

## Rock of Love I: Satan Wears Spandex



Paxil please! The return of Rock of Love with Bret Michaels has my anxiety levels soaring. Symptoms mimicking a heart attack and clammy hands prevent me from changing the channel. I am pulled, *Poltergeist*-style, into the cathode ray vortex of bad taste; a fashion black hole where everything I know of modern manners has been turned topsy-turvy. I exit a time traveling portal onto a glam metal moon. There, on an asteroid-pelted mystery sphere from 1988, women cavort in Lucite stripper shoes of yore and paisley bandanas paired with skin-tight sausage-strangler jeans are the height of manly fashion.

For those of you with loved ones, library cards, or dignity, Rock of Love with Bret Michaels is a VH1 reality show where Poison front man Bret Michael Sychak stocks a house with jiggly groupies in a search for true love, or in his words “a relationship that can take it to the next level” (according to Dante’s *Inferno*, the next level would be the Eighth Circle of Hell, specifically Bolgia 2 where flatterers are submerged in human excrement).

He puts the girls through a series of competitions to determine their inner beauty. Mud wrestling, dirty-talk contests, and topless photo shoots help Bret peer into the souls of hussy hopefuls to find that special someone who can administer his insulin.

You see, it is not all fun and rock star reindeer games for Type 1 diabetic Michaels. Last season he chose punky hairdresser Jes over buxom stripper Heather because of her sensitivity to his blood sugar levels, which layers meaning upon Poison’s hit “Every Rose Has Its Thorn.” This season, Bret Michaels must pick amongst new hot house flowers to find that perfect rose who can jam a thorn of insulin into his butt.

I do not begrudge him his odyssey for connection, as it is the human condition, nor do I fault the giggling gaggle of girly-girls frantically lap-dancing (yes, it's a verb) a rock star in the hopes of notoriety, fortune, and maybe even a life-long love spanning decades, I just hate the clothes.

Sitting through one episode of Rock of Love, hive welts rise up on my arms as I imagine slipping into the synthetic fibers adorning Bret's bespandexed groin. Just watching the ladies cavort, I've developed sympathetic lupus from all the implants, botox, and silicone.

Poison lyrics shout out my disdain:

*Just like every cowboy sings his sad, sad song...*

Bedazzled bandanas hide the aging lothario's weave. I am sensitive that the leonine mane is a hallmark of metal rockers and when their tresses become too wispy to properly haystack, a sense of panic ensues. Still, there is no excuse for employing the world's worst rodeo toupee. His severely taced cowboy hat emblazoned with flames is covered with some sort of shellac that gives it a greasy sheen (Note: Bret Michaels has a production company with popular actor and whore-monger Charlie Sheen, further demonstrating his penchant for a greasy sheen).

*I got a foot in the gutter, a foot in the grave (Look What the Cat Dragged In)...*

Michaels is no longer a *Tiger Beat* treat, and a thick smear of foundation with eyeliner can not bind the hands of Father Time. His cold-sore catcher, painted into a pout with glistening lipstick, grazes every loose inch of youthful female flesh in the house. His kisser looks like two lip gloss leeches sucking the blood of virgins to stay young.

*Sometimes the rainbow is better than the pot of gold...*

In the ultimate display of redundancy, Bret Michaels often wears a Bret Michaels T-shirt. This provokes questions of reality versus fantasy, idol versus image, and signals the great Rock of Love consolation prize: I Had A Drunken One Night Stand With Bret Michaels and All I Got Was This Lousy T-Shirt (and crabs).

*Like a knife that cuts you, the wound heals but the scar, the scar remains...*

South-of-the-Border discount boob jobs bob in and out of a cesspool of human funk better known as the hot tub.

*She's got pizzazz like a razzmatazz...*

The Rock of Love ladies have unique fashion sense. There are the requisite tattoos, belly rings, spray tans and dye jobs, but some outfits have slipped off the stripper pole completely. Shredded faux-savage loincloth dresses mixed with school-girl socks and pink neon tiger-striped pants?

There is also a reliance on the most basic sexy archetypes without a hint of irony or depth behind the French maid's outfit. While everyone appreciates a bouncy pink-clad sex kitten in the Jayne Mansfield mold, these girls lack a certain freshness that makes an S&M cat suit slinky. At least last season's "Don't-Keep-Calling-Me-A-Stripper"

Heather had a determined sparkle in her eye and a collection of navel cut sheaths that she wore with updos and her head held high in a convincing parody of class. She was confrontational but vulnerable. Mascara ran down her cheeks as she jabbed her finger violently in the air to make a drunken point. She was a pantheon of pulchritude. I miss Heather.

Even though his show makes me shudder with second-hand shame, I will continue to watch Rock of Love with Bret Michaels. I hope our hero finds his dream lady and her voice singing "Talk Dirty to Me" rouses him from a diabetic coma. May they travel the world, make love under secluded waterfalls, serenade their grandchildren by the glow of a flickering fire, and finally expire in one another's arms after a randy bout of geriatric oil wrestling. Bret Michaels will lie under his final rock of love, a flamed headstone, buried with his reality show soul mate in matching plots from which a single thorny rose emerges.