

Carat Circles Globe in Name of Branded Entertainment

Exports 'Tease' to Australia for Jenny Craig, Takes 'Pros vs. Joes' Abroad for Adidas, Others

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LOS ANGELES -- "Chubby women of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your weight!"



Photo: Kevin Lynch

Jerry Rice, Dennis Rodman and Jim McMahon of "Pros Vs. Joes." The show is being repackaged for international markets.

Craig clients who'd successfully lost weight, and many of its studio-audience members were also Jenny Craig clientele. Even in a world of DVRs, it would be impossible to "skip over" the weight-loss guru's involvement in the show.

"Women are as involved with their hair as they are with their weight," said Mary Fritz-Wilson, Jenny Craig's director of media and analysis. "But being TiVo-proof was the main driver here."

Her motivation is understandable: Strategy Analytics says sales of integrated DVRs will grow to 27.3 million in 2008, bringing the total number of integrated-DVR users to 71.5 million in the U.S. And in metropolitan markets such as Dallas and Los Angeles, one in four homes already uses a DVR.

OK, so maybe Karl Marx didn't exactly say that. But to the delight of Jenny Craig, Michael Yudin did.

Mr. Yudin is managing director of Carat Entertainment, which, despite having been founded just 18 months ago, has been riding an Acme Rocket Sled all over the world in the service of branded-entertainment deal making. Unlike the luckless Wile E. Coyote, Mr. Yudin's brand hocking is paying off handsomely both here and in previously inaccessible international markets.

With marketer in mind

Last season, Carat produced "Tease" -- a show Mr. Yudin jokingly calls "the 'Iron Chef' of hairstyling" -- for the cable network Oxygen. But unlike most reality game shows, it was conceived with Jenny Craig in mind: Many of the show's hair models were also Jenny

G'Day, Australia

Now, with the U.S. edition of "Tease" a proven success, Carat is taking it on the road. Though Jenny Craig's Australian operations are franchised and not controlled by corporate headquarters, Ms. Fritz-Wilson said, its Oz franchisee is nonetheless in negotiations with Carat to do a new version of "Tease" Down Under.



Carat's Joe Townley and Michael Yudin

Back in New York, where Carat is based, things have gotten so hectic that Mr. Yudin last week poached Joseph Townley from his gig as executive producer of another Carat-branded effort -- Spike TV's "Pros vs. Joes," a game show that pits regular schlubs against former pro athletes -- to become Carat's first chief operating officer. Mr. Townley, a former president of Clear Channel Television, said "Pros vs. Joes," like "Tease," is being repackaged for overseas markets, including Scandinavia and previously verboten Germany and Spain.

Why the rush overseas? In November, the European Union moved to allow brand logos in European TV productions, previously illegal in most EU member states. As a result, sports-apparel giant Adidas is in negotiations to sponsor several incarnations of "Pros," as are several other Carat clients, which include Phillips and Reebok.

Tailored to foreign audiences

In Spain, "Pros vs. Joes" will be tailored accordingly, with professional jai alai and badminton players squaring off against the average Jose. In England, it's cricket players and darts champs; Scandinavian editions get professional skaters and skiers.

The overseas market is not a one-way street: In exchange for the rights to "Pros vs. Joes" in Spain, Carat picked up the rights to a gaggle of Spanish-language telenovelas with breathless titles such as "Stronger Than Destiny" and "Forbidden Stories" -- young-skewing shows Messrs. Yudin and Townley hope to find new homes for on niche cable channels such as Oxygen and WE -- once branded sponsors are locked up, of course. With a thousand scripts already written, Mr. Yudin points out that development costs are substantially reduced. Indeed, all that's left to do is ink a deal with Raid to ostentatiously poison a protagonist's evil twin brother, and American cable could well have its next branded hit.