Easy on the eye

Posted on Jan 11, Posted by Anne Adams Category Miscellaneous

When that old stirrer-in-chief John Humphreys hinted in a recent Today show that Ed Milliband might be too ugly to be Prime Minister millions of Radio Four listeners of all political persuasions understood immediately what he was getting at. After all, 21st century politics isn't so much about what you say as what you look like when you're saying it. But are we really only looking for leaders who are easiest on the eye?

American voters have long since been wooed and won over by their movie heroes. They can't get enough of them on screen and love looking at and listening too them in places of political power too. The trend over there continues with the square-jawed Republican hopeful Mitt Romney who has surely come straight from central casting. Blinded by his polished profile and backed by a clutch of spookily good looking offspring it appears what comes out of his mouth is off less importance than the sparkly-toothed grin which accompanies it. No question he could fall back on a career in movies if he fails in his bid for the leadership of the nation.

Of course there's more to it than merely looking the part - but not much. The kind of Presidential politics which has found its way here and is widely accepted as the norm, means today's leadership package is all about the winning combo of how you look, behave and sound. You may have an intellect the size of a planet but do you have a nasal twang? Do you wave your arms around in a nerdy not quite appropriate way? Voters make their decision in seconds and are unlikely to be swayed. Fancy a career in politics? You can be good, you can be bad but whatever you do.. don't be ugly.

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