

# LOTS OF REAL DEALS

## 'Gotti' shingle makes cable connections

By DENISE MARTIN

GRB Entertainment, the reality shingle behind A&E hit "Growing up Gotti" and Fox's upcoming David Foster project, has sold series pilots to A&E, CMT, the History Channel and MTV.

GRB specializes primarily in docudramas but recently produced the upcoming projects "Invasion Iowa," a reality hoax show for Spike TV starring William Shatner, and "Intervention," a series about addictions for A&E. Both skeins premiere in March.

Exec VP of creative affairs Michael Branton says GRB is in an especially good position this year given the growing popularity of docudramas. A&E began its turnaround via such shows as "Airline" and "Family Plots." "The Osbournes" and "Newlyweds" continue to be big business for MTV. Even HBO got into the act last fall with "Family Bonds"

"More networks than ever are receptive to the docudrama genre. Broadcast and cable networks are seeing the value of having a face



Shatner

they can market every week," Branton said, pointing to such personalities as Victoria Gotti and Paris Hilton.

At A&E, GRB is in the middle of shoot-

ing the pilot for "Mister Justice" about the real-life exploits of New York private eye Bill Stanton.

### Body work

Then there's a muscle car makeover project and "Plan B" set up at CMT. Auto series follows country music duo Montgomery Gentry as they attempt to open up their own muscle car body shop in Nashville, Tenn. Meanwhile, "Plan B" will feature "The Apprentice"

season one alumnus Nick Warnock as he and his "turnaround team" make over small family-owned businesses.

GRB describes the History Channel pilot "On the Trail" as an "Easy Rider"-style series that trails biker Stan Elsworth as he travels around and explores the United States.

And at MTV, shingle has set up the strip "I Call Bulls\*\*\*," a reality series in which people try to dispel what they feel have been big lies told to them by their friends.

"Everyone at the networks is working really hard to brand themselves with a person whose world they can take you into," Branton said. "At the same time, all of these interesting and entertaining characters are making themselves available to sharing their lives on television."

Development veep Brant Pivido said GRB is also developing personality-driven series around

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## McDermott weighs in with CBS drama

By MICHAEL SCHNEIDER

"The Practice" alum Dylan McDermott is plotting his return to TV via the CBS pilot "3 LBS."

Meanwhile, the WB is aiming high to find its next comedy hit, greenlighting pilots from top producers Jerry Bruckheimer, Imagine TV and Carsey-Werner, while ABC is moving forward with a laffer starring Freddie Prinze Jr.

McDermott will play Dr. Hanson, a top Los Angeles neurosurgeon, in "3 LBS." Paramount drama comes from Peter Ocko, Paul Stupin, Tom Fontana and Barry Levinson, who is also on board to direct.

"I never thought I would go back to another series this soon, but because of the strength of the script, it was an opportunity I couldn't pass up," McDermott said.



McDermott

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## Gallery bid for vid rival OK with FTC

By JILL GOLDSMITH

NEW YORK — Federal antitrust watchdogs won't oppose Movie Gallery's bid to acquire larger competitor Hollywood Entertainment, even as the Federal Trade Commission continues to seek documents and depositions regarding video giant Blockbuster's rival offer — one of the juiciest hostile takeover attempts in recent showbiz history.

Movie Gallery, which agreed in January to buy Hollywood for \$13.25 per share in cash, said Monday the waiting period under the Hart-Scott-Rodino antitrust act has expired, leaving it free to proceed with the deal.

Pact still needs approval from shareholders of both companies.

"Clearing the pre-merger review process confirms what we have said all along — Movie Gallery stores do not have any substantial overlap with Hollywood's stores and therefore pose no risk to competition," said Page Todd, Movie Gallery's executive VP and general counsel.

"In contrast, we believe that Blockbuster's proposal poses significant regulatory risk, as more than 80% of Hollywood's stores are in the same local market as a Blockbuster store," he added.

Blockbuster was asked to provide the FTC with more information, which means the company

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## 'Hitch' finds a home at Turner nets

By JOHN DEMPSEY

NEW YORK — TBS and its sister network TNT have bought the cable-exclusive first network window to Will Smith's weekend hit "Hitch" from Sony Pictures TV in a three-picture deal that includes "The Grudge" and "Spanglish."

The license fee TBS/TNT will pony up could climb above a strapping \$40 million for the three movies, based on the fact that Sony was able to ramp up demand for the movie among multiple cable networks. The final payment won't get pinned down until "Hitch" reaches the end of its theatrical run because the fees are pegged to a percentage of the domestic box office gross. "Hitch" is coming off an opening weekend of \$45.3 million, a record for a romantic comedy.

"This was an easy decision because we've done great with Will Smith since we began running his 'Fresh Prince of Bel-Air' series many years ago," said Steve Koonin, executive VP and chief operating officer of TBS and TNT.

TBS, which focuses on comedy movies and series, will get "Hitch" and "Spanglish" and TNT, whose motto is "We know drama," will run "The Grudge." All three will be available by May 2007.

As part of the deal, Sony will carve out two one-year windows within the TBS/TNT five-year license term for sale of the movies to a broadcast network. The first of the carveouts will be February 2008 to January 2009, and the second from February 2010 to January 2011.



"Hitch" snags cable exclusivity with TBS and TNT.

## The puck stops at LMNO

By JOSEF ADALIAN

Reality factory LMNO Prods. is looking beyond Hollywood with its latest unscripted concepts, developing projects with novelist James Patterson

and hockey star Claude Lemieux. The shingle, currently producing the CBS skein "Wickedly Perfect," has teamed up with Patterson to develop an idea the author brought to LMNO. While still in the early stages of develop-

ment, skein would focus on the generation gap that exists within families.

"It could be about how a father and son look at things differently," said LMNO prexy-chief executive



NHL veteran Claude Lemieux is teaming up with LMNO Prods.

Eric Schotz, explaining that one episode might take a parent and child and have them both teach a sex-ed class.

Patterson said he decided to jump into the waters of reality TV because he

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## 'SMOKE' RISES AT GOLD CIRCLE

By DANA HARRIS

Tyro helmer Victor Garcia will direct the horror pic "Smoke" for Gold Circle Films.

The story revolves around a young woman who, while on the run from an abusive husband, is haunted by premonitions as she hides in a motel.

Ronnie Christensen wrote the script.

Pic is produced by Gold Circle's Paul Brooks and Roy Lee and Doug Davidson at Vertigo Entertainment and Lauren Lloyd at Bedlam Media.



Garcia

Exec producers are Gold Circle's Norm Waitt and Scott Niemeyer. Gold Circle exec Zak Kadison oversees "Smoke."

Born in Spain, where he worked on films including Pedro Almodovar's "Talk to Her" and Guillermo del Toro's "Hellboy," Garcia gained Hollywood's attention with his pic "El Cielo." After winning the prize for horror short at Screampfest Los Angeles in October, it made the rounds and earned the Barcelona-based f/x specialist reps at Endeavor and Underground Management.

Gold Circle's "The Wedding Date" and "White Noise" are in theaters.

Vertigo recently released "The Grudge" and is preparing to release "The Ring Two" and "Dark Water."