

Candid camera

Brutally honest teen talk served

'Straight Up' by Mike Boone

Warning: *Straight Up* should not be watched by parents, unless they are accompanied by teenagers. The six-part CBC series, which begins Monday night, may be a little too strong for impressionable adults. Viewers over the age of 40 may be blown away by the debut episode of *Straight Up*.

Marcia (Robin Brule) and Tony (Tomas Chovanec) are teenagers with a problem: The zest is gone from their sex life, and there's some candid talk about just how to rekindle the old passion.

Cover Granny's ears, but please do not adjust your set. Our national public television network is actually launching a series in which Canadian adolescents are up to things their parents don't even want to think about, let alone watch being performed by young actors on TV.

Straight Up is not like anything you've ever seen on the tube. The series' creators, Janis Lundman and Adrienne Mitchell, describe *Straight Up* as *My So-Called Life* meets real kids.

Lundman and Mitchell became interested in teen culture when they collaborated on two acclaimed documentaries, *Talk 16* and *Talk 19*. They have applied their familiarity with what adolescents say and do to a grittily realistic drama series that offers something new: the world of teens as it is, unfiltered by adult sensibilities. Mitchell is 35. Lundman, without specifying, admits that she's older than her partner. In their quest for authenticity, the *Straight Up* producers hired an 18-year-old consultant, Marina Filatow, who spots dialogue that doesn't ring true, wardrobe combinations that no self-respecting teen would wear, and music that doesn't work. "She helps us keep current," Mitchell says.

It's not easy. Lundman and Mitchell say that the world of teenagers is roiling with ideas and trends that are in constant flux. Teen music, language and style constitute a mystery seldom explored by television or film. "Adults don't understand it," Lundman says, "because they never get a chance to see it."

Too often, television has tried to preach to teens with stories that include grave conse-

quences for misbehavior. Mitchell says young people watching these shows "can smell the adult influence," which is a turn-off.

The stories in *Straight Up* are based on interviews with teens. Using teachers as contacts, Lundman and Mitchell toured Toronto area schools, talking to a wide sociological cross-section of adolescents.

"There was no agenda," says Mitchell. "We just talked to them about their lives: what they do, what concerns preoccupy them. We just tried to get a sense of who they are." In episode two of *Straight Up*, Sarah Polley (one of the few "name" actors in the series) plays a "goth girl." *Road to Avonlea* fans won't recognize the series' former star in her new role, which requires black lipstick, swaths of eyeliner, big hair and fishnet stockings.

She looks scary — which is the point. "Goth girls are into gothic literature, imagery and rituals," Mitchell explains, "like vampirism."

Vampirism? Sarah Polley?

Fasten your seat belts. *Straight Up* is going to be a fast ride.

Straight Up, Monday; CBC



Polley (left); newcomer Shawn Mathieson: cover Granny's ears

TVtimes

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