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Says Burnett, 'It's no benefit for me for them to have shaved armpits. Much the opposite. And their legs are a mess.'

The Latest from Mr. 'Survivor'

All we know is, we're addicted. And we had a ton of questions to ask in this catch up with the show's creator, Mark Burnett

NEWSWEEK WEB EXCLUSIVE

July 12 — We're now more halfway through TV's biggest summer smash since—well, "Who Wants to be a Millionaire." CBS's "Survivor," a soap opera/adventure show with a seven-figure-prize, probably owes a lot to Regis's game-show, but really, why bother with comparisons?

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Forget the Tribal Councils. It's *you*, the obsessed viewer, who knows best. And now you can prove it. Let us know which of the remaining castaways should be pushed off Pulau Tiga next.

- **Rudy Boesch**, 72: ornery, retired Navy SEAL from Virginia
- **Richard Hatch**, 38: chunky corporate trainer, one-time West Point Cadet from Rhode Island
- **Susan Hawk**, 38: straight-talking truck driver from Wisconsin
- **Kelly Wiglesworth**, 23: river guide from Las Vegas

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ALL WE KNOW IS, we're addicted. NEWSWEEK'S B. J. Sigismund had a whole stockpile of questions for Survivor's producer, Mark Burnett.

Newsweek: So "Survivor" keeps getting bigger and bigger. Are you hitting up CBS for a big raise or what?

Mark Burnett: I'm very happy. We're talking.

Here's the thing everyone around the magazine wants to know. Are Greg and Colleen a couple *or* aren't they? It appeared that they might have had a relationship beginning in week five, but we didn't see a *thing* in week six. Can you clear that up?

We've said all we want to say about it. The answer is that these are two highly intelligent people who know an open relationship could only get them off the island faster. Let's face it, you have to watch everything you say and do. The less you stand out, the better. And clearly, being in the midst of a relationship can't be very good for your voting aspects as time moves on. The reason it doesn't come up anymore is they got smart.

And here's what I'm dying to know. If the castaways were only allowed one luxury item, how do all the women have shaved armpits?

I think they're using Sean's razor. He was the only person who brought one, and they're all sharing.

They weren't given razors in one of the reward challenges?

I'm much too tough for that. It's no benefit for me

for them to have shaved armpits. Much the opposite. And their legs are a mess. Oh, my God! Watch episode seven. They're covered in sores.

How's the immunity contest going to work now that the tribes have merged?

Each time a reward or immunity is granted, it will be to an individual. It's a talisman they wear around their neck. They still go to Tribal Council, where they vote against other people. But if they're sitting there wearing the talisman, they can't be voted off. So the only secure person is the immune person.

In future episodes, how will ties be worked out?

By a revote. Another vote just between the two people who tied.

What if there's a tie again?

They'll be sitting there all night. It's like a jury. In America, a court case can take weeks if there's a hung jury, unless a judge decides it's a mistrial. The jury will sit there and debate until they make a decision. In the case of "Survivor," we *have* had tie votes—and they've all been resolved. Our only mandate is they must make a decision.

In instances when there's a tie, is there open discussion at Tribal Council of who should go?

No.

Talk about the last stretch, a month or so from now.

The 13th episode [a two-hour finale, to be broadcast Aug. 23] begins with four people. On that show, we'll get down to the final two. Then the previous seven—not including those two—will sit at the Tribal Council. Two will be up to win a million dollars, and the other seven will decide who wins.

Let's talk about those who've already been cast off. Did you see the Reebok endorsement deals that Stacey and BB got?

Yes. I'm very happy. I hope they all do fantastically. I've become friends with all of them and I want the best for them.

Are we going to see any new commercials that parody the show?

I'm so busy cutting the show I haven't had time to talk to the sponsors. But the BB and Stacey commercials will run during the show.

"Likeability is more important than capability in nearly every aspect of life. [Gervase's] likeability kept him there."

— MARK BURNETT
"Survivor" executive producer

They will?

I know they will. That's the point.

Forty-three percent of Newsweek's readers wanted Gervase off next. What's the secret to his staying on so long?

It's really not much of a secret. Likeability is more important than capability in nearly every aspect of life. His likeability kept him there.

Curious what you think of "Big Brother." American audiences are not taking to it as quickly.

It's a very different show. We take three weeks to produce each hour of "Survivor." That's fast—and we have a very talented team. But "Big Brother" has only a 24-hour turn-around. People are expecting the same quality and visuals, which is clearly impossible, given the format.

What can they improve?

I can't speculate on that. It would be presumptuous. I'm not the kind of producer who talks about other shows. But I don't know if I could do it. It's a *very* fast turn-around. I'm doing well on "Survivor" because my heart and soul is in it and I love it. I'm living it on a minute-by-minute basis.

Let's talk about the future of this genre and "Survivor II." Do you have a firm commitment from CBS for the 2001 show? What if this whole reality thing is over by the end of the year?

I guess we have a commitment, though I'm sure they could get out of it. We're accepting applications. I

Secrets of Survivor

Newsweek's complete coverage

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- [Catching up with the show's creator, Mark Burnett](#)
- [Secrets of 'Survivor': our first Q&A with Mark Burnett](#)
- [I Will Survive: Castaways Interview](#)

can't imagine it not happening, but anything's possible. I'm just doing my job.

Would you want to do it even if no one's interested in seeing any more reality shows?

I think "Survivor's" a dramatic relationship show. When all those game shows failed that tried to be like "Millionaire," did "Millionaire" go away? Whether the public likes other shows doesn't matter. As long as I'm producing a great show every week for

viewers, I'll be OK.

How are you going to feel later this summer when all this is over?

Well, I'll be on to the next show. I've got another show: "Eco-Challenge" [the long-running adventure program that led to Burnett's opportunity to make "Survivor"]. Before the final episode of "Survivor" even airs, I'll be overseas shooting the next "Eco-Challenge." It's a much bigger production than "Survivor." This is my seventh year. It airs in 145 countries.

Last question—for now. After all your years as a TV producer, how does it feel to have everyone finally talking about your work?

It certainly feels much better to be patted on the back than kicked in the ass. Still, like Rudyard Kipling said, I try to treat failure and success both as imposters.

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