Off the ground. Bob Johnson kicked off his Black Entertainment Television at well-attended reception on Capitol Hill and BET began transmitting first of weekly, two-hour programs to cable systems across country via satellite time leased from UA-Columbia Cablevision (Satcom). First program, one of 39 films BET has rights to, was United Artists’ “Visit to a Chief’s Son.” Reception, held in one of House office buildings, drew large crowd of local politicians and communications people, including FCC Commissioner Tyrone Brown, House Communications Subcommittee Chairman Lionell Van Deerin (D-Calif) and FCC’s deputy chief of Broadcast Bureau, Frank Washington. Also among crowd were representatives of six companies that have bought advertising time on BET—Anheuser-Busch Inc., Time Inc., Champsale Inc., Pepsi-Cola Co., Sears, Roebuck & Co. and Kellogg Co. — and Gil Lucas of Tele-Communications Inc., giant MSO, which bought 20% interest in Johnson’s venture.

Mark your calendars. Thirty-second annual Emmy awards of Academy of Television Arts and Sciences have been set for Sept. 7. NBC-TV will telecast from Pasadena (Calif.) Civic Auditorium.

On line. CBS-owned wcbs-tv New York and kmox-tv St. Louis have signed to carry Group W Productions’ “John Davidson Show,” talk-program that syndicator is introducing to replace Mike Douglas Show (BROADCASTING Jan. 21). O&O’s were first of 78 stations to sign for show, including Westinghouse Broadcasting’s five outlets.

Advance notice. Following practice started last fall, NBC-TV will give affiliates this week its March-May schedule of ministries and movies so they can develop local sales and promotion strategies, Brandon Tartikoff, new president of NBC Entertainment (BROADCASTING, Jan. 21), told Dallas regional meeting of 40 NBC-TV affiliates. Tartikoff, making first appearance in new role, also said NBC will have seven new comedy series ready for prime time by spring. He also reiterated plan to curtail game shows in daytime, replacing them with variety-talk and other formats, including Today-like half-hour at 11:30 a.m. NYT (BROADCASTING, Jan. 7).

In the marketplace. Arthur & Company, wplg-tv Miami’s children’s show for past decade, goes into national syndication next spring (M.A. Kemper is distributing). Arthur, featuring people and puppets, also has been airing on wplg-tv’s co-owned Post-Newsweek Stations … Road to the White House, 34 60-second TV shorts from David Blumenthal Associates, is being distributed by King World Productions. It’s series of presidential profiles, each with different celebrity host, said to include Bob Hope, Henry Fonda, Michael Landon, Diana Merrill, among others … Future Flippin’ is new animated series from NTA, featuring hero dolphin 100 years hence. NTA’s also offering off-network Music Country USA, Flip Wilson and Dean Martin, formerly on NBC-TV. So was original Flippin’ … Tell Me on a Sunday, “musical chronicle of a young Englishwoman who has four love affairs in New York,” is available from Metromedia Producers Corp. NBC-TV/MPC special has score performed by London Philharmonic and arranged by Andrew Lloyd Webber (“Jesus Christ Superstar” “Evita”) … Three joint pacts make news: Scholastic Productions and BBI Communications pool resources to develop children’s TV syndicated series for 1980, Metromedia Program Productions and Jim Owens Productions join forces for minimum of three prime-time television specials for next season and Television Syndication Group and Janus Television have entered joint distribution agreement for TSJ’s first-run syndication series …

Joining the fray. Competition for afternoon air continues to grow, with Viacom, Post-Newsweek Stations and Michael Krauss Productions proposing Hitin’ Home for early 1981. There’s no decision yet on host but “family of regulars” in studio and on road would include Art Linkletter on children; Cathy Cronkite with human interest stories; John Steinberg on consumer affairs, and “San Diego Chicken” of baseball fame who “will handle lighthearted gripe sessions.” Pilot week taping is planned this fall.

HBO’s wonders years. Home Box Office doesn’t expect to continue doubling its subscribers base each year but from year-end 1978 to year-end 1979, it claims to have done just that, from two million to more than four million subscribers. Affiliated cable systems rose from 731 to 1,700. HBO acceptance within systems grew from 37% to 43% of basic subscribers and from 20% to 23% of all homes passed by systems.

Teletworld is learning. Teletworld Inc., New York, has been named worldwide television distributor for Learning Corp. of America, New York, producer of ABC-TV’s After School Specials, NBC-TV’s Special Treats and prime-time feature films made by its Highgate Pictures Division. This division recently opened a West Coast office to expand development and production of prime-time programs.

The Baptists’ best

The Southern Baptist Radio-Television Commission has selected eight broadcasters who will be considered for its two top Abe Lincoln Awards (one in television, one in radio). The other six are to be merit award winners.

The final decisions will be revealed Feb. 28 at the awards ceremony at the Kahler Green Oaks Inn, Fort Worth.

The eight broadcasters: Mardee McKinlay Birchfield, director of public affairs, KBTY-TV Denver; Kathryn F. Broman, president, Springfield Televi-