



Style

Style Invitational Week 992: Mittsterpiece Theatre — How would PBS shows adapt to commercial TV?



If PBS had to survive in the commercial marketplace, Oscar the Grouch would be the host of “Hoarders.” (Bob Staake for The Washington Post)

By Pat Myers

October 11, 2012

Oscar the Grouch becomes the new host of “Hoarders.”

“News12Minutes With Jim Lehrer.”

“Sesame Street” becomes a 20-minute segment of “The Honey Boo Boo Hour.”






One thing Mitt Romney said during the debate that made even President Obama wake up for a minute was his vow to “stop the subsidy to PBS,” even though “I love Big Bird.” (You’d think he would have loved Big Bird’s role in selling \$47 million worth of products for the nonprofit Sesame Workshop, but we don’t think that’s what he meant.)

This week, in a contest suggested by Longtime Loser Larry Yungk: **Suppose public-TV shows, past or present, were turned out onto the open market to make a living on commercial TV. Tell us what could happen,** as in Larry’s examples above.

Winner gets the [Inkin’ Memorial](#), the bobblehead that is the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives, for once from this contest, money. Two cash prizes, in fact: First, a seat cushion of clear plastic — the stiff kind your great-aunt used to cover her nice upholstery with so that no one would hurt the extra-soft and comfortable fabric — stuffed with genuine finely shredded U.S. currency; it’s being regifted right back to the Invitational by Tom Witte, who won it in Week 164 (1996); I cannot guarantee, however, that it has ever actually cushioned the Hall of Fame Loser’s rear end. And we’ll throw in a genuine rubber \$100 bill, donated by Dave Prevar. A budget-stretcher. Or a budget stretcher.



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Other runners-up win their choice of a yearned-for [Loser Mug](#) or the ardently desired [Grossery Bag](#). Honorable mentions get a lusted-after [Loser magnet](#). First Offenders receive a smelly, tree-shaped air “freshener” (FirStink for their first ink). E-mail entries to losers@washpost.com or fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Oct. 22; results published Nov. 11 (online Nov. 8). No more than 25 entries per entrant per week. Include “Week 992” in your e-mail subject line or it might be ignored as spam. Include your real name, postal address and phone number with your entry. See contest rules and guidelines at wapo.st/inviterules. The subhead for this week’s honorable mentions is by Kevin Dopart; the alternative headline in the “next week’s results” line is by Tom Witte. Join the lively Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at on.fb.me/invdev.

Report from Week 988

in which we asked for ways to speed up or to add excitement to various sports and leisure activities. Lots of people suggested that NBA games begin in the last five minutes, since that’s all that matters anyway. We said we’d be flexible about what constitutes a leisure activity: So: scratching, okay; even watching paint dry, okay. Doing one’s taxes or talking to tech support, no.

The winner of the Inkin’ Memorial

For speed and excitement: Dog racing: Turn the tables and have the greyhounds chased by genetically modified saber-toothed rabbits. (*Martin Bancroft, Rochester, N.Y.*)

2. Winner of the three-sided dice plus the instructions on exploding animal carcasses: *For speed and excitement:* Baseball: Spike their steroids with amphetamines. (*Dixon Wragg, Santa Rosa, Calif.*)

3. For excitement: Rock-Paper-Scissors: Use real rocks and scissors, but you still have to use your hand for paper. (*Roy Ashley, Washington*)

4. For speed: The Rubik’s Square. (*Jim Reagan, Herndon, Va.*)

A bit gamy: honorable mentions

Require that batters’ crotches be pre-scratched before they reach the plate. (*Ralph Nitkin, Rockville, Md.*)

For every false start or delay of game, an NFL team has to replace one of its linemen with a cheerleader. (*Katherine Stickers, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.*)

Baseball: Pitchers who are replaced fall through a trapdoor under the mound. (*David Genser, Poway, Calif.*)

Lugers slide down the track on their backs as usual, but headfirst, guided only by three rear-mounted dental mirrors. (*Stephen Dudzik, Olney, Md.*)

Soccer: Keep adding balls until someone finally scores a goal. (*Anne Clark, Rochester, N.Y.*)

Binary sudoku. (*Kevin Dopart, Washington*)

Instead of using chess clocks in tournaments, have crowds of spectators count aloud “One hippopotamus, two hippopotamus . . .” (*Don Kirkpatrick, Waynesboro, Pa.*)

Divide the football field in half lengthwise, and play both halves at once — with the offense on one team playing the defense of the other. Better sideline views, and more time for tailgating. (*Owen Hammett, Lorton, Va., a First Offender*)

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A golfer has one minute to make a shot before the sprinklers come on. (*Dan Steinbrocker, Los Angeles*)

Bowling alleys should have ball-return cannons. (*Michael Burch, Nashville, a First Offender; Rob Huffman, Fredericksburg, Va.*)

The Game of REAL Life: Just hand all cash, stock certificates and properties to the banker. (*Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn, Va.*)

Call-and-response tennis: The audience divides into two groups to enthusiastically echo every grunt and squeal made by the players. (*Amanda Yanovitch, Midlothian, Va.*)

Hockey: Put the penalty box inside the goal. (*David Genser*)

Replace those boring X's and O's with real ticks, tacks and toes. (*Laurie Tompkins, Rockville, Md.*)

Institute 40-second clocks in stadium restrooms. When a stall's clock expires, someone in a striped uniform bangs on the door, pelts the user with yellow flags and blows his whistle until the person finishes. (*Gregory Koch, Storrs, Conn.*)

Water polo: Award points for removing an opponent's swimsuit. (*Mike Gips, Bethesda, Md.*)

Taking a cue from baseball: Golfers should be acknowledged with their own "putting songs" blared over loudspeakers as they prepare their shots. (*David Ballard, Reston, Va.*)

Pictionary: The Muhammad card. (*Danny Bravman, Chicago*)

Watching paint dry: First take away the "wet paint" sign . . . (*David Genser*)

To make opera go faster, give the fat lady the first aria. (*Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.*)

Speed up the men's 100-meter dash by renaming it "foreplay." (*Dion Black, Washington*)

Boxing: Between rounds, don't have those bikini-clad ring girls prance around degradingly with those signs. Have them fight each other. (*David Genser*)

Still running — deadline Monday night — is Week 991, the contest for neologisms incorporating the letter block V-O-T-E (in any order). See bit.ly/inv991.

Visit the online discussion group [The Style Conversational](#), in which the Empress discusses today's new contest and results along with news about the Loser Community — and you can vote for your favorite among the inking entries, since you no doubt figured the Empress chose the wrong winner. If you'd like an e-mail notification each week when the Invitational and Conversational are posted online, write to the Empress at losers@washpost.com (note that in the subject line) and she'll add you to the mailing list. And on Facebook, join the far more lively group [Style Invitational Devotees](#) and chime in.

Next week's results: On the double, or Twainful employment, the contest about having one person have two particular professions.





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Pat Myers

Pat Myers is editor and judge of The Style Invitational, The Washington Post's page for clever, edgy humor and wordplay. In the role since December 2003, she has posted and judged more than 700 contests. She also writes the weekly Style Conversational column and runs the Style Invitational Devotees page on Facebook. [Follow](#)

The Post Recommends

Dershowitz says federal probe in New York, not Mueller, is 'greatest threat' to Trump

"There are no constitutional defenses to what the Southern District is investigating," Dershowitz, an informal Trump adviser, said Sunday.

1 day ago



Opinion

Distinguished persons of the week: Breaking into Trump's inner circle

Who stood tall?

2 days ago



Trump recently sought his lawyers' advice on possibility of pardoning Manafort, Giuliani says

Trump attorney Rudolph Giuliani said Trump was seeking advice on pardons generally, and was upset that Manafort faced criminal exposure on charges unrelated to his work on Trump's campaign.

