

Matthew Shepard murder examined in movie

By Robert W. Black
The Associated Press

LARAMIE, Wyo. (AP) — In the opening moments of MTV's movie "Anatomy of a Hate Crime," Matthew Shepard walks toward the buck-and-rail fence where he was tied and savagely beaten and expresses confusion over his own death.

"They called my murder a hate crime," he says. "Where does that kind of hate come from? Are there moments in people's lives that create that hate?"

Shepard, played by Cy Carter in his movie debut, then invites the viewer into the Laramie bar where, on the night of Oct. 6, 1998, he met Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson, the two men who would beat the life out of him, allegedly because he was a homosexual.

"Anatomy of a Hate Crime" is the first of at least three upcoming movies based on Shepard's death, which touched off international outrage and condemnation. (NBC is working with his family on a

film, and HBO is producing one based on "The Laramie Project," which ran off-Broadway and focused on the town's reaction to the murder.)

It premieres on Wednesday at 8 p.m. EST on MTV to kick off the network's yearlong campaign against prejudice. The film will air without commercials.

The drama draws its dialogue from court testimony, media interviews with Shepard's family and friends, McKinney and Henderson, and the killers' statements to authorities.

Carter's portrayal avoids the sainthood that many have thrust upon the 21-year-old political science major. His Shepard is a typical college student worrying about midterms, releasing tension at bars and uneasy with new relationships.

"If you just show the truth and the pains and the joys of real life and what people are going through, viewers are going to see themselves in him, or their sons or their big brothers and they're

going to sympathize," the actor said.

Depicting Shepard as more perplexed than angry as he narrates the story helps draw the viewer in.

"I just knew and the director (Tim Hunter, best known for the 1986 film "River's Edge") knew as well that if Matthew were angry, if it came from a point of anger, then you can't dissect a problem. You can't really look at it," Carter said.

Although no simple answers emerge, glimpses of Henderson and McKinney's background offer clues: broken homes, poverty, little schooling, abusive childhoods, drugs and alcohol ...

"I think the film does a really good job of showing the complexity," Carter said.

Brendan Fletcher suitably plays the profane, way-too-cool McKinney, who was the aggressor in the attack, and Ian Somerhalder captures the quiet follow-

er Henderson. (The two young men are serving life sentences for murder.)

Amanda Fuller and Busy Phillips play the girlfriends who help cover up a crime far more serious than they were led to believe.

Brian Graden, MTV's president of programming, said the Shepard murder struck close to home for many of his network's viewers and serves as an apt start of MTV's "Fight for Your Rights: Take a Stand Against Discrimination" campaign.

"This was somebody their own age. ... It was the perception of the boy next door. It resonated emotionally for them," he said. "We anticipate that 'Anatomy of a Hate Crime' will set the tone for the entire campaign and accomplish the goal of educating young people about discrimination."

After the movie, the cable music channel will present a half-hour news special on hate crimes. Then at 10 p.m. it plans a 17-hour break in its regular programming to run a

continuous list of hate crime victims' names.

Graden said the network takes its cue for social activism from concerns of its viewers — and musicians.

"It's been the artists and a lot of the musicians who have challenged our notions about civil rights and the Vietnam War and injustice," he said. "These themes show up in music, and musicians are challenging the broader world and the older generation."

Creed, Braxton honored by fans at AMA

By David Bauder
The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Country singer Faith Hill, the rock band Creed and soul singer Toni Braxton each won twice at the American Music Awards Monday, an honor decided by music fans.

Hill, nominated for four awards, won favorite country album for "Breathe" and favorite female country artist.

"Wow!" she said. "This is something else." She then made fellow country star and husband Tim McGraw burst into laughter when she added: "I was going to wear my husband's underwear but it had a hole in it."

Creed was chosen favorite alternative music artist and their multi-platinum album, "Human Clay," beat teen poppers 'N Sync and Britney Spears in the best pop album category. Each artist was snubbed by the Grammys in that category.

Toni Braxton won her third American Music Award for fa-

vorite soul album, after winning the same award in 1995 and 1997, and favorite female rhythm 'n' blues artist. She said it eased the pain after spraining her knee twice in rehearsal.

"Two awards for two sprains," she said backstage. "I'm really happy."

Destiny's Child, of "Say My Name" fame, was named favorite rhythm 'n' blues group. The Dixie Chicks were the favorite country group.

The belly button-baring count stood at six. Jennifer Lopez performed in a midriff-exposing outfit, host Britney Spears stripped off a pink gown in favor of skimpy two-piece.

The busy Spears, co-host with LL Cool J, revealed seven separate outfits in the show's first hour.

Unlike the Grammys, which are voted on by Recording Academy members, music fans determine the awards, making them a popularity contest. A polling group sent out 20,000 ballots to record buyers.

The rock band 3 Doors Down, who made the hit song, "Kryptonite," was named favorite new artist in the pop category. Donnell Jones won the same honor in the rhythm 'n' blues category. Country singer Billy Gilman won the award as a country artist, taking his first trophy before puberty.

Two artists who were largely idle last year won trophies: Kid Rock as favorite male pop artist and Celine Dion as favorite adult contemporary artist.

Veteran rapper Dr. Dre beat out his protege, Eminem, for favorite rap artist.

"I love the fact that I won," he said backstage. "It means somebody's paying attention to my hard work, and that's exactly what it is, a lot of hard work."

Janet Jackson was singled out for the special Award of Merit given each year for "outstanding contributions to the musical entertainment of the American public." She was promised fans and new album and tour later this year.

Previous Award of Merit recipi-

ents include her brother, Michael Jackson, Ella Fitzgerald, Paul McCartney, Elvis Presley, Frank Sinatra, Billy Joel and Gloria Estefan.

Aerosmith also received a special International Artist Award.

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A Dream R-11:00pm

CBS plans to survive Thursday nights

By David Bauder
AP Television Writer

PASADENA, Calif. (AP) — CBS has nailed down a deal for a third and fourth "Survivor" even before the second edition — set in the Australian outback — has made it on the air.

Locations in Africa and South America are being scouted for "Survivor III," which will be on the CBS fall schedule, network executives said Tuesday.

CBS disclosed few details of its agreement with producer Mark Burnett. The network already had an option for several additional series, but Burnett was looking to sweeten his cut.

"Certainly this deal will make him richer," said Nancy Tellem, the network's entertainment chief.

She indicated CBS held firm on its refusal to give show producers a cut of advertising revenue.

The first "Survivor" was a rat-

ings phenomenon last summer, and the already-filmed Australian edition will premiere on Jan. 28 after the Super Bowl. It will then be shown regularly on Thursday nights at 8 Eastern.

CBS also said that it was moving its freshman hit drama, "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation," into the coveted Thursday time slot directly after "Survivor" in February. "Diagnosis Murder" will move to Friday nights.

The shift is less an attempt to weaken NBC's strong Thursday lineup than to shore up CBS' abysmal ratings that night, CBS President Leslie Moonves said. The hope is that "CSI," which has a younger audience than most CBS shows, will help earn the network a cut of the lucrative movie studio advertising market — which is big on Thursday nights.

Although the first "Survivor" captivated viewers during TV's

summer lull, there was no thought to putting another edition on in the summer, Tellem said.

"When you have a valuable property like this, we can benefit more by putting it on in the fall than we could in the summer," she said.

There's a good chance the reality series, "Big Brother," will be back next summer, although CBS executives all but admitted the first edition was a dog creatively. The house remains on a Hollywood soundstage, still wired for cameras and microphones.

A lot went wrong with the show last summer, Moonves said, from poor casting to poor decisions on which story lines to feature. But it still did better in the ratings than most summer fare, he said.

"If there is a 'Big Brother II,' we will be more actively involved in the creative process," he said.

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