

NATPE: where they talk about fourth networks but they still buy the games

The tried-and-true look better than ever to station programmers this year, with few experiments on horizon; prices on escalator

The 14th annual conference of the National Association of Television Program Executives will resemble previous years' meetings when the corridor talk turns to complaints about game shows still dominating access time periods and to grumbling about the high prices of off-network reruns and of theatrical-movie packages. But when the conversations swing toward fourth-network concepts like Operation Prime Time and MetroNet and to Group W's embracing of locally produced light-informational magazine strips on all five of its owned stations in access time periods, the NATPE executives will be coming up against new, experimental ideas with far-reaching consequences for the future.

But ideas tend to be rarefied things, and, as Michael Kievman, the programming vice president for the Cox Broadcasting group puts it, "the primary thrust of NATPE is as a marketplace for product—station guys sampling the wares of the syndicators and buying what they need for their schedules, particularly their access schedules."

And since "very few concepts outside the tried-and-true have ever worked in access," according to Mr. Kievman, the first two new access shows to be locked in by network-owned groups for next September were game shows: Goodson-Todman's *Family Feud* for NBC (with Viacom Enterprises as syndicator) and another Goodson-Todman show, *Tattletales*, for CBS (which Len Firestone will distribute).

The network-owned groups "are basically playing it safe—they're not taking any risks in access," said Robert Peyton, the vice president and director of audience development for Katz Television. The ABC stations have renewed a batch of access game shows for September: *The Match Game* (produced by Goodson-Todman, syndicated by Jim Victory), *The Gong Show* (producer, Chuck Barris; syndicator, Len Firestone) and two half-hours of *Hollywood Squares* (producer, Heatter-Quigley; syndicator, Rhodes Productions).

NBC will bring back its two successful game-show veterans, *The Price Is Right* (producer, Goodson-Todman; syndicator, Viacom Enterprises) and *Name That Tune* (producer, Ralph Edwards; syndicator, Sandy Frank). CBS has one access-game-show renewal, *The \$25,000 Pyramid* (producer, Bob Stewart; syndicator, Viacom), which will return at least in

New York and Los Angeles.

Musical variety formats in access are being decimated this year by the cancellation by CBS of *The Bobby Vinton Show* from Sandy Frank and by NBC of Grey Advertising's *The Andy Williams Show*. CBS, however, has renewed *The Muppet Show* (from ITC Entertainment) and NBC will take on, as a new access series, the satirical musical send-up of the 1950's *Sha Na Na*, from Grey Advertising's Lexington Syndication Services division, which was originally piloted by the ABC-owned stations.

Animal shows peaked two years ago, and, as an example of their weakness in the current marketplace, only Mutual of Omaha's *Wild Kingdom* (from Bozell & Jacobs), which NBC has renewed, will turn up on the access schedules of all three network groups next fall.

Mass-audience-oriented documentary half-hours in access will be represented by Alan Landsburg Productions' *In Search of...* (bartered by Bristol-Myers), which NBC has renewed, and by ITC Entertainment's *Catastrophe*, which Glenn Ford will narrate and which ITC will put into production despite its failure to get a pick-up from ABC (which helped finance the pilot).

John Serrao, the director of operations and programming for Petry Television, said heavy-volume sales are likely to be harvested by a 20th Century-Fox wallow in old-movie nostalgia called *That's Hollywood*, which turned out to be the last chess piece fitted into its stations' access schedule by the ABC group. Philip Boyer,

the programming vice president of the ABC-owned stations, said he's picked up the option on Columbia Pictures Television's *Special Edition*, a magazine-type half-hour presided over by the actress Barbara Feldon, and may run it as a weekly series outside of access or put it in the wings as a possible January replacement.

The ABC and NBC groups have filled all their access holes. CBS has one access slot still to fill and among the candidates being mentioned are a Yongestreet Productions' sitcom starring Don Knotts, called *Front Page Feeney*, and a new British version of *Robin Hood*, an action-adventure series distributed by Sandy Frank.

Petry's John Serrao pegs a number of other series geared for access that could very well be given production go-aheads despite their not having network-owned-station deals: Rhodes Productions' *The David Steinberg Show*, Rhodes' satirical *Second City Review*, Show Biz Inc.'s *Marty Robbins Show* (a country-music series) and Metromedia Productions' new access version of the strip game show *Truth or Consequences*. In addition, Mr. Serrao points to good advance word on two new strip game shows, Colbert TV Sales' *The Joker's Wild* and Show Biz Inc.'s *Word Grabbers*. And he says that MCA TV is serious about a new 90-minute strip variety show called *American Flyer*, which is being pitched to independent stations as logical prime-time counterprogramming to the networks. Yongestreet Productions, too, he continues, is soliciting stations for a first-run weekly variety barter series, *The*

Saturday, Feb. 12

Registration. 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Grand Gallery.
Hospitality suites open. 10 a.m.-7 p.m.

Sunday, Feb. 13

Registration. 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Grand Gallery.
Hospitality suites open. 10 a.m.-6 p.m.
Cocktail reception. 6-7:30 p.m. Garden Court.

Honor banquet. 7:30-10:30 p.m. East Ballroom. Program Excellence Awards and Lee Waller Memorial Scholarship Awards. Celebrity presenters include Jim Nabors, Lorne Greene, Buffalo Bob Smith, Peter Marshall, Bill Burrud, Phil Donahue, Mike Douglas, David Wolper, FCC Commissioner Abbott Washburn, Ara Parseghian, William Conrad, George Lindsay, Don Knotts, Dan Rowan, Al Waxman, Lynda Carter. David Hartman is master of ceremonies. Entertainment by Soupy Sales.

Monday, Feb. 14

Call to order. 9 a.m. West Ballroom. Phil Boyer, NATPE president.
Invocation. 9:15 a.m. West Ballroom. The Rev. Canon Theodore Gibson, vice mayor of Miami.
Keynote address. 9:30 a.m. Sid Sheinberg, MCA.

"Programming and the Communications Act."

10:30 a.m. West Ballroom. NATPE testimony regarding proposed changes for the 1934 law. Moderator: Chuck Gingold, KATU-TV Portland, Ore. Speakers: Dean Burch, Pierson, Ball & Dowd; Bill Leonard, vice president-Washington, CBS; William H. Dilday, general manager, WLBT-TV Jackson, Miss.; Donald H. McGannon, president, Westinghouse Broadcasting. Comments: Representative Lionel Van Deerlin (D-Calif.), chairman, House Communications Subcommittee; Harry M. Shooshan, counsel to the subcommittee; Vincent Wasilewski, president, National Association of Broadcasters; Don Curran, president, Kaiser Broadcasting; Joel Chaseman, president, Post-Newsweek Stations; Larry Grossman, president, Public Broadcasting Service; Ben Barry, president, Ben Barry & Associates; Bruce Paisner, Time-Life Television; Russell Karp, Teleprompter.

Luncheon. 12:30 p.m. East Ballroom. Host: Phil Boyer. Address: Richard E. Wiley, chairman, FCC.

Affiliate and independent meetings. 2:30 p.m. Versailles Gallery, Tower building. ABC—Pasteur Room. Moderator: Lew Klein, Gateway Communications. CBS—Lafayette Room. Moderator: Tay Voye, wtvj(tv) Miami. NBC—Voltaire Room. Moderator: A.R. Van Cantfort, wsb-tv Atlanta. Independents—Louis Philippe Room. Moderator: Jack Jacobson, wgn-tv Chicago. Discussion by Michael Moore, Benton & Bowles; Richard Buchanan, J. Walter