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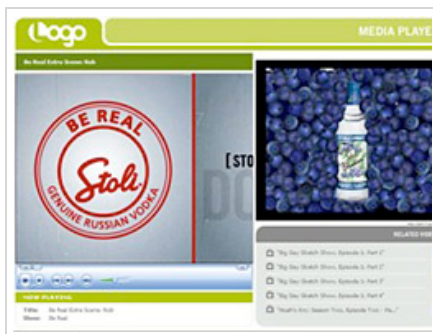
## Stoli Returns for Second Season of Logo's 'Be Real'

Commercial-Free Series Part of Evolving TV Branded-Entertainment Model

By [Andrew Hampp](#)

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NEW YORK -- Stolichnaya vodka will have an active presence on cable TV this year, but without airing a single commercial. That's because "Stolichnaya Presents Be Real," its five-episode series on MTV's LGBT-targeted Logo Network, will return for a second season in late April, following a successful run last spring.



'Be Real' is part of Carat Entertainment's strategy in changing the TV branded-entertainment model.

The commercial-free docu-series focuses on real-life tales of compelling individuals in the gay community, mentioning the brand's sponsorship only at the beginning and end of the program.

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What started as an hour-long documentary that premiered at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival evolved into a long-term relationship between Stoli and Logo after the brand looked to increase its market share in the gay community, where it competes with

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Absolut. Aegis Group's Carat Entertainment, the branded-entertainment branch of Stoli parent Pernod Ricard's media agency, approached the vodka brand about expanding the documentary's themes into a series, with TV eyed as the ideal medium to produce it.

Following other recent co-branded shows produced by the group, Spike's "Pros vs. Joes" and Oxygen's "Tease," "Be Real" represents the latest part of Carat Entertainment President Michael Yudin's strategy in changing the TV branded-entertainment model.

"The reach you get on TV and the awareness just cannot be duplicated on the web," he said. "The truth of the matter is, everybody who's developing for the web, their ultimate goal is to get a TV show." Case in point: Another Yudin-produced project, [Reebook Entertainment's "Framed,"](#) was conceived as a web series before gaining distribution on IFC.

Hot on the heels of MTV's six-episode run of "The Gamekillers," a dating show produced with Unilever's Axe body spray, "Be Real" represents a rare class of branded programs living a longer shelf life beyond one-off episodes or brand integrations with established shows. It's also the latest step in Stoli's evolved partnership with Logo, which will include sponsorship of several episodes of the network's "New Now Next" music series next month.

#### 'Perfect brand match'

Lisa Sherman, exec VP-general manager of Logo, dubbed the Stoli partnership a "perfect brand match. Stoli's 'be real' tagline and Logo's focus on telling authentic stories seemed like a great combination." And although the two-and-half-year-old network, in 28 million homes, isn't Nielsen-rated, Ms. Sherman said she was able to gauge the show's success based on traffic to the website as well as anecdotal feedback. "Whether it was viewer e-mails or web traffic, things like that tell us it was really resonating," she said.

Dolores Concepcion-Daniels, Stoli's senior brand manager, added that "Be Real" footage online was viewed an average of six minutes per viewer, 16% more than the average user spent watching local online content. Some of the Stoli brand's biggest success stories for the year came out of the show's first season, she added. "We have a sincere desire to reach the community in an effective way. It's more important than basic advertising alone." Overall sales of the vodka grew 11% in the second half of 2007.

The second season of "Be Real," in production, will be a continuation of the first season's themes. Ms. Sherman said episodes will include a gay couple adopting a child, as well as a lesbian commitment ceremony.



The Razberi suite in the Stoli Hotel.

#### Stoli Hotel

But "Be Real" isn't the only branded-entertainment project on

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Stoli's calendar. Though the brand does some TV advertising to coincide with a new flavor launch -- 2006's Blueberi being a recent example -- the bulk of its media dollars have been spent on print. That changed in 2007 with the Stoli Hotel. Ms. Concepcion-Daniels described it as a traveling "pop-up shop," creating a branded experience for consumers by going into a market for 30 days and executing 12 to 13 events in a 15,000-foot space. While it's not a functioning hotel, the venue is designed to echo the Hotel Moskya, the Russian hotel pictured on the Stoli bottle. Each comes equipped with flavor-themed rooms, including Razberi, Vanil andELIT.

Unlike "Be Real," which is aimed toward the gay community, the hotel has a broader focus to reach all of Stoli's potential upscale consumer base. Ms. Concepcion-Daniels said the hotel has been a huge hit in markets such as Chicago, Los Angeles and Miami, and comes to New York this May.

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