

Maddog Unleashed

Attention, Fanboys: The Clock's Running On Your 15 Minutes

"A healthy male adult bore consumes each year one and a half times his weight in other people's patience. —John Updike, "Confessions of a Wild Bore"



BY PATRICK O'GRADY

Remember Andy Warhol's prediction that in the future everyone would be famous for 15 minutes? Alas, attention spans have shortened considerably since the 1960s, so today's would-be superstars have to settle for 15 seconds. But for their audience, that 15 seconds often seems to last an eternity.

I speak, of course, of those of us forced to watch the costumed cretins whom cameras captured running alongside the peloton—and occasionally in the middle of it—during the recently concluded Amgen Tour of California.

Clearly better fed than taught, these buffoons were poorly served by their parents, teachers and other mentors, having been told from infancy that anything Junior does is just too cute for words, whether he's reciting "I'm a Little Teapot" or peeing on your sofa. The foreman's kids in "Raising Arizona" come to mind, as does Tim Allen in "Men Are Pigs," recounting his mother's admonition, "Oh, you have lit your sister on fire for the last time."

I Chose My Apparel. Playing dress-up on days other than Halloween is hardly a recent phenomenon. I think I first became aware that some desperate types would do and/or wear anything for a camera lens as a child watching TV game shows, particularly Monty Hall's "Let's Make a Deal."

This appalling condition metastasized rapidly, spreading to news programs like "Today," whose devotees would trample each other trying to get the attention of its succession of portly weathermen, and eventually to sports, most famously in the form of Rollen Stewart, a religious zealot renowned for wearing an enormous rainbow-colored Afro wig and brandishing "John 3:16" placards at televised events.

Cycling seemed immune in this country because it got less TV time than cricket, curling and Congress. That changed with the ascent of Lance Armstrong.

I Wore a Beer Barrel. That some vidiots live for painting themselves in team colors or wearing garbage cans to ballgames never bothered me, because I don't watch ballgames. I figure you've seen one herd of steroidal monstrosities locked in mortal combat over a sphere or ovoid, you've seen 'em all.

But I do like to watch bicycle racing, so much so that I will spend hours hunched over a laptop watching choppy Flash video of a Lycra smackdown on Mount Palomar. And when I go to that extreme for my occasional velo-fix, I want to see athletes wearing pained expressions because they're attacking and counter-attacking, climbing and sprinting—not because they just passed a jiggly Borat lookalike in a lime-green man-thong as they struggled to choke down some carbs while chasing a skinny Belgian full of drugs up a 9 percent grade.

My Turn to Have Me a Ball. Televised coverage of bicycle racing is scarcer than honest politicians from Illinois. Please, let's not squander a single, solitary second of what little we get on lumbering fatties in Speedos, antlered eejits in football jerseys, fright-wigged harebrains, mitred bishops clutching crosiers, Yellow Devils brandishing hypos and faux sumos.

Frankie Andreu summed it up during Amgen's online TourTracker coverage, noting that at European events spectators run alongside the peloton to spur the riders to greater efforts, while here in America it's all about trying to grab that all-too-brief moment in the spotlight that Warhol promised them back in 1968.

Let's make a deal, you bozos. Try Door Number Three—the one marked, "Exit."