

**Group W Satellite Communications** confirmed last week it will shut down **Home Theater Network**, 12-hour-a-day service that featured only G or PG movies. Its last day will be Jan. 31, 1987. Launched in July 1977, HTN is one of oldest cable services, but also one of smallest in terms of subscribership. It now has 375 affiliates and serves 325,000 subscribers. "Over the past few years, HTN has gone from a money loser to a company with positive cash flow," said Cheryl Daly, spokeswoman for GWSC, "but we could not project significant growth for it in the future." She said two factors dampened service's prospects: sale of Group W's cable division, which had provided affiliate base, and projected long-term difficulties of pay cable in general. Decision to shut down service was precipitated by desire to lease GWSC's Satcom III-R transponder to TWA for its new programming service, The Travel Channel (see below).

**TWA Chairman Carl Icahn** has entered cable business. He announced last week **plans to launch The Travel Channel**, 24-hour-a-day basic cable service, on Feb. 1, 1987. New service will be division of TWA subsidiary, TWA Marketing Services Inc., and will be **headed by Jim Trecek** as chief operating officer. Trecek had been senior VP of Tempo Enterprises. To distribute service, Trecek said, TTC has secured 12 hours (4 p.m.-4 a.m. NYT) on Satcom III-R, transponder 16, from Group W Satellite Communications, and is negotiating for fulltime slot on Satcom IV. GWSC will also handle tape playback and uplinking of service from its Stamford, Conn., facility, he said. GWSC made time on Satcom III-R transponder available following its decision to close down Home Theater Network (see above). Trecek said TTC also bought its name from GWSC. TTC had been name of travel-oriented programming presented between movies on HTN. TTC will be offered to cable system at no charge. He declined to say how much money Icahn

**Bottom line considerations for 'Cosby'.** A week after Viacom's announcement of its terms of sale for The Cosby Show in syndication (BROADCASTING, Oct. 20), stations were studying the company's marketing plan to determine whether the series, given the high prices it is expected to attract, makes economic sense.

At least one general manager said last week that his station would probably take itself out of the bidding. Others studying Viacom's offer said that while the show itself is not likely to make a profit, the strong lead-in it will probably provide to the remainder of the station's schedule could justify its purchase. "We can make money on this," said one executive.

The reactions came after meetings between Viacom and New York-based rep firms and some stations. Viacom will open sales of Cosby in New York today (Oct. 27) with formal presentations. Stations will be notified of the show's reserve price immediately following the presentations. The second market to bid on the show will be Chicago, with California markets following that.

According to sources, "a new wrinkle" in the marketing plan emerged from the initial meetings—Viacom will accept alternative offers for the show at the same time it is accepting bids in 5% increments over the reserve price it sets. It was not clear whether the two bids would be accepted simultaneously.

According to those reached last week, initial reserve prices for a week's worth of the show in New York are expected to be \$130,000-\$160,000. In Los Angeles, where the show is expected to command a higher weekly price than New York because there are more stations, the show could go for \$165,000-\$170,000. Station executives in Chicago estimated the show would be offered at a weekly reserve price of \$115,000-\$140,000.

Most of those commenting said Viacom's decision to take bids was fair, although many were not happy with Viacom's keeping of a barter minute. "I don't see anyone not wanting the product," said Viacom president of domestic distribution, Joe Zaleski.

as committed to venture, saying only, "It's funded well, funded deep."

Proposal by **Association of Independent Television Stations and NATPE** to add **day of first-run syndicated programming to annual Television Critics Association press tour** ("In Brief," Oct. 13) is picking up speed. INTV said last week that **17 producers/syndicators have far agreed to split cost** of Jan. 14 presentations. They are: MCA, Gaylord, SFM, Fries, Disney-Buena Vista, D.L. Taffner, Coltex, LLI Communications, Paramount Domestic TV, Viacom, Lionheart, Blair Entertainment, 20th Century Fox, Lorimar-Telepictures, Tribune Entertainment, Television Program Enterprises and Group W.

**Pacifica Foundation**, licensee of noncommercial KPFK(FM) Los Angeles, has responded to FCC Mass Media Bureau's formal request for comment on **allegations that programming it broadcast was "obscene or indecent"** (BROADCASTING, Sept. 29). In letter to bureau, Pacifica said that homosexual programming at issue consisted of interview with playwright and excerpts from play. "The treatment was sensitive and the predominant mood reflected the need to affirm life in the face of death," Pacifica said. Pacifica also said it broadcast warning that program contained material some might find objectionable. Program also was broadcast between 10 p.m. and 11 p.m. when children, Pacifica said, would not ordinarily be in listening audience. Pacifica said it regretted that other programming at issue aired.

**First five prime time World Series games** between New York Met and Boston Red Sox carried by NBC have **averaged 26.2 rating and 42 share** in Nielsen ratings, 9% higher than 1985's five-game national average of 24.1/37, NBC spokesman said. Game five last Thursday (Oct. 23) had national average of 29.8/47. Night was helped by *Cosby Show* lead-in (35.4/54), delaying coverage by half-hour to 8:30 p.m. Spokesman said *Cosby* aired because it is "most popular show in the country" and network feared calls from disgruntled viewers if program didn't run. He added that "practically speaking," it was also "good lead-in" to series. Advertising—roughly \$275,000 per 30-second spot—was sold out for first five games (25 minutes in each game). Games six and seven were "just about sold out," spokesman said.

Last week's news that WKJL(TV) Baltimore had settled on **contract with syndicators** in wake of station's sale to **Home Shopping Network** (BROADCASTING, Oct. 20) has raised ire of other stations which are now demanding similar reduction in their syndication payments. Syndicators settled with WKJL(TV) since they had no prospect of getting full value of their original contracts after station's asset-only sale to HSN. Association of Program Distributors now estimates that outstanding payments to syndicators as result of station purchases and affiliation agreements by HSN, plus stations' credit problems, total between \$750 million and \$1 billion. Between 85 and 90 APD members have now contributed \$2,000 each for legal counsel.

**Pay cable penetration reached 26.1%** of U.S. TV households as of July, according to Nielsen Station Index. Leading list is Laredo, Tex., with 55% pay cable penetration. NSI also estimates that **Viacom penetration has reached 39.9%** of U.S. households, with San Francisco-Oakland-Santa Rosa, Calif., market and Las Vegas each having 56% VCR penetration.

**CBS is negotiating with actress Mariette Hartley for possible co-host role on new morning news-entertainment program** that network planning for next January. Robert Shanks, executive producer of new show, said last week that he would not yet discuss plans. He did confirm that talks were ongoing with Hartley. In past, Hartley has substituted for Jane Pauley on NBC's *Today*. Unconfirmed reports said Shanks has also approached columnist **Jack Anderson** about contributing regular feature. Anderson did regular reporting for *Good Morning America* for about five years, ending in 1986.