

NEW YORK POST

COURT TV HAS CREEPY 'WHISPER' CAMPAIGN

By HOLLY M. SANDERS

November 8, 2006 -- If you hear voices in your head talking about committing murder, you're mind isn't playing tricks on you.

"Hey you, over here. Don't turn around," the voice warns. "Can you hear me? Do you ever think about murder, committing the ultimate crime?"

The trickster in this case is Court TV, which is drawing on some cutting-edge creepiness to make it seem like someone is talking to you - and only you.

The effect is achieved by focusing a beam of sound much like a laser. Someone standing in the beam can hear the voice loud and clear, while someone standing just two feet away can't.

Court TV has installed the sound devices, dubbed the "mystery whisperer," in a number of bookstores to promote its upcoming crime series, "Murder by the Book," narrated by popular crime authors such as James Ellroy and Jonathan Kellerman.

So don't be surprised if you're walking through the mystery section and you suddenly hear a voice come out of nowhere.

There are also plans to install the devices in the Time Warner Center.

The technology has been in use for years - mostly for military applications - but the brains behind the "audiobeam" predicted it would eventually move into the commercial realm.

Advertising seemed like a natural fit. Supermarkets and stores could beam product enticements at passersby with little or no ambient noise to annoy others nearby.

Someday the pitches could even be customized for each customer.

The technology may sound a little scary - almost Big Brother to some - but Zoom said there have been no complaints from either bookstore owners or customers.

Most people seem intrigued if a little perplexed.

Zoom has stationed observers, who pretend to read for hours, at several locations to gauge the customer reaction as they try to figure out the sound.

"They smile, they step into [the beam] and then back out again," said Patrick West, a vice president at Zoom.

Court TV and Zoom also put up poster displays to tip off consumers that it is part of an ad campaign.

Your College
Degree is
Within Reach



LEARN MORE ►

If they can't figure it out or continue to hear voices, then the audio ad offers up some sound advice at the end.

"If you continue to hear a voice after walking away, please seek help immediately."

Home

NEW YORK POST is a registered trademark of NYP Holdings, Inc. NYPOST.COM, NYPOSTONLINE.COM, and NEWYORKPOST.COM are trademarks of NYP Holdings, Inc. Copyright 2008 NYP Holdings, Inc. All rights reserved.