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SURFING THE WAVES OF POPULAR CULTURE
BY MICHAEL GILTZ & FRIENDS

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Is Hollywood Getting Budget-Conscious?

Not really. [The New York Times](#) runs down some recent examples of studios pulling back on pricey flicks: "Halo," "Used Guys" and "Ripley's Believe It Or Not." But Hollywood history is filled with stories of stalled or failed projects -- as well as projects that went ahead despite enormous price tags. Russell Crowe had the funniest line. When asked why he dropped out of Baz Luhrmann's Aussie epic a la "Gone With The Wind," Crowe said, "I do charity work, but I don't do charity work for major studios." Good on ya, mate. Most of the examples the NYT cites aren't examples of being budget-conscious, but examples of trying to screw actors and others out of their fair share of the profits. Writers for reality shows like "America's Next Top Model" (and yes, "reality" shows do have writers) want to be part of the WGA and Hollywood is fighting them tooth and nail. They want to work reality show writers to the bone and give them a pittance in money and recognition compared to what writers on sitcoms and dramas make. Since reality shows are linchpins of network tv now, trying to pretend they're still cheapo filler for the summer and that writers don't really deserve the same compensaiton as their counterparts in other genres doesn't wash. Also, networks expect the talent behind every TV show to produce weekly podcasts and videocasts, audio commentary to be placed online, short original webisodes for cell phones and countless other add-ons -- all for free and all without them ever seeing a penny of profits no matter how well these add-ons do. And of course the studios are desperate to keep the honey pot of DVD profits away from all but the most powerful. That's why DVD sales figures are so hard to come by -- studios are worried that the more attention paid to the fact that they make twice as much on DVD as they do at the box office, the more likely actors are to demand a cut.

POSTED BY MICHAEL IN NEW YORK AT 1:11 PM



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