

Fox adds on-air tweets to 'Fringe' reruns

September 4 2009, By JAKE COYLE , AP Entertainment Writer



In this image released by FOX, Anna Torv stars as Agent Olivia Dunham, right, John Noble stars as Dr. Walter Bishop, left, and Joshua Jackson stars as Peter Bishop in a scene from, "Fringe." (AP Photo/FOX, Craig Blankenhron)

(AP) -- Summer reruns are ho-hum television, but Fox is trying out a possible solution: Add Twitter.

On the network's repeat broadcast of its supernatural drama "Fringe" on Thursday night, tweets were added on-screen to the show. The tweets (messages of 140 characters or less from the microblogging Web site [Twitter](https://twitter.com)) ran throughout the show on the bottom third of the screen.

The tweets were from executive producers Jeff Pinkner (whose handle on Twitter is JPFringe) and J.H. Wyman (JWFringe), and cast members Peter Bishop (peterbishop2) and John Noble (labdad1).

It's an obvious gimmick that leans on the hype surrounding Twitter. But if successful, it could prove to be the latest tactic networks use to draw in viewers for reruns.

Joe Early, Fox's vice president of marketing and communications, noted that the Thursday and Friday before Labor Day historically have been very low-rated nights of television but said the Twitter feed wasn't really aimed at boosting ratings.

"What we want to make sure of is that fans get something out of this," he said.

Depending on how fans respond, the network might add tweets to future repeats. "It would never be done, obviously, on an original episode," Early said.

The tweets started around eight minutes into the broadcast. To avoid any standards violations, the tweets were filtered by network censors before they reached the air.

At times the actors and producers responded to fan questions (the discussion could also be followed online on Twitter). Sometimes they simply spoke between themselves, once asking each other how the weather was at their location.

Mostly, they attempted to give the kind of behind-the-scenes look typically offered on DVD commentaries: what it was like shooting particular scenes, how the cast members get along, their fondness of certain clues.

Tweeted Wyman: "The dead bodies and victims on Fringe are always fun to think of. The creepier the better. Always LOVE to freak people out."

During another scene in which his character, Dr. Walter Bishop explains the concept of alternate reality, Bishop tweeted: "This is a very important scene!"

The tweets, at least for anyone unfamiliar with "Fringe," made it difficult to follow a show already dense with dialogue and paranormal theories. But this experiment was for the dedicated fans of "Fringe," a show co-created by J.J. Abrams of "Lost."

The banter was catching on on Twitter, where "Fringe" was one of the top ten most popular topics in terms of traffic.

Fox, which is owned by News Corp., promoted the broadcast as "unprecedented" and "a broadcast first." However, there have been similar fusions of television and Twitter in the past several months. Most notably, Current TV, the user-driven TV network co-founded by Al Gore, scrolled [tweets](#) across the screen during its broadcast of President Barack Obama's inauguration.

Earley sees one notable difference.

"We did not just want to have a scroll across the bottom of the screen where hundreds of unidentified people were sending messages through," he said. "You're getting to interact with the talent."

The network will repeat the experiment Friday for the 9 p.m. (EDT/PDT) broadcast of the musical comedy show "Glee."

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