

Manka Bros take media by storm, online that is

July 23 2010, By RYAN NAKASHIMA , Associated Press Writer



In this July 9, 2010 photo, John Perry poses at Warner Studios, in Burbank, Calif. The make-believe media baron and son of Bulgarian immigrants is the creation of John Perry, a real business development executive at Warner Bros. (AP Photo/Nick Ut)

(AP) -- While Disney CEO Bob Iger was chatting with Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg at a major media summit in Idaho this month, Khan Manka Jr. was squiring around the lodge bar looking for a drink.

Bumping into Iger, Manka had to "gently" remind him that he wasn't interested in buying [broadcast network](#) ABC, because he already owned one of his own, MBS. "I must apologize to Bob. I didn't mean to dress

him down so cruelly in front of the other moguls," Manka writes on his blog.

If now you're thinking "Who's Manka?" you're not alone - real coverage of the event never mentions his name. He exists only as the prolific blogger and the fictional chairman of the world's largest media company, Manka Bros. Studios.

This week, Manka blogged that he gave the keynote address to the "geeks, freaks and dorks" at the annual Comic-Con convention in San Diego, dodging a question from a man dressed as Batman about whether a movie will be made of the "Captain Stoppo" comic strip.

Manka is a make-believe media baron, son of Bulgarian immigrants, and the creation of John Perry, a real business development executive at Warner Bros.

Perry, 42, started the website in 1999 with then-co-worker Chris Stengel with a simple but outrageous goal: "Can you start something that's not real, and actually turn it into the world's largest media company?"

Through Manka and his purported employee Jill Kennedy, Perry and his partners skewer media moguls and Hollywood, poking fun at the bad decisions made around the industry with a precision that comes from witnessing them first-hand.

It's reminiscent of a more prominent parody blog, Fake Steve Jobs. Written anonymously until then-Forbes editor Daniel Lyons was outed by the media, the first-person caricature of Apple Inc.'s CEO painted him as caustic and arrogant. The blog became a [Silicon Valley](#) sensation in part because it filled a vacuum, as Jobs generally avoids unscripted conversations with the press.

Perry doesn't advertise his position as the site's mastermind, but he didn't shy away from a reporter's questions. He only jokingly keeps up the charade that he moonlights as a Manka Bros. employee.

Through Kennedy, he regularly posts comments about his "boss" on real-world websites belonging to The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, The Wall Street Journal and The Huffington Post.

Given the replies he's gotten from some living, breathing respondents, Perry is getting closer to realizing his goal of making Manka real.

"I get letters saying, 'I had no idea, why haven't people heard of the Manka Bros.?','" he says. Online at least, Manka Bros. is slightly bigger than Time Warner Inc., NBC Universal, The Walt Disney Co. and its other media peers. The company has detailed origins back to the early days of Hollywood to boot. "On the Internet, we're all equal," Perry says. "Revenue outside the Internet is a little challenged right now."

The site has real ads that bring in real revenue, at least enough to cover the \$75-a-month hosting fee. It gets a steady stream of a few thousand visitors a month, albeit mostly Hollywood insiders.

It details the operations of a company that hews humorously close to how major media companies are structured, with divisions for movies, TV, publishing, music, theater, religion, theme parks and children. The one big difference is that all Manka Bros. projects seem destined for horrible failure, such as "Rampage of the Stegosaur: The Broadway Musical."

"You'd see all sorts of bad decisions being made" around the industry, says Stengel, 41, recalling his days at Warner Bros. in strategic planning. "This was our way to exorcise our demons with whatever was going on during the day."

In real life, Perry helps prepare investor-day presentations for studio parent Time Warner, which is why his version of Manka Bros. is almost believable.

Although Warner Bros. itself is fine with the project, a spokesman declined to comment.

In one video, Perry plays the role of Manka Bros. President and Chief Operating Officer Lloyd Grohl, and pokes fun at the forecasts that are part of many companies' investor materials. Slides showing years of decline are followed by predictions of a hockey-stick-like recovery. "Nice, huh?" Grohl says. "I wouldn't be selling (shares) any time soon if I were you. A reminder these are just projections, though solid. It's not real cash . yet."

Though he's skewered executives from former Yahoo Inc. CEO Terry Semel to IAC/InteractiveCorp CEO Barry Diller, the only executive who's ever responded was Viacom Inc.'s president of programming for MTV, Tony DiSanto.

DiSanto made the mistake of telling a real-world journalist from Entertainment Weekly that "The Hills" was turning into this generation's "A Tale of Two Cities" or "Oliver Twist." Manka Bros. "guest blogger" Cyrus Weinstein describes a fake lunch in which DiSanto compares other populist TV shows to classic novels. ("Project Runway" is described by DiSanto during that lunch as this generation's "The Brothers Karamasov").

Although DiSanto didn't return a message seeking comment, it's clear from his response on the site that he got the joke. "What I meant to say was that The Hills is this generation's Great Expectations. I'm always getting my Dickens mixed up," DiSanto wrote.

"He took it the right way," Perry says.

And like any functioning media conglomerate, Manka Bros.' development pipeline is chock full.

Next year, it is planning to launch an awards show in which Manka productions are expected to secure several wins. The company also is planning to fend off a hostile takeover by a larger rival. It's a good thing Perry has secured the domain name for its nemesis, InternationalGlobalWorldMedia.com .

Online:

Manka Bros. Studios: <http://mankabros.com>

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