

Broadband Report: Bravo goes alternative

June 1 2006

In the last two weeks the folks at Bravo have made some interesting moves with the launch of two brand new broadband sites, BrilliantButCancelled.com, which features one-hit wonder TV shows, and OUTzoneTV.com, designed for lesbian and gay viewers.

The new site will launch Friday, June 12, timed to coincide with the annual lesbian and gay pride month. According to the folks at Bravo this will be the first time a broadband site will launch that specifically targets the gay community. Personally, this I'm not sure it this is indeed the first, but it's probably the first effort created by a major television network.

On June 12 Bravo will host a special OUTzoneTV.com presentation of "Three of Hearts," a two-hour full-length feature documentary film chronicling an untraditional "trinogamous" relationship. Produced by Bravo and Hibiscus Films' director Susan Kaplan, "Three of Hearts" is the story of a relationship between two men and a woman. The OUTzoneTV.com presentation of "Three of Hearts" will make its U.S. television premiere at 9 p.m. ET/PT only on Bravo.

It'll be interesting to see how this works out and to see if the Bravo network will be able to sustain the synergy between their on-air and online channels. The pitfall that I see is that if it's done too tightly then the online site will become a dumping ground for stuff that has already aired. This is one of the reasons I'm not too excited about Disney's latest broadband moves because all they are doing is repackaging their network material. For a successful broadband channel, you need to have a mix of both original broadband only content supplemented with your offline

material.

BrilliantButCancelled.com will feature shows that were critically acclaimed but cancelled "before their time." The ITV play will be anchored by a critically-acclaimed line-up of some of television's most daring programs, described by Bravo as "too smart, too edgy or too hip for TV" when they hit the airwaves. Devotees of series including "the cancelled-before-it-ever-aired" "The Jake Effect" (starring Jason Bateman in a role that foreshadowed his character on "Arrested Development"), "EZ Streets" (starring Ken Olin in Paul Haggis' hard-hitting series about an honest detective battling to save his job and reputation) and "Johnny Staccato" (featuring John Cassavetes as a jazz musician moonlighting as a private detective) will be able to see their "hard-to-find" favorites as streaming on demand options on the Web site.

Other series available on BrilliantButCancelled.com include: "Delvecchio," the predecessor to Steven Bochco's "Hill Street Blues" starring Judd Hirsch; "Gideon Oliver," starring Lou Gossett, Jr. as a Columbia professor obsessed with crime; "Touching Evil," the story of a detective who returns to work after a bullet passes through his head. Additional video content will include "Face to Face" interviews with television celebrities and creators from the Bravo, Trio, and NBC archives; "Celebrity Autobiography," where A-listers read from the autobiographies of their fellow celebrities.

This is actually an interesting idea and a way for cable nets to showcase programming that otherwise wouldn't be on broadcast or cable television and is a good use of the new internet television technology. I'm not enamored with the current design of the site, it's a little hard to navigate and the layout is way too colorful, and, strangely, plain, but I love the concept. They give you plenty of opportunity to purchase the DVDs as well.

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