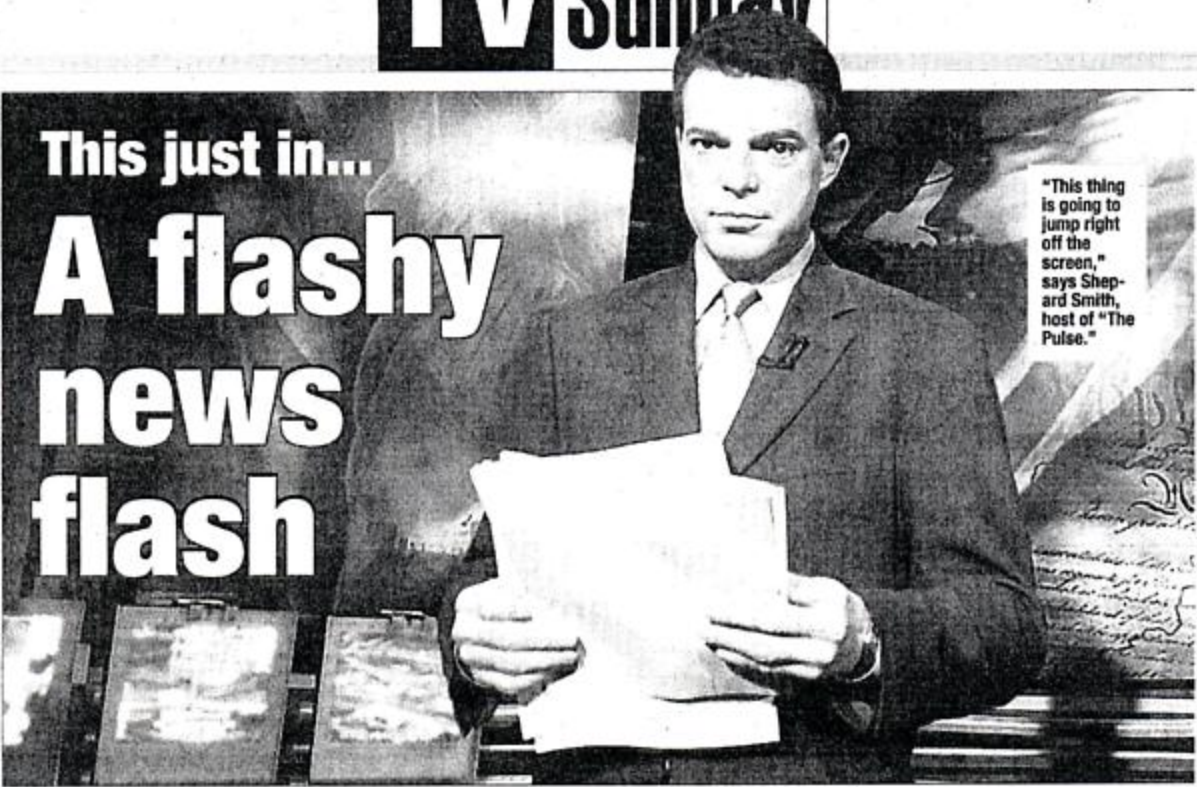


## This just in... A flashy news flash



"This thing is going to jump right off the screen," says Shep Smith, host of "The Pulse."

## Just don't call Fox's newsmagazine '60 Minutes III'

By MICHAEL GILTZ

**T**HE Pulse" is Fox's latest stab at a newsmagazine — and this time they plan to hit their mark.

Airing Thursdays at 9 p.m. on Ch. 5 starting July 11, "The Pulse" is a chance for prestige and big audiences for the news division and — if it scores — a gusher of profits for Fox.

It features Fox's biggest stars — such as Bill O'Reilly, Geraldo Rivera and show host Shep Smith. It builds on Fox's signature pugnaous style and it even offers O'Reilly as a more acidic Andy Rooney, with a commentary at the end of every show.

But if you described "The Pulse" as Fox's answer to "60 Minutes," they'd probably be offended.

"We'll do it in a flashy way, frankly," says Kevin Magee, VP of programming for Fox News. "Ours is flashier, in the same way that our newscast is flashier than CNN, for example, and that's why everyone is imitating us. Some people won't like it, but we're ready for that."

Smith, the 38-year-old "anti-anchor" of "The Fox News Report" every night at 7 agrees.

"This isn't going to be like any of our efforts before," says Smith. "This thing is not going to sit on the television. It's going to jump right off the screen. It's an amazing set, graphics, whiz-bang and critics are going to say 'Awww, there they go again with their stadium anthem and their strobe lights and their smoke!' It's an exciting screen to watch."

Typical stories to expect include a look at how the threat of dirty bombs has been exaggerated, balanced with a look at what a more conventional nuclear device

would do to, say, the Hoover Dam. You can also expect a weekly poll, O'Reilly going one-on-one in an interview and Rivera finally discovering a platform for his skills.

"Geraldo is coming out of the gate with a blockbuster story that I can't wait to see," says Smith.

As Magee describes it: "Geraldo has

himself, a native of Holly Springs, Mississippi with the distinctive, clipped delivery (verbs are passed, he says) and a dominating presence in Fox's daytime. "The Pulse" constitutes a separate contract for Smith but he hardly had to be wooed to take the job.

"You'll see some of that," says Magee, citing O'Reilly's terrific interview with Rosie O'Donnell as the sort of celebrity angle they might cover. "But it won't be our meat and potatoes."

The show's main serving will be Smith



"The Pulse" features Bill O'Reilly (left) and Geraldo Rivera

### 'Geraldo is coming out of the gate with a blockbuster story I can't wait to see'

been looking at the border between Mexico and the United States and there have been indications that some bad guys — I mean truly bad guys — have been smuggled in."

The show won't always be so heavy — one upcoming story is about a guy at a funeral home who began doctoring wills and started collecting Ferraris on a pit-

high on the agenda at family dinners, where Smith was the oldest, with one brother and three step-siblings.

"But I was a news junkie, no doubt," says Smith. "It started with Elvis Presley. Elvis's funeral was the first live event they had in Memphis. They'd just gotten the first mini-cams when Elvis died. I saw the funeral procession coming down

Union Avenue live. I thought, if they can do this now, where is this going and how can I be a part of it?"

After studying journalism at the University of Mississippi, Smith jumped from market to market, until the siren song of "A Current Affair" — High pay! National exposure! — rang in his ears.

"I did hesitate," says Smith, who eventually accepted. "I thought long and hard about it. They were doubling my salary. But the last six months of 'A Current Affair' it was a news magazine. They stopped paying [for stories] and we weren't telling fibs, so it didn't work and six months later the ratings went to hell and they shut us down."

But in another fortuitous break, Smith was under contract when Fox had all of two major correspondents on staff. When the Montana Freeman standoff occurred while the Unabomber was found, Smith got sent to Montana for a day or two and hasn't stopped working for Fox since.

Smith is thrilled to be in prime time with "The Pulse," but still considers his hard news coverage during the afternoon and the 7 p.m. "Fox News Report" as home. As for Magee, he's ready to make his mark alongside the "Datelines" and "20/20s" they'd rather not be compared to. What are his goals? Modest ones, of course, beginning with strong ratings opposite the Number One show on TV, "C.S.I.," "Will & Grace" and wrestling.

"Then our idea is that they find room for it [on the fall schedule] very quickly and handsomely reward everybody associated with it," jokes Magee. "I'm looking at a big house in the Hamptons and one of those snappy new Mercedes. But I haven't bought them yet."