

Question of the week

Did tabloid hoaxers do us all a favour?

Filmmakers tricked tabloid newspapers into running fictitious celebrity stories for the Starsuckers documentary. But did they perform a public service?



Victor Olliver

Alias blogger Madame Arcati - former tabloid journalist

The Starsuckers should be honoured at the next British Press Awards - a bunch of chain-store dyed chrysanthus is on its way from The House of Madame Arcati. Most tabloid showbiz desks are staffed by some 30-plus nincompoop and his selection of 20-plus gormless blondes who think Wikipedia the last thing in research tools. With a double-page spread to fill by 4pm, it's no wonder fiction blooms beside the touched-up picture bylines. Only a silly old party-pooper who doesn't get it would risk spoiling it all by picking up a phone.



Derek Laud

Big Brother 6 contestant

My general view is yes. There has been in recent times excessive intrusion into people's personal lives. The Press Complaints Commission should be abolished and we should have statutory regulation. If we did, everybody would know where they stood. The position now is a cosy relationship between editors and the PCC.



Mark Thomson

Libel and privacy solicitor advocate

Perhaps, but it doesn't seem that surprising as this sort of thing has happened frequently. A lot of tabloid newspapers are not checking their facts before reporting them or asking targets for a comment.

None of this is surprising to me in the least but it is important for people to have an understanding of what is now, in my view, common tabloid practice.



Mark Borkowski

Author and PR

This kind of thing is useful to draw attention to the way the press works but it's not something that's a cancer that needs to be cut out. Stories have always been fabricated in the papers. The granddaddy of this kind of stunt was called Joey Skaggs, from the 1960s and 1970s, who showed up the way governments and big military and financial agencies fooled the public. It's very telling that 40 years later similar stunts are being pulled but it's about celebrity and not something that really affects our lives.

Interviews by Ben Dowell