

Yumiko Aoyagi Readies Next Internet Sensation The Scary City

Written by Robert ID4487

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Award-winning Japanese writer/producer Yumiko Aoyagi, who was the Executive Producer for the groundbreaking Internet series *lonelygirl15*, is ready to take Web entertainment to the next generation with *The Scary City*, a mystery cyber-series she describes as “The Blair Witch Project meets *Lost*.”

Aoyagi’s Los Angeles, CA-based *The Scary City* LLC production company is undertaking the \$5.2 million project, a cutting-edge international mystery narrative combined with an online social networking community and pioneering website, which will begin production on two separate, but interrelated, versions in Los Angeles and Tokyo in September, with future versions planned for Korea, Israel, U.K., France and Thailand. The U.S. version of the story evolves around a haunted L.A. apartment complex and the missing 10-year-old daughter of an architect, who battles the building’s unseen evil forces, featuring a cast of tenants from all over the world who get caught up in the global intrigue. The Tokyo story will be co-produced by noted German-Japanese hit maker Tamon Andrew Niwa, who is well-known for discovering uniquely talented newcomers. It begins with a *Twins Peak*-like murder mystery that a tragic heroine, a Japanese high school girl, tries to solve.

The luxurious, \$1.4 million *Scary City* website was produced by IMJ, Japan’s leading interactive agency, collaborating with international, award-winning web designer Yugo Nakamura, the acclaimed leader of THA, his own renowned design firm. “*The Scary City* doesn’t use the platform, but incorporates it into how the stories develop,” explains Aoyagi. The website will include interactive online Alternative Reality Games, blogs by visitors and characters alike, commercial sponsorships and various opportunities for e-commerce conducted in each country’s native language, as well as a sophisticated device that can track consumer movements and preferences. It marks the first time that a website will be seamlessly integrated with an online show’s plotline, allowing visitors to track the various characters’ activities in real time around the clock.

“That’s the beauty of the Internet,” said Aoyagi, who was born in Japan, but also lived in the U.S. and Europe, speaking five different languages, including Japanese, English, German, Cantonese and Spanish. “My goal with *The Scary City* is to redefine ARG and

interactivity, how people communicate, interact and relate with one another online. *The Scary City* will provide the world with the ultimate entertainment, regardless to the age, religion, language, culture and race.”

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Aoyagi intends to turn The Scary City Internet series, which will start with five 90-second-to three-minute episodes a week, into a major motion picture. Content will also be delivered to mobile phones and featured in Manga graphic novels.

“It’s like a full-fledged pre-release campaign, with each story in every country serving as a trailer for the movie,” she says. “You don’t need to spend \$20 million in marketing any more.”

Episodes of the show can be sent by e-mail, spreading the show virally across the Web, where it will also appear on such popular portals as Facebook, MySpace and YouTube. The next order of business for Aoyagi is an online competition on YouTube to cast the U.S. version of The Scary City with “real people.”

“Our goal is to produce the next generation of web-based scripted series, with better production values,” says Aoyagi. “This is being done by an expert team which includes some of the most respected creative talent in the world, who really know how to tell a story on the Internet. And we’ve designed a highly sophisticated plan, both financially and artistically, to create a worldwide phenomenon.”

The globe-spanning plot will involve a future doomsday, with the international cast involving each of their subsequent home countries in the epic narrative.

“The promise of the Internet is how it allows us to mix reality with fantasy,” says Aoyagi. “A hundred years ago, it was said that Reality imitates Art, but now we can say Reality truly co-exists with Art.”

And that is the world The Scary City will inhabit.