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SURFING THE WAVES OF POPULAR CULTURE
BY MICHAEL GILTZ & FRIENDS

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Quaid's "Brokeback" Lawsuit A Sign Of Trouble?

Every major studio has a specialty division that develops smaller movies. And the *New York Times* suggests Randy Quaid's lawsuit over *Brokeback Mountain* is a sign of trouble for them. Why should actors take cut-rate pay to make a movie when the studio has every intention of putting its full marketing muscle behind the film and could reap big rewards? (*Brokeback* will easily earn \$300 million worldwide via box office, DVD, TV sales, etc.) The NYT is juggling several different issues and none of them seem to really apply or make sense.

1. These movies are labors of love, not studio profit centers -- movies like *Brokeback Mountain* don't get made because of studios. They get made because actors and directors and writers have pet projects, labors of love they yearn to film. *Brokeback* languished for years, even with major talent willing to work for cut-rate pay. So the idea that Universal saw *Brokeback* as a potentially huge money earner but wanted to squeeze every penny out of the actors to make it even more profitable is silly.

2. Net profits -- Randy Quaid apparently was given some "net points" on the movie. As every single person in Hollywood knows, "net points" are virtually meaningless trinkets, handed out as symbolic gimmes to make people feel good. (Screenwriters and minor actors like Quaid are the sort of people who get net points.) Everyone knows virtually no film EVER delivers a net profit, no matter how much money it makes. Stars with real power get gross points and even "first dollar gross points" and huge upfront salaries. An actor like Randy Quaid would never expect to participate in a movie's profits on any level. The salary he receives is the only money he will ever make and he knows it, his lawyers know it and the studio knows it, even if they placate his ego with some "net points." Quaid never has and never will get a piece of the back end. The idea that he should do so for a movie in which he appears onscreen for maybe five minutes is ludicrous. A really big star making a small movie might have called for a bonus if say it grossed \$50 million at the box office. Thus, no problem. They make the film and if it clicks, they make

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