

# WEBS RACING TO THE FINISH

## 'Idol' helps Fox close in

By RICK KISSELL

Second-half dynamo Fox has captured the primetime demo derby for a fifth consecutive week, setting up what should be a down-to-the-wire finish for the season title.

Massive ratings for a two-hour "American Idol" on Tuesday ensured Fox's rather easy victory among adults 18-49, with its 5.0 rating/13 share well ahead of CBS (3.8/19), ABC (3.6/10) and NBC (3.2/10), according to in-home viewing estimates by Nielsen.

Net also led in adults 25-54 (5.4/13) and persons 12-34 (4.2/13) while placing a close second to CBS in total viewers (11.9 million to 12.0 million).

## CW's Brady laffer a go

By JOSEF ADALIAN

The CW has greenlit "Flirt," a half-hour comedy starring Wayne Brady that's being produced by Lawrence Bender ("Kill Bill") and Kevin Brown ("Roswell").

Gary Halverson ("Everybody Loves Raymond") is set to direct.

Laffer, from scribe Barry Wernick ("Boston Common"), was originally developed for UPN.

In other pilot news, Constance Zimmer ("Entourage") is prepping for life after "In Justice," landing a gig in the ABC comedy pilot "52 Fights."

"In Justice" is still on the bubble for renewal, so Zimmer's in second position on the Touchstone/Brillstein-Grey-produced "Fights." Thesp will play the best friend of series star Christine Taylor.

Deal reunites Zimmer with Matt Letscher, who also stars in "52 Fights." Thesps worked together on the NBC laffer "Good Morning Miami."

"In Justice" regular Kyle MacLachlan has signed on for a multi-episode gig on "Desperate Housewives," while co-star Jason O'Mara has climbed aboard ABC's "Drift."

Elsewhere, Danielle Panabaker ("Yours, Mine and Ours," "Sky High") will play the daughter of James Woods in CBS drama pilot "Shark," which 20th Century Fox TV is producing.

At roughly the three-quarters mark of the season, Fox (4.0) has pulled to within one-tenth of a rating point of 18-49 leader ABC (4.1), with CBS at 3.9, The Alphabet and Fox appear headed for a tie at 4.1, although a lot can happen with more than eight weeks to be counted.

The top three nets are as snug as can be in nonsports averages—a better indication of each net's strength in entertainment programming: ABC, CBS and Fox are all at a 3.8 rating, with NBC at a 3.2. A strong finish should help Fox win in this category.

CBS is looking good to win in  
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Huge ratings for a two-hour "American Idol" on Tuesday ensured Fox's rather easy victory among adults 18-49.

## YouTube, E! make a 'Smack!' pact

By BEN FRITZ and DENISE MARTIN

Controversial video Web site YouTube has signed its first partnership deal with a network, pacting with E! for a contest featuring user-generated content.

E! will recruit content for its "CyberSmack!" segment, which has aired over the last couple of months on "The Soup," via YouTube. Cabler also will add "CyberSmack!" as a channel on its broadband network the Vine.

"CyberSmack!" features amateur videos that satirize or lampoon pop culture.

YouTube users can upload entries and also watch "CyberSmack!" videos on the site. E!'s broadband channel, meanwhile, will feature finalists' videos and other footage from the Web that's not used on-air for "The Soup."

No money is changing hands: E! gets access to YouTube's large, young aud, while YouTube gets more premium content for its users. Cabler will put up the \$25,000 grand prize.

"This is our first full-fledged

partnership as we start to do more programming without disrupting the user-generated content that is so popular," said Julie Supan, YouTube's senior director of marketing.

Other networks, including MTV2 and VH1, as well as several movie studios, have partnered less formally with YouTube to distribute clips and promotional shorts.

E! executive VP of marketing and communications Suzanne

Kolb said "CyberSmack" marks the channel's entry into the viral video territory that's already proved fruitful for other networks. VH1 and Bravo produce original series that showcase clips from the Web, while USA is piloting its own.

"Our take is to highlight videos that are in line with the brand of 'The Soup' and the network overall: They skew and spoof pop culture," Kolb said.

**YouTube**

## iTunes subscribes to ABC

By JOSEF ADALIAN

ABC is making "Desperate Housewives" and "Lost" the first network entertainment shows available for download on a subscription basis via Apple's iTunes.

In addition, "Scrubs"—the NBC laffer produced by Alphabet sibling Touchstone Television—is expected to make its iTunes debut today,

insiders said (*Daily Variety*, March 7).

As for "Lost" and "DH," consumers can now buy the entire current season of both Touchstone TV-produced shows on iTunes for \$34.99—about \$14 less than what a full season would cost if episodes were bought individually. Skeins are being sold as part of Apple's "Season Pass" program.

After buying a season pass, consumers can immediately download all previously broadcast episodes from the current season. Remaining segs are placed in customers' download queue the day after they air on ABC.

Advantage of the program is  
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## THESPS BOWLING FOR 'SPLIT'

By PAMELA McCLINTOCK

Tara Reid ("American Pie") and Ross Patterson ("The Darwin Awards") will star in bowling comedy "7-10 Split," from a screenplay by Patterson.

2 Sticks Prods. ("End Game") is fully financing and producing the indie pic, which begins lensing in Los Angeles early next month. Tommy Reid, the actress's brother, is directing.

Story revolves around an aspiring actor who becomes the Tiger Woods of the bowling circuit. Together, he and his girlfriend put the fun and edge back into bowling.

Producers are 2 Sticks' David Ornston and Richard Salvatore, along with Patrick Durham and Jonathan Sachar. Cameo Entertainment's Freddy Braidy is exec producing.



Reid



Patterson

## Spahn's shingle goes up

By PAMELA McCLINTOCK

With the sale of DreamWorks to Paramount, veteran DreamWorks corporate affairs topper and political strategist

Andy Spahn has departed to form his own consulting firm.



Spahn

Spahn, a longtime Democratic consultant and fundraiser, moved from Washington to L.A. to work for David Geffen's company. When Geffen formed DreamWorks with Steven Spielberg and Jeffrey Katzenberg, Spahn was tapped to run the studio's corporate affairs department.

He simultaneously managed the personal charitable and political giving of Geffen, Katzenberg and Spielberg.

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Peacock medical laffer "Scrubs" is expected to make its debut today on Apple's iTunes Music Store.

## Lassally accustomed to 3 Arts

By DAVE McNARY

Kustom Entertainment founder Tom Lassally has ankleed the management/production firm for a manager-producer slot with 3 Arts Entertainment and his roster of clients and film projects.

Kustom's Robyn Meisinger and Adam Kolbrenner will head operations for the Santa Monica-based company. Meisinger has been with Kustom since 2002 while Kolbren-

ner has been with Kustom for a year and a half.

Story editor Trevor Stewart and associate manager Chris Cook will continue at Kustom.

Kustom and Lassally are producing "Town Creek," written by client Dave Kajganich and set up at Gold Circle Films, and wrapped production on "First Snow" for the Yari Film Group. Other producing projects include Paramount and

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