

lespie. "We got more for it on a nonexclusive basis [for Chicago, New York and Los Angeles] than the best price we were offered for syndex.... We realize it will be tough going in the rest of the marketplace." But Gillespie stressed that syndex is something Viacom "wants to support in every way we can." With the film package, he said, "the question became 'Do we sell it or do we not sell it?'"

As to other new product, such as *Super Mario Brothers Super Show*, Gillespie said the company was "in a position to discuss syndex on all our programs. Don't pin a label on whether a show is syndex or non-syndex. We discuss it as a condition of sale."

But as for *The Cosby Show*, which was sold before syndex was reimposed, Viacom's current position is not to offer syndex retroactively. To do so, Gillespie sug-

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standing that Buena Vista is marketing its two newest properties, *Tail Spin* and *Gummi Bears*, on a nonexclusive basis, like *Duck Tales* and *Chip 'n' Dale*. But some stations may be granted syndex in individual cases, sources speculate, which would raise the potential for further blackouts.

But WGN-TV is not part of the Tribune Broadcasting group that bought *21 Jump Street*, for which local stations can enforce syndex. And Viacom's *Remote Control* and Qintex's *Roller Games* were bought by Tribune on a nonexclusive basis, that is, other-stations cannot request syndex protection. One reason is that WGN-TV is carrying the weekly *Remote Control* on a week-delayed basis. The station made the same offer for *Roller Games*, it said, but the syndicator turned the offer down.

There is one key area left unresolved: Buena Vista's two-hour afternoon block. WGN-TV, through Tribune, has bought *Duck Tales*, *Chip 'n' Dale*, *Tail Spin* and *Gummi Bears* on a nonexclusive basis. The first two shows were sold last year without clauses for syndex. It is WGN-TV's under-

vices in existence, said Treeman, that could be installed for less than \$1,000 at cable systems to switch to another transponder during blackouts.

The other stations UV carries, WPIX(TV) New York and KTVT(TV) Dallas, "are vulnerable," Treeman admits. Both reach far smaller audiences than WGN-TV and are passive superstations. More blackouts are likely for those signals, but Treeman said, "If there is a possibility we can substitute [for them], we would." WGN-TV is seen in 25 million cable homes, WPIX and KTVT in less than five million.

At WWOR-TV New York, the MCA station has been moving toward building an audience through one-hour action shows and half-hour comedies, relying less on the movie and sports programing that made it attractive as a superstation. It is in the last year of contracts to carry the New York Knicks and Rangers, while its Mets baseball contract has several years to run, which has made the station attractive to cable operators who carry it in 11 million homes.

And WWOR-TV continues to add some of the more desirable half-hour comedies to its program shelf. Currently it carries *The Cosby Show* and *Kate & Allie*, from 7-8 p.m., and carries the action shows *Hunter*, *A-Team*, *The Untouchables* and *Knight Rider* from 8-10 p.m. In late night it carries *The Morton Downey Jr. Show* and *The Arsenio Hall Show*.

On its shelf it has purchased *Who's the Boss?* and *Silver Spoons*, which will debut next fall, and *ALF* and *Head of the Class*, to debut in 1990. It also has *Amen* for 1990, for which, along with MCA's Debut III movie package, MCA is offering syndex protection.

The new and hot properties on WWOR-TV's schedule are likely to draw syndex interest from broadcasters. Duffy Dyer, program director at WTTG-TV Washington, which carries *Cosby*, said "without a doubt we're interested in syndex" for the show. But he has not discussed the matter with Viacom. The latter sent a letter last year when syndex was first adopted, indicating it would not be granting syndex protection for *Cosby*.

Vicky Gregorian, program director at WSVN-TV Miami, said the station has received syndex protection for *Arsenio Hall* and is preparing letters to send to cable operators. "We'll be sending them out as soon as we get the contract," she said. Many Florida operators import New York stations for their news and sports programing that appeals to transplanted Northerners in Florida.

But Jeff Delorme, senior vice president, Continental, which owns one of the larger systems in Miami, indicated the system would try to muddle through if it was faced with blackouts. He said he would first "try to talk the requesting station out of it. Maybe there is something we can do for them." He also said Continental would look at substituting programing, or running the screen black with an explanation. Dropping the station is not on the list, said Delorme, who believes that the issue will be resolved before there is need for dislocation. □



'Gummi Bears'

United Video and WGN-TV to keep station syndex-proof

One way or another, it appears that cable operators who want to continue carrying WGN-TV Chicago will be able to do so without blackouts, despite one deal, and possibly others, that would allow local stations to request syndicated exclusivity protection on WGN-TV programing.

Between WGN-TV's nearly universal non-exclusive program buys and common carrier United Video's plans to provide substitute programing if needed, it appears the station, for the moment, won't be syndexed to death.

Tribune Broadcasting, which owns WGN-TV, has bought one property, MCA TV's Debut III 31-title movie package, for which local stations can request syndicated exclusivity. The package calls for one movie to be shown twice each month over the 28-month period of the contract, and many