

TV Series 'He's a Lady' is a Tramp

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2004-11-04

And yet another reality show comes along to make me cringe on behalf of feminists everywhere.

Under the guise of participating in a reality show titled All American Man, 11 red-blooded, sports-loving men are tricked into competing for three weeks as a woman on TBS' new series, He's a Lady. The challenge? Are you man enough to be a lady?

And apparently being a woman is not that hard. All you have to do is learn how to apply eyeliner, right?

"What your husbands and boyfriends are going to have to do is no more challenging than what you have to do everyday," the host of the show points out to the wives and girlfriends of the contestants.

(Do I have to say I'm disgusted)?

The reinforcement of gender stereotypes begins right way as these "real men" (read: heterosexual men -- the implicit and fallacious assumption is that homosexual men don't like sports/ already dress in drag/aren't Americans) undergo makeovers for their female debut. Dressed in pink (of course) they instantly become femme by worrying about looking too fat, not being pretty enough or, worst of all, looking too skanky.

Over the course of the series, contestants will participate in a "lady of the house challenge" (read: housewife for a day), learn how to walk like a model, plan a wedding and participate in the ceremony as bridesmaids. The series will end with a beauty pag-

want where the men will answer the question, "What, as a lady, have you learned about being a man?"

What I've learned in just the first two episodes of the show is that the producers of *He's a Lady* think that living as a woman does not include being a doctor, an astronaut or a lawyer -- but does include being a mommy, catching a bouquet and being coquettish.

Has feminism gotten us nowhere?

This latest reality nightmare portrays femininity as an outdated ideal in which the concept of "woman" is superficially defined as being little more than the application of make-up, wearing a bra and walking in high heels.

Do we still see women so simplistically regardless of positive and empowering role models? Is gender still so pigeonholed?

If TBS really wanted to make a statement about gender and gender relations, they would take these men and pay them less, make them primary care givers who "do it all," tell them girls don't play sports, sexually harass them, introduce them to the glass ceiling, refuse to nominate them to high levels of political office and never teach their writings or their histories in K-12 public schools or outside of women studies courses.

So the question is: How offended should I be by the presence of a show like this?

I could just pooh-pooh *He's a Lady* as just another dumb-ass reality show and refuse to take it seriously. But I'm also nowhere near naive enough to think that images in the media don't have influence on how we think.

I'd thought we'd developed more complex ideas about gender, and I sincerely hoped that we were past this sort of juvenile amusement. But the unfortunate fact is, even with RuPaul's working it, *Queer Eye's* fab five and the metrosexual phenomenon, most men are still afraid of being seen as effeminate. And the

presence of He's a Lady is disheartening proof that there is still a prevalent fear of femininity, the feminine and homosexuality in American society. Think of the recent "girlie-man" controversy. Thanks, Governor.

While I don't think the series is as controversial as some of its critics would claim (the American Family Association is in a naive uproar over what they view as TBS' promotion of transvestitism -- whatever), I also don't see its reductionist treatment of gender as completely harmless.

Hopefully contestants and viewers alike will learn something about the ridiculous, unfair and tiresome social constructions of gender that we often unknowingly participate in and yet willingly cling to.

But I doubt it. And that's why TBS' Lady is a tramp.