

HBO enters into production deal for made-for-pay motion picture

Home Box Office, which originated the first satellite-delivered pay cable service (revolutionizing cable along the way), has now announced the first deal for a made-for-pay-TV movie. Principal photography will begin next spring on *The Terry Fox Story*, a drama about a Canadian athlete who, having lost a leg to the bone cancer that would ultimately kill him, began a "Marathon of Hope"—a trek across Canada to raise money for cancer research. The film is to be produced with an independent Canadian production company, Robert Cooper Productions, Inc., the producer of "Running" and "Middle Age Crazy."

HBO is tying this move to its decision to take its foundation service to a 24-hour schedule on Jan. 1, saying it's a part of HBO's move to new types of product and new types of service to fill that time without "regurgitation" of existing product.

Made-for-pay-TV movies have been gaining attention in the industry as the next logical step for pay-service providers looking to fill extensive schedules while program costs, especially those of theatrical features, escalate. HBO says this an-

nounced deal is only one of several such projects it expects to bring in for 1982 cablecast. While no financial details were available, HBO put the cost of *The Terry*

Fox Story in a league with broadcast network made-for-TV movies. HBO said it is talking to major Hollywood studios plus other independent producers.

Monitor

Fast moving. Over past five months, *Dukes of Hazzard* has been sold in 84 markets, making it "fastest selling" syndicated series in television history, according to Warner Bros. TV distribution. *Hazzard* was released for presale last April and has been sold on individual market basis with 1984 availability. WB-TV noted that sales of *Hazzard* in April, May and June of this year contributed heavily to previously announced worldwide record sales of \$170 million set by company in first six months of this year.

Syndicated captioning. National Captioning Institute has cited T.A.T. Communications *The Jeffersons* as "first off-network television program to be syndicated with closed captions for hearing-impaired viewers." Institute said it, T.A.T. and 15 local stations that will be running captions, are sharing costs and other stations are expected to join.

At NBC. Entertainment division of NBC-TV is planning to cut back its annual pilot production budget next year from estimated \$20-\$25 million to about \$15 million. Shift was announced by NBC Entertainment President Brandon Tartikoff, who said more cost-effective ways of evaluating proposed programs include closer script evaluation and concept discussion, as well as production of 20-minute demonstration tapes. Meanwhile NBC has changed name of its *Rock Hudson Show*, new series to premiere Sept 27 at 10 p.m., to *Devlin Connection*.

New role. CBS-TV has ordered production of new half-hour comedy series starring Suzanne Somers in role of stewardess. No premiere date has been set for show, being produced by Tandem Productions and Hamel-Somers Entertainment Inc. Thirteen episodes have been ordered.

Spinning off. *Nine to Five*, a limited-run half-hour comedy series based on motion picture of same name, will premiere on ABC-TV during 1981-82 prime-time season, network has announced. Four episodes have been ordered from IFS Films, which will produce series in association with 20th Century-Fox Television. Rita Moreno and Rachel Parton Dennison (sister of Dolly Parton, who appeared in feature version) will co-star with third actress to be named later. No debut date has been set.

In the marketplace. American Television Syndication claims 110 markets for late-night weekly hour, *An Evening at the Improv*, produced by New Form Television. Syndicated airing starts Sept. 25. . . . *Hot Fudge*, Lexington Broadcast Services' half-hour children's show now in sixth year of syndication, is available as strip. It is live-action puppet show. Puppets are also in cast of *The Rainbow Patch*, weekly half hour being distributed by Melromedia Producers Corp; it's a Gary Blohm Production in association with Strengtholt Entertainments and NBC Television Stations. . . . Lionheart Television claims 62 stations, including WPXI-TV New York and WGN-TV Chicago, for BBC's *Training Dogs the Woodhouse Way*, 10 half hours. . . . Telepictures Corp. reports its new first-run series for syndication, *Look At Us*, has cleared 103 markets serving more than 75% of all U.S. TV households.

In the sky. Filmways Enterprises, has entered into long-term agreement with Wold Communications for satellite and tape distribution of syndicated TV series, *Saturday Night*, 60-minute strip version of NBC-TV's *Saturday Night Live* comedy series. Beginning Sept. 21, Wold will originate program from its technical operating center in Hollywood for transmission via Westar III, transponder 7. More than 100 markets have cleared the series.

Rent only. By middle of next year, consumers can't buy (legitimately at least) videocassettes of Warner Bros. Warner Home Video unit of Warner Communications announced new rental-only policy for cassettes, saying that reflects current and "irreversible" trend of consumer market. Warner will only license, and not sell, cassettes to consumer outlets, which in turn will rent them to consumers.

Cronkite's idea. Satellite Education Services and noncommercial KCET-TV Los Angeles have announced *Why in the World*, weekly, half-hour, current-events series aimed for use in high schools, will premiere Oct. 20 ("Closed Circuit," Aug. 24). Series, underwritten with \$1-million grant from General Motors, was conceived by Walter Cronkite, SES chairman. Cronkite said series aims to "bring the best teachers and the best minds to all of the nation's high schools by way of television." Series will be distributed via satellite by Public Broadcasting Service.

Turning Japanese. ABC Video Enterprises, subsidiary of ABC Inc., has licensed rights to 18 ABC theatrical features to Victor Company of Japan (JVC) for distribution in Japan on VHD videodisk developed by JVC and scheduled for marketing in October 1981. Agreement is first overseas licensing for Japanese home video market.

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