

Title:

Casting The Role Of An American President -- 'all Business
Is Show Business!

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843

Summary:

So, I'm channel surfing in my New York City hotel room, organizing the junk I lugged from a conference to my hotel room floor, junk I'm about to pay an exorbitant surcharge to lug over the border and then throw out once I get home. No point in channel surfing, 'cause there's only one thing on, presidential hopefuls strutting their stuff.

Even with the volume turned off it didn't take me long to size 'em up.

Disclaimer. I have no business writing an article about American...

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Article Body:

So, I'm channel surfing in my New York City hotel room, organizing the junk I lugged from a conference to my hotel room floor, junk I'm about to pay an exorbitant surcharge to lug over the border and then throw out once I get home. No point in channel surfing, 'cause there's only one thing on, presidential hopefuls strutting their stuff.

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Disclaimer. I have no business writing an article about American politics. I know nothing about politics and I'm Canadian to boot.

But I do know that all business is show business and politics is no exception.

After glancing at the chorus line of official Democratic contenders, I picked a couple to whom I'd give a call-back (or as they say on American Idol, send "To Hollywood" for the next round). Who? An uptight looking woman and a magnetic "what's his ethnicity?" guy with an intriguing name. The rest of 'em? A bunch of boring looking old white guys in suits.

A month later, I see an headline in The Huffington Post from The New York Times, "Young Americans Love Obama, Clinton". The article says that young Americans are really familiar with only two of the candidates. Duh. I doubt it's just young Americans.

In his best-selling book, Blink, Malcolm Gladwell writes of a study in which students were shown 3 ten second video-clips of a teacher and asked to rank that teacher's effectiveness. Those results were compared with the opinions of students who'd been in that teacher's class for a whole semester. The results were virtually the same, despite the fact that the clips were shown with the volume turned off. No surprise there.

I didn't need 3 ten second clips. Woman, African American, old white guys in suits.

But let's dig a bit deeper and check their back stories.

The woman's a no-brainer. She's a sharp tongued Yale Law School graduate who used to be Mrs. President. Forget that she's got the charisma of a carp, the former first lady's got an interesting story and best of all, she's a woman, and we've never had a woman president, so she stands out. She's the long-suffering "he done her wrong" wife of an affable but naughty donut eating President who "did not have sex with that woman".

OK, so we never really liked Hill, but we did always suspect that she was the brains of the operation. We weren't sure about her "stand by your man" attitude, but we understood why she did it--the woman had bigger plans. A stain on some other woman's dress wasn't going to derail her.

Who can resist renewing the melodrama for four more years? Think of the ratings!

Will Bill schlep around the country to stand behind her podium? Was there a deal? She looks the other way, he gets her into the White House"? What will he be doing behind the curtains? Don't touch that dial!

And we won't just be getting the first "First Man" in U.S. history, we'll be getting two Presidents for the price of one. The Mr and Mrs. President Show. But the real reason this woman has a shot? She'll get the curiosity vote. We all wanna see how she's going to wear her hair.

The other contender, is a Hawaiian born product of a "black as pitch" Kenyan father and a "white as milk" mother from Kansas (his words, not mine). Throw in

a stint in Indonesia and things are starting to look interesting. He says his name means "Blessed by G-d" in Swahili and you gotta admit, the guy does have an angelic look about him.

The other choices? Like I said, a bunch of old white guys in suits. (OK, so one has a Mexican mother and a couple aren't grey haired yet, but they might as well be.)

I didn't notice 'em.

You can't get elected if people don't know you exist. It's no coincidence that actors do well in politics. The Republicans have figured this out. Sonny Bono, Clint Eastwood, Arnold Schwarzenegger. Ronald Reagan got the lead. (Don't think Law and Order guy will.)

Actors get that "all biz is showbiz". You gotta confidence. You gotta have a story. And know how to tell it. You gotta have a look. A name. You gotta give us something to remember you by.

Most important? You gotta be able to connect with your audience.

A brief look at recent history proves my point. No one would ever accuse George W. of being the sharpest tool in the shed, but he's sharper than the cardboard cutouts they threw into the ring to run against him, smart enough to know that we won't vote for guys we don't relate to even if they are smarter, more articulate and have a better plan.

So whatever you're running for, whatever role you're after, V.P of Finance, Girlfriend, PTA President or American President-- remember, all biz is showbiz!

And that, my friends, is the inconvenient truth.