

'Dumbest' investment a smart move



HOPE KINCHEN

John Palumbo owns the rights to Alex Haley's works and just bought the rights to America's Dumbest Criminals.

BY DEVAN STUART
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Jacksonville investor and businessman John Palumbo recently bought rights to the popular syndicated show "America's Dumbest Criminals" for just under \$1 million.

Talk about job security — "There is never a shortage of dumb criminals," said Palumbo, noting his purchase from The Entheos Group based in Nashville, Tenn., netted 15 large boxes filled with tapes of unedited surveillance camera footage of clumsy crimes being perpetrated across the nation. The loot includes about \$7 million worth of produced episodes.

"Criminals just get dumber and dumber with time," he said.

Palumbo aims to kick the show back into production, potentially in Jacksonville.

Kohl Lindsey Entertainment, based in Jacksonville, has helped produce 'America's Most Wanted' for nearly 15 years. It

recently contacted Palumbo about a potential deal, as have television production companies in Hollywood, Calif., and Nashville, Tenn. Palumbo is considering several offers and has yet to choose a production company.

"America's Dumbest Criminals" racked up high ratings in its first four seasons in the United States and in syndicated airings in more than 30 countries, according to New York-based Lacey Entertainment, which markets and distributes the show worldwide. Palumbo aims to boost the show's quality, gathering and shooting new footage and interviewing police officers nationwide.

In the early days of "America's Most Wanted," Kohl Lindsey partners Mark Kohl and Pepper Lindsey predicted a show like "America's Dumbest Criminals" eventually would hit the airwaves.

"They've been working on 'America's Most Wanted' for so long they've actually

seen some of America's dumbest criminals," partner Kent Lindsey said. He noted the continuing success of reality television means a run of newly produced episodes of "America's Dumbest Criminals" likely would be a hit.

"People love seeing people make stupid mistakes," Lindsey said. "It's a very viable type of program."

"I hate to make anything sound guaranteed," added Palumbo, who shuns the stock market and other traditional investment routes. "But this is pretty close to it."

The show is just one of hundreds of Palumbo's unique investments. Others include criminal restitutions; copyrights to all writings of late author Alex Haley, whose novel "Roots" became a top-rated television miniseries; and copyrights to songs by several major performers, including Billy Joel and the late Johnny Cash.

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