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MTV meets QVC

“MTV meets QVC”. This is how David Droga, creative chairman of New York-based creative shop Droga5, describes the new branded content website that he is due to launch with Publicis Groupe and Digitas.

The site, Honeyshed, aims to attract top brands with the opportunity to combine online advertising and entertainment. So nothing particularly original or ground-breaking in this idea so far. People have been experimenting with branded entertainment for a while now with some being more successful than others. Lonelygirl15 captivated millions of viewers who watched the videoblogs of a teenage girl's angst while blissfully unaware that 16 year-old 'Bree' was in fact a fictional character, which had been created by an American production company and infused with brand messages from companies such as Hersheys.

Honeyshed claims to offer the consumer something different to what has gone before but whether it will be more appealing remains to be seen. Unlike predecessors who have dabbled in the medium of online branded content, Honeyshed plans to take a completely open approach to advertising rather than deviously burying brand messages in entertainment. The consumer will be fully aware of the product or service that the brand is promoting in order to avoid any feelings of deceit or trickery. “It's based on the idea that people love brands and don't mind being sold to if it's completely transparent”, said Andrew Essex, CEO at Droga5. “This will make brands the life of the party rather than the uninvited guest.”

The website will shun traditional forms of advertising like banners or rollovers for a mix of live programming and character-driven sketch shows paid for by, and promoting, sponsors which will collaborate with Honeyshed to come up with suitably entertaining content aimed at the notoriously hard to reach demographic of 18-35 year olds. According to a report in AdWeek, there will be three sections – one offering studio-produced shows while a second will focus on episodic content that revolves around brands and the third will consist of contests and sweepstakes.

But is this really a recipe for success? In an age where brands are forever paranoid about ad evasion, are people actually going to take the time to visit a site just for the ads? The ads may be dressed up in entertainment but surely if you wanted to watch entertainment you would rather watch unbranded content in the comfort of knowing that there is no ulterior motive lurking beneath trying to tap into your consumerist desires. Perhaps we should congratulate Honeyshed for its blatant and unashamed consumerism but I have a feeling people will revolt rather than be allured.



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