

TOMKAT IS EVERYWHERE

Pop culture mavens see no sign of TomKat mania waning

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Some people just wish the whole TomKat thing would go away.

Well, folks, don't get your hopes up.

The lead-up to today's scheduled wedding in Italy between Tom Cruise and

hometown starlet Katie Holmes has been a media blitz with near-constant reports about the nuptials appearing everywhere imaginable.

Industry insiders say there's no reason to believe it will let up now, even after they tie the knot.

"No, not at all," said David Perel, editor-in-chief of the *National Enquirer*. "I think it will start to subside if they make it to their 25th anniversary.

"It won't be front page news every time they do something together, but they will remain a focus of the public and particularly all the celebrity publications out there."

The couple is just too interesting, mysterious, and sometimes bizarre for us to resist.

So even after Cruise, 44, and Holmes, 27, get married, people will find something else to speculate about, such as whether they will have another child or how they're getting along, he said.

The barrage of media attention is just an example of giving the public what it wants: More Tom and Katie. And that shows no signs of slacking off, according to Dave Levine, executive producer of *Showbiz Tonight* on CNN Headline News.

Ratings and viewer response are always higher for stories involving the couple, he said.

"We're like a restaurant," Levine explained. "If our customers who are the viewers aren't eating the dish, we'd stop serving it. Every time we serve this dish, people are eating it up."

Another factor feeding the continuing TomKat frenzy is the couple itself.

"[Cruise] has continually used his relationship with Katie Holmes to promote projects that he's doing," Levine said, referring to appearances with her when *War of the Worlds* and *Mission: Impossible III* came out.

"I would not be the least surprised if when the next big event happens ... there'll be a Katie play involved with it," he said.

That could be something with Cruise's new studio, United Artists, which he and a business partner were put in charge of recently after they were dumped in August from Paramount Studios.

Maybe Holmes will co-star in a movie with him, Levine suggested. That's what happened with the star's previous wife, Nicole Kidman, in the films *Eyes Wide Shut* and *Far and Away*.

There have been plenty of other memorable moments in the relationship that make it irresistible to the public and the media: Cruises's giddy couch-jumping episode on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, his public battle with Brooke Shields over her use of anti-depressants to treat postpartum depression, all the hubbub over his connection to



Katie Holmes and Tom Cruise, who are expected to be married in Italy today. (ASSOCIATED PRESS)

Scientology.

That's not even getting into the birth of their daughter, Suri, and the mystery and subsequent excitement over the public's first look at her.

As Levine said, "You never know what's gonna happen next."

Of course, if the couple lays low for a few months, the interest should subside, he added.

Montana Miller, assistant professor in the department of popular culture at Bowling Green State University, can't wait until that happens. She said the obsession with TomKat is generated primarily by the media itself.

"The general public is not nearly as interested as the media wants them to be and thinks they are," she said.

"When I watch Entertainment Tonight, I can't believe how much they're pushing it ... I think it's just gotten to the point of overkill."

That said, she and many others know a whole lot about TomKat.

"It's impossible to avoid," she said. "Even if you try to tune out, these news broadcasts just throw it at you. You can't help paying attention. It's everywhere."

Which is fine with people like Bonnie Boyer, a grandmother from Sylvania Township who is keenly interested in the Hollywood relationship with a local connection.

"It puts us on the map," she said. "I think it's the biggest thing since Danny Thomas."

She eats up TomKat coverage and has even driven by Holmes' parents' house here in town in the hopes of a star sighting.

"I watch everything that's going on with [the couple]," she said. "I'm kind of obsessed."

She said she's particularly taken with the romance of it all, like how Holmes once told Seventeen magazine: "I think every little girl dreams about [her wedding]. I used to think I was going to marry Tom Cruise."

"It's like a fair tale come true," Boyer said.

TomKat mania isn't a uniquely American phenomenon. People all over the world expectantly follow the couple's actions.

Eylul Ezgi, of Turkey, runs www.katieholmes.com, a Web site for fans. She said a lot of people haven't been turned off by some of Cruise's behavior and wish the couple all the best.

"I'm a Katie Holmes fan and as long as he keeps making her happy, there's nothing wrong for me," she said.

"As long as their love continues, I think fans and even haters will keep this TomKat mania continuing."

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