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**International Edition****Special Issues****WEB EXCLUSIVE****They Want Their 'TRL'**

**Gen-Y's cyber-friendly 'Total Request Live' is rewiring the record business**

*By B. J. Sigesmund*  
Newsweek, April 24, 2000

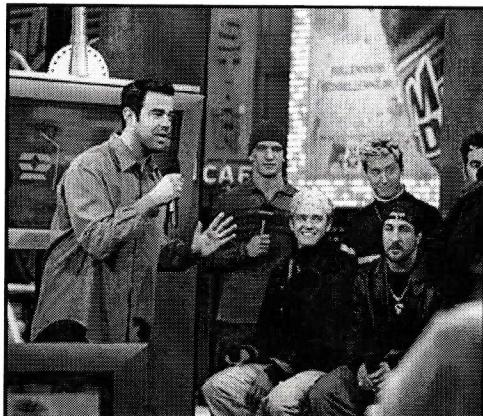
Times Square is always a mob scene. But on weekday afternoons, particularly on Broadway between 44th and 45th Streets, it's mania.

On one recent sunny Wednesday, several hundred hyperactive teenage girls were gathered there, pressed up against each other behind a police barricade—and smiling as wide as their acne-covered faces would allow. They screamed, giggled with their friends, and looked up wantonly toward the 2nd floor studios of MTV's "Total Request Live." Many held signs above their heads. One read: "Carson—It's my 16th birthday and my only wish is to come up and see you."

Yeah, you and every other teenager in America.

"TRL," a daily countdown of the ten hottest music videos, is taped live at MTV's Times Square headquarters between 3:30 and 4:30 p.m. five days a week. Since its debut in September, 1998, the show has grown to become youth culture's pop barometer, averaging over one million viewers a day. And they're not just watching to get a gander at Carson Daly, the adorable VJ-next-door and the current It-Boy of the channel. America's teenagers are tuning in day after day to see their favorite artists slug it out for the top spot, to stay keyed into what's hip—and to figure out on which CDs to spend their cash.

"The power of 'TRL' is just insane," says Daly, 26. Indeed. Eminem's "My Name Is" video debuted on the show on Jan. 21, 1999 and the album hit #2 two months later. TLC's "Unpretty" video first aired on "TRL" on July



'N Sync's appearance opposite Carson Daly on "TRL" last month undoubtedly fueled their record-breaking first-week sales (Todd Plitt)

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**Live Talks: Cover Talk-The \$2.1 Trillion Tumble:**

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**Politics Talk-The Right Stuff?**

Martin Anderson of Stanford University's Hoover Institution joined us for a Live Talk about the economy and Campaign 2000 on Thursday, April 20. [Read the transcript.](#)

**From Newsweek U.S. Edition****The Cover: The \$2.1 Trillion Market Tumble International**

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29, 1999 and the single was #1 in just six weeks. Christina Aguilera's spot for "Genie in a Bottle" premiered on July 6, 1999 and took only three weeks to top the singles chart. "We broke Britney Spears and Eminem and Kid Rock and Limp Bizkit," the host continues. "All those guys were artists who didn't have much presence on MTV outside of 'TRL,' and now they're the biggest stars of today."

Teenagers don't just watch "TRL," like in the "American Bandstand" days, they interact with it. The top-ten video rankings are determined solely by their phone calls and e-mails, which average several thousand a day. That makes "TRL" probably the most successful melding of TV and the Internet yet. "It's personal and interactive," says Janet Kleinbaum, vice president of artist marketing at Jive Records, who has overseen the marketing of "TRL" staples 'N Sync and the Backstreet Boys. "Kids are listening to Carson, they're watching the numbers, and they feel a part of it because they vote." Log on to an Internet chat room during the show and you'll meet kids who are watching MTV and typing about it at the same time. In fact, while the videos play on "TRL," e-mails MTV receives about them scroll across the bottom of the screen.

Even though artists like Aguilera, Spears and those dueling boy bands have benefited widely from "TRL," the show's countdown features acts well outside the bubblegum genre. Metal-rock band Korn is frequently in the top ten. Just this Wednesday, punk band Blink 182's "Adam's Song" was at No. 4 and rapper Sisqó's "Thong Song" was No. 3. "It seems like it's increasingly difficult to find acts who *don't* have exposure on 'TRL,'" says Geoff Mayfield, who covers music for Billboard.

*The show's power has affected other areas of the business.* "We feel its impact on the radio side for sure," says Tom Poleman, senior vice president of programming at Z100, New York City's top-40 radio station. He says he watched MTV abandon the alternative-rock sound a few years ago to make room for the teenpop phenomenon—a change that his station made as well. "In the radio world, people were afraid to create a station that leaned so young because we wanted to compete in the 25-54 world," he says. "But now the advertising world has realized the buying power of teenagers."

The best example of that came last month, when 'N Sync's "No Strings Attached" sold a record-breaking 2.4 million copies in seven days. The band appeared on "TRL" the day of the CD's release, during which thousands of fans mobbed Times Square. "They didn't just go out and buy the album, they bought multiple copies," says Daly. "That's what's scary. The average consumer bought three at a time. One for their car, one for their home and one in

#### in the Horn

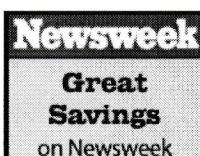
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case they lost it."

Record stores have obviously benefited from the show. "'TRL' is a big phenomenon right now and we like it being there," says Marcia Appel, Musicland's senior vice president of advertising and brand marketing. She says the chain doesn't track its sales against what's No. 1 on "TRL" and refuses to give the afternoon show all the credit. "I see it more in a supportive role or a validating role, but it's not necessarily the sales driver," she says. The stores' staffs do a lot of work themselves to promote CDs, she says. "Our stores had been talking up 'N Sync for a long time. We opened our big superstores at 7 a.m., some at midnight. We took out pages in Teen People and Entertainment Weekly. We were all over it... Pop culture has many outlets right now and 'TRL' is just one of them."



- Artscope

Wherever it ranks in influence, Daly's daily program is pretty much a mandatory stop for any act these days. Artists as varied as Rage Against the Machine, Master P and Jennifer Lopez have all stopped by to chat about their CDs. "If you sat Metallica down three years ago and said this kid-oriented show is going to be part of your marketing plan, they'd have either yelled at you or laughed at you," says Billboard's Mayfield. Increasingly, actors are showing up as well on the Friday that their films open. Jim Carrey, Adam Sandler and Mike Myers each came on to promote their last movies. Actress Kristen Dunst guest-hosted the week "The Virgin Suicides" opened. Even Madonna showed up to plug her movie, "The Next Best Thing."

Daly has taken down a few of their numbers. The VJ peppers his laid-back hosting with music industry news bites, many of which he gathers straight from the sources. "My phone rings, it's not necessarily a friend. It's Kid Rock," says Daly, who became one of the show's producers last month and has taken on a more active role in shaping its content. "Or I'll talk to Christina [Aguilera, if you needed to ask], and she's like, 'I'm recording my Spanish album, I'm here in Miami.' Or Enrique Iglesias calls from Spain. I'm thinking about shooting this video. Any directors you like?" That's how it happens. I also read newspapers and magazines and watch TV and go to a lot of parties. It's pretty easy. I just live the life and then come back on 'TRL' and report it."

A few music-industry types grumble that "TRL's" influence means that for aspiring musicians, a cute, camera-ready face is now more important than it should be. It's no surprise that Spears and two members of 'N Sync were once visual entertainers on TV's "Mickey Mouse Club." Counters MTV's Tom Calderone, the channel's head of music and talent: "Some acts that have crossed through don't look like MTV. Talk to Fatboy Slim... did [that video] look like MTV? Or the Chemical

Brothers. Kid Rock's earlier videos were not formula. Nine Inch Nails have *never* given us a video that was formula."

The only really nasty criticism of the show comes from those inside the building that houses the "TRL" studio, the now-famous 1515 Broadway. "I don't face Times Square, my windows don't open, and I work over a dozen floors up," says one music industry professional. "But every now and then, it sounds like you're standing on a runway at JFK Airport. You hear this 'hhhhrrrrahhhh' and wonder, 'Who's on "TRL" today?'. It reminds me of the early Beatles concerts, when the band couldn't hear themselves over the screams of the fans." Probably an association MTV wouldn't exactly mind.

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