

TABLOID BABY

EXCLUSIVE! THE TOP DOG BEHIND CRISTINA'S STUNNING, IN-YOUR- FACE EMMY UPSET OVER OLD JUDGE JUDY



The stunning Emmy upset night as the upstart syndicated Fox show Cristina's Court beat old standby Judge Judy for the first-ever Daytime Emmy award for Outstanding Legal/Courtroom Program is made all the more tasty because Cristina's executive producer Peter Brennan basically created Judge Judy as a show and a character as Judy's first EP, guiding her in the new arena while his staff, headed up by Cristina Emmy winner Lisa Brennan, found the cases that put the show a class above the rest— until they moved on.

Weeks before the debut of Cristina's Court in September 2006, we told you that "Judge Judy's genius has a new star," and pointed out that

"...Brennan tells stories like no other, and his team knows the key to a successful court find cases that may not be earth-shattering but are crucially important to the people who are pressing them. They also know to find litigants who don't look like they were scraped off the floor of Jerry Springer's waiting room."

Well, that team, including senior producer Dean Manibog— Katy, Texas' first Emmy winner (we want to be there for the parade), are polishing Emmys this morning, and must be chuckling that Judge Judy sat stewing at the next table at the Kodak Theatre last night.

As we told you last night, the episode that clinched Cristina's Court's prize concerned the shooting of a pit bull.

An animal story. Odd, no?

Not at all. This excerpt from Tabloid Baby, describing the early years (1987-90) of tabloid television, shows how Peter Brennan used the same tried-and-true formula to great success nearly twenty years ago:

Animal stories and tabloid TV go back to the genre's roots in Australian and British tabloid newspapers... Animal stories attracted calls and letters. They made up for the other sins you put on the screen.

Our most memorable animal story at A Current Affair was about an old dog named Smoke in a town somewhere down south. One day, Smoke ran down the railroad tracks, smack into the path of an oncoming train. When Smoke's distraught owner went out to see if there was anything left of his old hound, he found an ear, a leg another leg, the tail, a scrap of fur—that was about it.

That would have been the end of the story, except that a week or so later, Smoke picked himself up from wherever he was carried several miles up the track and came hobbling home, minus that the ear, tail, fur and those two legs. It was inspirational, all right. Brennan wanted to run it just so he could write in the promo:

“It was the day the train kept a rollin'... ON TOP OF OLD SMOKIE.”