

"24 IN 24: LAST CHEF STANDING" IS INTRIGUING CONCEPT, BAD OUTCOME

By LaDale Anderson

HOLLYWOOD—This was a genius concept for the Food Network. I will admit I hate food reality competition series. There is just way too much of this on the network that was a staple for me growing up learning how to cook and be creative in the kitchen. We don't have the cooking shows that we used to have all day on Saturdays and Sundays. Hell, you used to have repeat of cooks teaching one-on-one instruction during the week, but now it is just "Chopped" and so much more competition-driven shows.

This new series "24 in 24" sees the return of Iron Chef Michael Symon, who is hosting, alongside Esther Choi in this new adrenaline race involving 24 chefs competing for a total of 24 hours. Yes, it is NON-STOP for this extended period, which has a total of eight various skills that will be tested in three-hour intervals or shifts as the show highlights. Each shift will test a unique skill and the first thing tested was speed that witnessed the chefs cutting up onions, artichokes and avocados.

I enjoyed this concept, but beyond that it was a race to get to a protein you wanted to cook for your next challenge. So, there were 12 stations, and two chefs would be at each station, but only one would remain. Yes, with the snap of a finger 12 chefs were about to be eliminated from the competition, and right there, the series completely lost me.



Jet Tila competed on season 5 of "Tournament of Champions." Photo by Kathy Hutchins/Shutterstock.

How can you have a series about 24 chefs, and you get rid of half of them within the first hour of the two-hour premiere. I just found that as a cheap gimmick and it didn't really deliver for me. For starters, a lot of the chefs on the series not many viewers, unless you're engrained in the culinary arena, will you know. I think I knew Elizabeth Faulkner, Carlos Anthony, Marcel Vigneron and Viet Pham. Faulkner and Vigneron I know from their time on "Top Chef" and "The Next Iron Chef." Anthony was a competitor on re-

cent seasons of "Tournament of Champions" and Pham I recall from "Iron Chef America" battling Iron Chef Bobby Flay.

I didn't love this twist, because it really doesn't give the audience an opportunity to know the contestants. Like a 30 to 45 second take highlighting a few things about the chef doesn't paint a good enough picture for me. It just doesn't. That was not my only issue, it was the fact that we had a single chef judging the dishes from the two competitors at each station.

That was Chef Jet Tila, who recently

competed on "TOC." Here is the problem, there needs to be blind tasting for culinary competitions. You cannot do this, when you have judges who could have potential connections to chefs there can be bias, and that is the one thing I enjoyed about "TOC" it provides an equal playing field as the judges are tasting food unaware of who made what. That did not happen here and like I said 12 chefs were out, one being Faulkner which stunned me.

Then you have the next competition of this three-hour challenge, crafting your best egg dish in only 12 minutes. Yes, I'm glad they used eggs as the vehicle and 12 minutes is NOT a lot of time to craft a unique and tasty dish involving eggs. I mean, what if you are not a fan of eggs? At the end of this interval, it witnessed another chef getting the boot from the competition.

Then you have a battle after that challenge between the losing chefs where one is booted. The concept is quite intriguing, but there needs to be fixes. I was expecting 24 episodes, but the reality is that was near impossible as that is too many episodes, but slowly eliminating the 24 chefs would have been better than seeing half chopped with a snap of a finger.

I wanted to see more from this series that is doing something you don't see often in a reality cooking competition, however, there are still some tweaks that are needed. "24 in 24: Last Chef Standing" airs Sundays at 8 p.m. on Food Network.

LADY GAGA IS BACK!

By Rose Quintiliano

HOLLYWOOD—Where are all the little monsters? Mother monster will be on the screen again. We are all excited that Lady Gaga is going to play a new version of Harley Quinn in "Joker: Folie à Deux" opposite Joaquin Phoenix, who actually won an Oscar for the Best Actor. The pair seemingly meet and fall in love in the Arkham Asylum before apparently escaping and forming a musical duo. The director is Todd Phillips who says it isn't a musical, as it has been rumored, however says that the music is an essential element. Back in 2019, Phoenix won an Oscar for best actor in his performance in the Joker.

Back in 2019, the film the "Joker" made over \$1 billion, so it was only a matter of time before the twisted psychological thriller centered on the green-haired super villain and Batman adversary would be getting a sequel. According to published reports, it was back in 2022, at the time that Lady Gaga was filming "House of Gucci," that it was released that she was in early talks to join Phoenix in the "Joker: Folie à Deux."

The film's title is a reference to a medical term for an identical or similar mental disorder that affects two or more indi-

viduals, usually members of the same family, according to published reports. Then, on August 4 of that year, she confirmed the news, posting a musical teaser to social media that shows the silhouettes of the two actors dancing cheek to cheek. The film was co-written by director Phillips and Scott Silver, with whom he collaborated on the Joker.

Filming began in Los Angeles in December 2022, with additional filming in New Jersey and New York, in fact the scenes from the Arkham Asylum scenes were filmed at the Essex County Isolation Hospital. Most of the scenes are said to be centered around the Joker and Harley Quinn's meeting at the asylum, making the New Jersey location pivotal. Additional scenes were filmed outside the same courthouse where Donald Trump was arraigned in New York City and the so-called Joker stairs in the Bronx.

Production reportedly wrapped on April 4, 2023. This past Valentine's Day, 2024, Phillips shared three pics from the film, which included Gaga with the widest eyes known to man alongside Phoenix in full glam, a pic of the two waltzing, and the most Gaga pic of all, the two actors with their noses pressed together. Margot

Robbie, the first actress to play Harley Quinn in live-action, shared her enthusiasm about Gaga taking over from her, in an interview with ET.

The film bursts into song on October 4, 2024. It had a budget of \$200 million and it's being distributed by Warner Bros. Warner Bros. Pictures. Based on characters from DC. On the same day, the film "We Harvest," is also being released. A young surgeon takes a job in corrupt Las Vegas. Facing personal tragedy, he's tempted by co-workers harvesting criminal organs, believing the cause righteous before realizing his moral compromise.

The surgeon accepts a job in an innovative hospital, desperately trying to prove himself financially, he is eager to perform well. His new co-workers welcome him with open arms into their family. He learns that many of the surgeons exert vigilante justice through back-alley surgeries in which they sell the organs of criminals. Faced with this immense financial potential and moral opportunity, he begins to harvest organs for a cause he believes to be good. Only to realize his choice was actually of a greater evil. The film stars Drew Dusterhoff, who also wrote and produces the film.

The same day the film "White Bird," is scheduled to be release. The film is directed by Marc Forster, and stars Bryce Gheisar, Helen Mirren and many more in this war and adventure film. In the film, Julian has struggled to belong ever since he was expelled from his former school for his treatment of Auggie Pullman. To transform his life, Julian's grandmother finally reveals her own story of courage. During her youth in Nazi-occupied France, a boy shelters her from mortal danger. Together, they find first love in a stunning, magical world of their own creation, while the boy's mother risks everything to keep her safe.

Rose's Scoop: Demi Lovato who is currently filming a movie, in Cranford, took time out of her busy schedule to dine at Ambeli Greek Tavern on Saturday, April 13. The film "Tow," tells the true story of Amanda Ogle, a Seattle woman who fought her way out of a tow-company scam to reclaim her life and the car that held it together after receiving a tow bill for \$21,834, according to the letter. The movie stars Dominic Sessa, Rose Byrne, Oscar winners Octavia Spencer and Ariana DeBose, Demi Lovato and Simon Rex.