

Inside Move: WMA faces 'Reality'

Reps look to ink TV deals for online chase game

By SHARON SWART

In yet another twist in the race for ever-more original reality concepts, the William Morris Agency --which already reps the creators of "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire," "Big Brother" and "Survivor" --is on the brink of making several TV deals for "RealityRun," an online chase game that also plays out in real life.

WMA, which reps the property exclusively, is in negotiations with two leading U.K. networks --believed to be the BBC and Channel 4 --for a TV show component to the game. Further deals in major European territories such as France and Germany may be finalized as early as next week, said WMA's London-based Hans Schiff. The agency is also in advanced talks with U.S. TV production partners, which it will sign up before taking it to the networks.

The game is the brainchild of 29-year-old German entrepreneur Alexander Skora, who sought to create a bridge between real life and cyberspace where online users help to track down a selected fugitive, dubbed the RealityRunner. The runner has seven days to complete missions set out by the site operators and collect a \$10,000 prize. Online participants help choose the runners as well as the missions and clues given to the Web-based RealityHunter. If a runner is caught, the prize goes to the captor, cyber or real.

"What makes it so intriguing is that viewers around the world can not only monitor the game via the Internet 24 hours a day and virtually guide the RealityHunter, but they can also head out into the streets and actually find the RealityRunner themselves to claim the \$10,000 prize," Skora said.

"RealityRun" had its first outing in Berlin in August. The game's Web site drew 650,000 hits daily from people who were checking the progress of a RealityRunner named Roger from Amsterdam, who was eventually caught by a tabloid reporter.

"On the heels of the success of 'Survivor,' 'Big Brother' and 'Millionaire,' this is truly the next step in convergent entertainment programming," said Ben Silverman, head of international TV packaging for WMA. The game will hit the road, starting Nov. 13 in San Francisco, and visit major cities monthly, culminating with a \$100,000 mega-RealityRun in New York on Sept. 10. While similar to recent network orders for shows such as the Matt Damon-Ben Affleck exec produced "The Runner" (ABC) and Brit reality format "Wanted" (Fox), "RealityRun" is the first such property to be jockeying for a transfer from the Web to television.

Skora and WMA will search for appropriate off-line homes for "RealityRun" as well as devise a long-term strategic entertainment plan worldwide.

The deal was a collaborative effort between WMA's corporate advisory-new-media group, which first discovered the property online, and its international television packaging department. Applications are being accepted for the S.F. run at www.realityrun.com. The Berlin game drew 9,000 RealityRunner applicants.

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