**Lord of the Flies goes live for reality TV**

**·** Children left to fend for themselves in ghost town
**·** Participants aged between 8 and 15 to set own rules

Friday May 18, 2007

In the hands of a master such as William Golding, the subject matter makes for awe-inspiring literature. But in the hands of the producer of Extreme Makeover: Home Edition? And as reality TV?

CBS television, desperate for a hit to follow on from its reality shows Survivor and Amazing Race, has had the bright idea of emulating Lord of the Flies, Golding's 1954 dark masterpiece that earned him the Nobel prize for literature. The network has chosen 40 kids aged eight to 15 who will be left to their own devices for 40 days in a ghost town in New Mexico.

In Lord of the Flies, the island-abandoned children, devoid of adult boundaries, are gradually overcome by their violent and primitive instincts. "Kill the pig! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!" they chant in a famous scene recreated with spine-chilling effect in Peter Brook's 1963 film.

At the climax, the squinty-eyed Piggy, the last hope for civilisation among them, is murdered, eliciting Golding's immortal line: "Piggy's arms and legs twitched a bit, like a pig's after it has been killed."

CBS executives will be hoping that while Kid Nation, as the show is to be called, has enough tension to attract big ratings, it stops short of such depths. The children are to be assembled in Bonanza City, a mining town in the Los Cerrillos hills of New Mexico that between 1880 and about 1885 housed up to 200 pioneers digging for silver, zinc and lead.

The town failed, and according to visitors all that is left of it today are the faint outlines of the foundations of a smelting factory.

The challenge that CBS will set the kids is to see whether they can be any more successful in establishing a functioning society than those original frontiersmen. They will elect four leaders to guide them and set bedtimes. They will have to cook their own meals, clean their own outhouses and run their own businesses.

They will be allowed an old-town saloon, but there will be no scenes of tumblers of rye whiskey skidding down the bar - only root beer will be permitted.

Unlike other reality TV shows, there will be no evictions, though the kids will be allowed to go home at any time should they opt out.

At the end of each show the children will gather in a town hall and vote to give one of their number a reward. They may also be offered the choice between essentials such as food and supplies, and desirables such as computer games.

With reality television still driving ratings across the networks, the scramble for new concepts have become ever more desperate. Ideas that are currently floating around and in development include:

RealityLASIK - a show following models as they go through laser surgery to improve their eyesight;

Wedding SOS, featuring betrothed couples stressed out about their pending nuptials and in need of a wedding planner;

Anchorwoman, where an urbane east or west coast model (again) is sent to a hick southern town to present on a local TV channel.

In the case of Kid Nation, the producer is Tom Forman, who made his name with the home improvements version of Extreme Makeover (as opposed to the plastic surgery variation which seeks to give participants a "Cinderella-like experience").

CBS says the main point of the series will be to see whether the kids "come together as a cohesive unit, or will they succumb to the childhood temptations that lead to round-the-clock chaos?"

Executives are not at this stage making clear what they will do should chaos extend into anarchy.