

Voxy Ladies

Jennifer Aniston teams up with Voxy's new-media vixens to produce an online show for teen girls. What will she bring to the party?

Jennifer Aniston doesn't pretend to be Web savvy. When Voxy, based in Los Angeles, first approached the *Friends* star about doing an interactive show for its new website for teenage girls, she says, "It scared the bejeezus outta me!" But the self-described computer illiterate says she was soon sold on Voxy's mission: to provide a creative outlet for teen girls, a place where they could be themselves. Two months after signing on as an equity partner, producer and star of her own show, Aniston

still doesn't know streaming video from steamed rice, but she's beginning to figure out what her show will be about: a bunch of girls getting together to chat about, well, whatever girls chat about—like the pressure to be skinny ("It's infuriating!" Aniston says) or dealing with your parents' divorce (Aniston's parents split when she was nine). It won't all be serious stuff. Clothes and dating will be discussed, of course, but those hoping to get the juicy details of her relationship with Brad Pitt will be

disappointed ("I have to keep some part of myself private"). Viewers may be asked to send in their own poems or song lyrics, and maybe a "fabulous musician" will show up to put them to music.

The show, to debut in mid-summer, will be webcast via streaming video while a chat window brings viewers into the conversation. Aniston likes that idea because she doesn't want the show to be all about her. "I'm really nervous about being the host who says, 'I've got so much to share—let me tell you my story,'" she says. "I almost want it to be a blank page and just see what happens."

The Aniston show is one of several on Voxy's roster of "reality-based" programming that Voxy's three founders hope their target audience, girls ages 13 to 20, will find

"empowering." (The double x in Voxy represents the female chromosome; vox is Latin for voice.) For co-founder Hillary Carlip, that mission is an extension of her work as a chronicler of teen girls' lives; she's the author of *Girl Power: Young Women Speak Out!* Co-founder Maxine Lapiduss, a former writer and producer of TV shows *Roseanne*, *Ellen* and *Home Improvement*, says Voxy content will push the envelope in ways that traditional Hollywood would never permit. Writing for the networks is so stifling, Lapiduss says, that the end result is often as exciting as Velveeta. Voxy's content, she vows, will be provocative and subversive.

The designers of *voxy.com*—the company tapped Dewey Reid of Reid

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GETTING HELP FROM A FRIEND Voxy co-founders Kaylor, left, Lapiduss, top right, and Carlip, right, say Aniston will appeal to their young female audience

Creative of San Francisco to do the work—are promising a site loaded with animated graphics and other slick design features. Webcasts will appear in full screen for those with high-speed Internet connections; those with dial-up modems will have to make do with the usual small, blurry window. A netcam will transmit Aniston's live image during her show. Those who miss a webcast will be able to download and watch it later.

There will be e-commerce on the site too, but Voxy is working on ways to mix advertising and shop-

ping in with its content rather than create a separate virtual shopping mall. For example, an animated show might feature characters who work at, say, a Clinique counter; viewers who click on the Clinique logo will pull up a special offer on toner. "We call it guerrilla marketing," says Voxy's third co-founder, Kristi Kaylor, a former producer at MTV.

Ultimately, Voxy hopes to evolve into an interactive-TV channel, delivering content to set-top boxes over high-speed data lines and inviting audience participation via remote control. Voxy is one of a growing number of new media companies working to establish its Web-based brand while waiting for this level of TV-Net convergence to become a reality. Just don't ask Aniston to explain any of that.