

# ENTERTAINMENT

THE BATTALION

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## Campus Invasion

MTV's new channel mtvU exclusively targets college-age audiences

By Robert Saucedo  
THE BATTALION

Ten years from now, Syracuse University Class of 2003 graduate Maria Sansone hopes to be retired. Retirement at age 32 is a lofty goal for any college student, but not many college students have been working in television since they were 11 years old.

"I've been doing television since I was a little kid," said Sansone, the newest VJ for the latest MTV affiliate, mtvU. "I did sports reporting for the local news and hosted game shows."

Sansone took a break from her television career to attend college. After graduation, she learned of a new opportunity that would change her life. With a train trip to New York City and an audition, Sansone became a member of the MTV crew.

Two years ago, MTV acquired the previously named CTN: College Television Network and set out to construct a new station which would be aimed exclusively at college students. On Jan. 20, 2004, CTN channel was re-launched with a new name: mtvU.

"For about 10 years now, we've wanted to create a channel for college students," said Stephen Friedman, the general manager of mtvU. "They (college students) are at an amazing moment in life where anything is possible. There was a channel that existed and had distribution, yet wasn't speaking directly to them. We re-created that channel from scratch. We hope to be a resource for students yet still be a source of entertainment; a laboratory in which to discover new talent."

Along with the musical talent promoted daily by mtvU, the channel has also recruited a squad of hosts and television personalities set to become the next generation of "Video Jockeys."

Sansone had never watched MTV growing up but when she went to college, she discovered what would become her future employer. "I lived in a sorority house so MTV was always on," Sansone said.

Today, Sansone travels weekly across the country, stopping at one campus after another bringing music videos to college students with her show "The Freshman," a program dedicated to showcasing up-and-coming artists.

"We are on the road a lot," Sansone said. "We travel to campuses and work with kids to see what kind of music they like."

Sansone said mtvU is a very different from MTV or MTV2.

"It's all about the students and the music. You're going to see a lot of music videos and a lot of packages focusing on student life and jobs after college," Sansone said.

Friedman said in its initial years, mtvU will utilize a different

format from its sister channels.

"All our programming will be short form," he said. "We'll have segments on what's going on in life. We want to present (material) that MTV would never do."

Friedman said the new network will try to specifically cater to its streamlined audience.

"MTV has a much more broader audience," Friedman said. "Our programs will be about 90 to 99 percent original. We'll have late-night showings of vintage programming like 'Beavis and Butthead,' 'Daria' and 'Celebrity Deathmatch.' We'll have hourly news programming from CBS and MTV News that's relative to college students."

Lorie Noto, a junior political science major, said she would like to check out the channel.

"I watch anything on MTV like 'Total Request Live,'" Noto said. With a schedule that only allows her four hours a week to watch television, Noto seems to be the student MTV executives are targeting with their strategy of short programming.

"I think I'd have to see the (channel first)," Noto said. Patrick Barrett, a sophomore electrical engineering major does not share Noto's love of the music channel.

"I think they (MTV) do a lot of things good and to my liking, but they don't air those (shows) all that much," Barrett said. "I'm sick of how they market to the 'drama queens and kings' of high school. The off-air stuff they do, like promoting unknown bands and festivals, is really cool."

While he thinks MTV should put a new channel on the air, Barrett said he would be skeptical about their new college student targeted channel.

"I'm not sure it would be much different really," Barrett said. "Maybe they would have more 'sophisticated and adult' oriented programming, but the same stuff would come on and that wouldn't be much better. I think that their bulk line-up could really use a change and they need to stop airing some things 12 times a day. The college station could be cool only if they got a good deal away from what the standard lineup is."

One of mtvU's goals is to put the college student in the driver's seat Friedman said.

"We want to keep it real, what college students are really doing," he said.

Friedman said mtvU will not only help out students in the professional world, but also help struggling artists find their audiences.

"College is where the next entrepreneurs and artists are," Friedman said. "A big part of the channel is getting the students to program the channel with their choices. We want to discover great new musicians. Most of the great bands come out of the college scene."

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PICTURE COURTESY OF GABE PALACIO/GETTY IMAGES

Maria Sansone will host mtvU's program "The Freshman," which will focus on up-and-coming college bands.

Sansone said the channel will be a helpful resource to students. "I would have loved this channel my senior year. It deals with a lot of concerns in a way I would have loved to utilize," she said.

Although the channel is not yet available in College Station, mtvU's Web site, [www.mtvu.com](http://www.mtvu.com), has a spot available for students to request mtvU on their local cable lineup. In addition, the Web site has links where students can have their own talent noticed and aired on mtvU. From a search for the latest animators to co-hosts, mtvU is hoping to discover the latest talent in all forms of media.

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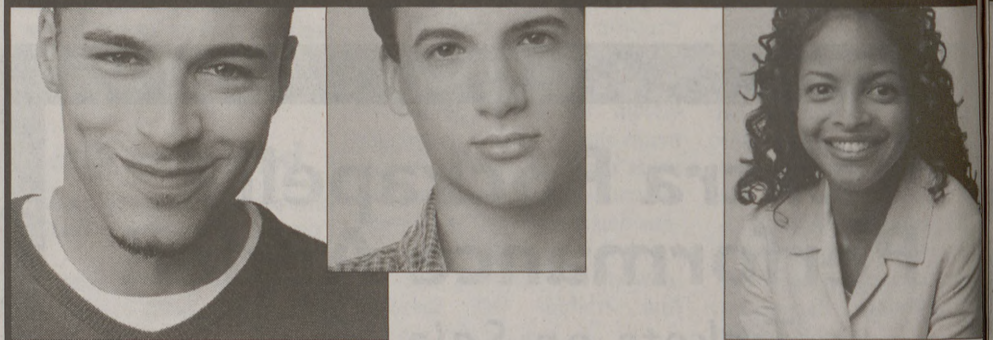
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