

1994.) The package is being offered exclusively on barter terms (12 minutes local/12 minutes national ad splits) with no cash back-end. Some major urban, youth-oriented box office theatricals

such as "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles," "House Party," "Pump Up the Volume" and "Relentless," in addition to made-for-TV features *Incident at Lincoln Bluff*, *Mayflower Madame*, *The*

*Prize Pulitzer* and *The FBI Murders: In the Line of Fire*, are part of the package, which Shapiro says will have no prior basic cable or broadcast network windows. —MF

## PBS LOSES FUNDING, DOWNSIZES ELECTION PLANS

**T**he Public Broadcasting Service has abandoned an ambitious project to improve election coverage in 1992 due to insufficient funding and a limited amount of time to work on the plan. But the collapse might also point to another problem at the service, according to one participant in the project, citing public TV's "history of interneccine, political battles and lack of cohesive response to national problems and opportunities."

PBS, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and the New York-based John and Mary Markle Foundation have abandoned their 1992 Public Television Election Project after eight months, following what some participants characterized as a standstill. Its demise had been suspected by a number of PBS member stations after little was said of the project at their annual affiliate meeting last month in Orlando.

"Our ambitious goals required a policy decision by public broadcasting to make the election initiative a very high priority, perhaps a first priority, and an

understanding that this was a redefinition of a primary mission," wrote Lloyd N. Morrisett, president of the Markle Foundation, in a letter sent last week to supporters of the project. "That level of commitment was never achieved."

Plans had called for the joint presentation of a minimum of 25 hours of original programming tied to the upcoming election, as well as other outreach efforts. A feasibility study, conducted by executive director Alvin H. Perlmutter and funded by the Markle Foundation on behalf of the project, determined that public TV could best serve viewers by providing candidates with relatively unfettered air time and using its local origination capability and satellite system to create a national dialog on the campaign.

Prior to teaming up with public TV, the Markle Foundation had considered launching the project with a commercial broadcast or cable network, including CNN and C-SPAN. Morrisett said public TV was chosen for a number of reasons, including its educational mission;

its flexible use of air time; its strong satellite system, and its high level of community involvement.

However, Morrisett also pointed to public TV's weaknesses—such as chronic and increasing underfunding as well as the aforementioned interneccine problems—which eventually served to crush the election project.

The Markle Foundation is now pursuing its interest in experimental and interactive television with an eye toward the 1996 elections. Plans include a return to talks with commercial TV about possible alliances.

PBS and CPB together will fund a coordinated Election '92 Project for public TV with their previously announced commitment of \$3 million from the Program Challenge Fund. Election programming will include expanded coverage of *Frontline* and *The MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour* as well as a live "national issues convention," which will bring together voters and presidential candidates over a three-day period in January 1992. —RB

## SYNDICATION MARKETPLACE

**RYSHER Entertainment** announced that the teenage cast from NBC's *Saved by the Bell* will be going on a nationwide "Mall Tour '91" this September and October as a precursor to its off-network syndication launch. RYSHER, a Los Angeles-based distribution company started by Keith Samples when he left Warner Bros. Domestic Television Distribution as senior vice president of off-network sales earlier this year, has sold *Saved by the Bell* in more than 75% of the U.S., including 34 of the top 35 markets. Client stations will have an opportunity to promote mall visits locally, a promotion that NBC undertook last year for its in-house half-hour.

**Cluster Television** has cleared *Casper and Friends* in 60% of country for its fall 1991 debut, including all of the top 10 markets. Top station clearances are WPIX-TV New York, KCOP-TV Los Angeles, WFLD-TV Chicago, WTXF-TV Philadelphia, KOFY-TV San Francisco, WLVI-TV Boston, WDCA-TV Washington, KTVT-TV Dallas, WKBD-TV Detroit and KHTY-TV Houston. Culled from Harvey Publications' library of more than 200 *Casper* cartoons (the rights were acquired by California entrepreneur Jeffrey Montgomery in 1989), Cluster is distributing 65 newly-packaged half-hour episodes. Featuring such animated characters as Baby Huey, Herman and Katnip and Buzzy the Crow, each episode will showcase four

original theatrical features, which have been color enhanced, re-edited and given new musical soundtracks, graphics and titling sequences.

The **CBS owned-and-operated stations**, which will be airing CBS's network coverage of the U.S. Open tennis tournament, have signed with **GGP** to produce and syndicate the half-hour *U.S. Open Preview Special*. In addition to CBS O&O's WCBS-TV New York, KCBS-TV Los Angeles, WBBM-TV Chicago, WCAU-TV Philadelphia and WCIX-TV Miami clearing the special, CBS affiliates WTVT-TV Tampa and WHDH-TV Boston are also on board. The U.S. Open, which is one of four grand slam tennis tournaments (with Wimbledon, the French Open and the Australian Open) will be fed to stations Aug. 24, two days before the tournament begins. CBS's *U.S. Open* announcer, Tim Ryan, will also serve as preview host. GGP is offering the special on even 3½-minute local/national barter splits.

In related product news, GGP has increased clearances of its *Albertville '92* winter Olympics preview specials to 135 markets, representing 75% national coverage. In addition, GGP has sold a package of six monthly hour-long specials (triggering this September) to more than 20 countries including Australia, Spain, Japan, Finland and Norway.