'Digi-novel' combines book, movie and website

Reuters

CW note: *Soon we won't be able to say, "I'll just wait for the movie."*

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Is it a book? Is it a movie? Is it a website?

Actually it's all three.

Anthony Zuiker, creator of the "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation" U.S. television series, is releasing what he calls a "digi-novel" combining all three media -- and giving a jolt to traditional book publishing.

Zuiker has created "Level 26," a crime novel that also invites readers to log on to a website about every 20 pages using a special code to watch a "cyber-bridge" -- a three-minute film clip tied to the story.

Starting next Tuesday, readers can buy the book, visit the website, log in to watch the "cyber-bridges," read, discuss and contribute to the story.

"Just doing one thing great is not going to sustain business," he said. "The future of business in terms of entertainment will have to be the convergence of different mediums. So we did that -- publishing, movies and a website."

He said he did not believe the digi-novel would ever replace traditional publishing, but said the business did need a shot in the arm.

"They need content creators like myself to come in the industry and say, 'Hey, let's try things this way,'" he said.

Zuiker put together a 60-page outline for the novel, which was written by Duane Swierczynski, and wrote and directed the "cyber-bridges." He said the book could be read without watching the "cyber-bridges."

GADGETS CHANGE READING LANDSCAPE

Zuiker said the United States was infatuated with technology and it had become such a permanent part of people's lives that more entertainment choices were needed.

Increasingly, people are reading books on electronic readers like Amazon.com's Kindle and Sony Corp's Reader.

Those devices don't play videos, so "Level 26" readers still need to log on to the Internet on a different device. Apple Inc is said to be developing a touchscreen tablet, which some analysts envision as a multimedia device that could play videos.

Zuiker said people's attention span was becoming shorter and shorter and that it was important to give people more options on how they consumed entertainment and books.

"Every TV show in the next five, 10 years will have a comprehensive microsite or website that continue the experience beyond the one-hour television to keep engaging viewers 24/7," he said. "Just watching television for one specific hour a week ... that's not going to be a sustainable model going forward."

"I wanted to bring all the best in publishing, in a motion picture, in a website and converge all three into one experience," he said.

"And when the book finished and the bridges finished, I wanted the experience to continue online and in a social community."

Zuiker said he came up with the idea for the "digi-novel" during a three-month TV writers strike in 2007/08.

(Editing by Claudia Parsons and David Storey)

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