

## Similarities and differences between 'Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?' and 'The Weakest Link'.

There are both similarities and differences between the two quiz shows, they both have the basic format of a quiz show, the entertain, excite and amuse us which is a very basic formula for any good television program, however, they are dissimilar in many other ways. The similarities between 'Millionaire' and 'Weakest Link' could be found in most quiz shows they cover such things as the colourful, spacious sets; the centre stage for playing; the live audience and their positioning; flashing lights; electronic screens and last but not least the presenter. Conversely the similarities are just through the content, it is the way that 'Millionaire' and 'Weakest Link' comprise these ingredients that give them their individuality.

This begins with the opening sequence, 'Millionaire' opens with darkness, out of that darkness a bright light is drawn in the shape of a question mark, this symbolises the question 'Who wants to be a millionaire?' this is shortly followed by a pan of a broad range of people, from all races and backgrounds, illustrating the fact that it could be anyone becoming the 'Millionaire'! The people are edging towards a bright light, this may or may not have a religious link - I can't be sure. The people then just continue to edge forward while green and purple lasers sweep around and result in constructing the 'Millionaire' logo background, the reason for this is to firstly show you the colours of the show, green symbolising the money and purple representing royalty - how you could be treated if you won money. The second reason for the impressive light display is to draw your eyes to the bright light where the background has just been created, this has the function of once again drawing your eye to the front of the people because moments later the main part of the logo sweeps over them to produce the finished article. This is all accompanied by a futuristic sound track of not what I would call music but the 'Millionaire' tune, a suspense creating, metallic synthesised soundtrack concluded by a louder sound that can only be described as a unique 'ta-da' like fanfare.

'Weakest Link' on the other hand has a cold blue and less inviting opening sequence, it prepares you for the type of show it is going to be, an intimidating quick fire show. It does show the contestants but in a different way, there is black and white, surveillance style, footage of the contestants just relaxing in a lounge room while a voice-over introduces the show and what you should expect including the rules and the contestants. The soundtrack to this introduction is dramatic chimes and atmospheric mantra. The opening sequences for 'Millionaire' and 'Weakest Link' capture the ideas behind both of the shows.

The main difference between the shows would have to be the presenters, Chris Tarrant and Anne Robinson could not have contrasted any more than they do, Tarrant is who he is, a friendly and

encouraging presenter who wants the contestants to win just as much as they do, Robinson on the other hand may be like that off duty, but at work she plays the persona of a strict school teacher cross dominatrix. Although both wear smart designer clothing and their roles are the same, the similarities end there. Robinson intimidates and humours the contestants whereas Tarrant supports them, on the edge of his little seat he is there to hold the contestants' hand throughout, and is just as happy if they succeed. He will make jokes to relax them and offer encouragement wherever possible. Robinson makes it her responsibility to shatter the confidence of any contestant that dare challenge her by answering a question, not only does she insult them but she can get quite offensive, bordering on just plain rude. Her dark exterior is united with her dark persona to create a relentless, courage-crushing evil. At the other end of the spectrum is Tarrant, the jolly old man who everyone loves, he 'wants **you** to be a millionaire' where Robinson wants you to be the 'weakest link' and does everything in her power to weaken and mentally destroy you. These qualities both make for good viewing from the audiences point of view, within each show there is audience participation, just in their own way. With 'Millionaire' the audience can vote, when asked, for their opinion of what they think is the right answer. 'The Weakest Link', or Robinson, uses the audience in a less direct way, she uses them to assist her in the humiliation of the contestants, they laugh along to the sometimes cruel remarks about the intelligence or lack of it, of the contestants. They are both examples of how each show uses the audience to carry across the theme behind each show, in 'Weakest Link' they are used to weaken the contestants and in 'Millionaire' they are used to establish the idea that anyone could be the millionaire, one of the audience who answered the question correctly could have won the money for that question if only they had applied.

The key to keeping an audience entertained is bright lights and shiny things, both shows have some from each category. 'Millionaire' has a floor lined with mirrored glass strips and an array of lights, from spots to lasers and the combination provides ample amusement. 'Weakest Link' uses more subtle lighting effects but that is not to say that it is any less entertaining, they are mainly in the form of colour changes, blues to reds and so on, depending on the situation, this does happen in 'Millionaire' but it is not as obvious, the subtlety of 'Weakest Link' gives it a more futuristic look than that of 'Millionaire' but the lights would be nothing without the sound, this is where each show comes into its element.

The sounds of the shows are the atmosphere, if you think about any good quiz show and take away the music or the background sounds then it becomes less attractive and not as interesting any more. The reason being that we respond to visual stimulation better if we have audio stimulation to accompany it, they go hand-in-hand. There are once again comparable aspects to this part of the show, one of them being the frequency of the sound, in 'Millionaire' there is a variety of different music, the opening sequence music is used throughout, it is

the trademark of the show, it was created to represent the image of the show. 'Weakest Link' has, other than the opening sequence music, just the two sound track. One is the dramatic music mentioned earlier and is played throughout the questioning it commences as it ends, with a loud thud-like noise. During the voiceover, after the questioning, there is a jingle-like melody that sounds like a timer counting down, this comes in after a question round while the contestants vote off 'the weakest link'. It is only when the show is at the last stage that it changes again, the music becomes louder and more dramatic still, this is because the questions are slower due to the fact that there is no time limit in this round.

There is no time limit in 'Millionaire' for the contestants, only in the 'fastest finger' qualifying round but that is only to beat fellow contestants, not the clock as such, there is a time limit for the 'phone a friend' and 'ask the audience' life lines but the contestant themselves are allowed to take as much time as they need to answer the questions, this can allow large gaps between conversation and answering, therefore, unlike Robinson's show, the music has to be varied and more interesting. There has to be diversity in the sounds, to create an ongoing suspense. You cannot simply loop the same music throughout the questions because it would not create any atmosphere. 'Millionaire' has stages, the first five questions are the warm up, and then the money escalates for another five questions until you get onto the serious money. Through these stages, the music has slight changes to separate them. Stage one is quick so not much has to go into making this; it is light airy music with a jingle at the end of each question. Stage two the music turns serious, the money jumps up in larger steps now so to respond to this, the music is deeper and more theatrical, and at the end of the questions, when an answer is given, the ending to the music is four bass-line beats which create the sensation of danger and tension. Once you reach stage three the music is slightly louder and the atmosphere is heightened by the sound of a heartbeat, this is supposed to represent the feeling of tension and fear in the contestant and adds to the excitement, once the contestant reaches this level the money is at life changing levels, the future of that person could be in the hands of the next question. In summary the ingredients of a good quiz show are found in both 'Millionaire' and 'Weakest Link' but they both have more than that, they are both unique. One offers to make somebody a millionaire, the other could send somebody into a spiral of depression; however, they are great to watch no matter the outcome. The presenter, the lighting and the sound are just a fraction of what goes into making these shows but it just gives an incite to how much planning and thinking is involved and how they are used to affect the viewer in so many different ways.