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'Dr. 90210' unmasks real plastic surgeons

By **AMY AMATANGELO**

"Dr. 90210," the series premiering tonight at 10 p.m. on E!, is not about the Peach Pit gang going under the knife to regain their youth or their hairlines.

It is about trying to bring a little respect to a profession that has become the latest obsession of reality television. Radical plastic surgery is on display on such shows as "The Swan," "Extreme Makeover" and "I Want a Famous Face," and it is the focus of FX's hit drama "Nip/Tuck."

"Nip/Tuck" kind of portrays plastic surgeons as unethical, hypersexual beings," said Dr. Robert Rey, one of the doctors followed on "Dr. 90210." "It raises the question, what are plastic surgeons really like? I wanted to set the record straight. We're not what 'Nip/Tuck' portrays. We live glamorous lives, but I'm a religious guy. I would never dream of cheating on my wife."

Richard Ellenbogen is another plastic surgeon on the show. "I think that nobody knows who plastic surgeons really are," he said. "All of these shows are so off the wall. If any real plastic surgeon sees that show 'Nip/Tuck,' they're going to laugh their asses off."

Ellenbogen calls Fox's hit series "The Swan" "the stupidest thing I've ever seen in my life."

"Extreme Makeover" came out and had some support from the American Society of Plastic Surgeons," Rey said. "A new set of shows came out that were a little edgier and overstepped the boundaries of ethics. I think these shows go through maturation process. Our show represents the later stage of maturation. We're not denigrating of women. We're not disrespectful of women."

Since November, E! cameras have been trailing several Beverly Hills plastic surgeons through long hours, grueling surgeries and into their home lives.

"Those who feel either pro or con can tune in to see who we are and what we think and what we do," Ellenbogen said.

Brazilian-born Rey agreed to do the series because "it shows the American dream still lives. I live in the same neighborhood as Jack Nicholson. It shows other Latin kids that the American dream still exists. I came to the United States in a cargo ship."

Because the doctors live in the epicenter of the entertainment industry, most of their surgeries are cosmetic. Ellenbogen mentioned a "major Asian model" who is hitting 32 and competing against 21-year-olds.

"Restorative surgery will keep her working," he said.

"Isn't it wonderful to be able to improve yourself?" Rey said. "Isn't that the purpose in life? Is there anything wrong with trying to improve ourselves at all levels? Here, the film



'JUST SALTWATER': Brazilian-born Dr. Robert Rey, one of the plastic surgeons appearing on 'Dr. 90210,' handles a pair of implants.

'Dr.' fixes image of plastic surgery

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industry is brutal. In an audition of 150 perfect-looking people, plastic surgery provides an edge."

But in addition to breast implants, nose jobs and face-lifts, Ellenbogen and Rey emphasized the less sensational aspects of their chosen profession.

"This shows the scope of plastic surgery — cosmetic surgery to do scars, cancer reconstruction, reconstruction from burns," Ellenbogen said.

Rey added, "A lot of these reporters love to make fun of us, but their kid gets bitten by a dog — they sneak in through the back door."

Rey told the story of one patient who was plagued by her protruding

ears. Four stitches later and Rey said she was transformed.

"Did these ears really make that much a difference? We unlock that inner beauty and give confidence to allow the personality to come out. ... In that girl's life, this changed her life. She'll get a better job. She'll marry better."

Rey said he turns away nearly 30 percent of his patients because they have unrealistic expectations. "The biggest myth is that we can make you into Brad Pitt or Jennifer Aniston. ... We can improve whatever you have," Rey said.

Ellenbogen estimates he says "no" to about 15 percent of prospective patients. "They're being ridiculous on what they want. They're thinking they can solve a life problem by

having plastic surgery done. I take no prisoners. I don't want somebody who's dissatisfied with what I do."

Rey practices what he preaches. If his daughter ever came to him asking for breast implants, he wouldn't stand in her way.

"How can I criticize? I had my own nose done, and that made me feel a lot better. If my daughter (says), 'Daddy I'm so flat chested, kids give me a hard time.' And she's become socially withdrawn, why not? It's just a little bit of saltwater."



LOOKING GOOD: Rey goes over a surgery patient's chart.