



by Robyn Taylor Parets

Some people watch the fictional *Melrose Place* every Monday night. Others are heavily involved in the real lives of the Gen-Xers on MTV's *Real World*. Still others are hooked on *The Spot* and the racy, sometimes scandalous, stories of its six Venice, California house mates.

Members of this sextet-in-joint residence — Tara, Lon, Carrie, Michelle, Jeff and recently added Tomeiko — are all twenty-something, beautiful, witty, and pretty much self-involved, just like the casts of *Melrose Place* and *Real World*. But unlike those other back-stabbing, career-climbing characters, *The Spot*'s party of six can't be found on TV.

"We're inventing something unlike anything that's ever appeared on TV or in Film. It's a Whole new world..."

— Russ Collins, Executive Producer of *The Spot*

That's because *The Spot* is a website. This "cybersoap" has quickly become one of the most popular sites on the World Wide Web, attracting more than 100,000 page hits and 560,000 server requests a day.

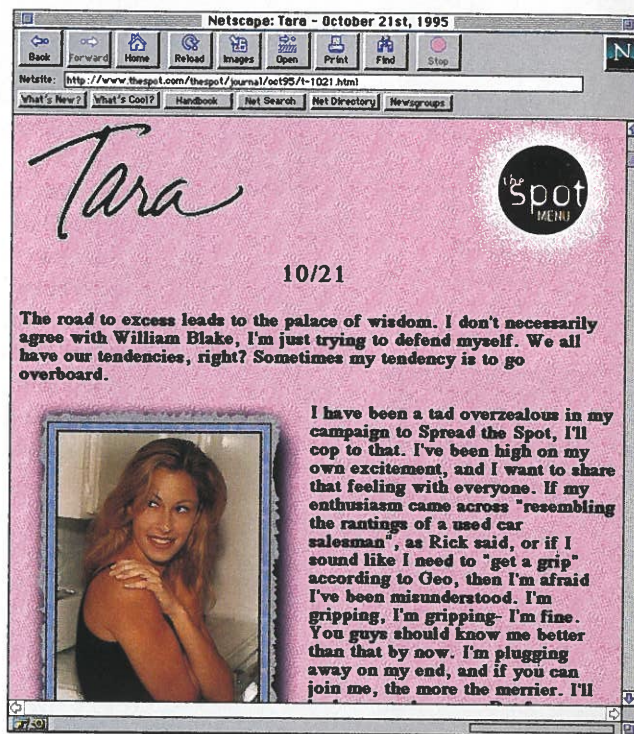
Launched early in June 1995, *The Spot* is produced by a dozen or so staffers at Prophecy Entertainment, the interactive division of Fattal & Collins advertising agency in Marina del Rey, California. "A group at the agency started fiddling around and created the site as sort of a hobby," explains Kay Dangaard, who is spearheading a massive publicity campaign for what she claims is "the world's first episodic website."

Each of *The Spot*'s characters updates his or her journal with juicy new entries at least several times a week and in some cases daily.

The Spot now receives about 350 email messages everyday, from places as far-flung as Finland, Korea, India, Australia, South Africa, Israel, China and Afghanistan. Fans catch glimpses of their favorite cast members in digital photos, QuickTime video files and audio files in RealAudio format. Die hards can even sign up for "SpotFlash" to receive gossip and scandal updates via email.

Russ Collins, executive producer of the "webisodic," has his own theory to explain the site's popularity. "Nobody is doing anything innovative.

Companies are just throwing up sites using existing assets," he maintains. He points to the slew of websites being used as marketing vehicles; the various sites run by movie studios to hype their new movies are a good



Diary entries like Tara's give voyeuristic fans a window into the lives of the *Spot* characters.



Although it may look like a bottle cap collection, *The Spot* home page is actually a very functional interface.

