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"Chad Vader: Day Shift Manager" invades YouTube

By Brendan O'Reilly in [Features](#)

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Among the biggest Internet stars, such as a skateboarding bulldog, Tom from MySpace, and the Numa Numa Guy, lives Chad Vader.

"Chad Vader: Day Shift Manager" is a Web series that follows the life of a guy who works in a grocery store and happens to be the brother of Darth Vader. The first episode has over four million views on YouTube.com.

But Chad would be nothing without Aaron Yonda and Matt Sloan, the short-filmmakers who brought him to life. The comedy-duo makes up Blame Society Productions, which is now so successful they were able to quit their day jobs and concentrate solely on filmmaking.

Yonda plays Chad, but Sloan provides the voice. Sloan's dead-on Darth Vader impression led to LucasArts offering him a job voicing Lord Vader in the Star Wars computer game "Empire at War: Forces of Corruption."

"Chad Vader" was also noticed by Kevin Murphy and Mike Nelson of "Mystery Science Theater 3000." Though MST3K ended in 1999, Murphy and Nelson continue to professionally make fun of films with RiffTrax, mp3s they sell that people can sync up with DVDs to hear the comedians' commentaries on new or classic films. They invited Chad to be a guest on the RiffTrax for "Star Wars Episode II" Attack of the Clones."

"We had a guest spot on the RiffTrax and we also made this promotional video," says Sloan. "It all came about really quickly and it was a great experience to work with those guys, guys who we've admired for years, and get a chance to work with them, and to hang out with them, and drink beer with them. It was a lot of fun."

Other admirers include Tommy Chong, Mr. USA 2005, who sent them an autographed copy of a magazine that he appeared on the cover. Jack Black also expressed to Yonda his admiration for "SuperShooter," a Web series created by Blame Society about an assassin.

The series has also brought Sloan and Yonda attention in their home state of Wisconsin. They started getting recognized on the street, and the mayor of Madison asked if they could find a place for him on an episode of "Chad Vader."

"We've been working at this for several years now, and I think everyone's just really happy that we're getting some recognition and getting a chance to get a lot of positive attention from networks and entities that will be able to support us in the way that we need to really do more extraordinary things and to get a bigger audience," says Sloan. "It's a very exciting time for us, because we're on the verge of doing a lot of really cool stuff." He says they have three significant deals coming up, but they are so early in the process that he is not at liberty to say anything about the projects.

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Aaron Yonda and Matt Sloan of Blame Society Productions flank the mask of Chad Vader.

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But he could talk about other future plans.

"We're planning a second season of the Web series. We've got lots of ideas for that." Sloan says he wants to explore the dimensions of Chad and the supporting cast in the sophomore season. "I think the cool thing about Chad Vader, the character itself, is really in depth."

Sloan, 34, studied theater and English in college, but has strayed away from his original course.

"The live theater process was always sort of frustrating to me - too much rehearsal time, too much waiting around," says Sloan. "The video work that we do offers more chances to be spontaneous and to just get things done really quickly."

In 2002, Blame Society committed to producing one video a month, hoping that something would catch on. "If something doesn't hit or if it fails," Yonda says, "you just move on to the next thing."

Since Internet videos are so easily accessible, this duo is able to reach many viewers. "We definitely always wanted our stuff to be the best that it could be and to be of the quality that it could attract a large audience," says Sloan. He says they strive for the best possible picture and sound, even though most people will be watching the videos in a small box on their computer screens. Maintaining a high production value has allowed them to market "Chad Vader" and their courtroom show parody "McCourt's in Session" on DVD.

"The quality of the video online is pretty atrocious, so I think a lot of people just want to see the videos in the quality that it deserves to be in," Sloan says.

For those who have the same ambitions as Blame Society, but lack the status of rising stars, Sloan offers this advice: Do what stimulates you, not what you think other people want to see.

"That's a trap that lots of amateurs and professionals alike fall into. If you start making what you think the audience wants, or what you think other people think is funny rather than what you think is funny, or what you think other people think is profound, rather than what you think is profound," Sloan says, "I just don't think that's a very rewarding way of practicing your craft."

Yonda says, "Just keep doing it and do it as much as you can. I'm really glad that I stuck to my guns and kept forging ahead, despite the odds."

Yonda got his start in video with the "Splu Urtaf Show" on public access television in Wisconsin. "The public access was really a really important part of how this all began actually," Yonda says. He started "Splu Urtaf" in 1993, while studying English in college.

"When I first found out that public access existed, and that I could do a T.V. show, I was just thrilled," Yonda says.

"It's a really good place to start and a really good place to learn and if you can't afford any equipment or if you want to learn to how use some equipment."

The show eventually led to him meeting Sloan and collaborating on video projects. "Our styles really seem to compliment each other," he says.

YouTube has bred a new kind of celebrity. Rather than inaccessible actors and directors who won't even respond to fan mail, stars will correspond with viewers over e-mail and message boards, and allow fans to add them as friends on MySpace.

"The Internet has just made everybody a lot more personal with each other," Yonda says. Another way Blame Society keeps in touch with fans is to post update videos in between episodes of "Chad Vader," to make announcements and read comments from viewers, both complimentary and negative.

One comment they seem to get repeatedly is the suggestion that they must have been on drugs when they made episodes of their other shows, like "Fun Rangers" and "Uncle Jimmy's **** Farm."

"What kind of quirks me about when people say 'what kind of drugs were you on when you made that?' I kind of feel like they're not accepting that people can be creative and come up with crazy things or funny ideas without using drugs," Yonda says.

"Some people might use drugs successfully to come up with ideas," he says. "For me, at least, I just feel like, if I was to do drugs and try to come up with these ideas, I wouldn't because I think it stunts my creativity."