



**JOE AMARANTE**

ON TELEVISION

**I**F IT'S FRIDAY, it must be time for talk of a new, big-machine, outdoor-workplace, hard-hat reality series premiering on TV this weekend. But hey, considering icky alternatives such as "Big Brother" or "The Bachelor," that's not a bad thing at all.

"L.A. Hard Hats," a new National Geographic Channel series about the construction of a 23-story residential building in Los Angeles, moves along nicely with fascinating looks into the skills involved in handling 94 million tons of concrete, 7 million pounds of steel, 917 sinks and 515 toilets.

Of course, you won't see the bathroom fixtures in the opening two episodes Sunday at 9 and 10 p.m. (the six-episode series moves to Monday after that). The first two hours are all iron rebar, scaffolds and wood forms as crews pour rivers of concrete ("mud") with the aid of cranes and other tools.

The building, planned as an eco-friendly structure, must also resist earthquakes and other safety hazards in Los Angeles, as it's built within a tight time frame. Think of the delicate coordination of a home renovation or addition played

out on a massive scale.

Episode one is "Rodbusters," about the ironworkers who place and tie up all the rebar; episode two (10 p.m.) highlights the concrete guys and form carpenters in "Mud Men."

Producers, meanwhile, are quite skilled at this type of show, having worked on "Deadliest Catch" and "Ice Road Truckers." If you've ever wondered how big buildings are put together, or you just enjoy seeing skilled blue-collar guys do their thing, this is another show for you.

■ **Fab Five:** The dynamic of girls in groups does get ugly when the queen bees set up their cliques and torment everyone else. You can see it on athletic teams or in any school setting. The sharks feed and the nice girls pray they don't end up as chum.

Lifetime channel makes the point in a TV film based on a real story at 9 p.m. Saturday. "Fab Five: The Texas Cheerleader Scandal" features Tatum O'Neal as the school principal and mother of the obnoxious leader of a group of cheerleaders calling themselves the Fab Five.

Jenna Dewan plays the new coach, who fights to end the well-connected group's reign of unchecked misbehavior.

Now, with all the problems in the world, you wouldn't think a group of five high school girls would warrant a movie as an evil force, but there you go. For a young person, it's hard to understate how devious and obnoxious the overprivileged teen can be to protect her (or his) little throne.

Brassy, bright-colored and predictable, "Fab Five" will ring true for girls and the women who nurture them, but men will have a hard time watching any of it.

■ **More for the young:** MTV will show two documentaries

from 3-5 p.m. Sunday in "True Life: I Don't Trust My Partner" and "True Life: I Can't Stay Thin." The first is about what happens when you fall in love with someone you don't trust, and the second is about two young people with histories of yo-yo dieting who are working to lose weight and keep it off for good.

■ **Here's what NBC may not show you** when its massive coverage of the Olympics begins soon. Fifty years ago, the Dalai Lama fled Tibet after a failed uprising against the Communists. Chairman Mao's Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976 then shut down nearly all of the 6,000 Buddhist monasteries.

The remaining 13 are forced to denounce the Dalai Lama, and are under close government watch, as CNN's Christiane Amanpour reports in a new documentary, "Buddha's Warriors." A new generation of Buddhists there are involved in political struggle, which has found its way onto the news radar.

The Sunday hour (8 and 11 p.m.) examines an important issue in the network lovefest that will be Olympics coverage this month.

"Whether intentionally or unintentionally, some type of cultural genocide is taking place," the Dalai Lama tells Amanpour in the documentary.

■ **Radio buzz:** WNHU-FM, the University of New Haven station at 88.7 on the dial, has a newly redesigned Web site today, offering ads and promotion of area musicians, bios and photos of deejays and play lists and expanded station information, according to a spokeswoman.

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*Joe Amarante is the Register television and radio editor. See his "J4" blog at [nhregister.com](http://nhregister.com). Send e-mail to [jamarante@ctcentral.com](mailto:jamarante@ctcentral.com).*

