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Ghostbusting with the Real-Life Whisperer

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CSI: Miami's DAVID CARUSO talks about the
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and why the world needs more Horatio Caine

TELEVISION'S
BEHIND-
THE-SCENES
NOTEBOOK

QUICK TAKES



Life imitates art: *How I Met Your Mother* blurred the lines between TV and the Internet.

As often happens with *The Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson*, millions of fans were abuzz earlier this year after watching one of Ferguson's monologues. But this time, a great number of the fans who enjoyed it hadn't necessarily watched it on CBS.

Ferguson's now-famous take on Britney Spears, originally aired February 19, shot to the top of youtube.com's ranks by the next day, garnering attention from both the media and new potential viewers who don't normally stay up that late. As CBS Interactive President Quincy Smith explains, that's all part of his

company's master plan. "In this new wide world, where everybody can get content on any platform, anywhere, we've got to be in a position to take the content out to them."

In marked contrast to other networks, which rely almost exclusively on their own websites for hosting show-related extras, Smith adds, "CBS wants to maintain 'open, nonexclusive, multiple partnerships.'" And so, in early 2007, the network's interactive team created the CBS Audience Network to reach outside cbs.com, syndicating video clips and other promotional pieces relating to Eye Network programming to such non-CBS sites as AOL, Microsoft, Comcast,

Joost, Sling Media and dozens of other partner companies. Via the Audience Network, viewers can easily catch full-length episodes of their favorite shows for free, with the added ability to incorporate clips from those programs into their blogs, wikis, widgets and community pages.

Robin Sparkles, and *Mother* Shines

Even before the advent of the Audience Network, CBS' shows had already become pioneers in the still-emerging practice of cross-promoting via the Internet. *How I Met Your Mother* creators Carter Bays and Craig Thomas admit to having been so inspired by the Web's potential that they have sometimes shaped the plotlines of their show to match their brainstormings of Internet tie-ins. "We set a goal to make a

A Brave New World

CBS shows are taking a lead role in using the Internet to build viewership

By Jim Colucci



20

WHAT DOES SANTA GET THE STARS?

POP CULTURE MEETS STOCK CULTURE

22



TV FAMILY WARFARE

24

DON'T MESS WITH HER



26



29

IN THE STARS

really funny YouTube video that people would seek out," Bays says, "and that would help promote the show." And thus "Robin Sparkles" was born. The clip—presumably a long-lost music video featuring a mortifyingly peppy teenage Robin—became the centerpiece of that season's most talked-about episode, and an instant Internet hit. "It felt good to be the show that people were talking about," Bays says. "We definitely rose from, 'Oh, I hear that show is good,' to 'Did you see that thing they did?,' which makes a huge difference."

How I Met Your Mother was quick to create show and character profile pages on MySpace and to provide a comedy bonus with the successful "Barney's Blog" on cbs.com. Now Bays says that his writers' goal for the show's third season is to continue to create a "multimedia storytelling experience," where the show's story line continues to unfold on the Internet. The producers plan to release bonus material to a new "Mother Central" homepage, uploading alternate versions of some of the five-some's more adult moments that future Ted couldn't in good conscience share with his kids. Also in progress: a scene this September introduced the show's newest Web tie-in, slapcountdown.com. The site, containing merely a digital time readout, ticks off the hours until the November sweeps moment in which Barney delivers the payoff of his

earlier "slap bet" with Marshall, one of the show's most popular running gags.

Ghost and the Machine

Right from its 2005 debut, *Ghost Whisperer* has been perhaps the most cyber-savvy of all network shows, in large part due to two of its executive producers, erstwhile Internet developers Ian Sander and Kim Moses. With *Whisperer*'s spiritual subject matter, a Friday night time slot, and *Party of Five*-famous star, all research indicated that the show's audience would skew young; and from watching their own two kids multitask with laptop PCs in front of the TV screen, the real-life couple knew to lean heavily on the Web. "We didn't want to be a show that goes on Friday night and young people aren't aware of it, to come to watch in a traditional way," Moses says. And so the show, she explains, was the first show to come through the doors at CBS complete with an Internet strategy. Now, based on *Whisperer*'s success, a recipe for some online sizzle is expected with any new show pitch.

With their mantra, "Intersecting TV with the Internet to create magic," the duo has continued to heat up the show's Web presence with each successive season. From the start, embedded pop-up ghosts and secret messages have encouraged viewers to download episodes. Later, a video collaboration with Argentinian speed painting artist Nico

Di Mattia got 122,000 views on the day of its YouTube launch, ultimately winning 27 awards from the site. In season two, the show's Halloween-themed Internet cross-promotion led to a spike in ratings for the October 31 telecast. "We learned we were able to build buzz in anticipation of an episode," Sander notes, "as opposed to a buzz in response to one."

Whereas most Internet promotion tends to be purely informational—when the show is on, bios of the stars—*Ghost Whisperer* has succeeded with games, video clips and other much more interactive features. From online tarot card and crystal ball readings to a series of original scripted webisodes tying ultimately into last season's on-air finale, Sander and Moses have concocted features intended to create what Sander calls an "infinity loop," driving viewers seamlessly back and forth between the flat screen on the wall and the computer screen in their laps. As a result of all these efforts, ratings in *Ghost Whisperer*'s core audience, women 18 to 34, rose 47 percent by season two, and even more noteworthy, the numbers for men 18 to 34 doubled. "It used to be that a producer would develop a show and then keep his fingers crossed that the network would get the audience there," Sander says. "Now, in the 21st century digital medium, it can also be our job while creating the show." **U**

The O'Neil Report

Angelique O'Neil, fashion director and stylist, has made a career of knowing what works and how best to "work it." The O'Neil Report is your guide to what's NOW and what's NOT.

Premiere	Finale
Penguins and polar bears	Skulls and crossbones
Drew Carey's game shows	<i>The Two Coreys</i> freak show
iPhone	Phone cards
Searching for ghosts with Jennifer Love	Comebacks from Courtney Love
Cinderella, the Yorkie	Tinkerbell, the Chihuahua
Cocktails and canapés	Margaritas and chips
Suits selected by Barney from "HIMYM"	Playlist from Barney the Dinosaur
Green movement	Green with envy
Paris by Yves Saint Laurent	Heiress by Paris Hilton
<i>To Sir with Love</i>	To whom it may concern
Desperate for Swingtown	Reckless and downtown
The Ocean Club, Bahamas	Culture Club with Boy George
Pear and apple martinis	Martini & Rossi Asti Spumante
CS/Is in Rag & Bone denim	Wise guys in tracksuits
Range Rover Supercharged in Java black	The Irish Rovers live with Black and Tans
Standing ovation	Standing for nothing



Max Lucht