

JACK MYERS Entertainment Report™

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Thanks To The Smoking Gun, TCA Opens With A Bang

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Throughout the next three weeks, dozens of cable and broadcast networks will present the stars and creators of their upcoming series, specials and movies to members of the Television Critics Association, who have assembled at the Renaissance Hotel in the heart of Hollywood for their annual summer tour.

The thrust of this event is the promotion of new programming for the networks' 2003-04 lineups. But returning programs and established talent are also included in the mix, and often prove to be of equal or greater interest to the press. This is true of cable as well as broadcast, as was evident during presentations by Court TV and Oxygen during the opening day of the tour.

Indeed, Court TV enjoyed one of its best-attended TCA sessions ever due to the inclusion on its panel of Daniel Green and Bill Bastone, the founders and chief operators of thesmokinggun.com, which Court TV acquired in 2000. Beginning in August, Court TV will present four quarterly Smoking Gun television specials, the content of which will be largely drawn from the Smoking Gun Web site. The Smoking Gun team will also be incorporated into Court TV's ongoing franchise "Hollywood at Large," which will be revamped and added to the network's prime time schedule in the fall.

The Source for Reality Scandals

Of course, thesmokinggun.com has become a must-read Web site for reporters who cover television, because it has become the primary source for background information (re: secrets and scandals) related to contestants on reality television shows, so the press turned out in force to meet the guys. Despite their proclivity for unearthing dirt about television personalities, Green and Bastone insisted that they do not have any "pre-existing relationships" with people at the networks. The leaks and tips they receive often come

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from viewers who recognize contestants on these shows and contact thesmokinggun.com to dish the details. Rigorous reporting and research follows.

"We also comb through small town newspapers," Green said. "We've developed relationships with sheriffs and police departments across the country."

Near the end of the session, Court TV provided all attendees with copies of Bastone and Green's most recently unearthed legal document — the confidential contract Trista Rehn and Ryan Sutter entered into with Telepictures, ABC and other parties for their upcoming wedding, which will be televised on ABC this fall. These documents were provided to members of the TCA before they were posted on thesmokinggun.com.

Following the session, Court TV CEO Henry Schleiff told *JMR* that the second Smoking Gun special is scheduled for December and will likely be an award show of some kind, honoring the best stories and scandals brought to light by the team over the years.

Let's Talk About Sex

Earlier in the day, Oxygen scored with an appearance by Sue Johanson, the straight talking Canadian sex specialist who appears on the network nightly and live on the Sunday Night Sex Show at 11 PM (ET). Three years after its much-publicized launch, there

seems to be little interest in or knowledge of Oxygen among members of the TCA. But everyone knew (or knew that they should know about) Johanson.

The spirited Johanson shared Oxygen's 45-minute session with Cheryl Hines, one of the stars of Oxygen's first original movie, "A Tale of Two Wives," and two personalities from the network's hidden camera series "Girls Behaving Badly."

Also impressive during day one: a Tech TV panel for its upcoming series "Invent This!," featuring the subject of its first installment, a wry inventor named Woody Norris who should become a Tech TV regular; and National Geographic Channel panels for its upcoming reality series "Worlds Apart," in which American families are transplanted into remote regions and experience new cultures, and Kratt Brothers: Be the Creature, in which two conservationists live with wild animals in their own turf and on their own terms. As always, BBC America impressed the press, this time with previews of the miniseries "Cambridge Spies" and the comedy program "3 Non Blondes."

The Game Show Network and the Sundance Channel teamed for an evening event that managed to generate interest in both networks without benefit of formal press conferences. Game Show, which has developed a major presence at TCA during the last two years under the guidance of publicity chief Cindy Ronzoni, offered dinner and a live presentation of its game series "National Lampoon's Funny Money" featuring talent from every original program on the network. Sundance promoted its original series "Keeping Time: New Music from America's Roots" with a performance by the Grammy winning bluegrass band Nickel Creek. □

We're the fastest growing cable network among women 18-49.

(Total Day impressions grew by +150%)

SOURCE: Nielsen 1Q'03 v: 1Q'02, Total Day ranking among ad-supported cable networks. Oxygen 1Q'02 reflects 3/02 (1st month of ratings available).

