

PROGRAMMING

IT'S BACK END TO THE FUTURE FOR SOME PRODUCERS

NBC'S low-rated 'Adventures of Mark & Brian' among surprising pick-ups

With the networks already making schedule changes, studios and producers are beginning to find out whether their shows will have a life beyond their initial orders, usually of 13 episodes. Networks started alerting producers two weeks ago to which of their shows will get back-end orders for the season, and thus far many of the pick-ups have been surprising.

One of the first series to get an additional order was NBC's low-rated *The Adventures of Mark & Brian*; the network, however, gave the New World show only an additional two-episode order, bringing its season total to nine. Another NBC series receiving its pick-up was *Seinfeld*, bringing its season total to 22. NBC series expected to get an additional order are *Sisters*, *Nurses*, *Eerie*, *Indiana*, *Blossom*, *I'll Fly Away* and *Reasonable Doubts*. Waiting for word, with cause for concern due to ratings, are *The Torkelsons*, *Pacific Station*, *Man of the People* and *Flesh and Blood*. *Pacific Station* and *Man of the People* have been put on hiatus, although both will return to the schedule for an indeterminate stay. The network is expected to announce more of their pick-ups this week and next.

At ABC, *Home Improvement*, one of the season's highest-rated new shows, has been given its back-nine order, bringing its season total to 22. *Step by Step*, another of the network's new series, is expected to get a full-season order. First-year shows waiting for the word are *Homefront* and *Good & Evil*. *Sibs*, which is in its first year, was given an initial full-season order of 22 episodes. *Dinosaurs*, which debuted last season, received a 13-episode order this year that, combined with seven episodes that didn't air last year, brings its total to 20 this season. *Pros and Cons*, which debuted last year as *Gabriel's Fire*, is still awaiting word on its back-nine order.

Recent pick-ups from Fox include HBO Independent Pictures' *Roc* and Witt-Thomas-Harris Productions' *Herman's Head*. Also, two weeks ago, the network gave Lorimar's *Best of the Worst* an order for seven more episodes,

bringing its season total to 12. Waiting for word is *Drexell's Class*. Fox has already canceled *The Ultimate Challenge*.

CBS has given additional orders to two of its series, the low-rated CBS Entertainment Production *P.S. I Luv U*, which got an order for six more episodes, bringing its total to 13, and *Northern Exposure*, which received its back-nine order. Also, *Princesses*, which is off the schedule while one of its

lead roles is recast, will receive an order for approximately six more episodes when recasting is finished. Awaiting word are critically praised but low-rated *Brooklyn Bridge*, which has been moved to Wednesday nights to give it a better chance to succeed; *Royal Family*, which is undergoing changes after the death of Redd Foxx, and *Teach*, which has been put on hiatus. Prospects for the latter's getting additional episodes do not appear promising. —SC

IT'S LOVE (SORT OF) AND LAWRENCE FOR TRIBUNE



'That's Amore' with host Lucia Barbareschi and contestants

The early station pick-ups of Carsey-Werner Distribution Co.'s *You Bet Your Life* seem to have generated long-dormant optimism in the first-run syndication market—an opportunity not lost on Group W Productions President Derk Zimmerman. After extensive development and testing, Group W Productions is officially rolling out *The Vicki Lawrence Show* and an Italian-originated game show, *That's Amore*, in what Zimmerman views as home runs for the 1992-93 season.

Following a pilot screening and pre-

sentation for BROADCASTING, Zimmerman said that the Westinghouse Corp. syndication arm had enough confidence in Lawrence's "sense of comedic timing" to make early fringe clearances its "primary sales objective," ahead of morning time slot targets. Whereas incumbents such as *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and *Donahue* are issue-related talk shows in early fringe, Group W is positioning *Lawrence* as a counter-programming, soft talk, comedy vehicle.

Group W took a similar soft-talk tack with the entry of *The Chuck Woolery*