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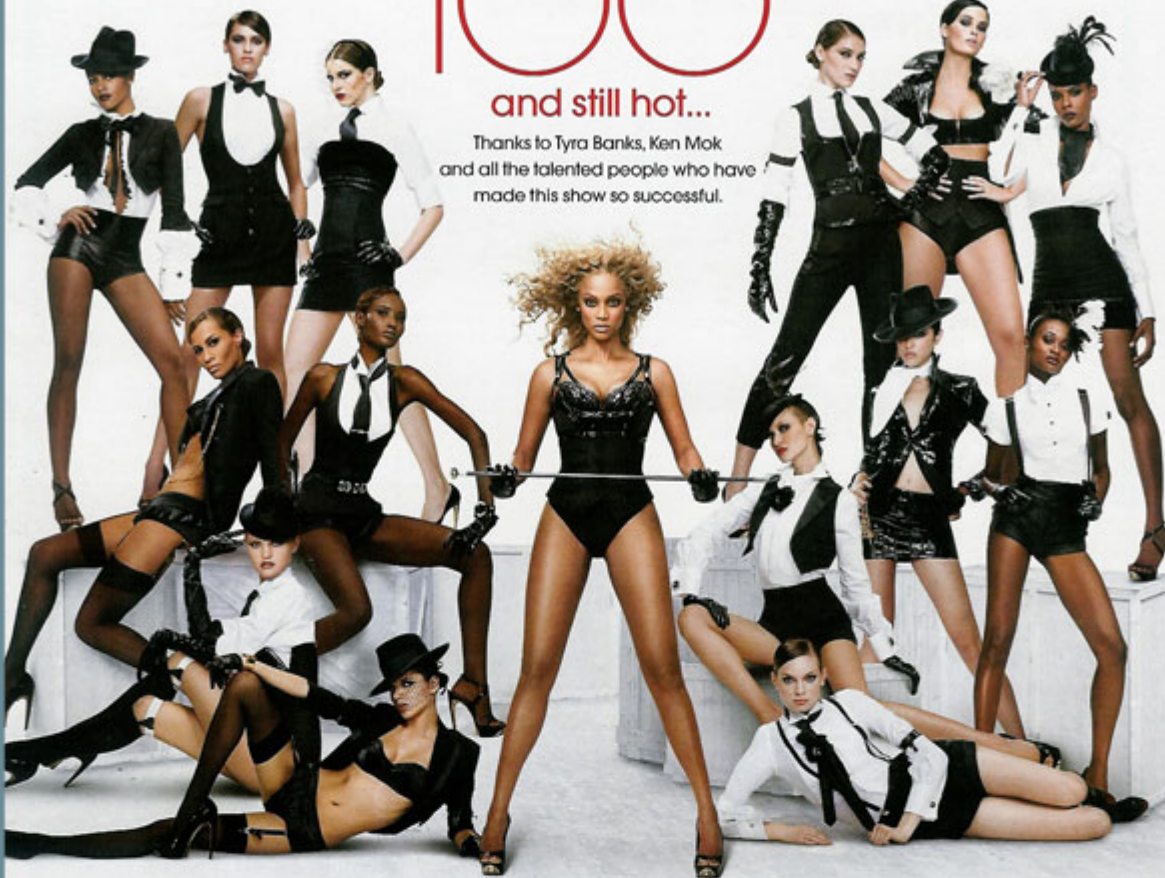
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Anatomy of a Hit: America's Next Top Model

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and still hot...

Thanks to Tyra Banks, Ken Mok and all the talented people who have made this show so successful.




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AMERICA'S NEXT top model

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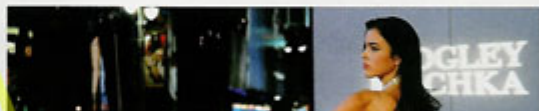
anatomy of a hit: top model 

SPECIAL REPORT

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2008

CATWALKCUE

Music elevates the drama among



When the producers of "America's Next Top Model" set out to capture the musical flavor of the modeling world, they didn't have to look any farther than the show's lead judge/executive producer Tyra Banks. The onetime supermodel not only took a hands-on role in charting a musical direction for the show, she lent her singing pipes to its catwalk-strutting theme song.

"Tyra's sensibility is urban-flavored and fashion-forward — in music, too," observes Emmy-winning composer Richard Wolf, one of the main suppliers of music for the show through his company the Producers Lab. "On the first few episodes, Tyra would give us feedback like, 'This cue is



music man Composer Richard Wolf supplies the score for "ANTM."

working, but you could raise up the bass' or, 'If you take out the flute, that would be perfect.'"

Tyra might have dropped the needle on the record, but from day one it has been music supervisor Matt Kierscht's responsibility to keep the groove going, and it's been no easy task. "ANTM" is packed front to back with music — none of which is scored to picture — with anywhere from 140 to 150 cues per episode covering a diverse array of styles, from hip-hop, rock and pop to dramatic film-style underscore. When the show makes its seasonal foray to an exotic locale, the musical palette grows even wider, incorporating indigenous styles and instruments into the contemporary, beat-heavy sound.

"It's a learning curve, because you're not really sure if a certain cymbal is from Taiwan or China, so you have to make sure that any type of sounds you use are authentic," says Grammy Award-winning producer Les Pierce, who co-wrote the show's theme with David Thomas and provides music on an episode-by-episode basis via his production house ToneDeLux.

In addition to the Producers Lab and ToneDeLux, Kierscht also calls on a number of up-and-coming indie bands and hip-hop producers, which helps keep costs down and gives the show a fresh, cutting-edge sonic flavor.

"A baby band might be good at doing that one kind of sound, but if there's something very specific I need, that's when I call someone like Richard," Kierscht says, "because he can just change gears and do something completely off-topic and unexpected from scratch."

Like any other reality program, "ANTM" has codified segments that appear in every episode, such as the deliberation, the elimination and the farewells, each with its own musical flavor.

Wolf says that the elimination segment is the biggest challenge for the composer "because music plays a very important role in building the tension in that context." But what he likes most about the show is its sheer volume.

"They play the music really loud," Wolf says. "I don't know if anybody really notices it except for music fans like my daughter, but for people involved in the music it's very satisfying."

— Todd Longwell



A Cycle 10 contestant shows off her style in designer Badgley Mischka finery during a Times Square fashion show.

"So little of this business is about looks alone."

— J. Alexander

the CW's entertainment president, who followed "ANTM" over from UPN. "Top Model" is a project of passion for everyone at this network. We all think it's gotten better and better over the years — it's water-cooler stuff. And Tyra has just blossomed in every way. She's got this amazing knack for relating to young women."

Ostroff also praises the show's expertise in conveying "wish fulfillment, intense competition and, of course, the drama of it all. Everybody goes after each other. That's something the audience really can tap into."

Ah yes, the catfighting. It is, acknowledges those involved with the show, the sugar that brings viewers to the "ANTM" table. "This is a soap opera where the people involved happen to be

aspiring models," points out creator/executive producer Ken Mok.

But as over-the-top as "Top Model" sometimes gets with the clashing personalities, there are real hopes and dreams being fulfilled and dashed — and some genuine education about the modeling industry, insists Barker. "The core of our show remains the diamond-in-the-rough mentality," he says. "The magic is in picking girls who embody their own Cinderella story — who, with a bit of spit and polish, can shine. If you took a bunch of pretty girls who already worked as models, it wouldn't be nearly as interesting or exciting."

Great pains are taken in "Top Model" to hold up a mirror to the actual fashion industry, insists the show's photo shoot producer and creative director Jay Manuel, who likewise cautions that what one sees in modeling isn't nearly as glamorous as it looks.

"Tyra likes to say that she won't do anything (on the show) that she hasn't actually done in her own (modeling) career," Manuel says. "All of the things the girls encounter can and do happen for real. When you see the girls hung up in harnesses, or shooting them with a parrot or a tarantula, we're creating provocative imagery. But it's not done for the fear factor's sake — it's about eliciting a reaction, which is what drives the real fashion industry."

"But if anyone thinks we're hard on the girls, trust me, the real world is much tougher," Manuel continues. "We take the time to explain things and give them another chance. There isn't that luxury out there in the actual industry. If you do something to tick off the creative director, you're gone. When we had Janice Dickinson here as a judge, she represented the harshness of this business."

Dickinson departed "ANTM" after the fourth cycle, the famed '60s