

# emmy<sup>®</sup>

**PRICE CHECK**  
ARE THE NETWORKS FINALLY  
READY TO REIN IN PILOT  
SPENDING?

**HOWIE  
MANDEL'S  
DEAL OF A  
LIFETIME**

**GOTTA  
RUN!**

*American Idol's*  
Ryan Seacrest  
starts his day  
at 4 a.m. You  
would, too,  
if you had his  
plans. With  
radio, TV  
and business  
ventures, how  
far can he go?

ISSUE NO. 1, 2007 U.S. \$4.95  
CAN. \$6.95

[www.emmys.tv](http://www.emmys.tv)





PHOTOGRAPHED AT AREA NIGHTCLUB IN LOS ANGELES BY JACK GUY

STYLING BY SUSIE HARDY  
GROOMING BY DEAN BANOWETZ

THE

RUNNING

MAN

**HOSTING THE COUNTRY'S  
NUMBER-ONE SHOW MIGHT  
BE ENOUGH FOR SOME,  
NOT AMERICAN IDOL'S  
RYAN SEACREST. WITH HIS  
CAN'T-SLOW-DOWN  
MINDSET, HE'S BUILT A  
MULTI-LAYERED CAREER  
THAT COULD TAKE OTHERS  
A LIFETIME TO CREATE.**

BY SHIRLEY HALPERIN

**EVERY SUNDAY THROUGH FRIDAY, THE ALARM CLOCK SOUNDS AT 4 A.M. IN RYAN SEACREST'S HOLLYWOOD HILLS HOME.** In darkness, he makes his way

to the car and down the winding but relatively short drive to the El Entertainment building, where a million-dollar radio studio (newly built for him) awaits his 5 a.m. start. There he'll spend five hours kibitzing on KISS FM, sharing celebrity gossip (his Longoria sign-off: Lindsay Lohan is in AA?) and entertainment news with several hundred thousand commuters — before most of us have even had breakfast.

From KISS, Seacrest heads upstairs to the newly decreed Ryan Seacrest Productions wing of 5750 Wilshire to finish up his morning. In the next four hours, he will strategize, rehearse and execute that day's airing of *El Nuevo* (the matches in it shows a work with Giuliana Delfino), do voiceovers for his other radio gig (hosting *American Top 40*, square in a little piece of his own and maybe lunch (snack at his desk)).

Then it's off to host *American Idol*, which, fortunately, goes live at 5 p.m. two blocks away, on Fairfax Avenue, at CBS Television City. The number-one Fox show, with an audience of nearly 40 million, is his last stop of the day. He is done by 7 and home by 8 so he has 8:30 bedtime. Soon, it's *bed, head, legs, legs...*

Seacrest thrives on the hustle, and it's why he's become one of America's most recognized faces and voices. Not since the glory days of Dick Clark and Merv Griffin has an entertainer worn as many hats and reached as many people — an estimated 66 million a week.

There's *El Nuevo*, where, besides anchoring, Seacrest is managing editor. El Entertainment's red-carpet coverage, for which he is presumably best, plus his production company, which is producing the March roll-out of its first reality series, *Pasado City* about a group of Las Vegas locals. There are the aforementioned radio shows and the network *New Year's special* that he executive produces and cohosts. And then's *American Idol*, which cuts up at least five months of the year.

For this thirty-two-year-old, the work never stops.

"I think it takes that mentality, that you can't take anything for granted," says Seacrest in his usual don't-hate-me-because-I'm-successful manner. "Even if you've had a certain amount of success, you can't slow down. You need to take that and parlay it into more. The moment you relax or think you've made it, you begin to lose it."

It's a mantra Seacrest has sworn by for half of his life. Since landing his first radio job at sixteen, the affable and ever-ambitious Danwoody, Georgia, native has been double- or triple-booking his schedule to make all his show-biz dreams come true — simultaneously.

It started innocently enough: one night, while he was still an intern at Atlanta's STAR 94 FM, the deejay on shift called in sick and left Seacrest specific instructions to do a simple station ID. Call it his rarely seen rebellious side, but Seacrest didn't do as he was told. Rather, he turned on the microphone and started talking. The station's owner happened to be listening, liked what he heard and the rest, as they say, is broadcasting history.

Still, being a big fish in the small pond of Atlanta in no way guarantees success in Los Angeles, the country's second-largest market. But Seacrest drove cross-country in a Honda Prelude packed to the gills, reaching the West Coast in 1993 as bright-eyed and bubbly-talented as that Clay Aiken kid from North Carolina.

"I was impressed and depressed," he says. "I was depressed because I didn't know anyone, I didn't know my way around and I knew I had to figure out a way to live here. I didn't want to go back home. I wanted to be able to say I did something, because my parents were a little unsure about the move. But I also remember look-

ing at the freeways and saying, 'Oh my God, it looks like *CSI:MI*!' And all the cops looked like KJ. Hooker! I was enamored by the things that were archetypal to my life growing up in Georgia — the Hollywood sign that you'd see in movies, the seariness of the city... Of course, my mother was like, 'There are crazy people there!'"

Turns out Seacrest fit in just fine with the crazies, and it didn't take long to start making a name for himself. He dropped out of Santa Monica College to pursue radio full-time, and by 1995 had taken over the afternoon drive slot at Star 98.7 FM. Soon he landed at KISS, at the doors of two of his idols — Rick Dees and Casey Kasem, both of whom he would later annoy, albeit amicably. In December 2003 he was named host of the weekly countdown show *American Top 40* — where Kasem had reigned since 1970 — and two months later he was given the morning drive, which had belonged to Dees for twenty-two years.

"They were stars to me," Seacrest reflects. "I was a radio geek, so it was surreal when I got the opportunity to go to KISS FM." But, he maintains, "I wasn't privy to Rick's situation. I assumed he was retiring or on his way out. I was already under contract with the company and I was his fill-in guy, so it seemed like a really natural, easy thing to do. He was there for a long time, and I think they wanted to give KISS a shot of something new."

That something was *On Air with Ryan Seacrest*, which has taken the station, owned by Clear Channel Communications, to the top of L.A.'s ratings game. But if it seems like Seacrest was confident going in, think again.

"I remember sitting in those first meetings and telling people, 'Oh, yeah, I can pull this off,' then walking out scared to death," he confesses. "Radio in the morning is very competitive in this market, and I had no clue if I could really do it — or if I could get up that early every day or be on for that many hours. But I think the beauty of it was that I didn't know what I was doing. I didn't have a show that we brought in — we created this thing! It took a year and a half to build it, but now the ratings are on top and everybody seems happy."

Certainly he must have been dazed when he got the call for a network show set to debut in 2002. It was an American version of England's latest reality phenomenon, *Pop Idol*. Seacrest, whose TV experience at that point included hosting stints on such shows as ESPN's *Radical Outdoor Challenge* and kids' game shows *Gladiator 2000* and *Wild Animal Games*, watched the tape that the producers sent over. "I thought, 'How cheesy is this! I can't imagine that this will catch on — it's just so corny!'" Turns out, corny works, but we had no idea [Idol] would take on the life that it did."

Six seasons and thousands of auditions later, host Seacrest — along with judges Simon Cowell, Randy Jackson and Paula Abdul — may still go into convulsions when the unimposing torso-dead contender tackles "I Believe I Can Fly," but he also craves the excitement for the unknown that makes *Idol* must-see TV.

"There's a total adrenaline rush to being on live television," he says. "And we don't plan anything we're going to say to each other — even. Up to the last second that starts the telecast, we're joking and winding each other up. It's become very relaxed on the set, and I think that translates."

What do his colleagues think? Jackson, for one, says by e-mail: "You can tell by watching Ryan that he absolutely loves his job and there's no place he'd rather be than on that stage."

Indeed, *Idol* was the launching pad for Ryan Seacrest, the personality. It's where he coined his sign-off, "Seacrest out!" ("Honestly, it was not strategically planned," he swears. "We were running out of time and it was quicker than Tim Ryan Seacrest. Thanks for watching and good night") and where





Jacket by **John Cowbars**, sweater by **Gucci**,  
T-shirt by **Tommy Hilfe**, pants by **Levi's**

# SCRATCHING THE SEACREST SURFACE

**"POWERFUL PEOPLE," SAYS RYAN SEACREST, THAT'S WHO MAKES HIM NERVOUS.**

"Whether it's Hugh Hefner, a political figure or someone powerful enough to change your career, I get most nervous in real-life scenarios," he says. "If he's being called in by the boss to listen to a playback and being criticized, those are the nerve-wracking times." But as soon as that red light comes on, Seacrest typifies grace under pressure. Has anyone in the business ever seen the unshakable Seacrest sweat?

"In times of crisis or where we've had things go wrong on American Idol,

I can't ask for a better person than Ryan," says Mike Barnell, executive vice-president of alternative programming at Fox, who was one of the first in TV to hire Seacrest; the talk show *Seacrest @ Night* did not go beyond its pilot. "We've had our share of scandals, like the Conny Clark incident [singing contestant Clark claimed to have had an affair with Judge Paula Abdul] and a phone-number problem about a year and a half ago, when we had to make the night. Ryan handled both beautifully. It is a live television show. When something [unexpected] happens, he is amazing at getting us out."

"I've never seen a better broad-

caster than Ryan," says E! Entertainment President and CEO Ted Harbert, who brought Seacrest to the network with a three-tier plan: to raise the profile of *E! News*, to own the red carpet and to produce original programming, starting in March with the reality series *Paradise City*. "When he's on the carpet with people screaming in his ear, you would be amazed what is going on in his earpiece. How could he ever talk? But you would never notice that something is going on. He never loses his cool or gets cranky, he doesn't bug the camera — it's kind of scary."

"Ryan is like the Michael Jordan

of on-air hosting: the higher the pressure, the bigger the audience, the less margin for error, the better Ryan's performance," says E! Weekly executive editor Ken Baker, who appoints regularly with Seacrest on *KISS* and *E! News* and collected Fox's 2005 New Year's special. "I've seen Ryan visibly nervous only once. About a minute before we went live on New Year's — which was the first time Ryan was both hosting and producing the show — we were standing on a platform in Times Square, and Ryan nervously started clearing his throat. That was the first time I saw firsthand evidence that Ryan is, in fact, human." —S.M.

his perfectly coiffed-and-colored hair made him a national punch line on shows like *Saturday Night Live* and *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* ("I love it," he admits, "and at times I will throw things out as fuel").

It's also where Seacrest officially became a bankable star. Networks, both broadcast and cable, were willing to invest money not just in Seacrest, as Fox did in 2004 when it hired him to host its New Year's special, but also in his production company, as Twentieth Century Fox did in 2006 when it agreed to let him bring *On Air* to television, as a live, syndicated afternoon talk and entertainment news show.

If there have been any bumps on Seacrest's road, it would be these two events in succession. *On Air* was the bigger blow to the ego. Yanked after only eight months, Seacrest's daily dose of *TRL*-flavored interviews and field segments failed to find its audience.

"I learned the hard way that syndication is a really difficult business," he says. "I remember getting into the sales process for the show and going, 'I feel like there's a [place for a] big, destination-type program which isn't shot in a perfectly lit studio, [something that] could feel less contrived.' I learned that just because you think this type of show needs to exist, doesn't necessarily mean it has to. Win I lose? Sure. You never want people to lose their jobs, and you feel an obligation to all those who put their time and energy [into it], but you can only control so much. And in some ways, I was relieved [at the cancellation] because I could breathe."

The New Year's show, on the other hand, put him up against his longtime hero Dick Clark, who did not mind words when it came to a new player challenging his two-decade-old institution, *Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve*. In fact, he had no words at all. When asked to comment about Seacrest for a 2004 story in *Entertainment Weekly*, Clark responded through his publicist: "Dick sees Ryan as competition. Why would he talk?" "I was heartbroken by that quote," says Seacrest, who first met Clark by cold-calling his office for a meeting, which the veteran took. "But looking back now, I love that he's competitive. He wants to win."

And if you can't beat 'em, join 'em. That's what Seacrest decided to do when he pitched himself as a potential punter, rather than rival, for Clark's ABC countdown. Seacrest recaps: "I thought, Dick Clark is the man, and if I'm ever going to be considered as a competitor in his show, I have to put myself in that context so maybe he would think I could help or be a part of it in

the future. And in a strange way, that's what happened. Before we did the deal, he said [to me], 'I think you are the guy to be a part of this show and eventually go on with it.' I was thrilled."

Your classic Hollywood ending? Perhaps. After all, in his relatively new position at E!, Seacrest is getting a second chance at that non-formulaic daily news show he craved, and it looks to be catching on. "We were hoping to put *E! News* in a much higher profile and, at the same time, increase the ratings," says E! President and CEO Ted Harbert. "Both those things have happened since Ryan's come on board. Ryan has helped in every possible way: we have so much more access to stars now; we get the interviews he does every morning for *KISS*. It's been an influx of high-profile names."

Not only does he get the big names, he gets them to break, relate or confirm the gossip that circles the water cooler for days. "I try to do [interviews] in a way that's tactful, respectful and many times playful," he explains. "I try not to make anyone feel uncomfortable, but I also don't want to be told, 'You can't ask [these] questions.' It's a constant balancing act. You don't want to take the tacky route of being invasive, but at the same time, if someone's just been through a divorce, you want to know how they're doing and if they're okay."

To that end, Seacrest could consider working on his own love life, which he admits has taken a backseat to his career. "My personal life suffers in that I can't spontaneously decide to do something, like go away for a long weekend," he says. "And there are weeks where you almost disappear from your friends, [not] even returning phone calls. Not that I'm complaining, because I'd rather be so busy where you can barely keep up, but it's probably why I'm single."

Something else Seacrest doesn't have time for? Watching TV, despite appearing on it and developing content for it on a daily basis. "I rarely get to watch shows in their entirety," he says. "I watch Larry King every night [he has dubbed for King] and TiVo all the entertainment shows, but I've become less of a recreational TV viewer and more of a quick study of what's happening. So if a show's being talked about, I'll quickly scroll through to see what the vibe was."

But there's one show Seacrest never misses, and that's *Idol*. "If I got shot, I would still try and host the show from the hospital by remote satellite," he adds without a hint of sarcasm, "introducing the contestants and giving out the phone numbers from my hospital bed."

Somebody really needs a vacation. ■