

# STRATEGY

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## *Drop The Beat* busts an interactive move

*Alliance Atlantis hip-hop drama invites viewers to participate via Web site and interactive TV*

by BERNADETTE JOHNSON

**A**lliance Atlantis Communications is gettin' jiggy wit' it, interactive-style. When *Drop The Beat*, a 13-part half-hour hip-hop drama – produced by the Toronto-based company in partnership with Back Alley Film Productions – makes its Feb. 7 debut on CBC, it will be

by Toronto-based ExtendMedia.

*Drop The Beat's* central characters are DJs on a campus radio hip-hop show. So the Web site is designed to appear as if it's the actual site for the radio show. Visitors will be able to listen to portions of the show, download music, purchase the soundtrack for the television series, check out message boards and participate in interactive chats.

program, comment on the narrative, register their opinions on the moral issues raised in episodes, and read additional information about the characters and situations – all via their television screens.

The project is funded in part by the Bell Broadcast and New Media Fund.

This isn't Alliance Atlantis's first such interactive venture. The Web site it developed previously for Life Network's *Dish It Out* program ([www.dish-it-out.com](http://www.dish-it-out.com)) also incorporates a number of interactive components. (ExtendMedia, again, was the developer.) The *Drop The Beat* project, however, is a much more ambitious step down the same road.

"As we slowly move toward some kind of converged universe, there will be increasing opportunity to integrate the Web and TV," Goldsbie says. "And as those opportunities further the objectives of our programming, we will go as far down that interactive road as we can. The learning we will experience with this particular project can be applied to the grand bank of our television knowledge."

*Viewers can follow links and get additional information about characters and situations – all via their TV screens.*

supported by both Web and interactive TV (iTV) initiatives.

Viewers will be able to experience the program in three different ways, says Todd Goldsbie, vice-president, new media with Alliance Atlantis. They can watch it on television, visit the Web site ([www.dropthebeat.com](http://www.dropthebeat.com)) or participate in a WebTV-enabled interactive experience.

Both the Web site and the iTV components have been developed

"This particular show, because of its musical content was very appropriate for this," says Goldsbie. "The way that we were able to use the Web site as a metaphor for the radio show, as opposed to the TV show, provided us with a unique opportunity."

The other interactive component of the show is WebTV-based. Consumers who subscribe to Microsoft's WebTV will be able to follow on-screen links during the