops and sing “I Will Survive.” As one commentator noted about this scene, “It’s no ‘Girls Gone Wild’ moment, or even remotely sexual, but just a sudden bit of Eden in the New York night.” Nevins extends the observation by noting the beauty of this scene as an especially joyous slice of life that is the forté of the documentary: “You just want to cry for their happiness. I mean, that doesn’t happen, couldn’t happen, in a movie, could it? And they love each other, and they like the driver and they like New York. It’s so full of life, it’s so invigorating in such a depressing world. We have so little to believe in, people are constantly betraying us—so to see simple people you can . . . revere on some level, it’s worth it.”³³

Whereas the documentary movement known as cinema vérité maintains that observational documentary catches "life unawares," the known presence of the camera is still an influential factor in the subjects' performances.³⁴ In *Taxicab Confessions*, however, people are truly unaware of the camera, even though their recorded behavior results in a particular version of what Bill Nichols calls the "performative" mode of documentary. According to Nichols, such films portray knowledge and understanding of the world as "concrete and embodied, based on the specificities of personal experience."³⁵ There is a rawness and honesty to these confessional monologues that is particularly appealing, regardless of whether the sometimes unbelievable stories are actually true. As one critic put it, "It doesn't matter whether the story is 'true,' only that it's true for the person telling it. If he or she puts up a front, it's only the everyday sort of front we all use with one another—in other words, an authentic front. Under these terms, even those who lie, lie honestly."³⁶

The embodied experience of the confessors who unsuspectingly share their stories with the driver—and ultimately the viewing audience—is central to the appeal of these programs. We meet these characters briefly, but are left wanting more. As one critic has asserted, "the profane becomes profound as face-value assumptions are continually confounded by unexpected depth."³⁷ It is perhaps indicative of such filmic encounters that these films, as Nichols argues about performative documentaries in general, "generate a feeling of tension between the film as a representation and the world that stands beyond it. . . . Film represents the world in ways that always leave more unsaid than said, that confess to a failure to exhaust a topic through the mere act of representing it. The world is of a greater order of magnitude than any representation, but a representation can heighten our sense of this discrepancy. Experience does not boil down to explanations. It always exceeds them."³⁸ And it is here that *Taxicab Confessions* offers so much more than shock, titillation, or voyeuristic pleasure. Each episode of the series provides a particularly arresting view of humanity, and as with most intimate encounters (however brief they may be), allows the viewer to contemplate such humanity long after that view escapes our eyes.

Perhaps a different view of humanity has emerged in the stories HBO

tells with its erotic programming of late. The network has extended one of its documentary brands by transforming it into a reality series. *Cat-house* debuted as an *America Undercover* documentary film that featured the Moonlite Bunny Ranch, a legal brothel outside of Reno, Nevada. Produced by Patri Kaplan (the creator of *Real Sex* and *G-String Diaries*), the documentary had a sequel, *Cat-house 2: Back in the Saddle*. But in 2005, HBO transformed the concept into a reality series, *Cat-house: The Series*. As Nevins explained, "We're trying to reinvent ourselves. We've always been more like an anthology, but now we're trying to have continuing characters going through continuing stories."³⁹

Aside from the unusual location for a reality show, *Cat-house: The Series* adopts many of the techniques that have become standard in the genre. The show features a regular cast of characters, including the ranch's male owner, the madam of the house, and a crew of "working girls." And as with most reality programming, the central feature of the show is talk (more than sex). The show examines the relationships between these characters—the owner and the girls, the owner and the madam, the girls and their clients, and so on—by observing casual interactions as well as incorporating edited interviews with each of them (including the clients). And every week, the show demonstrates some new aspect of life at the ranch. In one episode, for instance, we meet prostitute twins who are just "dying" to have sex with the owner. Another week we watch a porn star train the girls in the best way to perform oral sex. Other episodes include a girl demonstrating her shaving techniques, another girl demonstrating how to use sex toys on men, and yet another showing how to fulfill fantasy fetishes.

The series differs from its earlier manifestation as a documentary, however, by taking the viewers into the bedrooms to watch the sex (albeit in almost cartoonish ways by fast-forwarding through much of the "action" so as not to resemble pornography). The show is also replete with (fake) boobs, butts, and bleached-blond hair, all of which ultimately become rather banal (if not grotesque) after extended viewing. Although the viewer is transported to a place that he or she will likely never visit, the viewer also leaves without caring too much for the people encountered there. Perhaps due to the presence of the camera, the residents offer a decidedly romantic view of life at the ranch. Much of the

"narrative" the working girls and owner weave couches the interactions there through the familiar and normalizing framework of "girlfriends," "dating," "jealousy," and even "marriage" (as opposed to having a job, working hard, making money, experiencing boredom, and exhibiting disdain for the management, as is the more common narrative in other employment situations). We really don't hear much about the unerotic nature of having sex with fat, slovenly men either (to name just one unattractive aspect of life there).

The series has included eleven thirty-minute episodes, and as with the network's other sexually oriented programming, continues to draw large audiences (for example, 1.5 million viewers for the show's finale). As with several other sex-related shows that have appeared as "best of" compilations, moreover, the series is also primed to enter the lucrative aftermarket of DVD retail sales through HBO Home Video.⁴⁰ With *Cathouse: The Series*, HBO has wholeheartedly embraced the genre of reality programming that has preoccupied much of contemporary television. The question, however, is whether HBO, in providing viewers exposure to the "reality" of the world's oldest profession, is offering programming that is truly distinctive and "groundbreaking" (as the latest branding line suggests) or simply something far more routine and predictable.

In summary, the airing of erotica on HBO—from uncensored movies to documentaries and reality series—will continue to be a lucrative business strategy for the network, primarily because of low production costs, the enormous popularity of this genre, and the brand distinctiveness it offers the network. It also plays a role in tempering reactions to overtly erotic depictions appearing elsewhere on the network—namely original dramatic programming such as *Sex and the City* (1998–2004) and *Tell Me You Love Me* (2007–). Erotica will also continue to have a place in HBO's documentary output as long as Sheila Nevins is in charge. As we have seen, she believes that erotic documentaries provide a welcome antidote to both the seriousness and sadness the world has to offer, while also believing that HBO should play a leading role in providing these lighthearted and frivolous narratives to television viewers. HBO's erotic programming ranges from poignant to pathetic with each and every stop in between. In the end, the network offers its viewers an

array of stories including sexual activities and nonsexual intimate encounters that are appealingly different from programming found elsewhere on television. And in this regard, especially, erotica is and has been a defining feature of HBO.

Notes

1. As with the diffusion of other new communication technologies—most notably the VCR and the Internet—access to pornography in the privacy of one's home was a significant factor for some early adopters of cable television. See Jonathan Coopersmith, "Pornography, Videotape, and the Internet," *IEEE Technology and Society Magazine* (spring 2000): 27–34. Although the Playboy Channel provided such access for households where pornography wasn't a moral issue, HBO's movies could be seen as a more "respectable" means of obtaining racy yet unobjectionable programming in discerning households. One should also remember the historical context of satellite television's entry into the market. Movies such as *Deep Throat* (1972) and *The Story of O* (1975) had actually appeared in mainstream movie theaters by the mid-1970s, as American audiences briefly flirted with a move away from Puritanism in its visual arts.

2. Chris Albrecht, HBO senior vice president of original programming at that time, put it best when he said, "I think uncut feature films appearing on cable and home video have broadened what people consider acceptable on the small screen. There's nothing new about people's interest in sex. But there's more availability now, and more tolerance." Mark Lorando, "The Blue Tube," *Times-Picayune* [New Orleans], 22 June 1995, E1.

3. Nevins admits, "G-String Divas was our *Temptation Island*, except we shot real people working in a real situation." Mike Reynolds, "Passionate Programmer: From Strippers to Sept. 11, HBO's Sheila Nevins Tells It Like It Is," *Multichannel News*, 28 January 2002, 18W.

4. Nevins recognizes this when she distinguishes between the different documentary forms she produces and where they are placed in the marketplace. "Some things need spectacle and some things need living rooms and some survive in both. I'm not going to put *Real Sex* or *Autopsy* [in cinemas]." Reynolds, "Passionate Programmer," 18W.

5. Par Saperstein, "Brothels to Bush, Does Cover Wide Span," *Variety*, 4 November 2002, A14.

6. Scott Williams, "HBO's 'Real Sex'... Now That's 'Reality' Programming," *Associated Press*, 16 March 1994, PM Cycle, at <http://www.lexis-nexis.com> (accessed September 4, 2006).

7. James Sterngold, "HBO Programmer Likes to Kindle Both Heat and Light," *New York Times*, 15 April 1998, E2.

8. Ray Richmond, "Hard-Hitting Docus Rack Up Awards," *Variety*, 3 November 1997, 42.
9. Jim Rutenberg, "Seamy or Serious, It's Now Center Stage," *New York Times*, 21 March 2001, E1.
10. Sterngold, "HBO Programmer," E2.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. These audience figures, compiled by Nielsen Media Research and reported in the trade press, reflect season-to-date averages for both series. See James Hubbard, "Carhouse' Not a Secret to Viewers," *Television Week*, 11 July 2005, 6.
14. Julie Salamon, "Nevins Rules," *New York Times Magazine*, 3 March 2002, sec. 6, 66.
15. Saperstein, "Brothels to Bush," A14.
16. For instance, referring to the *G-String Divas* series, Nevins notes, "They play as well in replay as they did during their premieres." Reynolds, "Passionate Programmer," 18W.
17. Lorando, "The Blue Tube," E1, 8.
18. John Koch, "HBO's Shameless 'Real Sex' and Cheesecake," *Boston Globe*, 13 February 1993, Living, 32.
19. Williams, "HBO's 'Real Sex,'" 20.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*
22. Rutenberg, "Seamy or Serious," E1.
23. Ed Kirchdoerfer, "Flash, Cash and the Ratings Dash: HBO's Sheila Nevins," *Realscreen*, 1 September 1998, 33.
24. See, for instance, the review of the program in John Koch, "HBO's Shameless 'Real Sex,'" 32.
25. Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 178.
26. I agree with Bill Nichols that arousal is a defining feature of pornography; where "the basic unit is a situation or event exemplifying sexual engagement between actors/characters, organized and photographed from the perspective of an ideal spectator" Nichols, *Representing Reality*, 214. Patti Kaplan also distinguishes the function of these films, noting in reference to another sex-related documentary series she produced for HBO, "That is not to say that 'G-String Divas' is a show to whack off to. It's more of an educational-titillating-docu-soap." Christina Oxenberg, "Hellfire and Khakis," *Salon.com*, 23 August 2000, at <http://archive.salon.com/sex/feature/2000/08/23/hellfire/index1.html>.
27. Robert Lloyd, "Fares of the Heart," *Los Angeles Times*, 30 January 2005, E28.
28. The producers tape five hundred rides, then ask three hundred riders to sign permission release forms. Around two hundred typically agree, with half of those conversations being good enough for consideration. Twenty-five are then

- edited for airing, and roughly nine make the cut. Alan Bash, "How Cab 'Confessions' Gets Intimate Fare," *USA Today*, 5 December 1995, 3D.
29. Robert Lloyd, "Fares of the Heart," E28.
 30. Bash, "How Cab 'Confessions' Gets Intimate Fare," 3D.
 31. Harry Gantz, quoted in Lloyd, "Fares of the Heart," E28.
 32. Lloyd, "Fares of the Heart," E28.
 33. *Ibid.*
 34. It is hard to argue that the camera has had little to no effect on the "performances" of main "characters" such as Bob Dylan in *Don't Look Back* (1967), James Carville in *The War Room* (1993), or Little Edie in *Grey Gardens* (1975).
 35. Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 131.
 36. Lloyd, "Fares of the Heart," E28.
 37. Matt Roush, "Taxicab Confessions' Takes a Right Turn to Gritty Reality," *USA Today*, 13 January 1995, 3D.
 38. Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 158.
 39. Andrew Wallenstein, "HBO Docu Unit Mulling Series, Focus on Continuing Characters," *Hollywood Reporter*, 30 October 2003, at <http://www.lexis-nexis.com> (accessed September 4, 2006).
 40. Anne Sherber, "Cable Shows Corner the Vid Market; A&E, HBO Building on Success at Retail," *Billboard*, 12 April 1997, at <http://www.lexis-nexis.com> (accessed May 28, 2005).