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Using The Force: Grocery clerk Chad Vader is the brother of Darth. Eight episodes have been posted.



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Postgraduate working: Former college roommates now live together in a reality-type world.

By **Janet Kornblum, USA TODAY**

A new breed of independent film is growing on the Internet — webisodes. The videos are short (usually well under 10 minutes), they're scripted (no guy ranting in his underwear about politics), they're episodic, and they're experimental. Here are a few:

**MORE:** [Slick Webisodes could be the missing link](#)

### 'Quarterlife'

- **Who:** Marshall Herskovitz and Edward Zwick, the creative team behind *My So-Called Life*, *thirtysomething*, *Legends of the Fall* and *Blood Diamond*.
- **What:** Explores universal themes of aspirations, love and relationships through the ongoing stories of six creative people coming of age in their 20s. Also focuses on the Internet. Hour-long episodes are broken into eight-minute chunks, but could be lengthened — or shortened — depending on audience response.
- **Where:** On MySpace and on Quarterlife.com, which also features social networking and will host bonus videos profiling well-known artists such as writers and architects, Herskovitz says.
- **When:** Launched Sunday. Currently running.
- **Why:** The Web provides freedom from studio executives who increasingly meddle with the creative process, says Herskovitz. He has another goal: "I want to prove that you can do significant programming on the Net independently. If I can prove a model — that you can independently finance and distribute great content on the Internet — then other people will do it, too. And I think that's better for all of us."
- **How:** Herskovitz and Zwick initially financed it out of pocket but now have sponsors including Pepsi, Target and Toyota.

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### 'Chad Vader'

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- **Who:** Blame Society Productions' Matt Sloan and Aaron Yonda, 34-year-old independent filmmakers from Madison, Wis.
- **What:** A video series about Chad Vader, the hapless grocery-clerk brother of Darth Vader. Features Chad, in full Darth Vader costume, arguing with fellow employees and using The Force to do such tasks as picking up an apple and persuading a female clerk to go out on a date.
- **When:** Launched in June 2006, *Chad Vader* immediately became a sensation. Seven episodes have followed. Episode 1 has been viewed some 5.6 million times on YouTube alone.
- **Where:** All eight episodes are now posted on YouTube and on blamesociety.net, where they also can be ordered on DVD. Sloan and Yonda are working on other shows, plus a sequel.
- **Why:** "We had been making videos for the Internet and other places for several years," says Sloan. "*Chad Vader* was one idea in a pile of ideas that we had pitched to some networks and gotten some positive feedback. Things move so slowly in the television and film world, we didn't want to wait around for approval. We wanted to make it ourselves."
- **How:** Used amateur actors and financed it themselves for less than \$3,000 (the \$600 Vader costume was the biggest expense).

### 'Roommates'

- **Who:** Created by webisode veteran Scott Zakarin and his company, Iron Sink Media, for MySpace TV.
- **What:** A series featuring a group of former college roommates who live together after graduation, scripted but done in the style of a reality show. Includes voyeuristic material that makes it equivalent to a theatrical PG-13.
- **When:** Launched Oct. 22, with new episodes uploaded every weekday through Dec. 21.
- **Where:** Only on MySpaceTV, [www.myspace.com/roommates](#).
- **Why:** Zakarin pitched the idea to MySpace. They bought it. "It's so satisfying to come up with an idea, produce it,

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and within a couple of days be able to interact with an audience," Zakarin says.

• **How:** *Roommates* is sponsored by Ford Focus; not only does the site feature ads for the car, but the car also is integrated into the episodes.

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