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TUNED IN



TNN

Regan Burns, center, questions unsuspecting people on TNN's "Oblivious."

'Oblivious' Host Makes His Mark

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Don't be surprised if sometime, somewhere, someplace when you least expect it, someone steps up to you and asks: "Hey, who hosted 'Candid Camera,' Allen Funt or Alfred Lunt?"

Yes, from that Frankenstein lab where new TV shows are cobbled together from programs of the past comes "Oblivious," a guilty pleasure that's part quiz show and part hidden-camera tomfoolery.

Hosted with an addled affability by Regan Burns, the show kicks off a week of programs Sunday at 9 p.m. on TNN.

The premise is simple: Burns, disguised as a waiter, bartender or the like, engages an oblivious customer or two in conversation while slyly popping in five pop-culture questions. After revealing his identity, Burns peels off a \$20 bill for each correct question.

Now, in the usual studio-based game show, a \$100 top prize would leave both contestants and viewers more than a

little underwhelmed.

But out in the real world, this kind of unexpected windfall, however modest, packs the same simple, out-of-the-blue pleasure punch as finding cash in the pocket of an old jacket.

Once per episode, Burns ups the ante by letting the "mark" assume his role, donning an earpiece so Burns can direct the action from back in the production truck.

It's a bit borrowed from David Letterman, but it works beautifully all the same, with the original "mark" earning \$100 for each question the new target answers correctly.

The question-answer stuff is fun, but watching Burns blunder his way through the list of questions before his customers call for the manager is even better.

His quick-hit questions leading into commercial breaks are a particular delight.

And the startled reaction after Burns creeps behind a diner in a sidewalk cafe is one that would make Allen Funt (or is it Alfred Lunt?) proud.

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