



CARLE

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## Pitch Man

Murdoch woos Washington

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BEDNARSKI'S COLUMN

## Kill the Laugh Track

That would improve sitcoms

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# BROADCASTING & CABLE

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May 5, 2003

### MEDIA OWNERSHIP

## Powell, Copps Swap Shots on Dereg

BY BILL MCCONNELL

A chorus of lawmakers, artists and activists clamoring to delay the FCC's June 2 vote on sweeping ownership rules is getting a deaf ear from agency Chairman Michael Powell.

Powell told reporters Thursday he "feels good" about chances for securing the commission majority necessary to bring wide-ranging changes to broadcast-ownership rules to a vote by his June 2 deadline. Discussions with three of four fellow commissioners are ongoing, including with Democrat Jonathan Adelstein, he said.

Powell confirmed that the 35% cap on TV-household  
*Continued on page 30*



CBS had to find a new studio to make *Joan of Arcadia* pilot after Twentieth bailed.

## Deficit Disorder

### Why some good pilots never get produced

BY PAIGE ALBINIAK

CBS liked the idea of *Joan of Arcadia*, an hour domestic drama about a woman who moves to the 'burbs with her family and cop husband. It had the right talent: actors Joe Mantegna and Mary Steenburgen and producer/writer Barbara Hall, whose credits include CBS's *Judging Amy*. So the network approached Twentieth Century Fox Television, the studio backing the show, with a pilot order earlier this year.

upfront

But Twentieth balked. It weighed CBS's proposed license fees against high production costs and the limited international market for such soft, female-skewing programs. In the end, it told CBS that, even though it had brought the series to the network, it would pass. It wasn't interested in making the pilot because it wasn't interested in making the series. CBS ultimately made a deal with Sony Pictures Television to co-produce the show with the network.

*Continued on page 27*

### VIACOM EMPIRE

## Redstone Warms To All-Vivendi Deal

BY JOHN M. HIGGINS

The dismantling of Vivendi Universal's U.S. entertainment assets could get a lot more interesting, as Vivendi CEO René Fourtou showed new flexibility in selling the properties and an important suitor—Viacom—suddenly indicated that it might be more open about what it might be willing to buy. Viacom executives have



Sci Fi's *Tremors*

### Vivendi Values

	OWNERSHIP	EST. PRICE (000)
Universal Studios	86%	\$2,685
Universal Theme Parks	86%	\$1,154
USA Network	86%	\$4,334
Sci Fi Channel	86%	\$986
USA TV Studio	86%	\$664
USA Films	86%	\$182
Games	100%	\$2,378
Music	92%	\$5,437
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$17,820</b>
<b>USA + Sci Fi</b>		<b>\$5,320</b>

SOURCE: Sanford Bernstein & Co. analyst Tom Wolzien

**'It would be a delusion to think that we, a French group, can become a leader in American television.'**

**JEAN-RENÉ FOURTOU,**  
Vivendi Universal

previously said that they were interested only in Vivendi Universal Entertainment's (VUE's) cable networks, USA Network and Sci Fi Channel. Chairman and CEO Sumner Redstone didn't want to buy the Universal Studio movie- and TV-production operation  
*Continued on page 30*



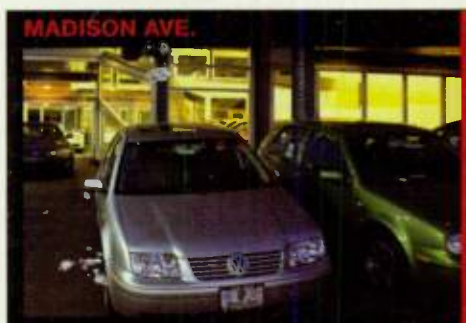
USA's *Peacemaker*



FCC chief Michael Powell is determined to stick with the June 2 date for the vote.

NEWSPAPER

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### GOING UP

# +6%

Local spot sales were up in April, but the fragile economy makes the market hard to diagnose

TV BUYER PAGE 14

# Disney Gets Slammed on the TV Side

War, sports rights and unpaid bills take a toll on broadcast and cable

BY JOHN M. HIGGINS

**W**alt Disney Co. TV operations saw a surprising surge in expenses overwhelm strong sales growth during the quarter ended March 31, showing that the parent company's problems run deeper than recession-battered theme parks.

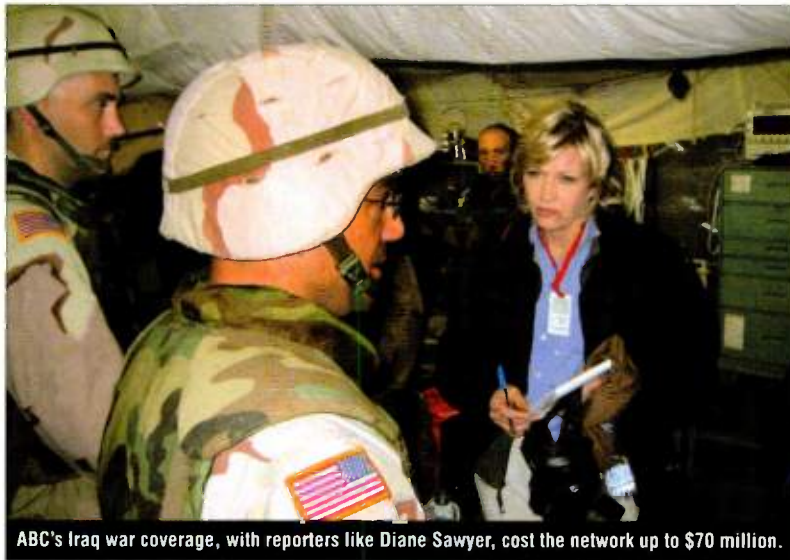
On the sales side, Disney's broadcast and cable operators exhibited little wear from the recession and the war on Iraq, each increasing revenues by 13% for the second fiscal quarter. But the two divisions' earnings were trashed by expenses tied to the war, sports rights and unpaid bills owed by DirecTV's now-bankrupt Latin American DBS operation.

Companywide, Disney's revenues rose 8% to \$6.3 billion, fueled by strong TV ad sales, cable license fees and roaring DVD sales. But operating income dropped 8% to \$646 million.

At the broadcast division, revenue increased 13% to \$1.4 billion, but operating losses ballooned from \$13 million to \$105 million.

Revenue from cable (principally ESPN and ABC Family) also jumped 13% to \$1.1 billion, but operating income rose just 5% to \$337 million.

A lot of the problems in TV stem from sports. Loading up on sports sharply boosts revenues. Morgan Stanley media analyst Richard Bilotti estimates that all of ABC's sales gain stems from its coverage of the Super Bowl this year. He also believes that ad sales from ESPN's pick-up of National Basketball Association games this year accounted for half the cable group's revenue gain.



ABC's Iraq war coverage, with reporters like Diane Sawyer, cost the network up to \$70 million.

But sports is also hugely expensive. One analyst estimated that ABC took a \$70 million loss on the Super Bowl. Bilotti projects that ESPN will lose \$137 million on NBA games this season (not counting license fees from operators).

Then there's the war. Between news coverage and the loss of advertising in the initial days of the conflict, it will cost the network \$65 million-\$70 million. About half those costs—\$32 million—fell in the March quarter.

In their conference call with security analyst, Disney's top executives tried to be upbeat about the TV business.

"Based on the strength of the current scatter ad market and marketplace intelligence, we believe that the broadcast upfront advertising market in aggregate will exceed last season," said President and COO Robert Iger.

CPMs will increase, he said, "sim-

ply by virtue of the fact that ratings are down" for the broadcast networks as a whole. (He noted, however, that ABC's ratings for 2002-03 are up over the prior season.)

"We also believe that the marketplace is strong enough that there will be enough demand for time and network programming. And that will drive increased inventory sales as well."

As expected, ESPN notified cable and DBS operators that it would be taking its annual 20% increase in license fees beginning August. The network, however, is offering to ease that yearly hike if operators commit to long-term carriage of a variety of other ESPN TV and broadband products.

"It's very, very important to focus on the strength that ESPN delivers both to the cable operator and to the consumer," Iger said.

CFO Tom Staggs said that, without the sales gain from the NBA, ESPN's ad sales would have risen about 5%. ■

## BREAKING...

### NBC, Fox in 18-49 Sweeps Tie

LOS ANGELES—One week into the May sweeps, NBC and Fox were tied in the 18-49 demographic, both at a 4.4 rating/13 share, according to Nielsen. That looks at the first full week of the sweeps, through last Wednesday night. Numbers including Thursday night's ratings were not available at press time because President Bush's speech interrupted prime time, delaying the Nielsen tabulation. CBS is in third place in adults 18-49 with a 3.5/10; ABC is fourth with a 3.2/9. The news is probably the best for Fox, which is up 22% in adults 18-49 year-to-date vs. this point last year. NBC is down 12%, CBS down 15% and ABC down 11%.

CBS is winning total viewers by a relatively wide margin at this point, beating NBC with 12.83 million viewers to NBC's 11.27 million. CBS is down 4% in viewers, while NBC is down 14%. Of all six networks, only Fox is up in viewers, by a huge 25% with 9.9 million viewers. Fox also is winning adults 18-34, where also it is up 22% over last year. The WB is up 11% in adults 18-34, its key demographic; UPN is down 13% in the demo.

### Hearst-Argyle Takes a Tumble

NEW YORK—Hearst-Argyle Television's operating income for the first quarter fell 19% to \$37.5 million on a 4% drop in revenue to \$149.3 million. "We are hopeful that the conclusion of the war bodes well for eventual economic recovery," said Hearst-Argyle CEO David Barrett. "But we believe a sustained improvement in consumer confidence levels, increased employment and capital spending, and a general improvement in macroeconomic indicators will be needed drivers to stimulate meaningful growth in overall ad spending."

### News Corp. Files for DirecTV

WASHINGTON—News Corp. Friday submitted its application for FCC permission to gain control of DirecTV and pledged to expand carriage of local broadcast signals in "as many as" 210 markets as soon as "economically and technologically feasible." The company also reiterated its promise to offer its Fox networks to rival distributors on nondiscriminatory terms. An earlier story on page 3 went to press before the filing.

## BROADCASTING & CABLE

May 5, 2003

Volume 133 | Number 18

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# Murdoch Takes Direct Approach

News Corp. chief will pitch merits of DirecTV deal to Judiciary Committee

By BILL MCCONNELL

**A**fter weeks of soothing Washington decision-makers in private, media baron Rupert Murdoch this week pitches them publicly to win support for his \$6.6 billion bid to acquire controlling interest in DirecTV.

Whether asking the U.S. government to waive prohibitions on owning TV stations and a newspaper in the same town or circumventing restrictions on foreign ownership of broadcast licenses, the Australian-born head of News Corp. has never been shy about seeking, and usually winning, regulatory favors.

This time, special treatment doesn't appear necessary, but he isn't taking any chances. For good reason, this acquisition makes a lot of people in Washington nervous. It would be the first marriage of a U.S. pay-TV distributor and a major broadcast network, a combination that many say would give Murdoch unprecedented leverage to favor his own programming channels and TV stations over competitors or boost the price that rival distributors pay for his channels.

Murdoch is scheduled to appear before the House Judiciary Committee May 8 to explain the bid and assure lawmakers that he will treat rivals the same as his own properties. The deal will also be examined during a Senate Commerce Committee hearing on the state of the multichannel industry Tuesday. The Senate Antitrust Subcommittee is also expected to hold a hearing on the deal.

Congress has no official role in approving the deal, but Capitol Hill jawboning can be a strong influence on regulators. Rulings by the FCC and antitrust

regulators expected by year end. Recognizing that the deal would cause jitters, News Corp. offered a concession when it announced last month, and Murdoch and Rich Wagoner, chief executive of DirecTV owner GM, immediately made rounds in Washington to make face-to-face appeals to policymakers.

News Corp. has already given regulators a two-page pledge to follow cable program-access rules, and more details will follow when a formal application is filed with the FCC. The company also is expected to play up consumer benefits of the merger, including demonstrations of interactive services introduced on its U.K. BSkyB DBS service.

Regulators have acknowledged that concerns over program discrimination will be the primary focus of their reviews. "We'll be looking at content-related issues," FCC Chairman Michael Powell told reporters last week. He called Murdoch's preemptive concession a "helpful step."

Sen. Conrad Burns (R-Mont.), chairman of the Senate Communications Subcommittee, said he is "optimistic" about Murdoch's offer but wants to assess the impact of the deal on rural communities, particularly DirecTV's carriage of stations in those areas, before reaching a decision.

Murdoch will face plenty of skeptics on Capitol Hill. Among them, Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.), the Judiciary Committee's ranking member. Commenting on prospects for a Murdoch/DirecTV union

18 months ago, he wondered aloud whether News Corp. could resist the temptation to favor its Fox programming.

If the DirecTV deal is approved, additional mergers between networks and major cable operators or EchoStar are sure to follow. Consequently, they will use as a template for future deals the program-access rules and anti-discrimination requirements Murdoch will be required to follow.

Before News Corp. formally announced the deal and unveiled its program-access promises, Consumers Union was vowing to fight the deal. "Consumers Union fears that a News Corp. purchase of DirecTV is likely to lead to higher prices for both satellite TV and cable TV," complained Gene Kimmelman, the group's Washington policy chief. Rather than cutting the price of DirecTV to compete with EchoStar and cable operators, Kimmelman predicted, News Corp. will increase programming costs to both cable and DBS provider.

News Corp. is currently lobbying the FCC to increase the 35% cap on a TV-station-group owner's household reach so that its Fox Television Stations can buy more stations. Murdoch has drawn the ire of consumer groups for building a vertically integrated media empire combining both programming production and distribution platforms. They also oppose his often successful attempts to escape rules barring crossownership of TV stations and local newspapers and restricting foreign ownership of broadcast licenses. ■



**Immediately after the DirecTV deal was announced, News Corp.'s Rupert Murdoch made rounds in Washington with face-to-face appeals to policymakers.**

## Teens Bored With Reality But Not With *Idol*

By PAIGE ALBINIAK

**B**olt Inc., a teen-targeted online community, says 13- to 24-year-olds are getting "sick" of reality TV, unless it is *American Idol*, and prefer sitcoms to reality. That's according to an opt-in online survey of 512 of its members (with a margin of error of ±5%).

According to Bolt, which released the survey in advance of the upfronts for clients including Nokia, Dr Pepper, Pepsi, Gillette and P&G, 68% of those surveyed said they are tiring of reality programs. But the survey also found that 91% said they plan to watch the return of Fox's *American Idol* next year; half said they expect to watch even more reality TV next year than they do now.

MTV's *The Osbournes* is the favorite reality show of this audience, Bolt says, followed by *Idol*, MTV's *Real World* and

NBC's *Fear Factor*. The survey also found that 80% of this group is online while watching TV, creating a sort of 21st century version of "water-cooler conversation" while the show is going on. It also found that respondents prefer sitcoms to all other TV programming, with 72% watching two or more sitcoms per week, including shows in syndication.

Bolt CEO Aaron Cohen said that, among the principal conclusions of the survey are 1) you can't miss with *American Idol* (teens like shows in which they can affect the outcome, he says), and 2) look for TV programs, reality and scripted, that integrate the Internet into the program so that the Web becomes the "water cooler" between episodes.

"Fox is in front right now," says Cohen, "in terms of understanding the ability of the Internet to be a grassroots force in growing ratings." ■



Out of 512 respondents to an online survey, 91% plan to watch the return of Fox's *American Idol*.

### WEEK OF APRIL 16-MAY 1

## B&C INDICES

### THE B&C 10



### BROADCAST TV GROUPS



### CABLE TV MSO'S



### RADIO



	CLOSE	WEEK	YTD
Dow Jones	8454.25	0.2%	1.4%
Nasdaq	1472.56	1.1%	10.3%

### The B&C 10

	CLOSE	WEEK	YTD
AOL Time Warner	\$13.58	-1.6%	3.7%
Clear Channel	\$38.75	-0.3%	3.9%
Comcast Corp.	\$30.18	-0.3%	33.6%
Cox Comm.	\$33.40	-0.3%	17.6%
Disney	\$18.72	0.4%	14.8%
EchoStar	\$29.99	4.2%	34.7%
Fox Ent.	\$25.50	4.3%	-1.7%
Hearst-Argyle	\$22.98	-1.2%	-4.7%
Tribune	\$48.39	-1.1%	6.4%
Viacom	\$42.89	-0.2%	-3.1%

### GOOD WEEK

Granite	\$2.47	23.5%	20.5%
TiVo	\$6.25	15.1%	20.0%
USA Interactive	\$32.68	13.6%	43.0%
Entravision	\$7.74	10.3%	-22.4%
TV Azteca	\$5.83	10.2%	21.7%

### BAD WEEK

Sony	\$24.35	-10.6%	-41.1%
SeaChange	\$7.65	-6.3%	24.4%
Acme	\$6.71	-4.8%	-15.8%
Emmis	\$18.98	-4.1%	-8.9%
Big City Radio	\$0.58	-3.3%	-65.9%

### CABLE COMEBACK

**20.2%**

Cable operators are the best-performing media stocks this year, up 20% when other sectors have risen just a few percent. That's partly because investors have stopped saying "Who's next?" after all the financial forest fires of last year. But it's also because cable had fallen so hard in 2002.

Source: CNET Investor (investor.cnet.com). This information is based on sources believed to be reliable, and while extensive efforts are made to assure its accuracy, no guarantees can be made. CNET Investor assumes no liability for any inaccuracies. For information regarding CNET Investor's customized financial research services, please call 415-344-2836.

## FAST TRACK

## The Clearinghouse

**BUENA VISTA TELEVISION's** *My Wife and Kids* is selling fast, with the show cleared in 25 markets, including 15 of the top 20, and more than 45% of the country for a fall 2005 launch, said **JANICE MARINELLI**, president of Buena Vista Television. Major station groups **TRIBUNE**, **PARAMOUNT** and **SINCLAIR** all have cleared the show. Buena Vista plans several more off-net launches, including the **TOUCHSTONE**-produced *Scrubs* in either fall 2005 or 2006 and the ABC Tuesday night comedy block in fall 2007. ...

**TELCO PRODUCTIONS** has cleared its weekly half-hour series *Missing* in more than 75% of the country for a fall 2003 launch, according to Telco President Alex Paen. Telco recently added independent WCUI-TV Chicago; NBC affiliate WFLA-TV Tampa, Fla.; NBC affiliate WPXI-TV Pittsburgh; UPN affiliate WRBU-TV St. Louis; and Fox affiliate WTNZ Knoxville, Tenn., to *Missing's* lineup.

## People Mover

**DAN WEISS** is joining **UNIVERSAL DOMESTIC TELEVISION** in the newly created position of executive vice president of worldwide marketing for Universal's domestic and international divisions. He comes to Universal from **CARSEY-WERNER-MANDABACH**, where he was senior vice president of marketing and creative services since 1995. ...

**NBC NEWS** has nabbed boyish war correspondent **RICHARD ENGEL**, who had been freelancing for **ABC NEWS** during the war in Iraq. Engel, 29 and fluent in Arabic, among other languages, was the only TV reporter for an American news outlet who remained in Baghdad throughout the war. For now, Engel will be based in NBC's new Baghdad bureau, working for NBC and **MSNBC**.

## Topic A to Z

After all the hype, a very small crowd tuned in to the debut of **TINA BROWN'S** **CNBC** show April 30. Her *Topic A With Tina Brown* mustered a 0.1 rating, or 74,000 viewers, in its debut outing, according to Nielsen Media Research. That is half the cable net's April prime time average of a 0.2. Hate to say this, but, outside of New York, only about 0.2% of people nationwide are familiar with Brown, the former editor of *Vanity Fair*, *The New Yorker* and *Talk* magazines. ...

*Jack Myers Report*, in its latest analysis of the upcoming 2003-04 upfront marketplace, projects that **NBC** will again amass the biggest dollar total, with \$2.8 billion, up 3.7% from its year-ago \$2.7 billion. **CBS** will be second, *JMR* says, with \$2.1 billion, up 10.5%. Cable's upfront, which Myers projects at \$5.35 billion, up 16%, would amount to nearly as much as the Big Three broadcast net totals combined (\$6.35 billion). ...

The top two weekly hours showed the largest percentage gains in syndication for the week ending April 20. **PARAMOUNT's** *ET Weekend* was the No. 1 weekly hour for the 70th time in the past 71 weeks and scored its highest ratings since the beginning of the war in Iraq, up 14% to a 3.3 rating. In second place, **WARNER BROS.'s** off-net *ER* was up 19% to a 2.5, though down 4% year-to-year. During the week, the average for households using television (HUTs) was down 8%. Bad weather on the East Coast kept people inside.

## CORRECTION

BitCentral's content management system will replace Pathfire's IP system at the NBC News Channel, a service that delivers content to NBC affiliated stations. A Cutting Edge item on page 25 of the April 7 edition incorrectly reported the BitCentral system would work in conjunction with Pathfire.



## Too Close To Home

**WPRI-TV** Providence, R.I., won't show *CSI: Miami*, starring David Caruso (above), on May 5: The plot involves a deadly nightclub fire caused by pyrotechnics. On Feb. 20, a fire at the Station Nightclub, outside Providence, also started by pyrotechnics, killed 99 people. **WPRI-TV** reporter Jeffrey Derderian is co-owner of the club, and station photographer Brian Butler captured the disturbing footage. Instead that night, **WPRI-TV** will show excerpts from a benefit concert for fire victims.



To help enliven the channel, Travel added *Road Trip*, which takes viewers to places like the best amusement parks.

## Travel Channel Chief Checks Out

BY ALLISON ROMANO

As the Travel Channel continues on its road trip, the channel's top executive is getting off the bus. Executive Vice President and General Manager Steve Cheskin is leaving the Discovery Networks'-owned channel after 18 years with the company, three heading the network. His contract was set to expire soon.

Cheskin's departure should usher in some changes for Travel under the tutelage of Discovery Networks U.S. President Billy Campbell.

Going forward, Campbell wants to liven up Travel. Clearly, nothing on Travel right now matches the recognition of TLC's *Trading Spaces* or Discovery Channel's *Monster Garage*. "I want to give viewers more opportunity to say they have to go [to Travel]."

He also envisions Discovery ad sales chief Joe Abruzzese's crafting more partnerships for advertisers in Travel shows, presumably like a recent deal with Holland America cruise line that included sponsoring Travel's *Beach Week 2003*.

In its seven years as a Discovery-owned net, Travel's distribution has soared almost 300% to 71 million homes. But plenty of seats are available. Travel ranks in the bottom half of cable Nielsens, routinely registering a 0.3 or 0.4 rating in prime time.

No doubt, Travel has been hard hit in the past year by world events and the sour economy. When ratings dropped after 9/11, "we sat back at the beginning and said, 'It's going to come back,'" Cheskin recalls.

When viewers didn't, Travel started introducing more entertaining fare, like its *Road Trip* series, which included visits to famous movie locales and the best amusement parks. But some shows seem a little off-brand, like *The World Poker Tour*, which happens to bring in some of Travel's best Nielsen marks.

Cheskin says he's leaving without any regrets. "Even in our darkest days, ratings were still 50% better than when I walked in the door." He plans to take some time off.

Discovery Networks has weathered a string of executive departures in recent years. Former top programmer John Ford left in February. In March 2002, former Discovery President Johnathan Rodgers jumped ship.

At the network level, several executives have left in the last two years: TLC General Manager Jana Bennett; husband-and-wife team Michael Quattrone, head of the Discovery Channel, and Kathy Quattrone, general manager of Discovery Health; and Charley Hubbard, head of digital networks.

Discovery says a search is already under way for a new Travel chief but would not name any contenders. ■

executives

## TiVo Taps a New Topper

NBC vet expected to look for exclusives

BY JOHN M. HIGGINS

In a move clearly aimed at building alliances with other media companies, personal-video-recorder developer TiVo has named NBC vet Martin Yudkovitz president.

Yudkovitz spent 19 years at NBC, most recently as president of NBC Digital. That means he gets credit for things like teaming with Microsoft to create MSNBC but also gets blame for Internet train wrecks like the NBCi search portal.

Yudkovitz replaces Morgan Guenther,

who exited the troubled TiVo in January. Mike Ramsay remains CEO of the company, responsible for the financial heavy lifting.

TiVo's curse is creating a product that's totally addictive to people who actually buy it but is too confusing or expensive to get more than half a million subscribers to sign up. Consumers first swear at it, then swear by it.

Yudkovitz's task will be building up alliances with other TV companies, particularly cable operators keen on deploying some sort of PVR technology but also TV networks and studios needed to develop product for TiVo-exclusive services. ■

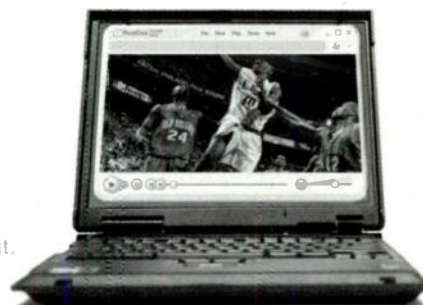
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Log on to RealOne.com to find out what all the excitement is about.



## MEDIA OWNERSHIP

Granite Chips Away  
at Duopoly Rules

Granite Broadcasting President Stuart Beck (below) is pushing state broadcast associations to take a stronger stand than the National Association of Broadcasters has on relaxing TV duopoly restrictions.

Last week, he pushed the Illinois Broadcasters Association, where Granite's WEEK-TV Peoria GM Mark DeSantis is chairman-

elect, to pen a letter urging duopoly dereg, though neither opposing or proposing any particular scheme.

Beck is pushing groups in California, Minnesota and New York, where other Granite GMs hold board seats, to

write letters. He says NAB's plan to permit TV pairs anywhere as long as one station has less than a 10 share won't help midsize and small markets, where there aren't enough stations for any to have a share that low.

IBA's letter didn't specify whether the NAB approach is inadequate, nor did it endorse Granite's call to do away with all restriction on TV pairs. It did, however, urge the FCC to relax sufficiently to help mid- and small-market stations that are "more at risk financially." —B.M.



## BEHIND THE SCENES | BEFORE THE FACT

## IN THE LOOP



## SPORTS

Wide Bodies,  
Wide Pictures

NBA TV's experiments with HD production of regular-season and playoff games have been enough of a hit to have the league moving toward going full-time HD for its subscription service. Gregg Winik, NBA TV and NBA Entertainment executive VP of programming, says viewer response has been fantastic: "NBA TV is well-positioned to go full-time HD." —K.K.

## REAL ESTATE

Heeeeere's  
Johnny's  
House

The owner of former *Tonight Show* host Johnny Carson's boyhood home in Norfolk, Neb., is auctioning the house on e-Bay, starting price \$150,000 (at press time, there had



been no nibbles). For those without that kind of change to plunk down on what is "sure to become one of the most beloved landmarks in America," according to the seller, also up for bid are nine lots of plaster from a renovated stairwell "which Johnny passed through many thousands of times." Starting price on those, a mere \$9.99. Each chunk of plaster comes with a certificate of authenticity and a "documented" 12-digit code to ensure that no bogus plaster hunks can be passed off as Carson's own. —J.E.

## DTV

KFTL's Higher-Priced  
Digital Switch

Spanish-language broadcaster Univision is buying KFTL(TV) Stockton, Calif., from Family Communications for \$65 million, according to documents filed at the FCC. Univision would not comment on the price, but there is more to it than meets the eye.

Because KFTL is on ch. 62, the contract provides that Family would get half of any payout Univision receives if it clears off the channel early as part of the digital transition. Ch. 62 is located in spectrum the FCC plans to auction for advanced communications services when the digital transition is completed and broadcasters' second channel returned. To try to jump-start those services, the FCC is allowing broadcasters to take payments from those companies in exchange for giving up the channels early. —J.E.

## PROGRAMMING

## Studio Name Game

Mutant Enemy, Once Upon a Frog, Persons Unknown, Deedle-Dee, Where's Lunch, Tea Gal, and Java Boy. New names for bands? No, some of the production companies filling the networks' schedules. The names were part of an appendix to an FCC filing by the Big Four networks showing just how many independent producers are represented on their airwaves, although some of these are "in association" with bigger names. The issue of whether giant studios have muscled independents off network schedules is part of the debate over whether to reinstate fin-syn rules.

We saved our favorite name for last: Dorothy Parker Drank Here. Who said long legal documents were dry? —J.E.

NBC Will Have To *Wing* It Without Sorkin

By PAIGE ALBINIAK

**W**est Wing creator, writer and executive producer Aaron Sorkin is leaving the show, and executive producer Thomas Schlamme is going with him, the two said last week, taking the network by surprise.

Executive producer John Wells, whose production company has run the show from its beginning in 1999, is taking over, adding to an already heavy workload that includes *ER* and *Third Watch*.

"This has been the experience of any

writer's dreams," Sorkin said in a statement. "I had the best job in show business, and I'll never forget that."

Said Schlamme, "There has not been a day in the past four years when I've pulled up to stage 23 that I didn't feel blessed by my good fortune to have been part of this great journey. I have been constantly inspired by the enormous talent pool of men and women with whom I have shared this experience, and I am looking forward with confidence to their next chapter of this extraordinary show."

In January, NBC cut a deal with Warner Bros. for two more years of *The West*

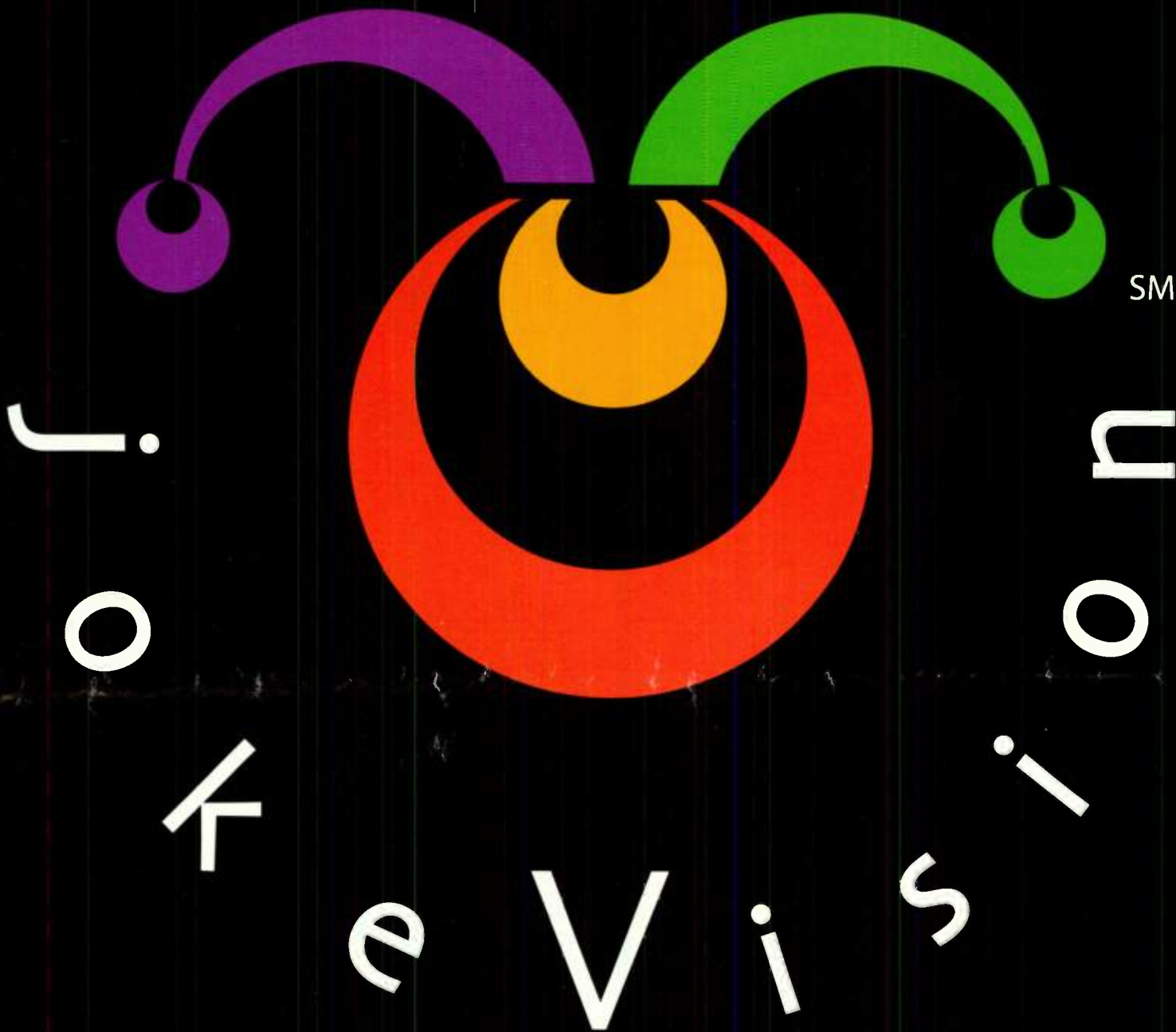
*Wing* at a license fee of approximately \$7 million an episode, with an option for a third year. But the show, entering its fifth season, has been declining in the ratings this year, particularly in its key adult 18-49 demographic, against strong competition from ABC's *The Bachelor* franchise and the renewed strength of Fox's comedies gaining on *American Idol*'s lead-in. Apparently, Sorkin's exit won't affect the pricey deal.

Sorkin has written virtually every episode of *The West Wing*, and show insiders have been saying for months that the effort was exhausting him, particularly be-

cause he is protective over the show and takes criticism extremely personally. Although NBC has not said publicly that it is unhappy with the show's performance, the network has been reluctant to air repeats recently, running repeats of consistent performer *Law & Order* in its place.

Sources say the show has a writing staff in place that Warner Bros. and NBC hopes will be able to handle the show's complex writing duties without Sorkin. He still has one year on his deal with Warner Bros. Television, and the studio expects him to continue to develop other shows, sources said. ■

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World Radio History

# STATION BREAK

BY MARK MILLER

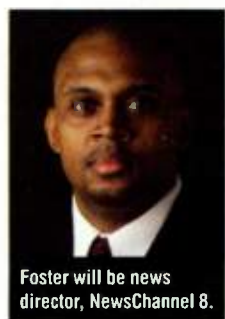
## Executive Shake-Up

**LEXINGTON, Ky.**—Media General ABC affiliate WTVQ-TV appointed Mike McDonald interim general manager last week after firing GM Bill Stanley, News Director David Foky and Executive Producer Audrey Port. Media General Vice President of Broadcast Stations Jim Conschafter wouldn't comment further.

McDonald, formerly news director of WDAF-TV Kansas City, Mo., has signed a contract, Conschafter says, to "help us during this interim period." Conschafter is interviewing GM candidates and wants to hire one soon: "I'd certainly like the new general manager to be involved in hiring a news director."

## New News Faces on 7 and 8

**WASHINGTON**—Allbritton's WJLA-TV, which is channel 7 in Washington, and the company's NewsChannel 8 cable channel went on a hiring spree last week. News Vice President Bill Lord, who oversees both operations, got a news director for the ABC affiliate (Jamie Foster, WFAA-TV Dallas executive producer); a weekend morning anchor for NewsChannel 8 who will also work as a reporter for the TV station (Leslie Cook, KXAN-TV Austin, Texas, 10 p.m. co-anchor); and a weekend weathercaster for WJLA-TV (Joe Witte, CNBC chief meteorologist).



Foster will be news director, NewsChannel 8.

Lord says, "Jamie is a really solid news guy, got great experience at some of the best stations in the country. He's smart, got a great feel for television. He knows graphics and presentation and pacing. He was always a very good producer and moved through the ranks into an executive-producer position, and I think he'll be able to do some great

things with our newscast here." Foster will join the station the first week of June.

Cook joined last week and is the first anchor Lord has hired since the two news operations were merged in September. "It's a blended operation now," Lord says, "so reporters report on both stations all the time." In addition to her weekend morning anchoring, Cook will be a weekday reporter for WJLA-TV's newscasts. Before her stint at KXAN-TV, she worked at KHBS(TV) Fort Smith, Ark., and KAIT-TV Jonesboro, Ark.

Witte, CNBC's chief meteorologist for the past four years, has BS and MS degrees in meteorology. He has worked at WNBC-TV New York, NBC-TV's *News at Sunrise* and *Sunday Today* and anchored the A&E series *Disaster Chronicles*. "Joe Witte," says Lord, "is a big catch for us. He's a phenomenal weathercaster."

## Former WCBS-TV Reporter Dies

**NEW YORK**—Chris Borgen, 76, long-time reporter at WCBS-TV and a former New York City Police detective, died from pulmonary fibrosis on April 25 at Valley Hospital in Ridgewood, N.J.

In addition to his reporting for the station's 6 and 11 p.m. newscasts, he hosted public-affairs programs, such as *Channel 2 The People* and *Channel 2 Eye On*. His popular *Police Files* series resulted in more than 40 felony arrests and the recovery of more than \$2.5 million in stolen property.



Chris Borgen was honored with more than 130 awards for reporting.

Prior to joining WCBS-TV in 1966, Borgen was an NYPD detective for eight years, earning 19 citations for bravery. He also served as the on-air moderator for television series *Experts Answer*, a United States Information Agency-sponsored program televised in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. From 1963 to '65, he was news writer for WINS(AM) New York and, prior to that, director of operations at WNCN(AM) New York.

Borgen earned more than 130 awards for reporting during his career. He re-

tired in 1995. A native of New York City, he attended City College and Columbia University. In 1984, he received an honorary doctor of humanities degree from Felician College in New Jersey.

He is survived by his wife, Mitsou; son, Christopher; and granddaughter, Maggie.

*Dan Trigoboff is recovering from surgery and will return. In his absence, Mark Miller is writing Station Break and can be reached by e-mail at mk-miller@aol.com. Readers and contributors may also send e-mails to Trigoboff at dtrigoboff@reedbusiness.com*



E!'s new programming slate will include reality offerings, like *Nearly Famous 2: More Vegas Showgirls*.

# E! Plans a Busy Summer

Ordering 14 new shows, easy on the shock value

BY ALLISON ROMANO

**A**nna Nicole Smith might have been too much reality for E! Entertainment Television viewers. *The Anna Nicole Show*, with its bizarre star who is hard to watch and even harder to turn off, grabbed headlines and big ratings last summer. But now, E! is going back to its celebrity roots with a new batch of series for summer and fall.

**cable** Facing a glut of reality shows on broadcast—as well as other cable networks—this summer, E! will proffer up entertaining documentary-style shows like *It's Good to Be...*, looking at how wealthy stars spend their loot, and *Hollywood Wives*, on the lives of the women behind Hollywood's leading men. There are a few reality entries, notably *Nearly Famous 2: More Vegas Showgirls*, the second installment of E!'s peek at what it's like to be a showgirl.

"We're trying to broaden our storytelling," said E! CEO Mindy Herman. "On broadcast, there's more shock value and train-wreck value than storytelling."

Her team of in-house producers is prepping 14 new series, E!'s largest one-time programming slate ever.

Summer has always been an important season for the network. Last summer, E! averaged a 0.5 rating in prime, a bit higher than its recent 0.4 for April, according to Nielsen Media Research. And this summer, with E! facing even more competition, Herman said the network needs to offer viewers more fresh fare.

"It used to be if *True Hollywood Stories*

was working, let's make 100 more," she recalls. "Now there is a lot of desire for new and original shows."

Other new offerings include *101 Shocking Moments*, an hour-long show that relives show business's most memorable moments, and the *Reality Magazine Project*, where E! cameras follow the staff of a major entertainment magazine (possibly red-hot *US Weekly*) as they hash out the week's news and put out the issue. One of Herman's picks to hit: *Celebrities Uncensored*, a weekly, hour-long look at a star's real life.

The new shows, "won't break through in a shocking, over-the-top way like *The Osbournes* or Anna Nicole did, but they will resonate," Herman predicted.

MTV and VH1 are also trafficking heavily in celebrity these days. MTV is plotting a new reality show with newlywed musicians Jessica Simpson and Nick Lachey. And at the revamped VH1, celebrity-hooked shows are now a major part of the menu.

Herman shrugged off the competition, contending other channels routinely dabble in E!'s space. "Diane Sawyer sits down with virtually every *True Hollywood Story* subject and Madonna was just interviewed on *Dateline*," she noted.

E! will create between six and 13 episodes of each new series. Because the shows are created or co-produced by its E! Studios, if a particular series pops, the net can quickly craft more episodes.

E! has also renewed *Star Dates* and *The Michael Es-sany Show* for second seasons. No word yet if *Anna Nicole*, now in season two, will return for a third trip. But the former playmate has dealt with disappointment before. ■



**'We're trying to broaden our storytelling. On broadcast, there's more shock value and train-wreck value than storytelling.'**

**MINDY HERMAN,**  
E! Entertainment  
Television



# IT'S LIGHTS OUT

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**DON'T GET LEFT IN THE**

# DARK!

## PROGRAMMING



Animated *Life's a Bitch*, set for a 2004 debut, is one of Oxygen's new original scripted series.

## Oxygen: It Lives! Now Can It Breathe?

After some stumbles, the women's network is working to refine and redefine its image

BY ALLISON ROMANO

**A**s Oxygen continues its hunt for female viewers, the net is adding scripted shows that are both "powerful and playful," says programming chief Debby Beece. "We're out there trying to get ourselves noticed."

Oxygen certainly gained notice, if not notoriety, for its celebrated launch because of the star power of its investors. Noted programmer Geraldine Laybourne, mega-celeb Oprah Winfrey and show producer Carsey-Werner-Mandelbach had big plans three years ago, but Oxygen flopped like a fish.

After several well-documented stumbles, though, Oxygen is still working to refine and redefine its image. Its executives still want to offer women a smart alternative. But, these days, Oxygen is also lightening up a bit. Lifetime, queen of the women's niche, has cornered the market with a lot of serious and sentimental offerings. At Oxygen, Beece says, "we're trying to reach younger, en-

gaged women with full lives." Those women, she contends, want more fun and funnier fare.

Oxygen seems to have a lot of ground to make up, particularly once the television world finally found out how tiny its viewership is: The channel, with 50 million subscribers,



Oxygen co-produces and shares the animated series *Hey Monie* with Black Entertainment Television.

recorded a 0.2 rating in April, the first month its Nielsen ratings have been published for ad agencies and competing networks to see. That puts Oxygen's marks in the Nielsen sub-basement with National Geographic and its women's competitor

WE: Women's Entertainment.

"To date, not enough viewers have been able to fit [Oxygen] into their array of options," said John Rash, senior vice president of media buyer Campbell Mithun.

To change that, Oxygen is venturing into scripted fare, with its first scripted series and made-for-TV movies. *In Your Dreams*, a sitcom about the sexual tension between two doctoral candidates working on a book about relationships, is slated for late this year. The second show, *Sexual Anthropology*, a half-hour dramedy about a young (male) anthropology teacher looking for love, should debut early next year.

Like other cable channels, Oxygen has to be creative to finance expensive scripted projects. It has ordered 13 episodes of both shows. To help defray costs, the series are being shot abroad with international partners. And Oxygen is also trying to develop ideas in-house, although both *In Your Dreams* and *Sexual Anthropology* came from outside.

For two other original shows, Oxygen also embraced new partnerships. It's co-producing eight new episodes of British hit *Absolutely Fabulous* with the BBC. Oxygen also airs older *Ab Fab* episodes.

And one of its two new animated shows, *Hey Monie*, is co-produced and shared with BET; it debuts on Oxygen June 1 (it has been airing on BET, but Oxygen will have new episodes). The other, *Life's a Bitch*, which arrives in early 2004, is a solo venture.

The net's first original movie, *A Tale of Two Wives*, is slated for this fall. After that, Oxygen plans one original movie per quarter.

Movies are a luxury that Oxygen finally feels it can afford. As a full-time cable channel, it has to make series its first priority. "You need to fill slots and create compelling programming 24/7," Beece says.

Oxygen is also renewing six non-scripted shows, including *The Isaac Mizrahi Show*, *Girls Behaving Badly* and *Oprah After the Show*.

Original programming now accounts for about 50% of Oxygen's schedule. The network is spending 25% more money on programming in 2003, Beece adds. That's up from about \$85 million last year, according to Kagan World Media estimates. ■

## Fox Keeps Killing, Even After the War

BY ALLISON ROMANO

**F**ox News Channel continued its winning ways in April, its war coverage attracting droves of viewers and helping silence critics who said the net couldn't handle hard news. Now, with breaking news giving way to post-war analysis and punditry—Fox's bread and butter—the network is still riding high.

In April, Fox registered a 3.3 prime time rating, besting its cable news rivals as well as all other cable networks. Throughout the month, though, ratings cooled off from a high of 4.4 for the first week to a 2.2 the last week. But that's still a full point above its 1.2 prime time rating a year ago.

"The brilliance of Fox is how they morph," said Lifetime's research chief and TV historian Tim Brooks.

Fox is holding viewers, while its competitors hemorrhage their war spoils.

CNN also recorded robust numbers for April,

### April's Top Gun



Fox News was  
No. 1-rated  
cable net in  
prime time

3.3

a 2.1 prime time average, up 133% from last year. By the final week in April, though, CNN had settled to a 1.0, just a touch higher than its average a year ago. Since jettisoning two of its softer shows *Talk Back Live* and *Connie Chung Tonight* during the war, CNN has emerged with more straight-news shows.

MSNBC, after riding high early on, has fallen back. The net grabbed a 1.2 prime time average for April, compared with a 0.4 a year ago. But the gains are deceiving. Initially, war coverage sparked the floundering channel, with a 1.6 average in prime for the first two weeks of April. By the final week, though, it had crashed to a 0.5.

Among entertainment channels, TNT was tops with a 2.1 average in prime, up 24% from last year. A sign of a shift though: TNT beat out Fox News to claim the top spot in the final week of April (a 2.4 average for TNT compared with 2.2 for Fox).

Other general-entertainment networks, however, slipped in April. Lifetime's woes continued, ratings falling 23% to a 1.7 average. USA Network was off 18% to a 1.4, and TBS Superstation plunged 24% to a 1.3 prime time average.

A few cable networks enjoyed robust year-to-year growth. ESPN's ratings jumped nearly 40% to a 1.1 rating, and Hallmark Channel increased viewership 60% to a 0.8 average. VH1 notched a 0.5 rating, up 67%. ■

## SYNDICATION WATCH

RATINGS | April 14-20

Nielsen Media Research

## Top 25 Shows

Adults 18-34

RANK/PROGRAM	AA	GAA
1 Seinfeld	4.5	5.4
1 Friends	4.5	5.3
3 Seinfeld (wknd)	3.9	4.4
4 Everybody Loves Raymond	3.0	3.4
5 That '70s Show	2.8	3.5
5 Will & Grace	2.8	3.1
7 King of the Hill	2.5	2.8
8 Home Improvement	2.0	2.4
8 Entertainment Tonight	2.0	2.1
10 Friends (wknd)	1.9	2.0
10 Oprah Winfrey Show	1.9	1.9
12 Dharma & Greg	1.8	2.0
12 Maury	1.8	1.7
12 Drew Carey	1.8	1.6
15 ER	1.6	1.8
15 Frasier	1.6	1.6
17 Everybody Loves Raymond (wknd)	1.5	NA
17 The X-Files	1.5	1.5
19 Jeopardy	1.4	NA
19 Judge Judy	1.4	2.0
19 Stargate SG-1	1.4	1.4
22 Wheel of Fortune	1.3	NA
22 Dr. Phil	1.3	1.4
22 Ricki Lake	1.3	1.4
22 WW Police Videos	1.3	1.4
22 Buffy the Vampire Slayer	1.3	1.3
22 Montel Williams Show	1.3	1.3

## Top Court Shows

Adults 18-34

RANK/PROGRAM	AA	GAA
1 Judge Judy	1.4	2.0
2 Divorce Court	1.2	1.6
3 Texas Justice	0.9	1.2
4 Judge Joe Brown	0.8	1.1
4 Judge Mathis	0.8	0.8

According to Nielsen Media Research Syndication Service Ranking Report April 14-20, 2003

AA = Average Audience Rating

GAA = Gross Aggregate Average

ONE NIELSEN RATING = 1,067,000 households, which represents 1% of the 106.7 million TV Households in the United States

NA = not available

| off-net sitcom |

## '70s Lives on in Syndie

BY PAIGE ALBINIAK

Carsey-Werner-Mandabach's *That '70s Show* has proved a strong entry in syndication, skewing young and entering the rankings near the top of the list.

It's the fourth-highest-rated off-net sitcom on the air in adults 18-34 season-to-date, behind powerhouses Warner Bros.' *Friends*, Sony's *Seinfeld* and King World's *Everybody Loves Raymond*. It is fifth in adults 18-49, just behind Warner Bros.' *Will & Grace*.

"A lot of our 18-49 viewers come from 18-34, so it's a great show for advertisers looking for young adults," says Robert Dubelko, co-president and chief operating officer of Carsey-Werner-Mandabach.

Around three-quarters of *That '70s Show's* audience comprises viewers 12-49, Dubelko says, which is the "highest concentration of that audience of any off-net show out there. In the 18-49 demo, this show has been the best performer of time-period improvements in the past seven years of any show launched in syndication, even *Friends*."

Stations believed in the show from the beginning, Dubelko says, and all but two stations in the top 50 markets double-run the show, 40 of them in access. According to Carsey-Werner, when the show is double-run in access, it builds on its lead-in by 133% in adults 18-49.

The show runs mostly on WB and UPN affiliates, with several Fox stations in the mix. The show airs on Fox-owned WFLD-TV Chicago, Fox owned WNYW-TV New York, and Viacom owned KCOP-TV Los Angeles, a UPN affiliate.

On independent KICU-TV San Francisco, the show has improved its access time periods at 7 and 7:30 p.m. in adults 18-49, by 160% and 125%, respectively. On Viacom's UPN affiliate WSBK-TV Boston, *That '70s Show* improved the access time periods by 300% and 31%, respectively.

On KCOP-TV, the show has improved its 7 p.m. time period by 170%. The station also runs it at 6:30 p.m., where its ratings performance is flat vs. last year. ■



This season, *That '70s Show* is the No. 4 off-net sitcom in the adults 18-34 demographic.

## Syndie

Insider

## King World Has a Programming Exec

King World has hired its first development executive after letting its entire programming department go at the end of last year. Mike Stornello, who has been with the company since 1990 and was most recently senior vice president of sales, will relocate to Los Angeles from Chicago to become senior vice president of development. Stornello played a large role in the development and launch of King World's new morning talk show *Living it Up! With Ali & Jack*, which has been cleared in 87% of the country for a fall launch.

Hey, John Walsh, Look Out for *Maury*

Universal's *Maury* did John Walsh proud on Friday, April 25 when the daytime talk show helped catch a criminal who had been on the lam for two years. On April 18, *Maury* did a show about brutal attacks. The program featured Jamielka Cooper of Florence County, S.C., who had been shot in the face and blinded by her boyfriend, Reggie McNeil, after the couple had an argument on May 6, 2001. After the segment, in which the producers posted a number to call at the Florence County Sheriff's office, viewers began calling in. Realizing the police were on to him, McNeil turned himself in to police in Brooklyn, N.Y. In more good news for *Maury*, the program was the highest-rated daytime talk show in New York that Friday, unrelated to the capture, with a 5.7 rating/15 share, beating *Oprah's* 5.4/14.

## Pie Town Divvies Up Pieces

Production company Pie Town Productions is giving a broader corporate role to three of its executives, all of whom work on Paramount's syndicated strip *Life Moments*. Eric Black, formerly post-production producer on *Life Moments*, returns to Pie Town in the newly created post of creative director. Sean Fitzgibbons, line producer on *Life Moments*, becomes executive in charge of production at Pie Town. And Dana Besnoy will be director of post-production after working as post-production supervisor on the show. The three will help Pie Town expand its business to develop programming for network prime time, basic cable and syndication. Pie Town has 11 series on the air, including eight for HGTV, for which it plans to produce 500 episodes of reality TV over the next two years.

#1 FOX Sitcom!

The  
Bernie  
Mac  
Show

HH

W18-49

7.6 #1

6.8 #1

The Simpsons

7.0

4.2

That '70s Show

6.9

6.1

Malcolm in the Middle

6.4

3.9

Wanda at Large

6.1

5.4

King of the Hill

4.7

2.7

The  
Bernie  
Mac  
Show

Wed. 9pm FOX



Source: NTL, Galaxy Explorer, w/o 4/21-27/03, HH &amp; W18-49 AA Rtg

--- COMING SOON ---



# Lifetime Picks Two for Prime

BY ALLISON ROMANO

It's never easy to pick favorites among your progeny, but Lifetime has finally selected two of its four drama pilots to take to series. Dramas *1-800-Missing* and *Wild Card* will debut in early August, each with an initial run of 13 episodes.

Entertainment chief Barbara Fisher says both shows have "great emotional tug and, hopefully, there is good suspense and good mystery."

Lifetime will use the shows to launch a second night of original programming, with Saturday, Tuesday and Friday in consideration. Its successful dramas *Strong Medicine* and *The Division* currently air on Sunday.

*1-800-Missing*, produced by Lions Gate Entertainment, stars Gloria Reuben as an FBI agent who teams with a teenage psychic to solve missing-persons cases. *Wild Card*, from Fireworks Entertainment, features Joely Fisher as a former Las Vegas blackjack dealer who, after her sister's death, goes to take care of the children left behind and embark on a new investigative career.

A team of Lifetime executives, including Fisher and Lifetime Chairman and CEO Carole Black and executives from research, sales and marketing, hashed out the selections. Fisher says *1-800-Missing* and *Wild Card* meshed well and also tested well with men and women.

The leftover pilots, *Follow the Leeds* and *Nick & Shelley*, still could have a future on Lifetime. Both shows could be considered as midseason replacements, Fisher said. Lifetime developed *Follow the Leeds* in-house. ■



Lifetime's Fisher says new shows mesh well.

## MARKET | Jonesboro | FOCUS

### AT A GLANCE

#### The Market

DMA rank	181
Population	212,000
TV homes	82,000
Income per capita	\$13,467
TV revenue rank	184
TV revenue	\$8,300,000

#### Commercial TV Stations

RANK*	CH.	AFFIL.	OWNER
1	KAIT-TV	8 ABC	Liberty

\*February 2003, total households, 6 a.m.-2 a.m., Sun.-Sat.

#### Cable/DBS

Cable subscribers (HH)	54,120
Cable penetration	66%
ADS subscribers (HH)**	11,480
ADS penetration	14.4%
DBS carriage of local TV?	No

\*\*Alternative Delivery Systems, includes DBS and other non-cable services, according to Nielsen Media Research

#### What's No. 1

Syndicated Show	RATING/SHARE***
<i>Live With Regis and Kelly</i> (KAIT)	8/30
Network Show	
<i>8 Simple Rules</i> (KAIT)	13/21
Evening Newscast	
KAIT	30/5
Late Newscast	
KAIT	24/51

\*\*\*February 2003, total households

SOURCES: Nielsen Media Research, BIA Research

## One Station, Many Rivals

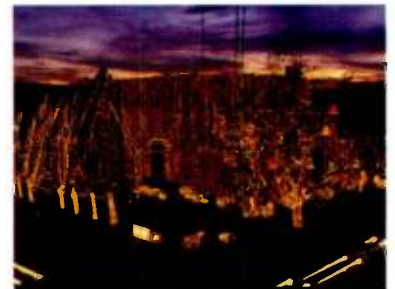
At first glance, ABC affiliate KAIT-TV might seem to have the Jonesboro, Ark., market all locked up: It's the only TV station in town. But first impressions can be deceiving, says Clyde Anderson, general manager of the Liberty Corp.-owned station, and that's because the market is heavily cabled.

With cable penetration of 66% in the seven-county DMA, 77% in the metro area and 79% in Jonesboro's home county, KAIT-TV faces competition on the basic tiers alone from CBS and NBC affiliates in Memphis, Tenn., and Little Rock, Ark.; the ABC station in Little Rock; a Fox affiliate in Memphis; PBS stations in Memphis and Little Rock; and an independent religious station from Little Rock that simulcasts on a channel in Jonesboro.

"The biggest problem," says Anderson, "is our DMA size. Although we're the No. 1-most-viewed station in probably about 19 or 20 counties, we only get to claim seven of them in the DMA. We may have the biggest sign-on-to-sign-off share, but, when you take Memphis, where you've got four or five stations, and you add them up collectively, they knock me out of the county. But, when you look at the county-by-county breakdowns, we're the most dominant station in about 19 counties."

And that imported television competition is not all. "From a sales standpoint," he explains, "our biggest competitors are Clear Channel radio and Saga Communications. Saga has three stations, and Clear Channel has six. And we've got a real good newspaper here, the *Jonesboro Sun*. And cable is also a competitor. We've got four or five major MSOs—Cox, Cablevision, Charter, Classic—and several smaller ones." So far this year, Anderson says, "we're pacing on budget, doing fairly well. The local market is a little bit ahead of budget."

Being the only station in town doesn't mean it's not looking ahead. "We've been broadcasting an HD signal since January," he says. "We're working on some building-expansion plans to develop a bigger newsroom and HD studio two or three years down the road."—By Mark Miller



### WHAT THEY DO

**21%** of household mortgage holders pay \$700-\$999 per month

**318K** acres in greater Jonesboro are crop land, with delta cotton land to the east and rice and soybean fields to the southeast

SOURCE: Greater Jonesboro Chamber of Commerce

## HATCHETT RULES PORTLAND!

JUDGE HATCHETT delivers honorable ratings with the time period's BEST performance in 3 years on KPTV at 2:30pm!

**2.9** HOUSEHOLD RATING!

**+16%** OVER LEAD-IN!

**+53%** OVER YEAR AGO!

JUDGE HATCHETT

SOURCE: NSI, WRAP Overights, M-F, (4/21/03-4/25/03), year ago=May 02 Sweep, best=May Sweep histories

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## TV BUYER

## How's Local TV Biz Looking?

Dunno, say some big group owners

BY STEVE McCLELLAN

**M**ost broadcasters have reported financial results for the first three months of 2003 (or will do so shortly), and it's becoming clear just how *unclear* the advertising outlook is for the station business for the next couple of quarters.

Broadcasters reported much slower growth and even declines in many of the top ad categories for the first quarter, including automobile, fast food, telecommunications, travel, beer and wine, and gas and oil. The movie and retail categories were mixed, with some groups reporting gains, others declines.

Discussing his company's first-quarter results last week, LIN TV Chairman and CEO Gary Chapman described the advertising business during that period as "challenging," adding that the near-term outlook is virtually unpredictable. Pro forma ad revenue at the LIN stations was basically flat, while "visibility is quite low," he said. He indicated that the group's same-station ad sales were down about 3% in March, due in part to the Iraq war but also due to comparisons with last year, when the group had millions more in political revenue.

April was up "slightly," and Chapman is hopeful that succeeding months will show improvement, "but it is difficult to say how fast and how far this marketplace will recover."

Similarly, Belo Chief Financial Officer Dunia Shive told analysts and investors during a first-quarter-earnings teleconference April 25 that it is too early to predict second-quarter TV ad sales (or newspaper ad sales for that matter).

Bear Stearns broadcasting analyst Victor Miller issued a report last week that concludes that the advertising recovery for stations is taking longer than originally expected. As a result, he reduced second-quarter operating-cash-flow estimates for seven of the eight TV companies he follows.

"There was an expectation that ad revenue would snap back" after the war wound down in mid April, Miller said in his report. But it hasn't. He estimates that local TV revenue was up a very modest 1% in April.

And paces for May, so far, are "generally poorer" than expected. Tough comparisons with last year are partly to blame. But, says Miller, "advertisers are sitting on the sidelines longer," unsure of when to reenter the market.

Belo Executive Vice President, Media Operations, Jack Sander conveyed a similar opinion in discussing first quarter results with analysts and investors. After discussions with advertisers, he said, he believes that a number of product introductions and accompanying ad campaigns are in the works. "People do have money in queue to get back to the normal ad pace. Now they're just kind of waiting to pull the trigger to see how consumers are reacting on a week to week basis."

He believes that "the question is when," not



Ad sales categories like fast food have shown slow growth.

if, "advertisers will implement their original advertising plans."

LIN TV Executive Vice President Paul Karpowicz said much the same thing to analysts and investors last week. It hasn't shown up in the actual results yet, he said, but "there's anecdotal evidence" that advertisers will be spending more aggressively in the coming months. "We feel cautiously optimistic, given what they're telling us."

Bishop Cheen, broadcast analyst for Wachovia Securities, sees the current ad market this way: "It is fragile. Handle with care. It's showing signs of recovery, but, at the same time, it's very spookable."

But, he said, with all that the economy has been through since the dotcom bubble burst followed in short order by 9/11, TV broadcasters have performed "remarkably given the circumstances. This is kind of not unexpected, and nobody should be crying in angst" because the underlying fundamentals of the business are still sound, he said.

In his Bear Stearns report last week, Miller wrote, "Regional and local advertisers are not stepping into the market as much as they have in the past."

On the plus side, WB stations seem to be faring better than affiliates of the Big Four. That was the case for Granite Broadcasting, which owns stations in both categories and reported first-quarter results last week. Granite CEO Don Cornwell told analysts that the group's WB affiliates had "double-digit top-line [revenue] growth in the first quarter" compared with low- to mid-single-digit growth at its other affiliates. And, while LIN reported that its movie business was down a little in the quarter, Granite's WB stations showed huge growth in the category: "something like 30%," said Cornwell. ■



## First-Half Roller Coaster

## Estimated Spot TV Sales

MONTH	CHNG. *
JANUARY	+14%
FEBRUARY	-3%
MARCH	Flat
APRIL	+6%
MAY	+0 to +2%
JUNE	+8 to +10%

\*First half 2003 vs. same period in 2002

SOURCE: Merrill Lynch

## EBB &amp; FLOW

Sound of Silence  
For Radio in April

Radio's rough patch continues, but some relief may arrive by June. Bear Stearns estimates that radio ad sales were down 3% last month vs. April 2002, and the firm projects that May will be down about the same amount. But look for resurgence in June, when sales could post a 3% increase.

That won't be enough to save

## 2Q projection:

-1%

the second quarter from a decline from the same period a year ago. Bear Stearns' revised second-quarter radio sales projection calls for a 1% drop. Earlier, the firm had predicted a 5% gain.

"March was flat to up a few points, but April looks flat and down a few points," says Marc Guild, president, Interep. Retail, "our top category," he says, remains flat, although domestic auto and telecom are pacing up.

"It's very easy to get into last-minute radio buys," says Kaylan Asher, president of Dallas-based Asher Media, "and at very easy CPMs."

LCI VP, radio, Maureen Whyte notes, "Speaking with people in the New York radio market, it seems many stations did not make budget in April."

Dennis McGuire, VP/regional broadcast director, Carat, concurs but adds, "With the bulk of the Iraq invasion over, I think clients are going to be more secure. Vendors are saying May is getting very active."

Katz Media Group CEO Stu Olds sees "a return to more normalized patterns for the remainder of second quarter."

Whyte still questions the market's return. "I'm working on buys for late May/June," she said, "and rates go back down after Memorial Day. Memorial Day week is getting ugly."

—Jean Bergantini Grillo

## NEXT WEEK:

## Networks

## SEPARATED AT BIRTH

Turner Broadcasting's Steve Koonin (r) and "clone" Wayne Knight, of *Seinfeld* fame, entertained buyers.

## With Two Pitches, Buyers See Double at TNT/TBS Upfront

BY JOHN M. HIGGINS

Turner Broadcasting entertainment executives are emphasizing two messages in this year's upfront season—one painstakingly number-crunchy, one simple and direct.

The company's upfront presentation in New York last Tuesday distinguished between drama-oriented TNT and comedy-action TBS, which share one common element: growth. The major presentation focused on the ratings success of the two networks, which rank first and second, respectively, among cable nets in adults 18-49 and 25-54, or, as the newly christened chief operating officer of both nets, Steve Koonin, boasted, "every demo that matters." (Advertisers looking specifically for men, women or young adults might disagree.)

For the number-crunchers, the Turner folks argue that cable networks can be artfully and cheaply used to deliver the same "reach" as broadcast networks. That pitch involves computer modeling (called Turner's Multidimensional Analytical Platform), which is better-suited to small meetings with the most techie of media planners but boils down to one point the Turner slide show pushes: "Prime time broadcast-network television can be nothing more than an EXORBITANTLY PRICED FREQUENCY MEDIUM" (emphasis Turner's).

For the bigger presentation to buyers, Turner glitzed it up a bit with a closing performance by singer Norah Jones and the "cloning" of Koonin featuring his lookalike Wayne Knight, who played the character Newman in *Seinfeld*.

Koonin continued to push the company's campaign to keep ad buyers from considering the networks interchangeable. Two years ago, TBS and TNT were hard to tell apart, particularly since they pretty much shared windows for every major theatrical release Turner secured. Now TNT is looking to skew

toward adults 25-54, emphasizing that "We Know Drama" and loading its schedule with hour off-net series like *Law & Order*, sports, and dramatic theatrical movies. (Current and upcoming movies include plenty of comedies, such as *Rush Hour*, *Trading Places*, *The Wedding Planner*, *What Women Want*, *Forces of Nature* and a remake of Neil Simon comedy *The Goodbye Girl*.)

TNT is tempering its ambitions. After being burned in attempts to develop an hour dramatic series, it has no new shows slated and only eight original movies scheduled for next year.

TBS is still searching for branding but has made one big, surprisingly long commitment. The network extended its deal for a cable run of *Seinfeld* through 2011 (that year, the comedian will be 57 years old, giving an indication of the show's presumed shelf-life) for a meaty

**'Prime time broadcast-network television can be nothing more than an EXORBITANTLY PRICED FREQUENCY MEDIUM.'**

Turner upfront slide show

price. The network will pay \$800,000 an episode and barter two 30-second commercial spots for Sony Pictures Television to resell.

That's only slightly lower than the then-record \$1 million TBS agreed to pay in 1998, even though the show is older and runs over and over in broadcast and cable syndication. But TBS wants a steady anchor for its prime time access "Nonstop Comedy Block," a 4:30-8 p.m. ET weekday lineup of off-network sitcoms, including *Friends*, *The Drew Carey Show* and cable syndie disappointment *Home Improvement*.

TBS also revealed plans to start its first West Coast feed. Even though broadcast nets have offered different feeds for different time zones for decades, a handful of cable networks have avoided the \$1.5 million or so annual expense and simply kept one feed. ■

## HOT SPOTS

### CAB Narrows CEO Search to Three

The CABLETELEVISION ADVERTISING BUREAU has trimmed its search for a new CEO to the three contenders, all from the ad-agency side (as outgoing CEO JOSEPH OSTROW was when named to the post in 1994). According to sources close to the situation, the three candidates have gone through the first two phases of the search committee's interview process.

The CAB hopes to make a selection in the next "two to four weeks," sources said last Friday.

### Sponsorships

USA NETWORK has signed about a half dozen major sponsors for *Eco-Challenge Fiji*, a five-hour competition airing in one-hour installments May 5-7 and a two-hour finale May 8. CHEVY TRUCKS will be the presenting sponsor; KODAK MAX, SMIRNOFF ICE TRIPLE BLACK, YAHOO!, VERIZON WIRELESS, SCHICK X-TREME 3 and MAD RIVER have all signed on as participating sponsors. The advertisers also get plugs via product placements and team names in the endurance competition. The actual competition—created by MARK BURNETT of *Survivor* fame—took place in October, starting with 81 four-person teams representing 23 nations; that number soon dwindled to 23 teams. ...

VH1 has sold the latest variation on its annual *Divas* special, *Divas Duets*, to nine brands, including three from the PROCTOR & GAMBLE stable: CREST REJUVENATING EFFECTS, COVER GIRL and HYDRIENCE BY CLAIROL. The other major sponsors: HEINEKEN, MERCEDES-BENZ, INFUSIUM 23, AQUAFINA, CHRYSLER GROUP and MCDONALD'S.

*Divas Duets*, hosted by QUEEN LATIFAH, will bow May 22 at 9 p.m. ET; this will be the second year that VH1 will originate the show from Las Vegas.

### Scarborough Offers Expanded Database

SCARBOROUGH RESEARCH has effectively doubled the size of its database by combining data from two continuous 12-month studies into a single 24-month database. STUDY MAKER, an addition to Scarborough's PRIME NEXT data-analysis software, allows TV-station clients to "drill deeper" into consumer, shopping, media, lifestyle and demo categories in pitching their stations to advertisers, says the company.

"Local advertisers and media outlets that have traditionally smaller audience sizes will now have a larger respondent base to work with when profiling their consumers," says Scarborough's STEVE SERAITA, executive VP and director of sales.

Scarborough is a joint venture of ARBITRON and VNU.

### Myers Sees Broadcast, Cable Upfront Gains

Jack Myers Reports last week released its projections for the 2003-04 upfront market—upwardly revised to \$8.75 billion for the broadcast networks and \$5.35 billion for cable.

The broadcast prime time estimate represents a 6.7% increase from the year-ago \$8.2 billion, up from the daily newsletter's previously projected 5%.

For the basic cable nets, JMR editor JACK MYERS estimates a hefty 16% jump from the year-ago \$4.6 billion, vs. the earlier forecast of 10%.

Myers, who predicts "significant" upfront cost-per-thousand increases, says key contributors to the upsurge will be the automotive and entertainment categories, as well as consumer electronics, media, pharmaceuticals, financial services and package goods.

For the broadcasters, JMR sees the evening newscasts as the only non-prime time daypart with slowing sales; he puts the dip at 11%.

Myers also predicts upfront growth for syndication, which he estimates should climb 10% to \$2.2 billion from \$2 billion last year.

### Next J&J 'Spotlight' Movie Set for Fall

JOHNSON & JOHNSON's next "Spotlight Presentation" movie on TNT will be *Wilderness Days*, due in October with PETER FALK as the star. As reported two weeks ago, the movie will be about a grandfather's recalling for his grandson his days on a circus boat. Interpublic Group of Cos.' MAGNA GLOBAL ENTERTAINMENT will co-produce with VIACOM PRODUCTIONS.

Another J&J movie, baseball-themed *The Winning Season*, which was announced months ago, will air in 2004, TNT said at its upfront presentation Wednesday evening. The fantasy plot deals with a 12-year-old who travels back in time to meet Hall of Famer HONUS WAGNER using the legend's prized baseball card as the portal.

That title makes four J&J/TNT movies done or in development.

## WASHINGTON

# Clear Channel Victory

Challenge to Ohio acquisition dismissed; Georgia buy likely

BY BILL MCCONNELL

**C**lear Channel appears to be beating back the host of single-station and small-group owners who have asked the FCC to stop what they say are strong-arm and illegal tactics by the radio giant, which has muscled its way to domination in many markets across the country.

On May 1, the FCC dismissed a petition to block its acquisition of an Ohio radio station on



Concentrating in Columbus, Ga.

CLEAR CHANNEL	SOLAR	DAVIS
WMLF(AM)	WDAK(AM)	WEAM(AM)
WVRK(FM)	WSTH-FM	WOKS(AM)
WGSY(FM)		WFXE(FM)
WPNX(AM)		WKZJ(FM)
WAGH(FM)		
WBFA(FM)		

SOURCE: BROADCASTING & CABLE research

grounds that Clear Channel concealed it already was de facto owner of WFCB(FM) Chillicothe. Also, the FCC found that incomplete listings of Clear Channel properties in the Chillicothe area were not proof that the company intentionally misled the commission. Clear Channel, however, was admonished for sloppy paperwork.

## COLUMBUS, GA. PURCHASE

An attempt to block another Clear Channel purchase also appears doomed after the federal appeals court in Washington cancelled May 6 oral arguments in Davis Broadcasting's attempt to undo Clear Channel's 2002 acquisition of six Cumulus outlets in the Columbus, Ga., area. Instead, judges will reach a decision without questioning the parties, which sources say indicates they will dismiss the case due to lack of standing by Davis.

Critics of media consolidation hoped the Georgia case would be a major test of the FCC's oversight of local marketing agreements (LMAs) and other partnerships that allow licensees to turn over aspects of a station's operation to a third party. Some advocacy groups complain

that the partnerships allow conglomerates to illegally, and sometimes clandestinely, become de facto owners of more stations in a market than would otherwise be permitted.

## OTHER CHALLENGES

If the judges toss out Davis's suit for lack of standing, Media Access Project President Andrew Schwartzman predicts there will be other challenges to the FCC's oversight of radio LMAs and unauthorized transfers of control.

Davis, which owns four stations in the market, unsuccessfully petitioned the FCC to block the Clear Channel purchase on grounds that Cumulus and then Clear Channel failed to disclose de facto ownership of two area stations owned by Solar Communications but operated under an LMA with the larger companies. The arrangements, says Davis, amount to an unauthorized transfer of control from Solar to the larger operators, a serious offense that could result in a license revocation. Attributing the Solar stations to the Cumulus/Clear Channel tally in Columbus would put both over the FCC's local-ownership limit, which in Columbus is six stations.

If the judges agree with Davis, the ruling could be a landmark case that could curtail the use of LMAs and force more investors to reveal the extent of their involvement in partnered stations. But lawyers on both sides of the case acknowledge that there's a strong chance the three-judge panel could throw out the case out on grounds that Davis has no standing to sue.

## 'VERY, VERY SIGNIFICANT'

"If they reach the merits of the case, it could be a very, very significant development," said Schwartzman. "They could address a range of practices the FCC's Media Bureau has winked at for a long time."

The FCC, besides arguing that Davis has no grounds to sue since the acquisition did not diminish competition in the market, insists that similar allegations about LMAs and unauthorized transfers of control were not persuasive.

The FCC also rejected Davis's allegations that Solar's owner, Alan Woodall, intentionally failed to disclose an interest in a then-pending application for a construction permit in nearby Cusseta, Ga., or that Cumulus misrepresented an option to buy those interests.

Davis asserted that the FCC failed to rule on "substantial and material questions" on the qualification of Cumulus, which Davis attorneys dub the "800-pound gorilla of Columbus radio," to hold the Columbus licenses and therefore to sell them to Clear Channel.

The undisclosed construction-permit interests allowed Cumulus to use another's application as a "stalking horse" and undercuts the company's qualifications to hold licenses "anywhere," Davis's attorneys insisted. ■



## CAPITAL WATCH

### More Noncoms Than Expected Miss DTV Deadline

More than half the county's 357 public TV stations missed last week's May 1 deadline for launching digital service, a substantially higher percentage than the one-quarter to one-third predicted six months ago. Nevertheless, a greater share of public stations are hitting the target than commercial broadcasters, two-thirds of which missed their roll-out deadline one year ago.

The reasons for public broadcasters' tardiness mirror the problems encountered by for-profits, such as technical snags and zoning fights. Unique to public stations, 20% of the laggards blamed delays in construction funds expected from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. CPB officials acknowledged that money allocated by Congress has not been passed on entirely to public stations yet as efforts to craft disbursement criteria slowed outlays. They also noted that stations are not entitled to CPB money until they raise sufficient matching funds. Recognizing the need for expedited cash, the Commerce Department Wednesday announced \$25 million in DTV grants to 56 public stations. The grants are funded from the Public Telecommunications Facilities program, which typically announces awards in September.

Public stations did get a bit of break on DTV obligations when the FCC allowed another six months before quotas for digital simulcasting of analog programming kick in. Previously, stations were to match 50% of their analog schedule in digital beginning May 1. The simulcasting mandate now starts Nov. 1. The FCC granted the delay because many stations found that meeting the simulcasting quota at the same time they were launching DTV too heavy a burden.

### MPAA Will Fight Grokster Decision

Motion Picture Association of America President Jack Valenti says the association will appeal a California district court decision that two Internet companies were not liable for producing the software that allows copying and streaming of music and movies over the Net. Valenti took as a victory, however, the judge's ruling that users would be liable for making and distributing illegal copies. "The court made it clear that the activity of users of file-copying networks to distribute copyrighted music, motion pictures and television programs is illegal. It's not 'sharing,' it's stealing," said Valenti. The file-sharing services, Grokster Ltd. and Streamcast Networks Inc., distribute software enabling files to be shared over "peer-to-peer" networks.

## LEGISLATION

### President Signs AMBER Bill

**W**ith NAB President Eddie Fritts looking on, President George W. Bush, last Wednesday signed legislation establishing a national AMBER Alert system. "AMBER Alerts are becoming an increasingly important tool in rescuing kidnapped children," Bush said. "Every person who would think of abducting a child will know that a wide net will be cast."

The alert provides for police and media coordination to cut the time between an abduction and a bulletin alerting the public



to the crime. The Alert was started by local broadcasters in the president's home state of Texas following the kidnapping and murder of 6-year-old Amber Hagerman.

## Clarification

The story titled "NAB Wants DTV Leeway" (4/28, p.20) mischaracterized the Advanced Television Systems Committee's position on cellular-phone-style distributed DTV. ATSC believes that no commission approval is needed to implement its candidate standard for synchronizing transmitters in a distributed network, but the group said other aspects, such as power levels and interference, may require FCC action. A call to grant distributed transmitters the same interference protection as primary towers should have been attributed to the Merrill Weiss Group, not ATSC.



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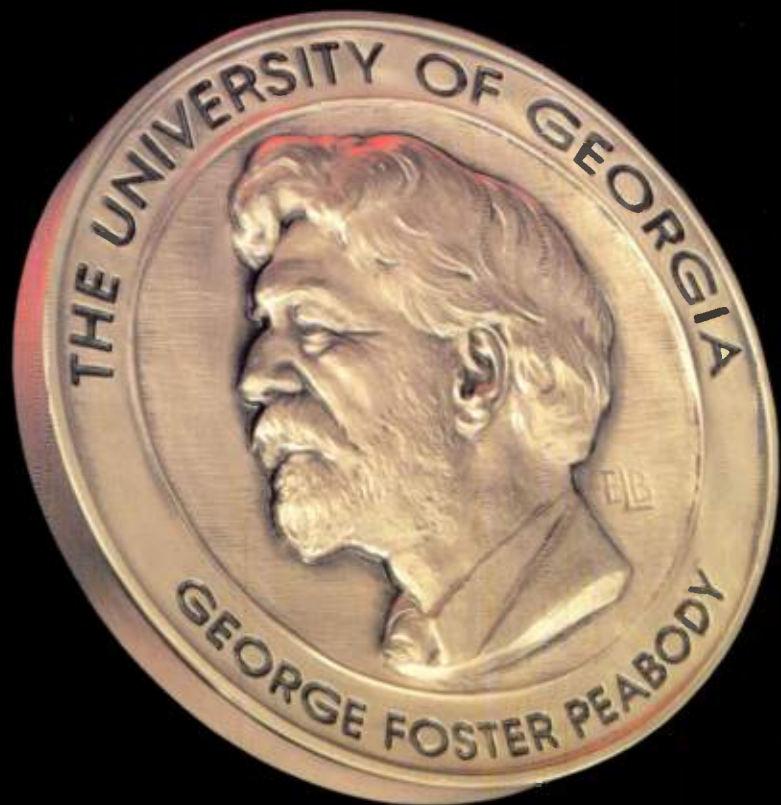


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# BUSINESS



## CHANGING HANDS

### Compos

**KABI-AM and KSAJ-FM Abilene, KBLs-FM North Fort Riley, KSAL-AM, KYEZ-FM and KZBZ-FM Salina, Kan.**

**PRICE:** \$9.2 million

**BUYER:** MCC Radio LLC

(Michael D. Osterhout, president); owns 27 other stations, none in this market

**SELLER:** EBC Inc. (John Vanier, president)

**FACILITIES:** KABI-AM: 1560 kHz, 250 W day; KSAJ-FM: 98.5 MHz, 100 kW, ant. 440 ft.; KBLs-FM: 102.5 MHz, 100 kW, ant. 492 ft.; KSAL-AM: 1150 kHz, 5 kW; KYEZ-FM: 93.7 MHz, 100 kW, ant. 509 ft.; KZBZ-FM: 104.9 MHz, 14 kW, ant. 440 ft.

**FORMAT:** KABI-AM: Nostalgia; KSAJ-FM: Oldies; KBLs-FM: AC; KSAL-AM: News/Talk/Sports; KYEZ-FM: Country; KZBZ-FM: Hot AC

**KHJB-FM Gooding (Boise) and KMHI-AM and KTPZ-FM Mountain Home (Boise), Idaho**

MHz, 2 kW, ant. 1,296 ft.; KWRO-AM: 630 kHz, 5 kW day/46 W night; KSHR-FM: 97.3 MHz, 6 kW, ant. 856 ft.; KJMX-FM: 99.5 MHz, 11 kW, ant. 400 ft.

**FORMAT:** KBDN-FM: Classic Rock; KWRO-AM: News/Talk; KSHR-FM: Country; KJMX-FM: AC

**KSZL-AM, KDUC-FM and KXXZ-FM Barstow and KDUQ-FM Ludlow (Victor Valley), Calif.**

**PRICE:** \$1.08 million

**BUYER:** Dos Costas Communications Corp (Roland A. Ullola, president); no other broadcast interests

**SELLER:** Tele-Media Broadcasting Co. (Ira Rosenblatt, VP/COO, Radio)

**FACILITIES:** KSZL-AM: 1230 kHz, 1 kW; KDUC-FM: 94.3 MHz, 5 kW, ant. 784 ft.; KXXZ-FM: 95.9 MHz, 9 kW, ant. 486 ft.; KDUQ-FM: 102.5 MHz, 6 kW, ant. -164 ft.

**FORMAT:** KSZL-AM: Nostalgia;

KDUC-FM: '70s Oldies; KXXZ-FM: Oldies; KDUQ-FM: '70s Oldies

**KBBR-AM, KACW-FM and KOOS-FM North Bend, Ore.**

**PRICE:** \$1 million

**BUYER:** Bi-Coastal Media LLC (Mike Wilson, president); owns 16 other stations, none in this market

**SELLER:** New Northwest Broadcasters (Pete Benedetti, president/CEO)

**FACILITIES:** KBBR-AM: 1340 kHz, 1 kW; KACW-FM: 107.3 MHz, 51 kW, ant. 692 ft.; KOOS-FM: 94.9 MHz, 89 kW, ant. 627 ft.

**FORMAT:** KBBR-AM: Talk/News/Sports; KACW-FM: Hot AC; KOOS-FM: Country

### FMs

**WXPK-FM (previously WYNY-FM) Briarcliff Manor (Westchester), N.Y.**

**PRICE:** \$20.3 million

**BUYER:** Pamal Broadcasting Ltd. (James Morrell, chairman/CEO); owns 29 other stations, includ-

ing WHUD-FM Westchester  
**SELLER:** Nassau Broadcasting Partners LP (Louis Mercatanti Jr., president/chairman)

**FACILITIES:** 107.1 MHz, 2 kW, ant. 591 ft.

**FORMAT:** CHR

**BROKER:** Glenn Serafin of Serafin Brothers Inc.

**WZMJ-FM Batesburg and WHXT-FM Orangeburg (Columbia), S.C.**

**PRICE:** \$11.1 million

**BUYER:** Inner City Broadcasting

Corp. (Pierre Sutton, CEO); owns 17 other stations, including WOIC-AM, WARQ-FM, WMFX-FM and WWDM-FM Columbia

**SELLER:** Rainbow Radio LLC (John Broomfield, managing member)

**FACILITIES:** WZMJ-FM: 93.1 MHz, 2 kW, ant. 561 ft.; WHXT-FM: 103.9 MHz, 9 kW, ant. 532 ft.

**FORMAT:** WZMJ-FM: Beach/R&B; WHXT-FM: Urban

### AMs

**KMUZ(AM) Gresham (Portland), Ore.**

**PRICE:** \$1.13 million

**BUYER:** Bustos Media Holdings LLC (Amador S. Bustos, president); owns one other station

**SELLER:** Pacific Northwest Broadcasting Corp. (Cshea Walker, general manager)

**FACILITIES:** 1230 kHz, 920 W  
**FORMAT:** Spanish

**INFORMATION PROVIDED BY:** BIA Financial Networks' Media Access Pro, Chantilly, Va., www.bia.com

### Station Deals Year-to-Date\*

	2003		2002	
	NUMBER	VALUE (MILLION)	NUMBER	VALUE (MILLION)
TELEVISION	10	\$454,306	39	\$1,401,607
RADIO	294	\$935,637	817	\$5,400,236

SOURCE: BIA Financial Networks

\*Through April 30

**PRICE:** \$3.8 million

**BUYER:** American General Media (L. Roger Brandon, vice president); owns 33 other stations, none in this market

**SELLER:** Horizon Broadcasting Group LLC (William Ackerley, CEO)

**FACILITIES:** KHJR-FM: 100.7 MHz, 80 kW, ant. 2,192 ft.; KMHI-AM: 1240 kHz, 1 kW; KTPZ-FM: 99.1 MHz, 80 kW, ant. 2,192 ft.

**FORMAT:** KHJR-FM: '70s Oldies; KMHI-AM: Classic Hits/Country; KTPZ-FM: '80s Hits

**KBDN-FM Bandon, KWRO-AM and KSHB-FM Coquille and KJMX-FM Reedsport, Ore.**

**PRICE:** \$1.5 million

**BUYER:** Bi-Coastal Media LLC (Mike Wilson, president); owns 15 other stations, none in this market

**SELLER:** Coquille River Broadcasting (Connie Williamson, general manager)

**FACILITIES:** KBDN-FM: 96.5

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## TECHNOLOGY



NBA TV's Secaucus, N.J., control room will eventually make the jump to HD gear. The channel currently broadcasts its HD feed out of one of its four trucks.

## NBA Commits to Games in High-Definition

This season's playoff coverage lays the groundwork for NBA HDTV channel

BY KEN KERSCHBAUMER

**W**ith ABC Sports set to broadcast the NBA Finals in HDTV in June, there's little doubt that broadcasters are serious about HD coverage of the basketball league. But today the NBA itself is showing how serious it is about HD: Its 24-hour TV network, NBA TV, will offer HD programming seven days a week via DirecTV and EchoStar.

Programming will include NBA games recorded in HDTV this past season as well as games going back as far as 1993, when Japanese broadcaster NHK began recording games in HDTV. The goal is to offer five hours a day of HD programming to satellite subscribers.

"We're actually seeing 1-inch HD tape," says Steve Hellmuth, NBA TV senior vice president of operations and technology, of the archive footage coming in from NHK.

The seven-day-a-week commitment builds on the league's HD playoff coverage. During the past three weeks, the NBA has produced six first-round playoff games in HD. That required four HDTV production vehicles: one from Core Digital in Phoenix, another from NMT (National Mobile Television) and two from All-Mobile Video.

"That's the reason we decided to do the games in HD," he says. "We wanted to show something new and show it done correctly."

More important, it can potentially increase viewership. Hellmuth says that blazing a trail in HD will naturally attract more viewers because sports content benefits greatly from HDTV's aspect ratio and resolution. The games were broadcast on an HD channel and, in a downconverted feed, on NBA TV's television network as part of a free preview to viewers on DirecTV, EchoStar and selected cable systems. All told, 25 million cable households were able to view the NBA channel, which helped the league fulfill its mission of making every game available to viewers.

One unique aspect of the productions was the decision to

letterbox the games on the standard-definition channel rather than protect for 4:3 or shoot a separate 4:3 production.

"We think letterbox is a better viewing experience," says Hellmuth. "People watch *The Sopranos* and a number of other programs in letterbox, and we think it works just fine. The reaction has been entirely positive."

The single production, he says, allowed the advantages of HDTV to be more readily visible to the viewer. "You don't really do extreme close-ups. You do wider shots that allow the viewer's eye to rove across the screen and look at what they want to look at." In shooting for NTSC telecasts, he points out, so little information can be included that it's necessary for the director to bring the viewers focus into a single spot constantly.

"Widescreen coverage is not so much about panning," he adds, "but just having the cameras in the right place."

NBA TV used eight cameras to shoot each game: two "up" cameras for typical game action, two handhelds, two low "slash" cameras located along the baseline and two robocams. The cameras were a mix of Sony and Thomson Grass Valley cameras.

"We haven't seen any big differences from one camera to the next," he says. "The pictures have been fine."

Surround sound was also part of the experience, with a 5.1 mix putting the announcers' voices slightly to the front left and right and crowd sound heard from the surrounds. The squeak of sneakers on the court would track from right to left and left to right with the action. "It's great to hear the crowd swell behind you," says Hellmuth.

Although doing the production in HD was more expensive, Hellmuth says, it wasn't significantly more expensive. "The real expense will come when we want to re-engineer the master-control facility at NAB TV's facility in Secaucus, N.J., for HDTV. Right now, we're releasing the commercials off of the truck so there are no HD-infrastructure issues. But we are planning on a full-time NBA HD channel that will require HD master control and a conversion of studio operations to HD." ■



NBA players, like L.A. Laker Shaquille O'Neal, will increasingly be seen in HD.

## Cutting Edge

### Yankee Looks at HD

A new study on HDTV released by the Yankee Group predicts that 46.8 million homes will have HDTV monitors by the end of 2007. The study, released as part of "The Connected Consumer Summit: Setting Strategy, Identifying Allies and Eliminating Threats in the Race for Digital Entertainment Dollars," also says that 41.6 million homes will receive HD programming by 2007. Cable MSOs will serve 50% of the viewers, DBS 41%, and over-the-air broadcast 9%. Today, the company says, an estimated 5% of homes viewing HD programming receive signals via cable, 37% via DBS and 58% over the air.

### Snell Granted Liberty

Station group Liberty has purchased a range of Snell & Wilcox IQ Modular intelligent infrastructure products and HD5200 upconverters for its 15 TV stations. The equipment, currently operating at 11 of the 15, will be used for the group's DTV broadcast rollout. The IQ Modular systems are housed in 3RU enclosure rack frames and are installed in single-rack DTV systems for each station. Signals are sent into the modular system and then to Snell & Wilcox's HD5200 for upconversion before passing to HD master control.

### GoldPocket a StoryTeller

GoldPocket Interactive acquired WatchPoint Media, creator of StoryTeller iTV authoring software, last week. The acquisition is expected to help GoldPocket enter the European iTV market. The company will offer a powerful new system combining StoryTeller's iTV content-production software with real-time, two-way interactivity via GoldPocket's EventMatrix interactive network.

### MGM Taps CinemaNow

"After an initial trial with CinemaNow, we were able to gain positive and useful insight that helped prepare us for future distribution of our films via the Internet," said David Bishop, president and COO, MGM Home Entertainment Group. An initial trial was successful, he said, leading to the broader agreement. CinemaNow will offer MGM's new-release films the same day they become available in their traditional pay-per-view window along with previously released movies from MGM's vast film library.

### Rockwell Gets Ikegami

Rockwell Scientific's ProCamHD 3530 HDTV CMOS-based image sensor is being featured in Ikegami's recently introduced HDL-40 full-digital box-type HD camera. The two companies have been collaborating for several months to test and certify the advantages and benefits of ProCamHD's precedent-setting design. The CMOS version is a one-piece, full-digital box-type HDTV camera with 1080i and 1080/720p progressive scanning. It uses a 2/3-inch 2.1 million-pixel Rockwell ProCamHD CMOS-based sensor.

## Scripps Takes on Broadway

Traffic and billing system from CAM Systems will be installed this year

BY KEN KERSCHBAUMER

**W**ith four separate cable-network properties (HGTV, the Food Network, Fine Living and Do It Yourself), Scripps Networks often finds itself battling with itself when it comes to selling advertising. Later this year, the company will deploy the Broadway traffic and sales system from CAM Systems, a step Scripps hopes will make it easier for seller and buyer to eliminate errors and create compelling campaigns.

Efforts like that won't be unique to Scripps Network. Increasingly the cable universe is dotted with media companies offering multiple cable networks. And in all of them there's the opportunity to cannibalize each other's business in a way that doesn't maximize revenues.

At Scripps, for example, there are two sales teams: one for HGTV and DIY, another for Food Network and Fine Living.

"What we see as the future is the selling of all of our prop-

erties in a media plan, not just having two separate plans that create a competition as it were," says Robert Shapiro, Scripps Networks Ad Sales vice president, pricing and planning. "The goal is to bring them together to have a total media plan and throw in on-line sales as well and cover all the properties."

The Broadway system is expected to be deployed in the third quarter of 2003. Shapiro says the company was selected primarily because it is an integrated system

from the front-end planning and sales side to the traffic side.

Traffic and billing systems continue to evolve in an effort to make the systems more dynamic. Electronic invoicing is gaining traction, and there are even discussions about how traffic and billing systems can use EDI to become involved in the negotiation process. Typically, the most important thing a traffic and billing system can provide is the ability to help sales and traffic personnel stay on top of changes.

"The initial negotiations are all set in stone," says Shapiro. "It's when you start doing brand application or moving flights around that things can get out of whack. And that's when you want the cleanest operation you can have."

When it came to evaluating the system, he says, Scripps began with the traffic side. Traffic personnel evaluated the available systems and liked the CAM System best. The kicker, however, was that it was fully integrated with the front-end sales piece.

"When you're dealing in a non-multivendor environment, things tend to work better," Shapiro observes.

With the four networks, there will be upwards of 80-100 people using the system. That introduces a lot of opportunities for changes, an opportunity that Shapiro expects Broadway to live up to.

"It's truly, literally live inventory," he explains. "Throughout my career, the definition of live inventory has been loose, but this will offer reality—not this morning's load. And that's one of the biggest benefits for sales when going out to try and sell stuff."

CAM Systems President Martino Mingione says that, with media consolidation on the rise, the expertise that his company brings, thanks to its work with cable operators like Time Warner, Cox, Comcast and Charter, will be an advantage. ■

## Focus

### TRAFFIC & SALES



Scripps hopes the integrated Broadway system will help eliminate errors.

## More Languages, More Viewers

BY KEN KERSCHBAUMER

**T**V stations that want to reach audiences that don't understand English have a new alternative to the often costly efforts needed to offer translations via secondary audio channel (SAP): a PC-based system from TranslateTV.

The system allows stations to translate audio into real-time caption information in eight languages at a fraction of the cost of hiring a translator. The captions are accessed via the second or third closed-captioning channel and are derived from the English caption information.

"Foreign speakers aren't hearing-impaired," says TranslateTV President and CEO Joel Rudich. "They just don't understand En-



glish too well. So, putting subtitles on [enables them to] see programming that they otherwise might not have wanted to [watch]."

And advertising as well. Rudich believes that the ability to draw in viewers, particularly Hispanics, whose presence in smaller markets is growing, can lead to new revenues. A revenue-generating option includes sponsorship of the subtitles, which could easily

be incorporated into the captions without distracting viewers.

"For a local TV station, the cost is about \$125-\$200 a day," says Rudich. Total system cost for a year's use is about \$40,000.

Currently, broadcasters reach non-English-speaking viewers with the use of live translations for the SAP channel. That can cost upwards of \$100 an hour, a costly proposition for even large-market stations. For small- to mid-market stations, it's prohibitive.

TranslateTV went live at WNBS-TV Columbus, Ohio, a CBS affiliate, last fall. MSNBC has used the system since December.

Once a station signs on for the system, the first step is to create a customized dictionary. That process takes about a week and is the result of analyzing scripts as well as tapes of local content. ■

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## PEOPLE

## THE FIFTH ESTATER

## Kid From Queens Counts on NYC Energy

Hecht says he can use it in relaunch of TNN as Spike TV

**A**lbie Hecht credits the streets of Queens for the creative juices that have fueled his career as studio musician, music-video pioneer, kids-TV producer and cable-network executive.

"It was just so great to grow up in an environment like that," he says, recalling inventing games for his bored friends by fusing others, like stickball and basketball. "So energetic. To feel the whole energy of New York City and the inclusivity of that population was amazing." Now, as president of Viacom's TNN, Hecht will be calling up as much of that creative energy as he can when he relaunches the network as a men's portal, Spike TV, on June 16. "You know how you feel in your stomach when you're not sure whether it is incredible excitement or incredible anxiety? That's what we are sitting with."

After Queens and New York's Columbia University, Hecht got his start in the mid 1970s as a reviewer of kids TV for the Hearst papers. But he was soon exploiting his musical talent as an A&R man for CBS's custom label, Lifesong Records. By the close of the disco decade, he had moved on to writing for and directing music videos.

In 1987, Hecht was able to pour 13 years of experience in journalism, film and music into TV-production company Chauncey Street Productions. "I got to do two things: create shows for CBS, ESPN and HBO and [produce] great commercials for MTV and VH1. And I learned how to do IDs and promos. That's where I established relationships with animators."

Those relationships paid off. In 1991, Hecht's two partners, Fred Schibert and Alan Goodman, moved on. But he kept things churning at Chauncey Street, entering into a production deal with animation-laden Nickelodeon and forging a friendship with Nick's then head of programming, Herb Scannell. Two years later, Scannell, now president of Nick, encouraged a reluctant Hecht to come aboard.

"I probably wouldn't have gone to work for anybody else but Herb because he had the vision I respected and the smarts and the leadership," Hecht says. "I felt like I could work in a corporation for him."

At Nick, Hecht turned the Chauncey-spawned *Kids Choice Awards* into a big draw and called on those animation contacts to develop hit shows like *SpongeBob Squarepants* and *Dora the Explorer*.

In 1997, with Nick Movies under his guidance, Hecht oversaw the \$350 million expansion of Nickelodeon Animation Studios, the first studio built in Los Angeles in 35 years. It was a veritable playground for the guys who "were always given the back room, the back office and the used equipment." In return, they gave him *The Wild Thornberrys*, *The Rugrats Movie* and *Jimmy Neutron: Boy Genius*.

Hecht hopes to calm the butterflies generated by the Spike TV launch with a fresh slate of programming, including an adult animation block featuring *Stripperella* (voiced by Pamela Anderson), *Gary the Rat* (Kelsey Grammer), and both old and new episodes of *Ren & Stimpy*.

There will also be reality and unscripted shows to tempt young men, including *A Guy and His Stuff*, based on the *Stuff* magazine column on the latest gadgets and toys for men; *Ride With Funkmaster Flex*, a peek into car culture with DJ Funkmaster Flex; and *10 Things Every Guy Should Experience*, where Spike TV takes a few lucky men to ultimate sporting events, such as The Super Bowl and Kentucky Derby.

"The greatest challenge will be to own the emotional space in their minds, [to convince them] that we're their home base," Hecht says of his 18-49 male target audience.

"I want to make a difference," he adds. "To show

[men] a bit of the promised land of what a really good guy and a good dad and a good person in society could be. And also, just to have a good damn time." —*P. Llanor Alleyne*

## Albie Hecht

President, TNN



B. Feb. 22, 1953, Queens, NY

## EDUCATION

BA, English, Columbia University, 1974

## EMPLOYMENT

Television writer, Hearst Papers, 1973-75; head, artist development, Lifesong Records, 1975-78; principal, Worldwide Biggies, 1978-86; executive producer/principal, Chauncey Street Productions, 1987-93; executive producer/VP, Nickelodeon, 1993-97; president, film and television entertainment, Nickelodeon and Nick Movies, 1997-2000; head, development, TV Land and TNN, 2000-03; current position since 2003, continuing as president, Nick Movies and Nick Records

## PERSONAL

M. Susan, April 16, 1983; children: Alex (15) and Kay (27)



## FATES &amp; FORTUNES

## Broadcast TV

**RICHARD LAHTI**, director, engineering and operations, Telemundo, Los Angeles, named director, engineering, Telemundo and KNBC(TV) Los Angeles.

**FRANK WILLSON**, director, marketing and design, WBNS-TV Columbus, Ohio, expands his duties to director, operations.

At KWBT(TV) Tulsa, Okla.:

**DARNELL WASHINGTON**, local sales manager, KOCB(TV) Oklahoma City, joins as VP, sales; **DEREK CRISS**, local sales manager, promoted VP, sales; **CAROL DAWSON**, VP, marketing and network promotions, account executive/archive producer, Yahoo! Broadcast, Dallas, joins as marketing manager.

## Cable TV

**BILL SHAW**, VP, field operations, AT&T Broadband, Miramar, Fla., joins Bright House Networks' Birmingham, Ala., division, as president.

## Programming

**STEVE SMITH**, COO, Intertainer Asia, Singapore, named COO and executive VP, Encore International, Denver/Hong Kong.

**BRUCE R. THOMAS**, VP, integrated marketing and business development, A&E Television Networks, New York, joins Yankees Entertainment & Sports Network, New York, as executive VP, media services.

**JIM MCCLINTOCK**, VP, network media, ABC Television Network, Los Angeles, appointed senior VP.

**KIM HATAMIYA**, senior VP/GM, television and film, Mindrocket Media/JP Kids, Los Angeles, named senior VP, sales and marketing, Sony Pictures Television International, Culver City, Calif.

At ESPN, New York: **RICK ALESSANDRI**, VP/assistant to president, promoted to senior VP/GM, ESPN Enterprises; **KERRY CHANDLER**, VP, human resources, promoted to senior VP.

**CAROL ENG**, VP, original programming, MTV, New York, promoted to senior VP.

**DUSTY SCHMIDT**, VP, creative services, Home & Garden Television, Knoxville, Tenn., promoted to senior VP.

**JERRY LEO**, manager, program planning, VH1, New York, promoted to VP.

At Court TV, New York: **MARK FICHANDLER**, senior director, development, promoted to VP, documentary development and international co-production; **ROBIN SESTERO**, executive producer/VP, LMNO Cable Group, Los Angeles, joins as executive producer, documentaries and specials; **LORI**



**STEVE SMITH**  
Encore International



**KIM HATAMIYA**  
Sony Pictures Television



**CAROL ENG**  
MTV



**BEV SMITH**  
WWRL(AM) New York

**SIEGEL**, senior producer, series production, promoted to executive producer, documentaries and series; **DIANE PETZKE**, freelance producer, ABC newsmagazines unit, New York, joins as senior producer, *Hollywood At Large*.

**PETE CROWLEY**, director, property development and facilities, Scripps Networks, Knoxville, Tenn., promoted to VP.

**MICHAEL DESSART**, director, mar-



keting strategy and analysis, HBO, New York, joins CSTV: College Sports Television, New York, as VP/partner, marketing.

**DIANA HANFORD**, VP, marketing and network promotions, Pax TV, West Palm Beach, Fla., joins Fox Sports Net Florida, Sunrise, Fla., as communications manager.

**PHIL HAN**, design director, on-air design and promotions, G4, Los Angeles, named art director, on-air de-

sign, E! Networks, Los Angeles.

#### Journalism

**JOE ALLBAUGH**, director, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Washington, joins Fox News Channel, Washington, as contributor.

**STAN STOVALL**, anchor, WMAR-TV Baltimore, named weekend morning co-anchor, WBAL-TV Baltimore.

**TOM CLYDE**, sports director, KDRV(TV) Medford, Ore., joins

WZZM-TV Grand Rapids, Mich., as sportscaster.

**JENNIE FINCH**, professional softball player, joins Major League Baseball, New York, as correspondent, *This Week in Baseball*.

#### Radio

**BEV SMITH**, radio talk-show host, Black Entertainment Television, Washington, joins WWRL(AM) New York, as host, *The Bev Smith Show*.

#### Technology

**JIM KUHN**, director, field support, Terayon Communications Systems, Clinton Township, Mich., joins Optinel Systems, Elkridge, Md., as director, network engineering.

#### Advertising/Marketing/PR

**SAM MILLSTONE**, senior VP, lodging finance and business development, Marriott International, New York, joins Arbitron, New York, as VP, finance.

**KEVIN COX**, VP/director, strategy and integrated marketing, Doremus & Co., San Francisco, named VP/group account director, Hill, Holliday, San Francisco.

#### WHAT'S YOUR FATE?

Send it to Llanor Alleyne, editorial assistant, BROADCASTING & CABLE (e-mail: palleyne@reedbusiness; fax: 646-746-7028; mail: 360 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10010).

## OBITUARY

**COL. BARNEY OLDFIELD** (USAF, retired), journalist, publicist, philanthropist, writer and founder of the Radio-Television News Directors Foundation, died April 26 in Los Angeles. He was 93.

As chairman of the RTNDA finance and fundraising committee in 1967, he launched an effort to endow a scholarship in broadcast journalism. That effort became RTNDF, which awarded its first scholarship in 1970 and now awards 22 scholarships, including one in Barney and wife Vada's name for national-security reporting. In 1994, RTNDF also established the Barney Oldfield Distinguished Service Award for contributions to the success of RTNDF.

Oldfield, born in Tecumseh, Neb., Dec. 18, 1909, began his adult working life driving stakes for Barnum & Bailey and spikes for the Baltimore & Ohio railroad to help put himself through the University of Nebraska. Later, he worked as a newspaperman and theater usher. He would combine the latter two as movie reviewer for the *Lincoln Journal* (including contributions to *Variety*) from 1930 to 1940. During that time, he also had his own radio show, *Hollywood Highlights*, on KFOR(FM) Lincoln, Neb.

During World War II, Oldfield was a public relations officer, serving as a press aide to numerous generals, including Dwight Eisenhower and Omar Bradley, and to British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery.

Oldfield was also a pioneer in "embedding" journalists in wartime. As an ROTC graduate and paratrooper, he helped line up journalists willing to accompany paratroopers during the Normandy invasion and organized mobile press units to cover the army's march through Europe. His book *Never a Shot in Anger* told of the military's effort to accommodate journalists.

After the war, he joined Warner Bros. as a publicist before being called back to active duty.



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#### LOCAL SALES MANAGER

Media General Broadcast Group [www.mgbg.com](http://www.mgbg.com) Newschannel 10 is looking for a talented Local Sales Manager for our Roanoke office. You must be new business minded and a great motivator. You will be a part of the community through your civic and business connections. Your abilities to develop relationships and grow client's business are essential. Experience with inventory management and staff development is necessary. If you are the person for this position, please send your resume ATTN: LSM, Roanoke Office HR Department, Newschannel 10, P. O. Box 10, Roanoke, VA 24022 EOE M/F Drug Screen.

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# For Studios, No Such Thing as a Sure Bet

Continued from page 1

*Arcadia* illustrates a growing trend in Hollywood: Major studios' rejecting pilot orders, even series orders from networks when push comes to shove and they conclude that the financials don't add up or there's no chance the series will later sell in syndication.

"If you have a high-cost project that lacks international appeal but doesn't have a network license fee that reflects those challenges, studios have to be willing to acknowledge that financing those projects may not be good business decisions," says one studio chief.

## SUPPORT THE 'VISION'?

Networks are finishing up their pilot screenings this week and putting together fall schedules to present to advertisers next week. But as they do, they may not be working with all the pilots they wanted or may be working with pilots backed by studios other than the ones that had helped develop them.

**'Giving up these projects is really scary. Sometimes you have to follow your gut and your passion rather than looking at the economics.'**

Studio chief

There was a time, not so long ago, when studios would produce almost anything the networks ordered, and some studio chiefs still see the business that way.

"Studios do not buy the product; the networks buy the product," says Peter Roth, president of Warner Bros. Television, which, with 33 pilots in production, is the leader of the studio pack this year. "If you produce a script that is compelling enough to the network, then an order is placed. It's our job to support the vision as long as it can be produced in an economically responsible and creatively effective way."

But many studio chiefs say sometimes that can't be done.

Four years ago, for example, Disney's Touchstone Television developed *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* for CBS. But Touchstone is not *CSI's* producer. Alliance Atlantis and CBS Productions are. When Touchstone looked at *CSI's* economics, it walked away from the deal. Of course, that proved an unwise decision. The show became a hit and spawned a successful spinoff, *CSI: Miami*.

Sources say, when Touchstone was considering the order for *CSI*, the show was expected to cost \$2.4 million an episode, with CBS offering just \$1.1 million in license fees. Touchstone didn't think the international and domestic broadcast and cable syndication revenue would close the resulting \$1.3 million-per-episode deficit.

Today, that decision looks like a huge mistake, but several studio executives say they would have done exactly the same thing. "Nobody's ever going to go out of business for not doing *CSI*, but you could very well go out of business for doing one of the softer, serial dramas that have no international market," explains one executive.

"Giving up these projects is really scary," Newman says. "Sometimes you have to follow your gut and passion rather than looking at the economics."

That's because studios can afford only so many hunches. If a studio has, say, eight one-hour shows in production and each operates at a deficit of \$500,000 per episode over a season of 22 episodes, that would put the studio \$88 million in the hole. The studio bets that one or two of those shows will become hits and go into syndication, throwing off enough profit to pay for all the losers.

Until about five years ago, studios cut a good number of "output deals" with international television distributors. Such deals required those distributors to take a certain quantity of shows from the studio, and the revenue from those deals helped close deficits and finance shows. But, with money tight everywhere, many countries producing better local programming than they did just a few years ago, and some countries limiting by law the amount of American programming that can run in prime time, studios can no longer count on the international money.

## KEEP DEFICITS DOWN

In off-net domestic syndication, broadcasters are interested only in long-running hit sitcoms; most stations don't have time slots to fit hour-long off-net dramas, so they are shopped to cable networks.

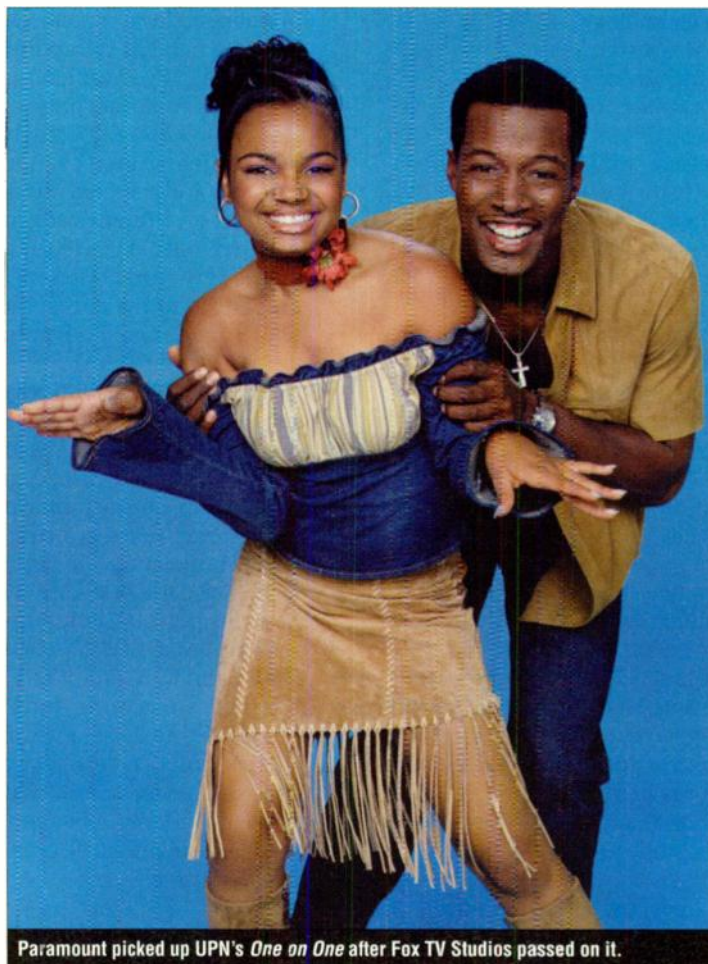
In addition, in the past two years, networks have been hit by an advertising slump, making them reluctant to increase license fees and shrink the deficits.

All this means that studios have grown more careful about taking on a project and are look-



ing to keep their deficits under \$200,000 an episode. Hour programs cost approximately \$1.6 million to \$2.3 million to produce, while multi-camera sitcoms, such as *8 Simple Rules* or *Less Than Perfect*, cost anywhere from \$850,000 to \$1.2 million. (Single-camera sitcoms, such as

*Scrubs* or *Malcolm in the Middle*, cost slightly more.) But network license fees average \$1 million to \$1.6 million for dramas, \$600,000 to \$900,000 for sitcoms. That means that prime time programming often runs with deficits of \$500,000 or \$600,000 per hour, the studios expecting to get at



least \$300,000 an episode back from the international market. When that math doesn't work out, the studios are beginning to walk away.

This year, it's not just *Joan of Arcadia* that had to find a new studio. Twentieth also decided not to do *Vegas Dicks* for UPN, so Viacom's Eye Productions is financing it. Universal left film star Danny Glover's pilot, *The Good Guy*, on the table, and Spelling Television picked it up. UPN's *Platinum* ended up being financed by CBS Productions when Fox Television Studios decided not to back it even though the studio had already made the pilot. Warner Bros. picked up UPN's pilot with hip-hop star Eve after Paramount and Touchstone both passed on it, but Warner Bros. this year passed on other pilots for UPN and ABC.

## LEFT ON THE TABLE

Fox Television Studios has left a good number of pilots on the table, including CBS mid-season replacement *Queens Supreme*, which also went to Spelling Television in association with CBS Entertainment Productions. (It was canceled after three episodes.) Fox Television Studios passed on UPN's *One on One*, which went to Paramount Network Television and is still on the air.

Last year, Twentieth chose not to do sitcom *Danny* for CBS, and Paramount's Big Ticket Television decided to try it. The show failed after two episodes.

But, as Warner Bros.' Roth points out, with a total of 113 pilots in production this year for six networks, studios still are taking on their fair share of shows. "If we all agree that none of us know where our next hit is coming from, of course you want as many chances at bat as you can have."

That illustrates another truth: One studio's pass is another's pick-up, and no one knows until the show launches whether which made the right decision.

"We have our own parameters to meet and we had to be confident that we could meet them or we couldn't proceed," says one studio chief who has picked up shows after other studios have let them go.

"Just because someone at another studio thinks a show isn't viable, that doesn't mean you think it isn't," says another. "I'm only interested in my own judgment. You can't make every call correctly, but what separates the men from the boys is making the calls and being right more times than you are wrong." ■



## EDITORIALS

BROADCASTING &amp; CABLE COMMITTED TO THE FIRST AMENDMENT

## June 2 Is None Too Soon

There is a tide in the affairs of the FCC that, taken at the flood, leads on to victory, or at least gets one of many important proceedings out the door.

It is time for the FCC to proceed with revising its broadcast-ownership rules. OK, past time, actually. The "flood" is the thousands of comments already submitted, which Media Bureau Chief Ken Ferree characterizes as "astoundingly broad and diverse."

Why not postpone a vote and allow for yet more debate as Commissioner Michael Copps and advocacy groups have called for? For one thing, continuing the road tour of re-hashed arguments is unlikely to add anything substantive to the debate. Copps' suggestion that a vote now would be based on "paltry" information does not square with the reams of comment. For another, broadcasters need to know how to proceed with their businesses: either to buy or not to buy (yes, that is the question).

Regulators need to move on to other things as well, like the NASA petition, broadcast flag, digital must-carry, multicasting, cable regs. Besides, in only nine months, it will be 2004, time for the beginning of yet another of these reviews (this one was supposed to have been done in 2002). The FCC can tweak the rules then if the sky has started to fall, or not, if the Cassandras prove Chicken Littles. With a biennial review always just around the corner, nothing is set in anything more permanent than soapstone anyway.

If Copps still wants to talk about rules, there are the cable regs

to hash out, which are also supposed to have been reviewed by now. By the time that review is done, it will probably be 2004 anyway, when he can schedule a whole new round of public debates on broadcast regs. Frankly, the next debate should really be in Congress. The subject: Changing it to at least a quadrennial chore lest it becomes commission's full-time job.

## Green Light for AMBER

The oft-bashed broadcasting industry and the NAB came up smelling like a rose garden last week. That's where President George W. Bush signed into law a bill making the AMBER Alert a national program. The Alert coordinates and expedites widespread bulletins on missing children, thus improving the odds of recovering them alive. Local AMBER alerts have already led to the safe return of 50 children. The program was created by local broadcasters in Texas following the abduction and murder of Amber Hagerman. The bill's passage would be reason enough for celebration, but last week also marked the 750th capture for *America's Most Wanted*, whose host, John Walsh, was also a vocal advocate for the AMBER bill. *AMW* is the most visible "long arm" of broadcasting when it comes to aiding law enforcement, but it is far from the only one. It was local radio listeners who helped catch the D.C. snipers, and, just last week, an episode of *Maurice* led to the capture of a wanted criminal. Kudos all around.



## AIRTIME

GUEST COMMENTARY

## Make DTV Albatross Into an Asset

For broadcasters, DTV remains a technology in search of a business plan. Meanwhile, ESPN and other cable networks are hijacking HDTV. Broadcasters have rightfully pushed for DTV tuner mandates and digital must-carry—unfortunately, to the exclusion of a strategic, coordinated marketing effort. The time is now to do three things that will make viewers say, "I want my DTV!"

**Simplify and saturate the HDTV message.** High definition, hi-definition and HDTV: three descriptions on three networks. It's critical that broadcasters offer a simple, unified message. Which consumer-electronic product has achieved the fastest adoption in history? DVD. Why? DVD provides unsurpassed audio and video quality—until HDTV. Therefore, I'd suggest a slogan: "HDTV—pictures and sound even better than DVD."

The slogan should be included in an HDTV equivalent of the old NBC "color peacock" to depict picture clarity, wide screen and surround sound and should be used by all broadcasters. Five seconds should be made available at the top of each HDTV program to air the "peacock," localized with station and sponsor logos.

**Complement HDTV with multicasting.** Multicasting is the ideal complement. The right content will jump-start DTV penetration while cross-promoting HDTV. Compression algorithms permit simulcasting of at least one SD program with most HD content.

Multicasting offers broadcasters the opportunity to target lucrative niche audiences with relatively inexpensive programming. It's a natural extension of their core business and enhances service to the community. As demonstrated by sizable investments in regional channels, MSOs place huge im-



**Most broadcasters have already built the infrastructure for the only digital video service that's local, wireless and free.**

**LEE SPIECKERMAN**  
Spieckerman  
Media LLC

portance on local content. It reduces churn, counters DBS and, most important, can drive digital-tier uptake. By embracing cable's digital tier for secondary multicast programming, broadcasters will be providing MSOs with a formidable new digital offering: local channels they won't have to program and can help promote.

**Focus on affluent and young viewers.** Instead of lamenting the viewers DTV *doesn't* have, focus on the very special viewers it *does* have. Affluent and ahead of the curve, they're tough to reach with conventional advertising and hungry for unique DTV content.

Why not partner with advertisers targeting this segment—luxury-auto dealers, jewelry, gourmet-food and fine-wine stores, travel agents—to create localized multicast programming?

Another valuable multicast target is a \$100 billion market that's growing twice as fast as the overall population: teenagers. And the ideal platform is also the best-kept secret in the DTV business: the personal computer. For just over \$300, with antenna, PC DTV tuner cards receive both HDTV and DTV multicasts without clogging up Internet connections. And PC DTV provides true "point-of-purchase" advertising for the Web.

Most broadcasters have already built the infrastructure for the only digital video service that's local, wireless and free. Once the industry capitalizes on such advantages, seemingly intractable DTV issues will suddenly find solutions. ■

*Spieckerman is president of Spieckerman Media, which provides DTV business strategies and consultation to media companies.*



## OPEN MIKE

### Fin-Syn, Redux

Editor: Anyone who has worked with Bob Corn-Revere over the years knows of his tenacious defense of the First Amendment. However, in his Counterpoint commentary (B&C, 4/28, p.12), Bob has missed the important, pro-First Amendment benefits of the 25% Independent Producer Rule proposed by the Coalition for Program Diversity.

First of all, the 25% Independent Producer Rule is content-neutral. It does not propose any programming format but merely proposes that five hours a week of the four major networks' prime time schedules be set aside for programming produced by true independent producers, not network employees or network "partners."

If adopted by the FCC on June 2, the 25% Independent Producer Rule would simply mean that approximately 20 hours would have a different creative source than the four networks' television programming chiefs, who today control 100% of everything aired on network prime time television.

When only four people program every minute of the networks' 80-plus-hour weekly prime time schedule, "blandness," "sameness," risk-free programming is the inevitable result. Things only get worse as networks fixate on programming that can be simultaneously "rerun" (or repurposed) on the networks' co-owned multiple broadcast and cable platforms.

That's why Barry Diller, once a leading opponent of the Fin-Syn Rule, has publicly called for a re-imposition of a content-neutral rule that would promote prime time program diversity by allowing true independent producers to compete to have their creative programming concepts aired on the networks' free spectrum. Grant Tinker, CEO of NBC during its most profitable and critically successful years, has also decried the loss of independent voices over the last decade and publicly supported the 25% set-aside rule.

Since 1992, the dramatic and documented shrinkage of sources of diverse programming provides the FCC the legal basis under the Schurz Court to adopt the sustainable, First Amendment-friendly 25% Independent Producer Rule. Despite all the network hype, the record is clear: Since 1992, independent-producer programming dropped from 66.4% to 23.9% of the prime time schedule; in 1992, 22 independent producers developed and owned 46.5 hours of the networks' prime time schedule yet, last year, only six independent producers owned 17 hours of programming.

The debate about the 25% Independent Producer Rule is not about dollars or content; it is about the FCC's willingness to promote diversity of programming sources based on the irrefutable record of anticompetitive network dominance of the narrow but vitally important prime time television-programming marketplace. For 43 million U.S. consumers who don't have access to diverse programming on pay services, the commission's vote on June 2 really matters.

**MICKEY GARDNER AND KEN ZIFFREN**,  
Counsel for Coalition for Program Diversity

### WE LIKE LETTERS

If you have comments on anything that appears on these pages and would like to share them with other readers, send them to Harry A. Jessell, editor in chief, (e-mail: [hjessell@reedbusiness.com](mailto:hjessell@reedbusiness.com) or fax: 646-746-7028 or mail to: BROADCASTING & CABLE, 360 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10010).

**P.J. BEDNARSKI**  
EDITOR

# Let's Be *Real* Funny

May Charles Douglass and his laugh track rest in peace

Charles Douglass, the man who invented the laugh track, died last month. I never met him, but a long time ago I interviewed Carroll Pratt, the man who helped him when Hollywood needed more fake laughs than Douglass's company could crank out. The highlight of that interview, though it doesn't have much to do with the story, came when Pratt hauled a portable laugh-track machine to his driveway and let me "drive" it. You got laughs from a kind of gas pedal, applause from a switch, and, as I recall, another pedal took the laugh from a chuckle to the greatest joke ever told. I don't think I've ever had a more surreal time in anyone's driveway.

You didn't get a chance to meet many laugh-track guys in Hollywood, Pratt theorized, because no one liked them too much. Once, he said, a woman wrote a letter to *M\*A\*S\*H* producer Gene Reynolds begging him to kill the laugh track (which happened, but only in a few episodes). Here's the kicker: The woman who wrote the letter was *dating* Pratt at the time and later married him.

Now that Douglass is gone, I think we should reconsider Mrs. Pratt's suggestion: Kill the damn thing.

I can watch sitcoms for hours without laughing. I'm not necessarily saying they're not funny, but there's funny you laugh at and funny that entertains you. There is no laugh track in *Sex and the City*, none in *Malcolm in the Middle* or *The Simpsons*. But there are in most sitcoms, even ones that don't need it. Would *Seinfeld* be less classic without it? I doubt it. Would *That '70s Show* suddenly be less funny? No. I think it would be improved. When Aaron Sorkin's *Sports Night* aired on ABC without a laugh track, it seemed brilliant, witty, urbane. In syndication on Comedy Central, a laugh track was added, and it felt like a yukfest without the yuks.

In this the week before the networks announce their fall schedules, it would be great for network executives to test the premise of the laugh track itself by obliterating that audio track as they watch the pilots they're pondering putting on the air. They would be better off listening for their own laughter, rather than depending on a laugh track provided by a studio and producer that

need them to think they are enjoying the show.

I'd venture that networks and studios lose millions every year listening to the laughs of people who really aren't there.

Classic *M\*A\*S\*H* had laugh track for all but a few episodes.

**This would be a great time for the network executives to test the premise of the laugh track itself by obliterating that audio track as they watch the pilots they're pondering putting on the air.**

Remember, for example, Jason Alexander's horrible 2001 sitcom, *Bob Patterson*, a comedy about a "famed motivational expert" who was, as it turned out, famously and consistently unfunny? A laugh track did that to ABC and, briefly, to us. (The funniest thing *Bob Patterson* ever did was participate in a fake interview with this magazine. The character—that interview—was funny because Alexander had no phony

protection. His interview even had to read funny.)

Lots of comedies are funny but ruined by the laugh track. Writers learned to lean on it and then to write "to" it. There has to be that buzz of canned

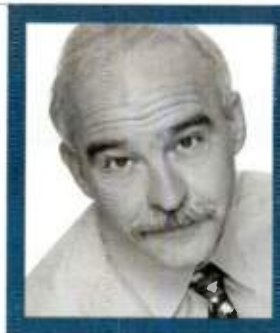
laughter about every 10 or 15 seconds, and so the writers write it that way. That's why television comedies are often so, well, awful. They are written to repeat a pattern of noise we now associate with a sitcom. Most sitcoms are, at best, "funny—for television." And they earn that dim distinction all by themselves.

But the successful ones make it because they're good and probably would be better without a laugh track. My laugh-track pal, Carroll Pratt, in his day, came to become the preferred laugh-track guy among producers of good comedies because he would not lay on the laughs too heavily. He'd do little more than "sweeten" the laughter from the real show that he was working on. Charlie, on the other hand, didn't like to upset comedy writers so he'd lather up a show with guffaws wherever they wanted.

Today, we're a fractionalized television audience, and that should tell broadcast networks we're a nation of television viewers looking for

alternatives. Any network that offers a mass audience laughing all at once is bound to lose the viewers who are looking for something to laugh at all by themselves. The world has changed since Charles Douglass. May he rest in peace, and leave the last laughs for us, for real. ■

Bednarski may be reached at [pbednarski@reedbusiness.com](mailto:pbednarski@reedbusiness.com)



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# Vivendi: No Longer All or Nothing

Continued from page 1  
or the troubled Universal Music.

That's changing. First, Fourtou said early last week that he would sell Universal Music separately from the TV and movie assets. And Redstone said in an interview last Thursday that he would consider buying both Universal's TV and movie assets.

Redstone still covets Sci Fi Channel primarily, keeping with his longtime preference for niche networks. But he said he would happily take USA Network if it were part of the package, cautioning that "We're extremely price-sensitive."

And, he said, "I won't rule out" buying the studio if Vivendi insisted on bundling movies and TV as a package.

Viacom already has a movie and TV studio in Paramount, so buying Universal would leave a lot of redundancies and likely trigger a tense antitrust review in Washington.

But those wouldn't be issues in

helm of QVC and was backed by Liberty Media and Comcast.

A spokesman for Diller wouldn't comment on Redstone's remarks.

Diller has said that he's no longer chasing VUE, dismissing the contention he has "desperate yearnings" to control a studio and TV portfolio. Few media executives believe him.

A year ago, Diller sold USA Network and Sci Fi back to Vivendi, whose predecessor company had swapped the channels in exchange for a 43% stake in USAI.

The sale gave USAI 5.4% of VUE's equity and—for a time—left Diller chairman of VUE.

Diller has sued Vivendi, saying the company is renegeing on a pact to cover any of USAI's tax bills stemming from the sale of USA Network and Sci Fi to Vivendi. That bill could ultimately triple, depending on how a sale of VUE is structured. The lawsuit is widely seen as aiming to make it

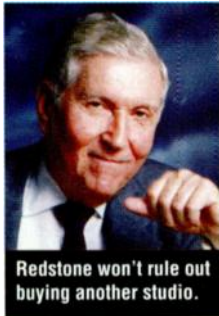
Tuesday, Fourtou finally acknowledged that, oui, there is an "en vente" sign on VUE, something that everyone but Fourtou would say.

But he also said that he would not separate the cable networks from the movie and TV studios. "Obviously, we're after cash, and we're after value," Fourtou said. "We're very keen on disposing of it under circumstances that will be optimal for us and for the team that is there."

He told shareholders he would take ailing Universal Music out of the package and sell it separately or even hang on to it for a couple of years. Universal Music "can stand to be kept for quite some time," he said. "It could stand some changes."

For all the frenzy about Apple Computer's tentative approach about buying the record company, Fourtou said, "we have, for the time being, received no proposal."

Fourtou continued his biting criticism of his predecessor, Jean-Marie Messier, who used the financial strength of Vivendi's water and telecom utilities to stitch together a giant media empire, buying Seagram Co. for its TV and



Redstone won't rule out buying another studio.



Viacom would consider a Vivendi package including Sci Fi Channel, with *Tremors* (I), and USA, with the upcoming *Peacemaker*.

what Redstone characterized as his "ideal solution": teaming up with Barry Diller. "Diller could take the studio; we would take the networks."

Diller, the chairman and CEO of USA Interactive (USAI), has long coveted a movie studio, harking back to his days running Fox's TV and movie operations. He has been circling VUE for months and is deeply entwined with Vivendi. It's not at all clear, though, that he would be interested in owning only the studio.

Redstone didn't say whether he has had any conversations with Diller, although he did say that he and Diller have a good relationship despite their fierce takeover battle for Paramount a decade ago. At that time, Diller was at the

trickier for other players to buy VUE, although Diller says that he is no longer particularly interested in buying the company for himself.

Viacom's shift could be important for Fourtou, who has met with Redstone twice to feel out what kind of a deal they might make. While the cable networks are coveted by many companies, the studio is not. Hence, he doesn't want to split them up and be stuck with the studio. So far, only oil billionaire Marvin Davis has made an offer to buy both sides.

Industry executives said that NBC has also expressed interest but so far only in the cable networks.

At Vivendi's heated annual shareholder meeting in Paris last

movie assets. The resulting debt threatened to topple Vivendi last year, and Messier was axed, ending his ability to use Vivendi to finance a lavish lifestyle.

Fourtou said it is ridiculous to assume that Vivendi could be such a big player in U.S. media. "It would be a delusion to think that we, a French group, can become a leader in American television," he told shareholders.

Messier is suing Vivendi to collect payouts he says he's owed under his French and American employment contracts.

"We have decided to pay him nothing," Fourtou said, noting that Messier owes three months back rent on a company apartment he occupied until March. The tab: \$31,000 per month. ■

# Powell Firm on June 2 Date To Complete Dereg Review

Continued from page 1

reach, the most divisive issue among broadcasters, will be modified, not eliminated. He wouldn't address talk that the new limit will be 45%.

Although federal judges found current broadcast limits to be poorly reasoned, the new limits will be sufficiently justified to survive court scrutiny, he predicted.

Powell took a swipe at his most vocal critic on the commission, Democrat Michael Copps, who wants the vote delayed. Copps has repeatedly complained that the commissioners are in the dark about what changes will be recommended. Powell countered that Copps has not participated in briefings offered to all commissioners: "The clues are available for the taking."

He said he would grant Copps a delay only if there are substantive reasons, not "delay for its own sake."

Countered Copps: "This is serious business, not a game of Clue. With only 32 days left before the most important vote the FCC will take this year, there is no excuse for not having a proposal to review." He said he has accepted an offer for a briefing next week by Media Bureau Chief Ken Ferree. "To my knowledge, I have



**'This is serious business, not a game of Clue. There is no excuse for not having a proposal to review.'**

MICHAEL COPPS, FCC

never turned down a briefing on media-concentration rules."

Powell insisted that it's important to keep the proceeding on track because the market is entitled to some measure of stability before the next congressionally mandated biennial review begins in 2004. That means the inevitable court challenges to the new rules must get under way as soon as possible, he noted.

He called the seemingly never-ending biennial review process a "nightmare for the markets" because no regulatory framework will ever stabilize. Although a five-year review process might make more sense, he said, he hasn't decided to formally request that Congress change the timetable for the future.

As for the cacophony of voices urging delay—many critics of deregulation say the FCC is moving too fast to relax ownership limits—Powell said just as many are urging him to stay on track.

"There are an equal number, if not more, expressing the opposite view" from his critics, he said.

After the broadcast proceeding is completed, he will be eager to move on other media priorities, such as designing new cable-ownership limits, resolving affiliates' complaints about broadcast-network practices, setting rules for cable carriage of digital broadcast channels, and establishing a broadcast DTV copy-protection regime.

Last week, 285 academics asked Powell to reveal the so-called "diversity index," an economic model that will be used to establish new ownership rules. "We have grave doubts that any single measure can effectively analyze the complexities of the media marketplace in terms of its impact on journalism, citizen access to information, and competition," they wrote in a letter to Powell.

Powell countered that the index will be only one tool for setting new limits.

He defended plans to keep the index and other specifics of the rulemaking out of the public eye until the commissioners vote. Releasing the details early would be nearly as difficult to coordinate among the panel as the final vote itself, he said. ■

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