

CULTURE

DRINK BEER

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OFTEN, when chewing the fat with various beer-loving types while doing in-depth research, the subject has turned to the dearth of television that focuses on beer and beer culture.

It's very odd in a country like Australia that prides itself on being a beer-loving nation that there is so little beer-oriented media.

There's plenty of other lifestyle TV focusing on wine, travel, cooking, snogging ... just about everything other than beer.

My fellow researchers always conclude that we should pitch the idea to the networks, which would fall over themselves to broadcast such a fabulous show and we would become instantly rich and famous.

A little more product assessment and the idea has taken a back seat to other, more pressing topics, like the etiquette of wearing boxer shorts as exterior apparel or whether Lara Bingle is actually attractive.

That lack of follow-through has cost me and my mates dearly, because we have been gazumped by three blokes in Sydney.

Todd Venning, Damien Siviero and Mark David have become internet sensations with their video blog show *BeerMenTV* (at beermen.tv).

They launched it in November last year and have just completed their 22nd episode.

Their alluring mix of humour, knowledge and obvious affection for each other and the beer they test-drive has led *BeerMenTV* to be listed in iTunes' top podcast section.

Venning says the audience growth has been nothing short of spectacular.

"We've all set up websites for varying reasons over the years and we know how hard the slow but steady trail to increasing readership can be," he says. "*BeerMenTV*, however, has gone from hundreds of viewers per week to thousands, all in the space of five months."

BeerMenTV began with an email written by Venning late one night, possibly after a few ales, to his friends Siviero and David.

"From memory it was a single sentence, something along the lines of, 'I have a crazy idea where we set up an

online beer tasting video blog with the aim to save Australians from bad beer,'" Venning says.

"I still remember Mark's immediate response being, 'I will contribute any or all of my knowledge of the sustenance of life' and soon after Damo says he is in and that was that."

Their motto is: "We're here to drink better beer." And they put a lot of effort into their activities, in video form and by engaging in discussions about all things beer on Twitter, forums and a few other social media channels.

"We're a little unconventional in our approach to profiling beers," Venning says.

"It's probably not normal for grown men to dress up in costumes, laugh at each other and drink beer – well not in public at least – but the feedback we've received so far has been amazing.

"I'm still laughing at the fact that we convinced Damien to do an episode where he took a beer on a first date. Priceless."

They are not motivated by anything other than sharing their love of beer.



CHEERS: Todd Venning, Mark David and Damien Siviero on *BeerMenTV*.

"If we achieve nothing else than to increase awareness among the general public of both the booming craft market and better beers available from some of the bigger commercial

players, plus have a little bit of fun in the process, then we will have achieved a big goal," Venning says.

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