



Homegrown unscripted series

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From 'Biggest Loser' to 'American Chopper,' these shows were born in the U.S.A.

When the celeb-reality spectacle "The Surreal Life" first premiered on the former WB Network in 2002, it seemed like a savvy melding of the Dutch franchise "Big Brother" and the British creation "I'm a Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here."

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But the show's co-creator, Cris Abrego, insists its inspiration was as American as -- well, Stove Top Stuffing.

"There was a TV commercial that featured Sally Jessy Raphael making Stove Top while George Hamilton played a video game

in the next room," recalls Abrego of the ad that ran in the early 2000s. "We saw it and we were like, 'What if they really did live together?'"

Many U.S. series, such as "American Idol," "Survivor" and "Undercover Boss" (which was adapted from a show that aired on England's Channel 4) are foreign. But there are also wholly American-born hits. Fox's "Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader?" was originated by Mark Burnett in L.A.; NBC's "The Biggest Loser" had several creators, all American. And the CW's "America's Next Top Model," which has been franchised to 40 countries worldwide, was created here by Ken Mok and Tyra Banks.

To date, all of producer Craig Piligian's shows have been 100% homegrown, and many wave the flag in their titles ("American Chopper," "American Hot Rod"). Piligian's Pilgrim Prods. is readying a reverse British Invasion.

"We developed a concept called 'The Nation's Luckiest' and we're doing it in England first," he says.

And it's probably not surprising that the rehab genre epitomized by VH1's "Celebrity Rehab With Dr. Drew" and "Sober House" originated in the U.S.

"Americans believe that recovery is possible," says Rob Sharenow, producer of A&E's Emmy-nominated "Intervention," "whereas I think in a lot of cultures many people assume that, once you're an addict or have a certain syndrome, life is over."

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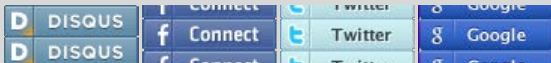
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