

Tinseltown Vets Back Entertainment Web Site

BY ERIK GRUENWEDEL—If college is a time for self-expression, growth and creativity, Santa Monica, Calif.-based Nibblebox wants to showcase and profit from those experiences online.

The 7-month-old advertising-supported broadband content provider today launched its round-the-clock college radio programming, the premier of student-created video broadcasts and streaming music videos.

Backed by \$5.5 million in first-round funding, Nibblebox, which was founded by film director Doug Liman (*Swingers*), former NBC TV executive Dave Bartis and Internet entrepreneur Liz Hamburg, is staking its claim in cyberspace by empowering college students with the tools, funding and mentoring necessary to create and deliver video, radio and animated content.

"We feel most Internet entertainment content is aggregated, not created specifically for this medium," said Bartis. "Most content is simply repurposed from other media. By applying the principles of development and production from TV and film to bring out the best in [students], we believe

that if anybody will figure out what entertainment on the Internet will look like, it's this group."

For example, Nibblebox is broadcasting a show called *Virtual Rob*, billed as the first "clickable human" and created by three University of Southern California film students.

Browsers to the site can manipulate Rob's movements in 40 ways from various vantage points in his virtual off-campus apartment.

In addition to providing short, smart, innovative and irreverent content for the coveted college-age demographic, Nibblebox will Webcast college radio stations, posting playlists on the site in exchange for on-air ad spots.

"College students watch, listen and shop on their computers," said Hamburg. At the center of most dorm rooms is the computer. It's easier for them to get Internet access than cable access."

Through a series of registered affiliate programs established with college and high school media clubs, academic departments, creative writing classes and individual students, Nibblebox encourages creative wannabes to submit their content and ideas onto its password-protected Web site.

According to Bartis, individual students and organizations whose ideas and submissions are accepted by Nibblebox are loaned digital video equipment, awarded grants ranging from \$200 to \$25,000 and mentored by a group of industry actors, producers and directors associated with the site.

"Part of our business model is to take a risk," said Bartis.

And spending money. For any content

that is Webcast on the site, Nibblebox pays the content creators \$500 per episode.

Future plans include incubating the cream of the content for offline consumption on Comedy Central, HBO and NBC, among others.

"The talent, enthusiasm and energy is amazing," said Liman. "These are the people who are going to crack [online entertainment]. Our goal is for the mentors to learn as much from the students about this new medium as the students will learn from them." ■



nibblebox
entertainment by its