

April 6, 2009

Hi guys-

Here's the replacement article for TV Eye for April 10.  
I'll call you tomorrow to see if it's ok with you. Thanks  
talk soon, Perri

MAD Max!  
Local Snipers vs. The Big Gun!  
MAD Outcools MTV by a Country Mile!  
Perri Pagonis  
[perripagonis@yahoo.com](mailto:perripagonis@yahoo.com)  
April 6, 2009

For several years MAD tv, the local pop-video youth channel, enjoyed sole monopoly of the airwaves concentrating on the Greek-youth market. The only thing like competition was Athena TVs Greek video programs. They always showed outdated work by bouzoukia singers, and was used merely to fill air-time space as cheaply as possible. MAD was always current in its video playlist, but lacked style and zest. As usual, when there is no competition in a market, one tends to get lazy about things.

In September 2008, MTV Greece launched its broadcast signal, with the entire MTV corporation at its support. It is apparent the MAD had good advanced warning of this coming event. Many months before MTV's inauguration, they began adding jazzed-up video presentation and colorful VJs. When mammoth MTV arrived, it would have been easy for them to simply play dead and wait for their inevitable demise. However, quite the opposite reaction occurred.

Producer Themis Georgantas went against the invading titans fang and nail, but not in a way that one would expect. He could not compete with them on an economic level, as almost no one in broadcasting has deeper pockets than MTV. Their high production shows like *Paris Hilton: My Best Friend Forever*, *Viva La Bam*, *My Super Sweet Sixteen* and *The Hills* have no equivalent on MAD. What MAD did to compete with these shows was quite clever. Instead of trying to lock horns with the giant, they super-localized their energies and talents towards the Athens youth market.

Programs were created such as *Your Space*. In this show Alexandros Symmiriotis and Laura Naries surf the web with powerful laptop computers and broadcast live local blogs, webpages and Greek kid Internet stuff. Lydia Papaioniou, in her show *Funked*, takes e-mails from viewers and does live on-air chat with them. Themis Georgantas himself, on his show *OK* interviews local bands, bouzoukia singers and visiting musicians who are in town for the night. Through personalizing their shows and making them interactive with their audience, MAD has not only become more vibrant, aware and in-touch with their viewers, but does it at a fraction of the cost of a single MTV-produced program.

If there is one complaint to be made about this marketing approach, it would be that MAD has created a slight us-and-them paradigm, appealing to a certain national/ethnocentric dispositions with the audience. By fomenting a Greece vs. the world attitude, they can only hurt themselves in the long run, as the country cannot culturally survive in a contemporary climate without some global influence. MAD, of course, plays

videos by all the international big-name artists, but definitely keeps their spin and focal point on native talent.

Punk rock/pop icon Debbie Harry once said it is always better to be the underdog in a fight than the heavily rated favorite. Audience expectations are lower and the contestant is more hungry, scared and willing to try anything necessary to stand-up to, and attempt to defeat their rival. When MTV arrived in Greece, it was something akin to the biblical arrival of Goliath in the face of David.

MAD tv used cunning, intelligence and pinpoint marketing not to defeat the giant, but work its way around it while creating its own vital, albeit more marginalized market presence. Personally, I would much rather watch local kids talk about things happening in my town than have a syndicated, globalized, homogenous product force-fed to me by a media giant. MAD tv is the local champ of pop-video, and has given us a lesson in survival that we all can learn from.