

GROSS SETS SIX-PACK

Producer's slate includes pair of thrillers

By JOSEF ADALIAN

Producer Matthew Gross has set up a half-dozen projects under his Touchstone Television-based shingle this fall, including a pair of high-concept action thrillers and a detective skein.

At the Alphabet, Gross has set up thrillers "20 Questions" and "Day Break." "20 Questions" is a conspiracy-themed skein set in Washington, D.C., that he's exec producing with John Wirth ("Love Monkey"). Thomas Hines ("Y2K: Countdown to Crisis") is writing the hour.

Gross has paired with feature scribe Paul Zbyszewski ("After the Sunset") for action thriller "Day Break." "We're trying to keep the story under wraps," Gross said, but if this "makes it to the airwaves, people are going to dig it."

Gross Entertainment also is a partner in "Napoleon Hendrix," the ABC/Touchstone detective skein from Peter Calabrese's Q Media Partners and "Die Hard" scribe Jeb Stuart that has Michael Clarke Duncan attached to star (*Daily Variety*, Oct. 14). Alan Sternfeld also will exec produce.

Gross, former head of production for "The Fugitive" producer Kopelson Entertainment, is balancing a busy TV slate with his role as producer on the upcoming Julie Taymor-helmed pic "Across the

Universe." Revolution Studios film is a musical love story with a narrative driven by Beatles songs.

Putting together projects for the nets this year was tougher than usual, Gross said, because of webheads' desire for bigger, noisier concepts.

"They were very specific and picky about what they wanted to put in development," he said. "They're not just looking for pack-

ages that look good on paper. They want the big idea."

Outside ABC, Gross has set up "Bond Street" at NBC with scribes Zev Borow and Matthew Carnahan ("Fastlane"). Show's about an ultra-hip Gotham hotel.

Sean MacPherson — the hotel/restaurant impresario behind the Maritime in New York and such L.A. eateries as Jones and

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Swingers — is aboard as a consultant. Carnahan will exec produce, with Borow as supervising producer.

Producer said he's wrapping up deals for two other projects he expects to formally add to his slate within the next two weeks.

Currently in the final year of a

three-year pact with Touchstone, Gross Entertainment produced the 2005 ABC pilot "Neighbors," starring Lenny Clarke and Brian Benben. On the feature front, Gross' credits include Tim Allen starrer "Joe Somebody."

Nicholas Nicoletta is director of development for Gross Entertainment.