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10 Things Not to Miss About 2009

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12/29/09 - 01:40 PM EST

Well, here we are, and another year has passed. I hope that you are all a year healthier, wealthier and wiser. Every December I compile a list of the [10 things I won't miss](#) about the past year (and never want to see or hear again). It's time for the 2009 installment of this tongue-in-cheek satirical look at corporations, government, society and the media. Without further ado, in no specific order, are the 10 things I am not going to miss about 2009.

Celebrity Indiscretions



Since Bill Clinton took the art of getting caught in flagrante delicto to new heights during his presidency, other politicians and celebrities have followed in his footsteps. This year, we were delivered a triple play of celebrity indiscretions.

First there was Gov. Mark Sanford of South Carolina. Then came [CBS](#) ([CBS Quote](#)) "Late Show" host David Letterman. Most recently, and not to be outdone, was Tiger Woods, who has appeared to triple bogey his way into marital infidelity, losing some sponsorships (such as [Pepsi's](#) ([PEP Quote](#)) Gatorade) and keeping others (such as [Nike](#) ([NKE Quote](#))).

We already know that the average life expectancy of a Hollywood or celebrity marriage is infinitesimal. Do you really think that these guys come home from a hard day's work to their wives, ask how the children are, sort through the mail and help clear the dishes after dinner? I couldn't care less which celebrity is cheating or with whom. Stop wasting my time when there are far more newsworthy stories to cover. **Dancing Reality Shows**



I grew up watching



some of the greatest dancers on TV, the Great White Way and the Silver Screen: Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Gene Kelly, Ann Reinking, Sammy Davis Jr. and Tommy Tune, to name a few. Now we're subjected to not just one but two reality dancing shows, most notably "Dancing With the Stars" and "So You Think You Can Dance." At this point, why fight the trend? I'd like to pitch my own idea, perhaps to **Time Warner's**([TWX Quote](#)) truTV or even **General Electric's**([GE Quote](#)) **CNBC**: "Dancing

With the Convicts."

Just think about it: Dennis Koslowski and Martha Stewart doing the rumba; Squeaky Fromme and Charles Manson going disco; Mike Tyson and Marion Jones dancing the cha-cha-cha. For the season finale, Bernie Madoff could dance the meringue with Paris Hilton. Can't you see it? Live from Alcatraz. **Social Networks**



Sorry, I don't want to be LinkedIn. I don't want to be your friend. I don't know anyone from Indonesia. No thanks to Mafia Wars; I grew up in Brooklyn and live in New Jersey, so I don't really need a simulation. Why waste time with Farmville when I can shop at my local **Whole Foods**([WFMI Quote](#))? And I couldn't care less what Jay-Z is Twittering about. **HSBC Commercials**

This year's most awful commercial came courtesy of **HSBC**([HBC Quote](#)). It featured a melting pot of people - Asian, Orthodox Jew, Hispanic -- taking turns standing on a box and talking about how the bank understands immigrants and helps them achieve the American dream. The actors do everything short of singing "God





Bless America." After all, HSBC stands for "Hong Kong Shanghai Bank," and it's headquarter in London, so it knows plenty about multiculturalism, immigration and the U.S.

In fact, through its household finance unit, HSBC was one of the biggest subprime losers and was

accused of predatory lending practices to minorities, so a more fitting commercial might be a series of families of varied backgrounds in front of homes they used to own. Sounds like an idea for Michael Moore: "**WaMu & Us.**" **Congressional**

Hearings

Is anyone else sick and tired of watching a bunch of legislators who mismanaged this country rant and rave as they hold hearings for government bureaucrats and corporate managers who were equally culpable of screwing up the U.S. financial system and corporations?

We need *ESPN* to start covering these instead. If only Howard Cosell were still alive today. He'd tell it like it is. Here's how I envision the hearing coverage by sports announcers:



Cosell: Welcome to Tuesday afternoon, Congress. I am Howard Cosell here in the booth live from Washington, the District of Columbia. Here with me is Dandy Don Meredith. Today we have an excellent matchup for you. The House of Representatives' Ways and Means Committee, chaired by Representative Charles Rangel, going up against Secretary of the Treasury Timothy Geithner. Rangel is a 20-term congressman out of New York University, where yours truly was a member of the Law Review. Geithner spent time in the banking farm system before finally getting the call to the big leagues to head up the Department of the Treasury.

Meredith: Today's hearing is brought to you by **Budweiser**([BUD Quote](#)), the King of Beers, and **Ford**([F Quote](#)), the car company not owned by the White House.

As Rangel begins to speak, onscreen graphics on the bottom of the screen reveal: "Rangel had failed to report more than \$500,000 in previously unreported assets and income." When Geithner first talks, the onscreen graphics say: "Geithner had not paid \$35,000 in self-employment taxes for several years." After some back-and-forth on Capitol Hill, Cosell speaks again.

Cosell: Dandy Don, this is a match of equal opponents. So far we have played the first 15 minutes with both parties dancing and jabbing, but no real blows have been landed yet. What is on your mind, Danderoo?

Meredith starts to sing lines from War's "Why Can't We Be Friends":

I kind of like to be the president,

so I can show you how your money is spent.

Why can't we be friends?

Why can't we be friends?



Bada Bing

Microsoft (MSFT Quote) continues to be a technological folly. Remember OS/2? How about the Zune? This year the crew from Redmond, Wash., rolled out Bing. Big deal! I will stick with my **Apple (AAPL Quote)**-**Google (GOOG Quote)** combo over Microsoft, Bing or no Bing. **New-Car Sales**

Each and every year, another metric is over-hyped, over-used and over-relied-upon. In the past it was the **ADP (ADP Quote)** labor report or same-store sales. This year it is new-car sales. Who are they kidding? We were in the midst of the Great Recession, and automobile manufacturers were going bust left, right and center. Then the Federal government institutes the Cash for Clunkers program. How could you possibly predict, analyze or rely upon this data? Yet it was bantered about and extolled as the single most important metric this year.

Winner Bashing

Not long ago, this country loved winners. We saluted, hailed, cheered, looked up to and emulated them. Now we bash them. If you make a successful product, somebody out there will sue you. If you make too much money, we will jack up taxes on you. If you win championships like the Los Angeles Lakers or New York Yankees,





you are accused of buying your way to success. **Goldman Sachs**([GS Quote](#)) does it, and now Goldman Sachs is hated. The U.S. is the Mount Olympus of capitalism. Hey, that is the American way. Accept it. For every Yankees or Goldman Sachs, there is a New York Knicks, a

Cablevision([CVC Quote](#)) holding, an **American International Group**([AIG Quote](#)) or a General "Generous" Motors that spends its way to failure. Who would you rather be: a winner or a loser? **As Seen on TV**



Apparently, I live a deprived life. I have no Slap Chop; I use knives. There are many languages I need to speak in case I join the CIA, so I should buy **Rosetta Stone**([RST Quote](#)). **Proctor & Gamble's**([PG Quote](#)) Bounty won't do; I need ShamWow. Let me ask you something: If ShamWow and Slap Chop are so great, why does Vince Offer, the guy hawking them, have to wear a headset microphone on the commercials? It looks stupid. I think he needs a wireless microphone. Rest in

peace, Billy Mays. **University Solicitations**

I don't mind solicitations from colleges or universities from which my wife or I graduated, but it really gets under my skin when a college or university to which I am currently paying tuition and fees for my children hits me up -- usually by phone -- for a donation. Do they not get it? Parents are all shelling out \$30,000 or more to some of these institutions so their kids can get a degree, yet they try to hit us up for more moolah. If that is not bad enough, their basketball teams probably stink. Just don't bother me. Wait till my kid's education pays off (or is paid off), and then hit me up for more cash.

My best wishes for a happy and healthy holiday and New Year season to all of you and your families. Thank you for your personal notes and professional advice during the past year. I hope our team at *TheStreet* has made this year a profitable and enlightening one for our readers and subscribers. Last but not least, thanks to our tireless contributors and editors who work so hard every day to produce this fine product.

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