

## Povich to end Fox 'Affair'

He signs to host new talk show for Paramount when current contract expires in June 1991

In a major coup for Paramount Domestic Television, tabloid magazine anchor Maury Povich is leaving Twentieth (Fox) Television Syndication's highly rated half-hour strip *A Current Affair* to host a new hour-long afternoon Paramount talk show strip planned for the 1991-92 season. His departure will come at the end of his current contract in June 1991.

The deal raises questions about the future of *Current Affair* in syndication, which reportedly earns Fox between \$30 million and \$40 million in revenue a year. The program had been offered to stations for a one-year renewal, apparently with the anticipation of Povich's moving to a Fox-produced talk show for the fall 1991 syndication season. Fox has also used the popularity of *Current Affair* to sell stations—sight unseen—on a new magazine show, *Personalities*, as a companion piece.

Povich and Paramount syndication President Lucy Salhany confirmed that he signed a multi-year deal last Thursday with the Hollywood studio, but did not divulge financial terms. However, sources said, Povich would be earning more than the \$1.8 million annually Fox currently pays him.

In a phone interview, Povich, who renewed his *Current Affair* contract last summer (BROADCASTING, June 26, 1989) for two additional seasons, said he was "free" to pursue outside talk show projects. Povich said recent negotiations with Fox about doing a similar talk show hit "stumbling blocks."

Paramount took advantage of the opening, offering Povich the ownership interest and financing that he sought. "I just saw it [the Paramount deal] as the long-sought rainbow opportunity to start out fresh with my own production company at a studio known for its established stable of quality first-run programming. I see this new talk project as an ideal early fringe lead-in to local news. Fox had shown interest in doing a talk show, but other companies also exhibited interest in doing a similar show. Lucy [Salhany] just provided the main energy and incentive to make it happen."

Paramount's Salhany, who said she was involved in year-long negotiations with Povich's attorney, Alfred Geller, emphasized that there was "no bidding war" with Fox over Povich's future services. She added: "I can't really say what happened with Fox—that's something only they know. It wasn't as if we were directly negotiating against Fox. They knew [Povich's] contract was up in June 1991; like anyone else we pursued him."

Fox syndication officials, who were in sales meetings last Thursday, were unavailable for comment, with Fox issuing a general statement: "We wish him [Povich] every success with the talk show, and we plan to continue working with him in the fu-



ture." However, Fox did not elaborate on what future relationship it may seek with Povich, and Paramount officials had indicated that his deal with the studio is a long-term exclusive pact. Povich says he will fulfill his obligations to *Current Affair* through the end of his contract, which is June 1, 1991. No word was available on his replacement.

Selection of a high-profile, recognizable host similar to Povich could be critical to the continuing success of *Current Affair*. In the latest weekly national (NTI) syndication rankings (week ending May 6), *A Current*

*Affair* ranked seventh overall with a 7.8 rating, the second-ranked magazine to Paramount's *Entertainment Tonight* (8.3 rating, fourth-ranked overall) and two notches away from the highest rated talk show, King World's *Oprah Winfrey Show* (8.2 rating, fifth-ranked).

The deal would appear to raise possible conflict of interest for Paramount, which handles station sales for Tribune Entertainment's early fringe talk strip *Geraldo* and daytime talk strip *The Joan Rivers Show*. Salhany said she hopes Paramount can "continue to build our relationship with Tribune Entertainment," and has no plan to drop clearance sales of those shows. Tribune officials were unavailable for comment.

While Povich is fulfilling his contract obligations to Fox, Paramount will be working on developing the fall 1991 talk show's format, according to Salhany, but she declined to discuss producers being considered and format specifics of the "joint production venture." Povich indicated he would not be personally involved until after June 1991, although he anticipates a live audience talk show (to be taped in New York) with a "heavy news orientation." —MF

## U.S. firm building digital audio system

Start-up company asks FCC for spectrum for DAB service, to rival European-backed system

Satellite CD Radio Inc., a Washington-based start-up company, filed an application with the FCC last week for 55 mhz of spectrum above 1 ghz to establish a digital audio broadcasting (DAB) service in North America. "Our system is going to be a true compact disk-quality broadcast," said Peter Dolan, president, Satellite CD Radio.

Few technical details of the system or the specifics of the FCC filing were available last week. Satellite CD Radio is a co-venture of three companies: MARCOR, Washington, a year-old company which developed the transmission system; Stanford Telecom, Santa Clara, Calif. (not affiliated with Stanford University), which has designed the receivers, and Ingenico, a French firm specializing in credit card verification equipment, which has invested money in the project, Dolan said.

Among the central figures in the organization of Satellite CD Radio are Dolan, former chief financial officer for Crico Communications, a cellular communications firm in Rockville, Md., and Marin Rothblatt, president of MARCOR, former head of Geostar, Bethesda, Md., which uses satellite radio technology to locate vehicles for shipping companies.

The frequencies requested are between 1.475 ghz and 1.530 ghz. Most of those channels fall within the 1.5 ghz-3 ghz frequencies scheduled to be discussed for world allocation by a number of different services, including digital audio broadcasting, during WARC 1992. Satellite CD Ra-

dio plans to take part in that conference in some form, Dolan said.

He declined to say how much money has been invested in Satellite CD Radio or how much has already been spent in development and testing of the DAB system. But from the descriptions given, it will take several million dollars to complete the project. According to a Satellite CD Radio press release distributed last Friday, there are plans to build and launch two 6,000 watt satellites.

The Satellite CD Radio system is a rival of a similar DAB system which is being developed in Europe by the Eureka consortium of private and government-backed research organizations. The Eureka DAB system, demonstrated last month at the National Association of Broadcasters convention (BROADCASTING, April 16), is being designed for either terrestrial or satellite delivery. Plans in Europe are for hybrid satellite-terrestrial service to be established between 500 mhz and 2 ghz.

Like Eureka's DAB, the Satellite CD Radio system is being designed for national satellite and local programming. The company's plan is to provide national services, probably on the band above 1.5 ghz, via DBS radio. Programming would consist of existing AM and FM stations, which would be turned into national "superstations." A fiber optic link between the stations' studios and Satellite CD Radio's central transmission facility would be established.

For local service, a portion of the spectrum, probably between 1.475 ghz and 1.5 ghz, would be available for allocation to existing stations, which could simulcast programming over their DAB channels. —RMS