

REBATE STATUS

CNBC's Oct. 1 deadline for 10 million new homes to qualify for a \$3 rebate per subscriber has come and gone, but CNBC hasn't quite reached its goal. More than seven million subscribers are committed, and "we're still in significant negotiations with key MSO's," said CNBC President Al Barber. "I'm encouraged by our progress to date."

Barber said CNBC is undecided whether it will give MSO's the rebate even if it doesn't reach its goal of 10 million subscribers. While operators are to be notified if they'll get the rebate by Oct. 22, Barber said he's looking forward to a "positive announcement" this week. The Oct. 1 date had already been an extension from the deadline of Aug. 31.

The rebate is open to new affiliates if they commit 75% of their subscribers, and to existing affiliates if they add on 25% more. Slightly more than half of the participating MSO's are already existing affiliates. Barber wouldn't specify how many MSO's are taking part in the rebate offer, saying only that a lot of "small and medium MSO's are coming in."

day roles in new show, which is being produced by Vin Di Bona, who also produces *America's Funniest Home Videos* and *America's Funniest People* for ABC.

Taking aim at USA Network and Lifetime, newly-appointed Turner Entertainment Networks President **Scott Sassa criticized basic cable networks that pay too much to buy movie packages that bypass syndication.** At luncheon speech in New York two days after his promotion, Sassa called such buys "lack of creativity," and said basic cable networks are unnecessarily spiraling programing costs. Sassa's comments came on heels of USA's recent purchase of Paramount and MCA packages for reported \$2 million per title. "I'm not saying we shouldn't bid, but how high do we go?" he asked. "What premium is it worth to have that [syndication] window missing?" Sassa also said that such purchases potentially devalue pay category by shortening window.

Newly-launched **Action Pay Per View** has made its first major carriage deal. PPV

network specializing in adventure and thriller films **signed corporate-wide affiliation agreement with United Artists Cable**, which has 330,000 subscribers. Service will be launched in UA's 250,000 addressable homes.

NAB has announced its opposition to FCC proposal to establish new personal communications services (PCS) in 1990-2110 mhz. Those frequencies are used by many TV stations as auxiliary spectrum for electronic newsgathering and microwave links between studio and transmitter. NAB said that broadcasters have invested heavily in equipment for that band and that FCC proposal to relocate TV users "could result in severe operational and financial burdens."

Christian Science Monitor purchased space for The Monitor Channel (TMC) on Galaxy V, Hughes Communications' cable programming satellite scheduled to replace Westar V in early 1992. Monitor was unprepared to identify "very prominent cable bird" that will carry TMC in interim between May 1991 launch of service and move to Galaxy V.

NASA's Television Development Division awarded Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, contract to develop digital high-definition system. One-year contract went into effect on Sept. 27 and may be renewed for up to four more years. Potential value of agreement is \$3.05 million. Research will be performed by William Glenn, former head of New York Institute of Technology's Dania, Fla., TV lab where he developed "Vista," high-definition augmentation system for terrestrial transmission that was formerly proposed for standardization before FCC eliminated consideration of augmentation systems last spring.

NCTA and superstations have taken swing at Major League Baseball pitch for special relief or waiver concerning program syndication and exclusivity protection. NCTA called request "legally unsustainable and factually insufficient" and that "relief sought by MLB is aimed at maximizing the revenues of sports interest, not enhancing the public interest." Tribune Broadcasting, owner of Chicago superstation WGN(TV), which broadcasts Cubs and White Sox games, said MLB petition is "protectionist" and said there was no evidence that "viewers' current ability to choose between a local broad-

cast and a different version of the same game is harmful to either sports or the public interest." Turner Broadcasting, owner of superstation WTBS(TV Atlanta, exclusive rights holders to certain Atlanta Braves games, said that since "neither the audio nor the video" is same as opposing team, nonduplication rule does not apply. United Video said "blacking out one game would deprive viewers...an important programing choice" while "MLB proposal would do nothing to increase program supply [but] would diminish existing program diversity."

CBS IN BARCELONA

CBS has chosen a drama coproduction between Lorimar and Spanish broadcaster TV3 to fill part of its new late-night checkerboard. Two other projects are in the works between Lorimar and TV3, including a prime time series and a syndicated program for early fringe or access. The network ordered 22 episodes of the hour-long *Dark Justice*, which is to be shot entirely in Barcelona, Spain, with a predominately American cast, and centers on a American judge who adopts a secret identity at night to bring criminals to justice. The show is to air at 11:30 p.m. beginning the week of Jan. 7.

Lorimar TV President David Salzman said the show's budget would be at a level normally associated with prime-time programing, although Lorimar's Les Moonves added that the CBS license fee is considerably lower than normal prime time fees. The deficit burden is to be shared by Lorimar and TV3. The Spanish channel will also carry the program and worldwide distribution rights will be handled by Time Warner division, Warner Bros. International Television.

In related activity last week, Orion Television International signed \$75 million deal with TV Catalunya (on behalf of Spanish Federation of Regional Television Stations) for exclusive free television broadcast rights to new Orion motion picture and television product over next three years. Agreement also includes broadcast rights to product from Orion's library.