

Introducing CNNE, Cable News Network Entertainment

Do you know what 24-hour news networks have in common with professional wrestling? It can be summed up in one word: entertainment. Perhaps it's time for these news networks to learn something from the world of professional wrestling and add an "E" to their acronym?

Back in 2002, Vince McMahon, the professional wrestling entrepreneur, was forced to change the initials of his organization from WWF to WWE after a dispute with World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

But with the change in acronym came a change in emphasis. The WWF, the Worldwide Wrestling Federation, was now WWE, Worldwide Wrestling Entertainment? The message was clear: What the fans were watching was not an athletic competition but rather a scripted entertainment event, all for the viewers' enjoyment.

Of course, the wrestlers are in tremendous shape and are well-trained for their jobs. And they do perform serious wrestling moves. But it's all entertainment. The punches aren't real. The submission moves aren't real. The screams and cries and facial expressions aren't real. It's all scripted, and it's so well done that the crowds roar and tune in by the millions to watch the drama.

This is very similar to 24-hour news.

There are some very talented journalists and broadcasters starring on these networks, and from time to time, they report serious news and give excellent analysis. But much (or most?) of what they do is more about entertainment than it is about information.

After all, how many hours a day can you report the same news? How many hours a day can you update the same story? And, realistically speaking, in this information age in which we live, by how many seconds can you beat your competition to a news scoop?

What it comes down to, then, is entertainment. Which network can be more sensational and salacious? That network will get the best ratings, which means the most income, which, in the end, is the bottom line.

So, a panel sits around and parses the president's latest words, putting their particular spin on what he really meant when he said something like, "Let's come together as a nation."

This will be dissected and analyzed and interpreted endlessly, with the panel sounding more and more like tabloid gossip columnists than professional journalists. Where is the *news* in all this? It's opinion and speculation and innuendo and worse. It's certainly not news.

And just like wrestling matches are scripted, much of the news is scripted.

If you're watching leftwing news with a conservative president, he will virtually always come out the loser, no matter what. He's bad, he's wrong, he's incompetent, he's bigoted.

Conversely, if you're watching right-wing news with a liberal president, then that president will virtually always come out the loser, no matter what. He gets credit for nothing; he gets blame for everything. This is the predetermined script.

Every story has an agenda. Every report has an angle. Even the way guests are introduced and treated goes along with the scripted outcome. It's all a set-up, with the desired end results in mind from beginning to end. Deviation from the

script is rare.

And just as there are good guys and bad guys in wrestling—the revered heroes and the hated villains—so also there are good guys and bad guys on network news. So, the good guys are the hosts and their favored guests; the bad guys are the guests and voices on the opposing side, and you tune in to watch the bad guys take a beating. What entertainment!

So, isn't it time for networks like CNN to change their names and acronyms? Why not Cable News Network Entertainment, or, CNNE for short? It has a ring to it, doesn't it? And it's a more accurate description as well.

To be honest, though, I'm not holding my breath, expecting the news networks to take me up on this suggestion. I am, however, encouraging all viewers to remember that what they're watching is primarily scripted entertainment. Much of it shouldn't be mistaken for real, impartial, factual news.

To mistake entertainment news for real news can be destructive and deceiving, which will be the subject of my next article on this subject, since much of the media is driving a very dangerous and divisive agenda these days.

Stay tuned for more.