

five miles, the space station, which is run by the Earth Alliance, is literally an artificial host city to a divergent array of aliens and humanoids. Jeffrey Sinclair, a former fighter pilot who earlier in his career led an Earth Alliance squadron in a seemingly victorious war against aliens known as the Minbari, is the commander of the space station.

As a UN-style outpost, *Babylon 5* is the home to three alien ambassadors, with the fourth permanent ambassador, a Vorlon, scheduled to arrive at the station at the beginning of the telefilm.

Upon his arrival, Vorlon Ambassador Kosh is injected with a near-fatal poison in an unidentified assassination attempt. However, when a telepath

named Lyta Alexander reads Kosh's mind, there appears the image of Commander Sinclair injecting him with the poisonous patch when they shake hands. Facing a 12-hour extradition deadline and a stacked trial on Vorlon, Sinclair joins security chief Michael Garibaldi and Lieutenant-Commander Laurel Takashima in a frantic investigation to find the real assassin.

(Casting for the main characters is not completed and production isn't slated to begin until late August, according to Straczynski. The two-hour presentation, he says, has now been pushed back to February 1993, for the February sweeps.)

Quick comparisons will likely be drawn between *Babylon 5* and a simi-

lar storyline for Paramount's *Deep Space Nine*, something that Straczynski refutes, saying that he developed his series concept more than five years ago.

"Whereas *Deep Space Nine* is a small outpost dominated by the Federation, we have built a universe within *Babylon 5* where more than 250,000 aliens live within separate atmospherically controlled cities, which the Earth Alliance sometimes has trouble exerting its control over," Straczynski says.

"*Babylon 5* will really mirror what most ethnically diverse, advanced societies confront on a daily basis, but we'll also have to seek to make humor of some of the outdated taboos present in certain societies today." ■

SATURDAY MORNING: STATIONS DISCOVER NEWS NICHE

CBS affiliates follow many NBC stations that have launched Saturday local newscasts and found untapped source of advertising; networks are not pleased with trend because that daypart is profitable for them

By Steve McClellan

NBC affiliates aren't the only stations discovering the positive fiscal and community service benefits of blowing out Saturday morning cartoons for local news programming (BROADCASTING, June 29). A growing number of CBS affiliates are discovering that truth as well, despite the fact that CBS is number one in the daypart.

In the last two months, a handful of CBS affiliates have launched or announced plans to launch Saturday local news blocks to build revenue and to program to the underserved Saturday morning news audience. The stations include KDFW-TV Dallas, KSL-TV Salt Lake City, WBAL-TV Baltimore and WITI-TV Milwaukee.

KIRO-TV, the CBS affiliate in Seattle, launched a three-hour Saturday news block last year and has developed companion magazines for the daypart as well, on subjects including automobile care and repair, golf, home and gardening, cooking and travel. Some of those shows are being syndicated regionally and packaged for home video.

Station executives looking at the possibilities are acutely aware that CNN's highest rated daypart (barring extraordinary events) is Saturday

morning. In some cases, stations say they want to get a jump on competitors, especially NBC affiliates that may be planning local news blocks to complement *Saturday Today*, which debuts next month.

According to station executives, the opportunity takes on even greater im-

portance at a time when CBS is about to make another sharp reduction in the compensation pool, forcing stations to scramble to look for ways to offset those losses.

"A lot of the CBS affiliates I've talked with are considering such a move as a way of recovering at least

MOYER MOVES TO KNBC FOR \$7.5 MILLION

Ending weeks of rumor, KNBC-TV Los Angeles has signed KABC-TV news anchor Paul Moyer to an estimated six-year, \$7.5 million contract. The loss of Moyer is a major one for KABC-TV, whose early fringe newscasts are perennially top-rated in the market and which is in a seesaw 11 p.m. battle with KNBC-TV, but Capcities/ABC apparently declined to sweeten its rumored \$5 million, five-year offer.

The hiring, which KNBC-TV says is effective immediately, marks Moyer's return to the NBC O&O after 13 years at KABC-TV. Moyer was anchor at KNBC-TV from 1972 to '79. It is expected, as part of his contract, that Moyer will get to substitute anchor news inserts for NBC's *Today* show and fill in for Tom Brokaw on the *NBC Nightly News*.

Although KNBC-TV declined comment on contract terms, Moyer, given the recent budget naysaying on million-dollar annual salaries, is said to be the highest-paid L.A. anchor, slightly ahead of KCAL(TV)'s Jerry Dunphy, also a former KABC-TV anchor, who is believed to have a \$1 million-plus-per-year contract with the Disney-owned independent.

A KNBC-TV spokeswoman would not comment on whether lead 11 p.m. anchors John Beard or Kelly Lange would be reassigned to earlier newscasts to make room for Moyer, something the station says it will decide shortly. As for KABC-TV, a spokesman says the station is "studying its options," although the ABC O&O has already been rotating anchors since Moyer began the failed renewal negotiations last month. ■