

new and returning comedies.

At a press conference two weeks ago, Kim LeMasters, president, CBS Entertainment, acknowledged that his network's comedy development in a number of instances was unsuccessful. For example, Eddie Murphy Television Enterprises' pilot, *Coming to America*, which the network had high hopes for, failed to make the final cut. The network had commissioned a comedy pilot from actor-producer Dan Aykroyd, *Mars: Base One*, which also didn't pan out. Many ad agency executives remarked on the conservative nature of all three network strategies. "I don't see any breakthrough shows," said Paul Isacson, executive vice president, director of broadcast programming and purchasing, Young & Rubicam. But he also said most of the new programs are still concepts waiting to be executed, and that some of the new shows look promising, such as ABC's *The Kid* and CBS's *Major Dad*.

"You can call it conservative [strategy], said Isacson. "There aren't any way-out shows, but high concepts don't work. All three are taking the traditional route with established stars. It's a proven strategy."

ABC was the last network to announce its schedule, which was released last Monday (May 22). The network added six new comedies, giving it the most comedies going into next season, with 16, compared to NBC's 14, and CBS's six. ABC also added two dramas and the new ABC News program *Prime Time* with Sam Donaldson and Diane Sawyer.

ABC will have a total of six hours of new prime time programs, CBS introduced seven and a half hours of new fare, and NBC has four hours.

The new ABC comedies include one from Columbia Pictures Television called *Free Spirit*. It's about a divorced attorney, his three children and their housekeeper, who's a witch.

ABC also picked up Castle Rock Entertainment's *Homeroom*, about the life of an inner city teacher. Broadway star Jackie Mason will star in another comedy called *From this Moment On*, from Carsey-Werner.

Also from ABC is the first project from Stephen Bochco under his new exclusive contract with the network, a comedy called *Doogie Howser, M.D.*, about a 16-year-old resident at a big city hospital. A *Perfect Strangers* spin-off called *Family Matters* also made the cut, featuring an outspoken female elevator operator.

Michael Learned is back in prime time in a *Who's the Boss?* spinoff called *Living Dolls*, from Columbia. Learned plays a surrogate mother to four teen-age models.

A second western will join the prime time lineup next fall—ABC's *The Kid*, about the young riders of the Pony Express, from MGM. The network's other new drama, from Warner Bros., is *Life Goes On*, about a contemporary working class family.

ABC also said it ordered three backup dramas and two backup comedies for next season, including the dramas *Capital News*, about a big city newspaper; *Twin Peaks*, about life in a small northwestern town, and

## Upfront agenda

With the three-network schedule freshly drawn, agency and network sales executives last week were planning their respective strategies for the upfront selling season, where at least two-thirds of all television network dollars are committed. Prime time unit cost increases for next season were projected by some to be slight, but with three-network audience share expected to continue declining, the cost that advertisers pay per thousand viewers (CPM) could increase by at least mid-single percentages and may reach, by one account, double-digit increases.

Raymond Katz, an analyst with Mabon Nugent & Co., said that agency executives he talked with believes that three-network CPM's in daytime might increase by a "very low" single-digit percentage, while in the other four dayparts—news, sports, late night and children's—the average CPM increase would be 7%-10%.

How the CPM increases translate into unit prices depends in part on the audience guarantees that the networks give. Larry Hyams, ABC director, audience research, said: "The reason three-network viewing has declined, the increase in the coverage of basic cable, continues...so we realistically foresee a 2% or 3% decline in three-network audience for next year." David Poltrack, senior vice president, planning and research, CBS marketing division, said: "In terms of planning, we probably will take the three-network share down one point...although the fourth quarter of last year was dramatically impacted by the writers' strike and election night coverage...so we think it is possible we could end up with no share erosion for the 1988-89 season."

*Equal Justice*, an ensemble drama set in a district attorney's office.

Canceled by ABC was *Dynasty*, leaving CBS as the only network remaining in the prime time serial business. Other ABC cancellations included *Moonlighting*, *A Man Called Hawk*, *The Robert Guillaume Show*, *Have Faith*, *Men* and *Great Circuses of the World*.

The network's addition of *Prime Time* to the schedule brings the number of news programs in prime time to five. And that number may grow to six if NBC's summer tryout of a new magazine show, *Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*, succeeds and captures a spot at midseason.

CBS's David Poltrack said last week the news trend in prime time will probably continue as the baby boomers grow gray. The networks will doubly benefit from that trend because such shows are also much cheaper to produce than entertainment programs.

Affiliate reaction to the schedule announcements was varied, with NBC affiliates viewing the upcoming season confidently, and ABC and CBS affiliates looking toward the fall with guarded optimism.

"The schedule looks real solid," said John Kueneke, general manager, NBC affiliate KCRA-TV Sacramento, Calif. "They didn't make a lot of changes, but with a 48-week winning streak, they don't seem to need to make a lot of changes."

In assessing CBS's schedule, Ron Mires, vice president and general manager of CBS affiliate KERO-TV Bakersfield, Calif. said, "Overall, it looks pretty decent. The schedule probably won't fix everything in one year, but it's a step in the right direction to get us more competitive."

"I think it is safe," said Colleen Brown, vice president, business affairs, and programming, KUSA-TV Denver, referring to ABC's fall schedule. "I think Saturday night will be a wide open battle with NBC's *Golden Girls* and *227*. *Mr. Belvedere* will give *227* a battle, but I think it may not score as well as it did on Friday nights." □

## CBS to Hughes, ABC to AT&T, in 1990's

Pending final approval of handshake agreements, the CBS and ABC television networks will go to separate satellite systems in the 1990's. CBS announced Wednesday (May 24) that it will purchase 10 C-band and two Ku-band transponders on two Hughes Communications satellites, Galaxy 4 and 7, to be launched in 1992 and 1993—leaving behind AT&T, carrier of both networks since before the advent of satellite program distribution.

Two days later, ABC said it would stay with AT&T, purchasing seven C-band and two Ku-band transponders on the proposed Telstar 401 and 402 birds, with 401 "to be in place by April 1993," said Brent Stranathan, director of communications, ABC. Although none of the parties to either deal would reveal costs, well-placed sources said the two satellite operators engaged in a price war this month to land the two major users. "Financially, it was, in essence, a wash in our minds," said Stranathan. "It was very close and competitive."

Hughes was "very creative," said Chris Cookson, CBS vice president, New York broadcast operations, "making changes in their proposal that had to do not just with pricing, but with service and satellite design," including a commitment to ask for authority to launch a hybrid C-Ku-band bird. CBS will share with cable programmers back-up options on Galaxy 6.

The separate deals, said Stranathan, "solidify an important foundation in the next generation—that there will be at least three, if not four, players," including AT&T, Hughes, GE Americom and GTE Spacenet. "There will be occasional capacity," he said. "We will be able to be in the parttime market and hopefully keep some of the resellers, an important part of the industry, alive." "It will mean the difference between a C-band glut and shortage," said one source. □