

## BLAIR EXTENDS ITS PROGRAMING BILL OF FARE

*First-run syndication specialist is moving to general practice, targeting programs for cable and networks*

**B**lair Entertainment, which has focused on niche programing for the syndication market, is now branching out to produce similar programs for cable and network television. Blair is also looking to overseas partners to co-produce programs for the syndication market.

The company is developing a new reality program for cable, *Detectives in White*, which would document various homicides, suicides and fatal accidents, and follow the examinations of forensic pathologists as they try to uncover clues to the causes of death.

Blair hasn't signed a deal yet, but has made a presentation to USA Network about the project. A network spokesman said the show was under consideration.

"We're a niche marketer," said Alan Berkowitz, president of Blair Entertainment. "And we'll stick with that course, looking for the different concepts, like this season's *Reunion*."

Blair has also optioned the rights to a Robert Ludlum thriller, *The Scarlatti Inheritance*, which the company intends to produce as a four-hour network miniseries. "We have to be able to produce for cable and the networks," said Berkowitz. "The opportunities are there."

Blair's big new project for first-run syndication next year is a weekly one-hour reality show, *Stuntmasters*. The show is scheduled to debut next April, and has already cleared over 30% of the country. Deals are still pending in New York and Los Angeles, but the show has been picked up by WPWR-TV Chicago, WGBS(TV) Philadelphia, KHTV(TV) Houston, WBFS-TV Miami, WPGH-TV Pittsburgh and WBFF-TV Baltimore. The show has also been cleared in Denver, Hartford, Cincinnati, Phoenix, Milwaukee, Portland, Ore., and other markets.

Two weeks ago, at the MIPCOM program market in Cannes, France, Blair entered into a co-production agreement with two French companies to secure the financing necessary to produce the show at a weekly cost of \$250,000. The two French partners are Paris-based Cameras Continentales and a company headed by stunt coordinator (and former stuntman) Remy Julienne, whose credits include the James Bond films.

In exchange for its financial commitment to the program, Cameras receives



Blair's 'Stuntmasters'

distribution rights to the program for the European Community territories. Julienne's company will produce one stunt segment in Europe for each weekly episode. The rest of the program is being produced in Los Angeles (or on location) by GRB Entertainment, headed by Gary Benz.

Benz has produced several network stunt specials, most recently last year's *Live! The World's Greatest Stunts*, for Fox.

Blair is demanding, and receiving, 18-month commitments from stations for *Stuntmasters*, which is being offered on a barter basis, with 6½ minutes of both national and local time. Berkowitz said stations have been receptive to the 18-month commitment because "this season has been a little disappointing for everybody. And stations will have an opportunity to air fresh programing over the summer, which we think will add to the sampling of the show."

Berkowitz also said that Blair expects to bring back two weekly programs for a second season—*Reunion*, a reality show that reunites people, and the half-hour drama, *Dracula*. Like most new shows this season, neither program has emerged as a hit. According to a Seltel

analysis of the Nielsen metered markets, for the first six weeks of the season, *Reunion* averaged a 2.2 rating and 5 share, off 17% from its lead-in, while *Dracula* averaged a 2.3/6, off 14% from its lead-in.

The company may also bring *Divorce Court* back for an eighth season. Although not as popular as it once was, the show was relaunched by Blair this season as a cash property, selling it in about 30 markets while moving production from Los Angeles to Orlando, Fla. "The old stand-bys tend to be the shows that are working this season," said Clare Simpson, senior vice president, program development and production, Blair Entertainment.

In the 10 Arbitron metered markets where the show is airing this season, *Divorce Court* averaged a 2.3/8 from Sept. to Oct. 14, up slightly from its average 2.2 lead-in. A decision on *Divorce Court* is expected in the next couple of weeks.

Berkowitz said the company is looking at several other possible syndication projects for next season, including a series of animation specials. A possible series could also emerge from a co-production Blair is doing with Reeves Entertainment. The venture will produce four late-night comedy specials starring Philadelphia radio personality John DeBella (BROADCASTING Oct. 8). If the show does well, says Berkowitz, it could evolve into a late night strip. —SM

### Peoples' person

British producer Peter Wagg, who co-created and developed multimedia personality *Max Headroom*, has been named producer of Paramount Domestic Television's *The Party Machine* with *Nia Peoples*. Half-hour late fringe companion piece to Paramount's highly rated *The Arsenio Hall Show* is set to debut in January 1991. Most recently, Wagg co-created *Cyberforce* for ABC and won three Emmy awards in addition to Britain's Royal Television Society Special Program Award for his 1984 creation of *Max Headroom*.