



'Monty Python's The Meaning of Life'



'Dumb and Dumber'



'National Lampoon's Animal House'



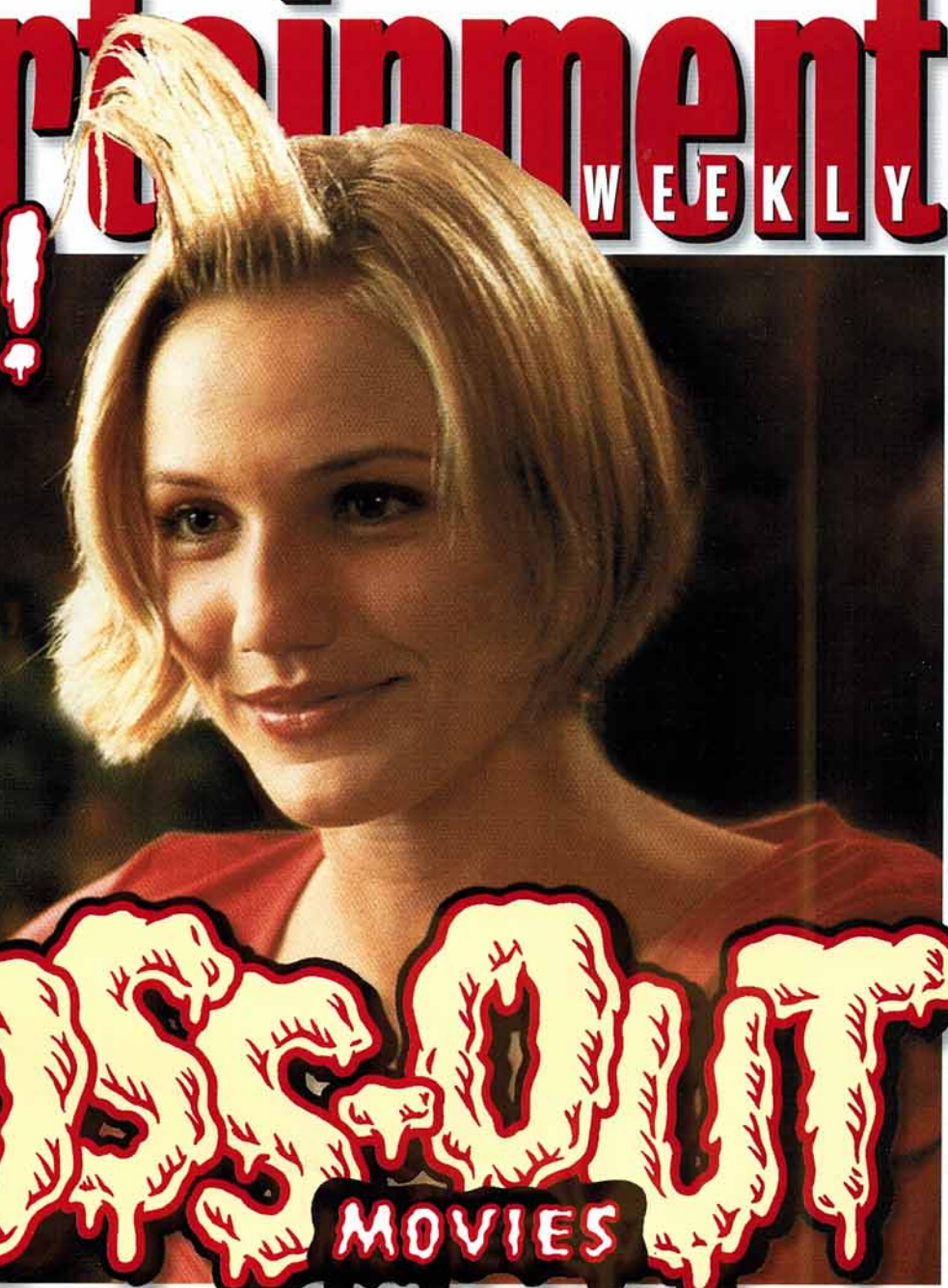
'BASEketball'

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# Entertainment WEEKLY

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## PLUS KATIE HOLMES in 'Disturbing Behavior' Bad Days at GOOD MORNING AMERICA



# The Studio Era

Like the MGMs of old, ambitious websites are creating entertainment that showcases the medium at its coolest. **by David Kushner**

IT WAS BOUND TO HAPPEN: The digerati are going showbiz. After seeing several pioneer websites (adaweb, TotalNY) unplug, ambitious E-preneurs are repackaging themselves as full-fledged production companies. They don't merely make sites, they make "shows": real-time, bells-and-whistles Net-only entertainment. They're not new media, they're *all* media, incorporating the best—and sometimes the worst—of TV, magazines, radio, computer games, and film. If the Web is ever capable of truly original content, here are some of the sites that may show us what it is:

■ **Pseudo Online Network** ([www.pseudo.com](http://www.pseudo.com)) Based in New York City, Pseudo is an alt.innovator in live, online happenings. Using RealPlayer software, Pseudo produces more than 40 weekly chat-radio shows that combine audio, video, talk, and text messaging. Boot up, say, "All Games Hardware" and hear expert gamers debate the splatter quotient of *Quake II* while you chat with other listeners or E-mail questions to the hosts. Pop-culture fetishists assemble shows that cover music ("88 Hip-Hop," "Reaction Reggae"), digital life ("Silicon Alley Reporter"), and—Howard Stern, take note—female wrestling ("And Justice for BRAWL"). Pseudo has the McLuhanesque vision; now it just needs the bandwidth to catch up. **A**



■ **RSUB** ([www.rsub.com](http://www.rsub.com)) The content wing of Razorfish Studios, a Silicon Alley ad company that has created sites for Pepsi and America Online, RSUB is (as the name implies) a subnetwork of regularly updated digital experiences created by neo-bohemian artists. The vibe of RSUB's "shows" is self-conscious late-'90s cool, from "Bunko" (kitschy

**THAT'S SHOWBIZ** It's "J'Open Mike" time on Pseudo, top; one-minute movies unspool at the Sync

Shockwave games such as "Club Seal"—"Beat defenseless animals to a techno beat!!") to "The Blue Dot" (art/prose installations like the unnerving taxi-dermy-on-the-loose saga "Rabbit Rat"). The works are edgy, but, considering the speed of the average surfer's connection, the combination of bit-sucking plug-ins and sprawling content is pretentious. You can't help but crash this party. **B**

■ **Tripod** ([www.tripod.com](http://www.tripod.com)) Tripod is best known for its sprawling community, whose residents host and create their own websites, but it has also been cultivating Pods: self-contained online clubhouses that feature chat, essays, and digital art. These aren't shows as much as group projects, interweaving contributions by guest artists, writers, and Tripod locals. Topics cover *Real World*-style essentials, from job hunting to cheap eats to retro games (read a piece on the phenomenon, then boot up a spoof of the Atari 2600 classic *Yar's Revenge*). With nearly 2 million members, Tripod already has what other sites clamor for: an audience. Now it could use some live audio/video fun. **B+**

■ **The Sync** ([www.thesync.com](http://www.thesync.com)) A cross between a public-access cable channel and, it hopes, Sundance. One section, the Sync Online Film Festival, features documentaries, animation, and, for ultra-quick downloads, one-minute shorts. Sync fans vote for their favorites along the way; will it be the cyborg noir "Everyone Is a Robot" or the gothic safe sex of "Vampire Condom"? There are also do-it-yourself talk-video shows like "Cyber-Love," where four twenty-somethings meet the inventor of the world's first Virtual Sex Machine. And Jenni of the infamous Jenni-Cam hosts a behind-the-scenes look at her life as a Net celeb. Is that postmodern or what? Just don't expect polish: The Sync, like most of these sites—heck, like the Web itself—is necessarily scuffed. **A-**

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