

and CBS combined. Frons said last week that that's OK with him. The way he sees it, the NBC schedule will be "better balanced" with three hours each of game shows and soaps. As for introducing new soaps, Frons said he was taking a "wait and see attitude" on that, but acknowledged that he would be very reluctant to come out with a new half-hour soap because they don't seem to perform nearly as well as hour-long soaps.

Sale of the Century, which NBC is moving to 10 a.m., had been winning its time period at 10:30 a.m. through the third quarter. But the new syndicated talk show starring Oprah Winfrey, which launched in September, has given *Sale* some tough competition and dominates from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. in many markets. A network researcher said last week that *Oprah* is currently winning the 10-11 a.m. time period in 12 of 13 metered markets. In New York, for example, fourth quarter to date, the show was first with a 5.6/27. Nationally, *Sale* at 10:30 a.m. has averaged a 3.8/17 so far in the fourth quarter, off a share point and six-tenths of a rating point since *Oprah* came on the air. CBS's *Card Sharks* at 10:30 a.m. has averaged a 3.3/15 in the same period.

Still, *Sale* has been beating its network competition, and Frons hopes that it will get NBC's daytime schedule off to a fast start.

The network could use the boost. It has been mired in third place in the daytime race (households and demographics) for some time although it has become more competitive in the past year. In recent months, it has lost some of the momentum it seemed to gain through the second quarter, when it was less than a rating point out of first place. Four weeks into the fourth quarter, CBS is first in daytime with a 5.9/23, followed by ABC with a 5.4/20 and then NBC with a 4.6/18. A year ago, ABC led the pack (6/22) with CBS closing in fast (5.7/22) while NBC was a poorer third with a 4.4/17.

NBC's new entry at 10:30 a.m., *Blockbusters*, ran on the NBC schedule from October 1980 to April 1982. Frons said it was canceled originally not because of its performance, but because the network had no place to put it when it decided to try the soap, *Texas* (subsequently canceled), in the morning. That game show "was averaging a 17 or 18 share with a horrible lead-in," the old *Regis Philbin Show*, said Frons. *Blockbusters* is a question-and-answer game show which the network hopes will prove compatible with *Wheel of Fortune*, which airs at 11 a.m. In hindsight, said Frons, *Blockbusters* "probably should have never been taken off."

Wordplay, which debuts Dec. 29 at 12:30 p.m., is described as a "comedy game show based on the childhood dictionary game." It features two contestants and a panel of three celebrities who give a series of humorous definitions for a word, only one of which is right. Frons said: "If the show only holds its *Super Password* lead-in, we'll have a 50% improvement in share. . . . If we hold a 14 or 15 share, we'll be delighted." Frons described the changes announced last week in NBC daytime schedule as "major." He said he'll give the current lineup at least six months to take hold before making further adjustments. "Then we'll see what happens." □

Group W goes for comedy

In departure from its usual magazine format and animation, company teams with Bristol-Myers for first-run, syndicated sitcom

Group W Productions, primarily known for its animation, talk-variety and magazine-style format shows, will turn to comedy for the first time in the fall of 1987 with *Together Again*, a new, first-run syndicated sitcom that GWP will feature at NATPE. To be produced in association with Bristol-Myers as part of an extensive agreement between the two companies, the program will represent "yet another step in our effort to become a supplier that can distribute all forms of programming to outlets," said Edwin T. Vane, GWP's president and chief executive officer.

A pilot for the show, which will consist of 24 half-hour episodes produced at a standard cost of \$325,000-\$375,000 apiece, is scheduled to be taped Nov. 25. GWP and Bristol-Myers are casting the show, Vane said. GWP will begin marketing *Together* in December, with the show to be sold for either cash-plus-barter or on a straight barter basis, he added. If *Together* is a financial success, Vane said, GWP would consider producing more sitcoms.

GWP and Bristol-Myers have signed George Tricker and Neil Rosen as executive producers of *Together*, which they created. During the past 12 years, Tricker and Rosen have written *The Ted Knight Show*, *Too Close for Comfort* and *Silver Spoons*—as well as serving as the last's executive story editors.

The new series involves former high school sweethearts who go their separate ways, marry and divorce others, then accidentally meet years later as young adults. The couple quickly weds, figuring their previous relationship would make their second marriage simple. But they are proved wrong, according to Vane.

A first-run sitcom appealed to GWP, Vane said, because it can be sold for access (5-8 p.m.) or as part of a checkerboard pattern. Citing the ratings success of the checkerboard at KTLA(TV) in Los Angeles, which has consistently outsourced the network affiliates in prime time access since its debut Oct. 4, Vane said GWP is betting checkerboarding "will become quite popular by December 1987."

Although sitcoms represent a new undertaking for GWP, they are nothing new for Vane, who has 35 years of programming experience at NBC and ABC, or Christine Foster, the company's vice president of development, who was vice president of series for Columbia during the 1981-82 season.

The new comedy series is the by-product of an earlier three-part agreement among GWP, the Group W Television Station Group and Bristol-Myers. Under the partnership pact, which executives of the companies would only describe as a "multiyear" contract valued in the "eight-figure range," Bristol-Myers agreed to a co-venture for a first-run syndicated sitcom; to purchase advertising on additional GWP programs, in-

cluding *PM Magazine* and *Hour Magazine*; and to the production of 16 hour-long health specials on Group W stations over the next four years (one special a quarter). The first of those specials, due for airing early next year, will focus on different forms of addiction. Discussions are under way with potential hosts for the series of health specials, with Group W and Bristol-Myers planning to hire "a major personality," Vane said.

Marvin Koslow, senior vice president of marketing services for Bristol-Myers, said the company "is extremely enthusiastic about the widely appealing entertainment values and hit potential of *Together Again*." □

'A Great Day' coming from Blair, Multimedia

Moreno to host show that will examine stress

Multimedia Entertainment and Blair Entertainment are joining forces to syndicate a new half-hour "infotainment" strip, hosted by Rita Moreno, that will take an informative and offbeat look at the role of stress in American life. The show, *A Great Day—All Stressed Up and Nowhere to Go*, will be produced by Kline & Friends Productions, producer of Blair's game show, *Strike it Rich*.

A Great Day is planned to include a number of pre-produced segments that deal with a single stress-related subject, including one-minute pieces looking at 24 hours in the life of a man or a woman, depictions of stress as portrayed on television and the movies, as well as discussion segments with audiences that will feature guests, such as psychiatrists. Other examples of segments will include comedians humorously dealing with anger. Other topics will include guilt, stress management, achievement, nonviolent crimes against women and secrets of a happy marriage. A pilot will be shot shortly at Sunset Gallery Studios in Hollywood.

Multimedia Entertainment President Mike Weinblatt said Moreno was chosen because of her interest in the show and her credits in the entertainment industry. Moreno has won Grammy, Tony, Emmy and Oscar awards.

Weinblatt said the new show will fit "flexibly" with the company's half-hour talk show, *Sally Jesse Raphael*, but that it is not specifically designed to be sold in a package with *Sally*, although that remained a possibility. "I do think they will appeal to similar audiences," said Weinblatt. *A Great Day* is being aimed primarily at morning and afternoon time periods. Weinblatt said that *A Great Day* will probably be sold, like *Sally*, on a cash-plus-barter basis, with Multimedia holding one 30-second spot. Initial plans for the joint marketing of the series call for Multimedia to handle station clearances and for Blair to sell barter time in the show. □