

**THE BLOG**

Where Is Natalee Holloway Now That We Need Her?

By Marty Kaplan

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The results of the 25-year experiment in 24/7 cable “news” are now in.

What cable news is really good at: Michael Jackson, runaway brides, missing blondes, Christmas Eve murders, Princess Di, hurricanes, tsunamis, propaganda, whiz-bang graphics, scary theme music, polls, hair, gotcha, HeadOn, “Thanks for having me,” people who begin every answer to an antagonistic questions with, “Look,” people who say, “I didn’t interrupt *you* when *you* were talking,” and “We’ll have to leave it there.”

Here’s what cable news is not so good at: insight, context, reflection, proportion,perspective, humility, information, analysis, news,

I’ll spot you an exception or two on each of the networks. Personally, I can’t live without Olbermann, and I’ve recently developed a soft spot for Cafferty.

But over all, the cable news performance we’re witnessing this last crucial week before the election is a case study in hysteria, onanism and pomposity that would make the authors of the First Amendment cry.

I know, I know: Don’t watch. No one else does. After all, compared to broadcast programs, cable shows barely register. I just wish I felt more confident that in this era of allegedly unprecedented media abundance, the quality of information reaching citizens — not just available to them, but actually taken in by them — were equal to the gravity of our terrible times.

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