

Miss Seventeen

Thu 15, MBC4, 10pm

There was a time when MTV used to be about music, although it was never that cutting edge. Included in the first 42 videos played were Phil Collins, Robert Palmer, Pat Benatar, Rod Stewart and two, yes two, by Cliff Richard. But at least it fulfilled the criteria of its existence and the tunes did get a lot better over the years. But sadly, MTV gave up on playing music videos long ago and if you turn on now it's either adverts or contrived reality shows.

The latest contrived reality show to reach our shores is *Miss Seventeen* and although we'll get it on MBC4, it originally comes from the MTV stable. In short, it's *The Devil Wears Prada* meets *The Apprentice*, as 17 young girls compete for an internship on the teen fashion mag *Seventeen* and a college scholarship. The girls are not only photogenic but had also been at the top of their class, to 'provide a role model for young women' although using a reality TV

series to get on in life rather than hard work, talent and dedication is not that much of an example. Each week, more are eliminated blah blah blah you know how it goes by now.

From *Say What? Karaoke* to *Where My Dogs At?* the MTV channel now seemingly exists to produce trashy TV that sells computer games and fizzy drinks to teens. Perhaps it was never anything more than that in the first place. But it's clear that the whole concept of MTV has just morphed from a channel that, in 1981, changed the face of music with the mass introduction of the pop video to the lowest common denominator marketing tool. 'You'll never look at music the same way again' was an early slogan, but recently they actually ran with: 'MTV: We Don't Play Music'. Tongues firmly in cheeks, I presume.

Miss Seventeen isn't the worst thing to have come from MTV, not by a long stretch, but it's essentially more of the same and by now it's all looking very tired. *MP*

Clueless

Thu 1, Paramount, 8pm

Again, it's something that's not new but it's still well worth a plug. First broadcast 11 years ago, it's a spin-off from the film of the same name. And although Rachel Blanchard has replaced Alicia Silverstone in the lead role, it's pretty much the same cast, including a young Donald 'Turk from *Scrubs*' Faison.

Amy Heckerling, who wrote and directed the movie, was also behind several episodes in this series and her high-school valley-girl humour still hold up even if hearing people exclaim 'what-ever' is, like, so mid-90s.

There are digs at *Beverly Hills 90210*, ('In 10 years we'll be 27, almost old enough to play high school students on TV') and pop culture references galore as well as appearances from Breckin Meyer (who would go on to appear in *Road Trip* with Blanchard), Brittany Murphy and the band Luscious Jackson.

Later episodes did that horrid 'lessons to be learned' thing with drink driving and anti-smoking episodes that seemed far too 'Blossom' for their own good, but when it sticks to the fun stuff it's a light and occasionally very witty teen sitcom. *MP*



The Blue Planet



Thu 8, Style UK, 7pm

This incredible series was first shown in the UK on 12 September 2001. As you can imagine, given what had occurred the previous day, gentle nature programmes were not the big topic of discussion around the water coolers but 12 million people (over 30 per cent of the audience share) tuned in to watch. Perhaps the idea of sitting in front of the television and watching the story of the sea was a much-needed break from the round-the-clock footage of mass murder and terrorism on the other side.

The series took almost five years to make with nearly 200 filming locations visited. Over 400 days were invested in, often unsuccessful, filming trips just to get the shots they needed. Because 60 per cent of the sea is over a mile deep more is known about the surface of the moon than the waters on

our own planet but this series unearths some creatures never filmed before.

In the first episode, the narrator David Attenborough says this: 'Our planet is a blue planet: over 70 per cent of it is covered by the sea. The Pacific Ocean alone covers half the globe. You can fly across it non-stop for 12 hours and still see nothing more than a speck of land. This series will reveal the complete natural history of our ocean planet, from its familiar shores to the mysteries of its deepest seas.' And it does just that. It's an astonishing piece of filmmaking and while, in the week of its initial broadcast, the television screens were dominated by footage of unspeakable horror, so there was also a gentle and intelligent reminder that there are wonderful, amazing and life-affirming things surrounding us too. *MP*

10 Years Younger

Mon 5, Style UK, 10.30pm

It's another makeover show and for some, that's all you'll need to know. Ooh you're still reading, well if you're not bored of makeover shows then this will probably entertain you as much as it will horrify.

The idea is, they take women who have aged badly and wheel them out into the street like freaks at a circus to let passers by guess their age. After the contestant has been told they look far older than they really are by complete strangers, the team gives them a makeover, shoves them back into the public's gaze and asks what people think this time. The average age from answers is, of course, lower. Because of a better hair-do and make up mostly.

On the official website there's an example of their work in which a woman who previously resembled Francis Rossi from Status Quo went to see them and after they worked their magic she looked like a drag queen. But crucially, a younger drag queen.

According to the blurb, 'it's the show that tells you things even your best friend wouldn't', but that's presumably why they're your best friend in the first place. They don't care that you have wrinkles or a big bum but clearly the people who go on this show do, and when you see their tears of joy at the end it's hard to be too cynical. But it's still another series that beats people over the head with the belief that looks and appearance are everything and does so by humiliating them in front of strangers.

Perhaps it should have a *Logan's Run* ending where, post-makeover, they're released into a shopping precinct and if any of the public thinks they are over 30 years of age a pack of slavering attack dogs are released to hunt them down by tracking the scent of desperation that they're giving off.

Sure it's cruel, but it's not too far from what we already have here and chase scenes are always more exciting to watch than a camp man giving a woman a haircut. *MP*