

NYC show aims to fill MTV video void

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Video may have killed the radio star, but in recent years, MTV has virtually snuffed out the art medium it once helped nurture and promulgate.

The network that used to be a 24-hour cycle of music videos nowadays fills airtime with “The Real World,” “Laguna Beach” and other reality show pabulum.

But don’t sound the death knell just yet for music videos. “New York Noise,” one of the 22 shows produced and broadcast by NYCTV, the city’s culture and education station, has honorably kept the art form alive while showcasing underground and up-and-coming bands.

“I don’t think other shows really focus on the cutting edge in music these days,” said Shirley Braha, the show’s 23-year-old producer, at her office recently in one of the city’s downtown government buildings.

Indeed, few other networks have similar music playlists. The sparsely shot hourlong show features music videos by fuzzed-out pop bands like Wolf Parade, freak folk heavyweights like Devendra Banhart and indie rock legends like Pavement.

In between the music blocks, droll interludes show city bands in unlikely places. One episode had the Hold Steady answer questions about being rock stars from kids at a local Boys and Girls club. Another had a member of The Cloud Room go on a blind date with singer Nicole Atkins.

“I think it can get a little boring if you are just asking an artist about his songwriting,” said Braha, who comes up

with the ideas for each episode.

The show debuted in September 2003. Braha had interned at NYCTV that summer while she was a student at Smith College. The station wanted to create a show about New York bands. It was a perfect match for Braha, who volunteered for the undertaking.



Shirley Braha
(Photo by handout, Apr 2, 2006)

The native Brooklynite has been involved in music from a precocious age. At 16, she started her own independent label, Little Shirley Beans, where she put out an indie rock Hannukah compilation and a 7-inch of the band I am the World Trade Center. In 2001, she earned girl-mag accolades when YM named her one of the 21 coolest girls in America. In college she earned a degree in American Studies with a focus in pop culture and mass media. Oh, and she also interned at MTV.

The show’s latest season, which starts Tuesday, will follow the same mix of videos and segments that have delighted fans. Check out new episodes on Tuesday nights at 10 p.m., with encores on Fridays at 9 p.m. and Sundays at 10 p.m.