

RIN

talking WM sense



I was waiting for my MOT certificate to be printed, which is the only reason I did it.

Normally I try to avoid the kind of gossip that "flaunts and taunts" the beach/gym/5am stroll moments of whichever poor slob is being hounded by the paparazzi that week.

But the reading material in my local garage is, to say the least, lacking – it was the magazine I chose, a noticeboard covered in spare part ads or an incomprehensible flyer about trade battery packs (now on sale for a limited period only).

So, I found myself gazing at a dozen celebs, divided by size: those who had gone from "flab to fab", and those who had "gone too far" and those who had "piled on the pounds".

And I'm ashamed to say I read the whole thing. I sat there, for a good 10 minutes, and judged a bunch of women I didn't know, purely on the way they looked in a bikini.

As I said, ashamed.

Looks are important, I won't deny that. As animals we are biologically and socially conditioned to draw conclusions about others by the way they appear. Burberry cap, 13 pairs of gold hoops and a velour tracksuit?

There you have a member of the Chav Tribe, with whom other chavs will socialise and those from the City

Slicker Tribe – with their Blackberries and their Kurt Geiger heels – will avoid at all cost.

More fundamentally it can be an issue of survival. Big bloke storming towards you with a menacing sneer and clenched fists? Time to invoke that fight or flight instinct.

But when thoughts like "gosh, she's looking a bit porky", or "crikey, she ought to sue that plastic surgeon" come unbidden into your head, it's time to fish that plank out of your eye.

The weight issue is particularly prevalent. Have you ever noticed how people talk about anorexia with sadness and obesity with disgust? They're opposite sides of the same coin, yet most people judge those who over rather than under eat as somehow less deserving of sympathy.

The thing is, everyone has their issue that they struggle with, whether it's resisting chocolate, keeping their paperwork in order, getting to the gym, keeping their temper in check, or not having that third glass of wine.

For me it's self discipline. I can stick to things for a week or two but after that I usually lose interest. Which is why I usually struggle with diets.

But over the last month I've been eating five portions of fruit and veg and drinking two litres of liquids every day, for this week's cover story.

It hasn't always been easy, but I have done it. When you get to pages six and seven you'll find a picture of me and the three other girls who joined me for the Weight Loss Wars.

You'll be pleased to know, however, that we're not in bikinis. After all, WM isn't that kind of magazine.



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... and THEN what happened?

With the American writers' strike bringing all our favourite shows to a grinding halt, self-confessed US TV addict Sarah Drew Jones decided to step into the breach with a few alternative plot lines



BROTHERS AND SISTERS



Oh, to be a member of the Walker family! Sure, they're more dysfunctional than Britney Spears on a Benlyin bender, but who wouldn't want their luxurious LA life? Season One ended with the whole fruitcake clan jumping into their pool in an impressive act of denial about their myriad problems (an adulterous dead dad, an ex-junkie brother just sent back to Iraq, a business heading for the toilet, a sister's marriage in meltdown, and that's just for starters). But what should happen next to our fave Walkers?

■ **Sarah:** I'd love to see the sensible eldest sibling revert to the rock-chick roots she's so far only hinted at, give in to an early midlife crisis and go on the road with an appallingly-behaved rock band. Ditch the dark suits and start wearing Cavalli while swigging Jack Daniels on the tour bus at 6am. Maybe get caught in a hotel room with Kid Rock; that'd certainly take her mum Nora's mind off the whole dead-criminal-husband-and-his-secret-love-child thing.

■ **Kevin:** Ah, the delightful Matthew Rhys!

Buff, handsome, sexy and currently acting the rest of them off the screen, it's about time hunky lawyer Kev threw himself with gusto into a period of sexual experimentation, resting the borderline-celibate gay lifestyle in favour of a series of hot affairs with women. Give us all something to focus on this winter, wouldn't it?

■ **Kitty:** There's no easy way to say this, but Kitty Walker must die. Calista Flockhart's winsome, tedious and downright annoying character has to chuck in the campaign trail (with cutesy-pie presidential candidate and fiancé Rob Lowe, who could do a lot better, frankly) and drive off a cliff instead. Would we even notice she'd gone? Apart from the loss of the trout pool and the endless whingeing that pours out of it?

■ **Thomas:** Whither Thomas's personality, that's what I want to know. Because, even before they went on strike, the writers seemed to have forgotten to write the poor lamb a storyline. I don't get it. Balthazar Getty, the actor who plays the hapless Thomas, seems like a nice enough lad, and

isn't exactly hard on the eye, either. But someone in the writing pool sure doesn't like him. Why else would they portray him as (a) infertile and reduced to begging his two brothers (one gay, the other a drug addict) to help impregnate his wife, (b) not bright enough to run his dad's company, (c) the brother who, in the middle of the Walkers' trademark snappy banter sessions when all together en famille, stands there looking pretty but essentially vacant, a great big uncomprehending smile on his face as if English isn't his first language. So, a storyline is on my wish-list for poor old Thomas please. Any storyline. Except maybe more icky medical worries and/or lights-are-on-but-no-one's-home gurning.

Above all, next season, I'd write in more intrigue (maybe Rob Lowe could turn out to have an evil twin?), more sex (perhaps 60-something Nora could get a boyfriend. What's Warren Beatty doing these days?), and most importantly, fewer clothes for Matthew Rhys. Lovely. Long live the writers' strike!

DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES



DH, as those of us in the know like to call it, is now well into its fourth season in the USA (Channel 4 was due to show the first episode here last month but has suspended it) and struck by what's commonly known as "storyline fatigue". Another term for this is "The Dynasty Effect", where the writers appear to either run clean out of plausible ideas or spend too long at the free bar at lunchtime, and start concocting ever more ludicrous situations for the poor characters to find themselves in. This is why (spoiler alert!) we now have the magnificent Bree swanning around Wisteria Lane with a pillow up her bobble-free jumper pretending to be pregnant, while Gabrielle forces Husband No 1 to push Husband No 2 off his own boat (twice!), after only about three and a half weeks of marital non-bliss. Bizarre. What's next? Joan Collins guesting as Teri Hatcher's long-lost ballet teacher, with a fake Swiss accent and wig the size of Geneva? Anthony Hopkins taking over from Mary-Alice as the narrator? Perhaps they'll get cancer survivor Lynette to emerge from the shower, Bobby Ewing-style, and declare it all a dream. Hmm, that could work, but I prefer this...

■ **Mike:** Having spent what amounts now

to three years staring manfully off into the distance while carrying a greasy wrench, it's about time moody Mike had something to do. Something exciting would be good. I'd like to see him run for Mayor (well, poor Victor doesn't seem up to his duties at the moment, what with Gabrielle trying to kill him at every opportunity). He could run on a "shirt off, pecs out" ticket, giving the bored ladies of Fairview something new to gossip about at the mall every morning. It's also about time we heard him speak a full sentence, so perhaps he could join sexy Tom at the pizza place, and embark on a career that doesn't involve a sweaty vest and much talk of midnight leaks. Second thoughts, maybe not, we'd miss that vest too much.

■ **Susan:** Dear, annoying, silly Susan. She does love that kooky klutz thing, doesn't she? Yeah, well, park it, Hatcher. Shirley MacLaine and Goldie Hawn were doing that schtick 30 years before you and to darn sight better effect too, so let's have a welcome break from the comedy pratfalls and oops-I-burned-the-dinner-while-reapplying-my-lipgloss routine. Much like Mike's vest, it doesn't wash. Remember Lynette's misogynist boss, the marvellous

Ed, from Season Two? Let's get Susan working for him as the PA-from-hell. Shouldn't be too much of a stretch. I seem to remember he thought women were about as bright as a stack of mung beans, and in Susan's case, it's actually true, so they'd probably get on like a house on fire (and oh, imagine the comedy gold when Susan hilariously trips on the office carpet – whoa there! – and throws hot cappuccino into Ed's lyin', cheatin' lap. Ah, how we'd laugh.)

■ **Andrew:** Yes, the ex-teen-rentboy, reformed drug addict and borderline-sociopath gay son of the faultless Bree. Season Three saw Andrew's potential put firmly on the back burner in favour of a dialled-down remorseful offspring story arc, but we've missed naughty Andrew, haven't we?

I think it's about time he recovered some of that mischief, shook the dust off his bad boy reputation and started playing mind games with his outwardly-perfect-but-dysfunctional-to-the-core family.

A power struggle with new stepdad Orson would be interesting: who wins control of the family and hair-gel bill? My money's on Orson and his mighty quiff...

UGLY BETTY

For us here at WM, Ugly Betty's the most fascinating show on Channel Yank at the moment, because people seem to think that's what a magazine office is actually like. Sadly, it's not, let me tell you. What we'd give for a stylish, sparkly white office like Wilhelmina's, a decadent, secret room in the basement filled with vintage champagne and Balenciaga, and a receptionist as spectacularly rude as Amanda (oh, hang on...). There are strong rumours in the States that there's an all-musical, tribute-to-Broadway episode planned for when filming resumes, which fills our hearts with joy. Betty and Henry singing Somewhere There's A Place For Us, to a backdrop of her tough Queens neighbourhood? Bitchy assistant Marc belting out The Sun'll Come Out Tomorrow while dressed in a selection of size zero samples from the fashion cupboard? This is what television was invented for. Clear your diary, set your VCRs and fingers on the Sky+ button, because it's going to be fantastic. Of course, there are one or two other things the writers might want to consider:

■ **Christina:** Much as we love actress Ashley Jensen, she doesn't get much to do, does she? What do we know about fashion-cupboard-maven Christina except that she's Scottish, may have a shady past and gives good advice to orthodontically-disadvantaged Betty? They don't even dress her well – for someone with easy access to the new season lines, why's she always kitted out like Stevie Nicks, circa 1974? Any more floaty scarves or chiffon layers and she'd be carried off down Fifth Avenue on a stiff breeze. They're missing an opportunity to have Christina channel Sarah Jessica Parker in Sex and the City and ransack that fashion cupboard, giving us a reason to tune in every week if only to play guess the designer...

■ **Hilda:** Sister of Betty, mother of teen-queen sensation Justin and owner of perhaps the most ghetto-fabulous wardrobe this side of P Diddy, we'd like to see Hilda find lasting love this season. And what a great excuse to introduce a much-needed guest star. Remember all those A-list cameos on Will & Grace and Friends? Well, may I suggest George Clooney as Hilda's new boyfriend? Their eyes could meet over a taco at The Refried Bean, George's new cafe on the mean streets of downtown, leading to a passionate affair, punctuated by hot salsa lessons and Justin's tantrummy disapproval of his mom yet again falling for a man so...manly. After all, ladies, Clooney + Mexican food + dancing = perfect date, and don't ever let anyone tell you otherwise.

■ **Amanda:** She's a born editor, that one. Given a chance at the top spot (maybe smoothie Daniel could be wiped out in a tragic male-grooming incident? Accidentally drink his Clinique for Men moisturiser or something?), Amanda would run amok with the pages of Mode magazine, and what fun that would be.

Articles entitled Handbags Are Better Than Friends, and free pairs of Jimmy Choos glued to the front of every front cover. We've only seen a tiny percentage of Amanda's potential so far, and we'd love to see more. She's a perfect combination of crashingly dim but spectacularly power-crazed and that's exactly the kind of person you want on your TV. Or running your magazine, come to think of it (ahem)...



Sarah Drew Jones is editor of WM magazine (www.icwales.co.uk/wm)

Did you know?

Rumour has it that Kylie might be rekindling things with old flame Olivier Martinez. The singer was spotted strolling arm in arm with him through Paris which, let's face it, isn't the kind of thing you do with someone you're "just good friends" with. Still, they were walking the dog they once shared, so perhaps it's only puppy love after all.



Meanwhile, life in the Miller-Ians camp is apparently less than ideal. Sienna and Rhys finally went public with their relationship before Christmas last year after months of speculation, and it's been widely rumoured that the Welsh actor proposed numerous times. Now it looks like his young girlfriend's failure to give him an answer is getting him down – a source close to the couple has suggested that he's given her an ultimatum: a wedding or a break-up.

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