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### Pamela Anderson Busts Into the Book Business

April 13, 2005

Pamela Anderson

By Rachel Deahl

To say that the name Pamela Anderson is one that has never been synonymous with books would be an understatement. The inherent hilarity in such a juxtaposition is behind the former *Baywatch* star's new FOX sitcom, *Stacked*. In the midseason entry—which debuts Wednesday night in a coveted spot at 8:30 p.m. ET/PT before *American Idol*—Anderson stars as a one-time party girl who takes a job in a family-run bookstore. While FOX is hoping the unlikely sight of Anderson amid a dusty collection of books and surrounded by panting bookworms, will create extensive fodder to pump the laugh track, booksellers have a particular interest in the show. Their question: Will Anderson create a new audience of book buyers? One major independent bookselling outlet has even gone so far as to poll its customers, both booksellers and book buyers, to find out if they think breasts really can sell books.

At Abebooks.com, an online marketplace that sells new and used books listed by 13,000 independent booksellers, executives are paying close attention to the FOX sitcom. Lisa Stevens, VP of marketing at ABE, said the company "will be watching the show with interest." Whether that means the upper brass will be grabbing a six pack and a bucket of popcorn before tuning in, or rewriting their marketing budget to include ads that end with the phrase 'and twins,' is unclear. Either way, ABE was eager enough about the show to poll 300 of their users about the show. The result? Only 29% of respondents said they would tune in while another 35% said they thought *Stacked* could actually inspire Americans to buy more books.

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Scott McWilliams, a manager at 57th Street Books in Chicago, IL, is among the majority of booksellers who doubts Anderson will make a significant contribution to the industry's bottom line. "I don't think the show will have much of an effect on sales at small bookstores...even if it's a hit." McWilliams added that, while he doesn't think *Stacked* will cause a sea change in the business, he'll be tuning in all the same. "I am curious about [the show]. I imagine [independent booksellers everywhere] will be watching it."

Maureen Tzudiker, an employee at the Brookline Booksmith in Brookline, MA, was skeptical about *Stacked*. Although Tzudiker said she was impressed by Anderson's performance as a celebrity-turned-bodyguard in her former series, *V.I.P.*, she had her doubts about the actress's ability to pull off her new role as bookstore employee. Regardless of her reservations, Tzudiker is also planning to watch the debut episode. "We are actually set to TIVO it, and we'll probably watch it at the store."

Despite the recent attention being paid *Stacked*, the show is not the first to infiltrate the world of bookselling. Ellen Degeneris played a bookstore owner in her self-titled 1994 sitcom, and Blair Blown starred as a confused Manhattanite, who does a stint working in a bookstore, in the 1987 dramedy, "The Days and Nights of Molly Dodd." Historically, such shows have done less for books sales than they have for the image of the book business, says CEO of the American Booksellers Association, Avin Domnitz. "[Shows like these] don't do anything specific for book sales. They are, on the other hand, a reminder that cool places like bookshops exist, and that they are not all stuffy intimidating places."

If *Stacked* is a big hit, booksellers may face a new sort of challenge...trying not to disappoint their new customers. That newly minted bibliophiles could suddenly flock to their local bookshops in droves, looking for a voluptuous salesgirl to offer sage literary advice, or climb the store ladder to reach for that dusty first edition they need way on top of the bookshelves, is an irony not lost on Ellen Heaney, owner of a Novel Idea in Brooklyn, NY. "If [fans of the show] come in here looking for a Pamela Anderson-type behind the register," Heaney laughs, "they're going to be let down."

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