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4 Shows Proving TruTV Is an Underappreciated Channel

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TruTV, the host of shows like "Adam Ruins Everything" and "The Carbanaro Effect," is a lesser known channel but streams quality programming.

Photo

TruTV gave CollegeHumor’s Adam Conover his own platform for "Adam Ruins Everything." (Illustration by Hannah Delmore, Kent State University)

In today’s media, an increasing amount of entertainment is being relayed online, so, to stay relevant, traditional television outlets with channels like HBO, NBC, CBS, ABC and TBS fill their usual niche as well as an increasingly online presence. Their sitcoms and talk shows reflect little sign of any significant drop in views for the foreseeable future, but one that is often overlooked is truTV. In spite of its original iteration as Court TV, it has produced several highly rated comedy programs. Here are a few of truTV’s most redeeming shows.

“Impractical Jokers”

In 1990, Staten Islanders Brian Quinn, Joe Gatto, James Murray and Sal Vulcano met in high school, where the four formed the improv club The Tenderloins. After graduation, they went on to enjoy a fruitful career on stage and online; although no longer updated with sketches, the group’s YouTube channel has been around since 2006. In 2011, they achieved further success on screen.

A staple of truTV for seven years, “Impractical Jokers” follows the four as they dare each other to enact various pranks and challenges on the unsuspecting public. Each episode typically ends in a loser who has failed or refused too many challenges. Their punishment cannot be declined and is therefore especially embarrassing or personally terrifying for them. The most extreme examples have included piercings, tattoos and an unsettling driver’s license [photo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t7WeZ1Qt1uc).

Although sometimes members of the group are recognized, the show is off enough people’s radar to facilitate their antics. Their tendency to shift location to different states helps as well, as the New England populace can only remain aloof to them for so long. For that reason, it may prove to be bittersweet when their film is released in 2019, which will likely both launch them to further notoriety as well as make their job that much more difficult.

“Adam Ruins Everything”

For the last 20 years, CollegeHumor has entertained millions, with a current subscriber count on YouTube of 13 million. Its online sketches have seen cast members come and go in SNL fashion, some of who have gone on to larger projects, like Adam Conover. The “Adam Ruins Everything” concept originated as a few CollegeHumor sketches, but in 2015 they were picked up by truTV and became another of its greatest hits.

The premise of the show revolves around a fictionalized version of Conover, who through some plot device will invite himself to discuss a topic. He then explains in depth the misconceptions surrounding subjects relating to health care, politics, culture or the environment, among others. The foci of his tangents are usually fellow CollegeHumor cast members, for whom Conover will ruin their preconceptions and leave them with new insight.

The show has received criticism for its presentation of topics, as well as had the authenticity of its sources. In response, the show dedicated a whole episode to its mistakes, explaining that sometimes they can even misrepresent their own arguments. While the move showed that not every fact or source they present should be taken at face value, it also exhibited their willingness to grow and be a more honest source for discourse.

“The Carbanaro Effect”

Originally the head of segments on “The Tonight Show,” Michael Carbanaro is a magician who in 2014 was given his own show. Like “Impractical Jokers,” “The Carbanaro Effect” is a hidden-camera show where random people are unsuspectingly incorporated into the segment, but because the pranks are based around elaborate illusions, much greater care is required to set up each sketch.

While Carbanaro is the primary on-screen talent, the show’s 30 [crew](https://www.realityblurred.com/realitytv/2018/05/carbonaro-effect-michael-carbonaro-interview/) members are constantly working to ensure the cameras and subjects are positioned properly, subtly coaxing their prey into place. When the subject notices an illusion, Carbanaro will usually offer some explanation that, at least in hindsight, comes off as nonsensical. The show, now in its fourth season, is a testament to the skill of Carbanaro and his crew, as the unwitting participants often accept the first explanation they receive.

“Those Who Can’t”

Initially an [Amazon](https://ew.com/article/2015/03/03/trutv-greenlights-scripted-comedy-those-who-cant/) project, “Those Who Can’t” is a typical sitcom intended to facilitate truTV’s new comedy orientation. Set in a high school, the show follows faculty as they carry out their self-serving schemes to either move ahead in life or exact some personal vendetta. The three main characters are usually embittered for some reason or another, commonly as a result of discontent with their past, their financial standing or issues with their students. Low-brow yet well-written humor dominates the series, and the show entered its third season this year.

TruTV is not the biggest name in television, only existing in its current form for 11 years, so the budget and acclaim of a show like “Impractical Jokers” would never come close to that of “Game of Thrones.” But even though it’s not comparable to its contemporaries, with the short time it has spent in the entertainment world, truTV has only has potential to grow.