
Slice of American life seen in new series

Produced by Kelly Broadcasting, Multimedia and Frank Magid, pilot draws enthusiastic response, says syndicator and will bridge gap between network news and prime time

Undaunted by the FCC's deregulatory mood, backers of a proposed new strip magazine series are optimistic about the chances of success for a program they say "brings out the positive features of America and the American way of life."

The pilot for *American Pie*, as the proposed half-hour weekday show is being called, is now being shown to prospective buyers with a Sept. 13, 1982, start date in mind. Sacramento-based Kelly Brothers Television says it produced the pilot for more than \$1 million and has established an annual budget of \$10 million for the 200-episode first year.

Kelly owns 70% of the project. The unit is the production and programing arm of Kelly Broadcasting, owner of KCRA-TV Sacramento and KCPQ-TV Tacoma, Wash. Multimedia Program Productions owns 20% of the series. MPP is owned by Multimedia Inc., owner of six TV, six AM, six FM stations, 38 newspapers, and 67 cable TV systems and franchises. Frank N. Magid Associates, a broadcast industry research firm, owns the remaining 10%.

"We don't see the possible loss of the prime-time access rule as an ominous thing," said Donald L. Dahlman, executive vice president, sales, for Multimedia Programs. "First, we think the rule will still be there. But even if it is repealed, our research shows this is the kind of program people want to watch, and we believe there is a strong demand for it."

Dahlman describes Kelly's KCRA-TV as "the grandfather" of successful magazine shows, having produced eight consecutive years of *Weeknight*, a half-hour prime-time access series offered unsuccessfully for national syndication this fall. According to Dahlman, *American Pie* was promoted as a spin-off of *Weeknight* by Frank Magid after his research confirmed significant public interest in such a program.

The series is seen as a natural bridge between "the reality of network news and the entertainment aspects of network prime time" during the early evening, Dahlman told BROADCASTING last week.

"Our research shows that people are eager to hear what's right about America," Dahlman continued, "and will respond favorably to an emphasis on good news." He said the series would also include elements of humor, sympathy and practical knowledge.

The series pilot, co-hosted by Squire Fridell and JoAnn Pflug, includes segments on the world's tallest roller coaster, *Today* show weatherman Willard Scott, a group of successful business executives who took over a hotel in Tahiti, an 8-year-old who has his own ice cream business,

and a billionaire who refuses to give up work. According to Jon Kelly, a one-third owner of Kelly Broadcasting, "*American Pie* will portray slices of American life in an upbeat, positive and affirmative manner."

Kelly estimated his company plans to shoot some 1,400 individual stories, using a staff of 65-80 persons. The pilot was produced at the Osmond Entertainment Center studios in Orem, Utah. Kelly noted negotiations are under way with the Osmond Entertainment Co. as to whether its studios will be used for future *American Pie* productions. "The distance (from Sacramento)," he said, "is a factor of concern ... Their studios are superb; their cooperation excellent."

Kelly believes that KCRA-TV is the second largest producer of original programing among local stations, behind WCVB-TV Boston. He said his station produces at least 25 hours of local programing each week.

Initial response to the *American Pie* pilot has been enthusiastic, according to Dahlman, whose Cincinnati-based firm is syndicating the program. He said the first big push for the series will begin in mid-November, after October ratings for current early-evening and fringe programing are available.

Silverman strikes deal with UA-MGM

He will head new production arm with George Reeves

Now its's Fred Silverman, independent producer.

The former NBC president will be running a new independent production company for United Artists and its parent MGM—a venture said to "embrace all facets of the entertainment industry."

Silverman, ousted from NBC this summer in favor of Grant Tinker, called his new association with UA and MGM, "the fulfillment of my 22 years in the business." His partner in the company is George Reeves, a former senior vice president at ABC whom Silverman had worked with during his years at that network.

In an announcement last week from UA, Silverman said he will be "involved in all of the broadening areas of entertainment." He added that he is "particularly gratified in working with [UA Chairman and Chief Executive Officer] David Begelman in the development and production of feature films."

Begelman said that "the prospect of Fred being part of our theatrical filmmaking, TV activities and new ventures in entertainment brings satisfaction and delight to all of us at the studio." He said Silverman "brings a guaranteed quotient of creative dynamism."

According to UA, Silverman will be announcing his staff and projects "shortly." He will maintain offices on both the West and East Coasts. Other details were not provided.

ABC retools prime time

ABC-TV announced several changes in its prime-time schedule last Monday (Oct. 12), including introduction of a new terror/suspense program on Friday nights.

ABC Entertainment President Anthony D. Thomopoulos said, "The addition of *Darkroom* [a series from Universal Television to air between 9 and 10 p.m. NYT beginning Nov. 27], along with the accompanying scheduling moves ABC has made, will serve to strengthen our fall schedule. *Darkroom* will bring to television a genre for which there is obviously a growing appetite." The anthology series will be introduced by a host to be announced shortly.

As a result of the series addition, ABC is moving *Maggie*, the half-hour situation comedy created by Erma Bombeck, from 9 p.m. Friday to 8 p.m. Saturday, beginning Oct. 24. The 9:30 p.m. show on Friday, *Making a Living*, a situation comedy about waitresses working in a posh restaurant, has been switched to 8:30 p.m. Saturday, beginning Oct. 24. The two programs replace *King's Crossing* during the Saturday time period. ABC has delayed the premiere of the drama about a New England family and plans to reschedule it for a midseason debut.

The network also announced premiere dates for three other new series. *Open All Night* will debut Friday, Nov. 27, at 8:30-9 p.m. NYT. The one-hour drama, *Strike Force*, will premiere with a 90-minute episode Friday, Nov. 13 (9:30-11 p.m.), then switch to its regular time period (10-11 p.m.) beginning Nov. 20. *Code Red*, a one-hour series about firefighters, joins the schedule Sunday, Nov. 1 at 7-8 p.m. ET.

Gearing up for a software explosion

New York film seminar takes look at what emerging media will mean to creative community

"Channeling the Future: Cable and the New TV" provided the focus of a seminar that drew the attention of the independent production community in New York. Set as part of the 19th New York Film Festival, the session featured an opening address by 20th Century-Fox Chairman Alan J. Hirschfield and a discussion on cable by a panel composed of John Goberman, director of media development for New York's Lincoln Center; William Baker, president of Group W's Television Group; Sheila Mahoney, vice president, director of franchising, Cablevision Systems; former FCC Chairman Charles Ferris, and Gloria Steinem, editor of *Ms. Magazine*. The day-long program was organized by The Film Society of Lincoln Center and the telecommunications consulting firm, New Medium.

"We are now entering an era of un-