

This is The True Story of Seven Strangers

Posted by *Arielle Schwarz* / March 29, 2011

The story of how a Jamaica native charmed his way to the granddaddy of reality TV

By *Arielle Schwarz*

For fans of MTV's "The Real World," the show's opening theme can be recited by memory. Each episode of the show's now-25 seasons begins by introducing the cast members as they each say "This is the true story of seven strangers picked to live in a house, work together and have their lives taped. To find out what happens when people stop being polite and start getting real: The Real World."

The concept seems simple, throw some young people together in a house in a new city, from Seattle to Sydney, for a few months, have cameras follow their every move, and see what kinds of drama unfold.

Drama does indeed unfold on MTV's longest-running series. Cast members deal with family issues, financial issues, romantic issues, illness—and it's all filmed. In the process cast members are stripped of their privacy, and in many cases, their dignity. So why would someone want to put all of that out there for public consumption?



Brown posing with MTV chums Deena Nicole Cortese and Paul "DJ Pauly D" DelVecchio

Nick Brown, a 27-year-old Jamaica-native living in New Rochelle, N.Y., did just that in 2008 for the 20th season, "The Real World: Hollywood." While many people might have reservations about becoming a reality show celebrity, Brown, an aspiring TV host, insists his goals were respectable.

"The show is a great social experiment," he said recently as he chatted about his experience.

"[It has lasted so long because] people can relate to these people and their 'characters' and I never saw someone I fully related to on the show. So I thought, maybe I could do that and maybe people could

relate to Nick."

Brown was so determined to appear on Real World that he had auditioned three times previously and made it to the later rounds for season 19 in Sydney. He turned it down because he was attending the University of South Florida and worried if he moved to Australia he'd never finish college. "I was not about to forfeit four years of school. Graduating college is a scary time; you don't know where you're

going.”

So he waited until late 2007 to film the show, what he says now was the right move. “I was a kid. ‘Hollywood’ gave me wheels to build a car on. I always knew I wanted to do it, I just needed to find the right time.”

Strikingly handsome, impeccably groomed and with a perfectly straight, glaringly white smile that complements his smooth dark skin, Brown seems made for TV. He’s polite, well-spoken, and carries himself confidently. MTV cast him, he says because, “I’m a people pleaser, and they look for conflicts. I like people to like me but not everyone’s going to like you. I’m outgoing and charming, but let’s face it; everyone on the show is a little crazy.”

As for actually being on camera, Brown says what audiences saw was genuine, at least from him. “You get used to it. It’s overwhelming at first, but if you’re constantly making an effort to tone it down, it becomes so much harder, so you’re just like, fuck it.” Brown says he “fell in love on a nightly basis” and brought many girls home, to the dismay of his female roommates.

It is true, every room in the “Real World” house has cameras and they’re on all the time. “Yeah, you have sex on camera. I did. They hear you taking a poop. There’s always cameras, always. But they only have a camera crew come out when something big is about to happen. We did not speak to the crew at all and only got to know them on the last day of filming.” He says, honestly, “I was interested in having sex with as many girls as possible. You put out whatever you put out there. They don’t make any of it up. They only end up showing like 1 percent of what was filmed, but you did it. They showed Sarah and I going at it constantly, which just wasn’t true... but they have a story to tell and they’re telling it as fast as possible.”

Unlike many reality show stars, Brown didn’t change his ways for the cameras. His friend of 12 years, Sofia Holohan, believes this is truly part of his character. She says, “He was picked because his status as a ‘lady lover’ is good for TV. He’s a people person, known for his personality. He didn’t change for the cameras.” His best friend of five years, Alex Staropoli, adds, “A lot of people go on these shows and then claim they weren’t portrayed the right way but what you saw was who he is. He’s always lived his life as if he’s being filmed. He’s authentic in that he just doesn’t give a shit, just there to have a good time, so he appealed [to audiences] in that regard.”

He says his dad found the ordeal to be an embarrassment. “My dad was never big on the drinking, but I was 22 or 23, and that’s what kids do. I was a normal kid— it was just taped.”

Now almost three years later, Brown is still riding the wave of publicity from the show and is trying to build a career as a TV host. His Facebook page acts as his personal publicist. His current profile picture (which changes frequently) shows an unidentified woman straddling his bare back. His other photos show him crooning with various scantily-clad women and are captioned “it’s two-chick Tuesday.” His photo albums show him cavorting with MTV personalities, including Mike “The Situation” Sorrentino and Nicole “Snooki” Polizzi. It would seem that Brown is quite the playboy, but in person, this image does not come across. He comes across as sweet, even shy at times.

He insists he never wanted to be an actor or singer and that he knew about the show's less-than-favorable reputation before filming. "I'm doing something risky, very risky. I'm from Jamaica where people go to school and then get a job. This entertainment thing just doesn't exist there. There is no artistry, it's unheard of. You just go to school." His Jamaican roots and conservative background fueled his desire to be a part of the entertainment industry and be on the show.

Living in Hollywood was "surreal" for Brown. He'd never been there before being on the show and would live there again if he could afford it. Upon arriving home in New York, he realized that he was a familiar face. "None of it equals fame. But it's cool being known. People want to buy you a drink or approach you while you're at a restaurant. I still get that." The show does not equal instant financial success either. He says that MTV did not pay for their nights out and that many of them held part-time jobs out in Hollywood to support themselves. They got a small weekly salary of a few hundred dollars and a free place to live, but he says he was "pretty broke."

He has since appeared on two "Real World/Road Rules" Challenges and hosted for MTV's Spring Break programming. "Ultimately, if I got my own show, I'd be happy and it would be like, 'I've made it.' I'd be happy to host a show. I have a project going on called 'Curbside Critic' that I edit, produce, and write online. I've done three or four episodes." "Curbside" allows him to act as TV host a la Mario Lopez in which he picks a topics ranging from relationships to politics and interviews people on the street to get their feedback. Topics range from relationships to politics. Currently, Brown just returned from Las Vegas where he attended the premiere party for "The Real World: Las Vegas," the show's 25th season, and to host MTV's 2011 Spring Break shows.

Brown claims he has no regrets about his time on reality television. He says he went on the show for a good reason, to "represent a niche for other people to relate to." Reality TV hasn't changed him. "I'm just as arrogant and boisterous as I always was. A person with a lot of money doesn't act differently if they win the lottery."