

The Alternative Club

A Letter to the Editor, Gulf News, Dubai following an 'undercover' BBC programme reporting on Expatriates

One could be forgiven for feeling manipulated and exploited by the charming and courteous team from the BBC. For several months, the dynamic reporters were absorbing information, whilst covertly preying upon the unsuspected and mostly genuine British residents of Dubai.

The aim of this vampire-ish behaviour was to produce a documentary on Modern Times – The British Expatriate in Dubai.

It is hurtful to believe that the programme really wished to illustrate Dubai as harbouring only human leeches. Portraying all British expatriates within the same frame as the irritating manager husband of the hairdresser, was also unfortunate. As was seen, some people will grin shallowly from what every fancy frame will further their social status. Dubai – and the majority of British expatriates – would rather not be associated with such shallow, transparent and snobbish bloodsuckers – both documentary film makers and their over-exposed victims.

Realising, of course, that 'to make good television', the average, honourable and hard-working Britain would be considered colourless and mundane, it is interesting that the film focused on the superficial, flighty and frivolous life some can lead.

Those not in the film should feel proud not to have been considered radical or shocking or shocking enough to feature.

It should be said that not all British expatriates have such lucrative, coddled and over-pampered 'packages' as our British viewers of the programme have been led to believe. Most of the breadwinners here in Dubai, work a long and dedicated week, fulfilling their days with commitment and responsibility.

As for 'culture' – the acquainting ourselves with the best that has been known and said in the world – we are left wondering what Tom Jones – or the non-appearance of Michael Jackson – have done to accomplish an accolade worthy of the meaning of 'culture' in Dubai. They have produced nothing that is either social or intellectual, or enhanced the human works and thought characteristics of this community or its population.

The programme was mostly 'negative'. Having placed Dubai firmly and unceremoniously on the 'glamour map' has done absolutely nothing towards helping us have an enjoyable holiday in England.

We are only left to wonder how long some television stars will remain shining in Dubai!