



Donahue: the trendsetter for today's talkers

## CAN WE TALK? NEW FOR 1993

*Incoming class of shows prepares to join veteran offerings*

By Mike Freeman

**W**ith up to 17 syndicated talk shows slated for airing by fall 1993, the next big topic of conversation on the daytime talk circuit should be their own proliferation and the American viewers' seemingly insatiable appetite for the genre.

With four new marquee talk shows poised to debut in the market next season, it remains the most duplicated genre in television.

Perhaps the most salient explanation for the profusion of shows comes from Karen Miller, vice president of programming and development for the CBS Station Group. "One has to believe that as talk shows age, the audience ages with them," says Miller, in reference to the 12-34, 18-34, 18-49 and 25-54 female demographic groups that are the predominant viewers of talk shows.

"My mother may still prefer to watch *Donahue*," Miller says of the 25-year talk veteran, adding, "but I may have more of a tendency to watch *Oprah* or *Gerardo*. It all comes down to viewer loyalty to a certain host, and each one has a certain demographic profile. However, for me, as a programmer, the key is to find fresh blood

and new faces to lure in the younger demographics, the core 18-34 demos that drive the ratings for any talk show."

Possibly with that in mind, Rysher Entertainment's founder and president, Keith Samples, is launching a "young adult-skewing" talk/variety series, *Wavelength*, and Columbia Pictures Television Distribution has apparently secured several major mar-

ket clearances for its similarly targeted *Ricki Lake* talk vehicle for fall 1993.

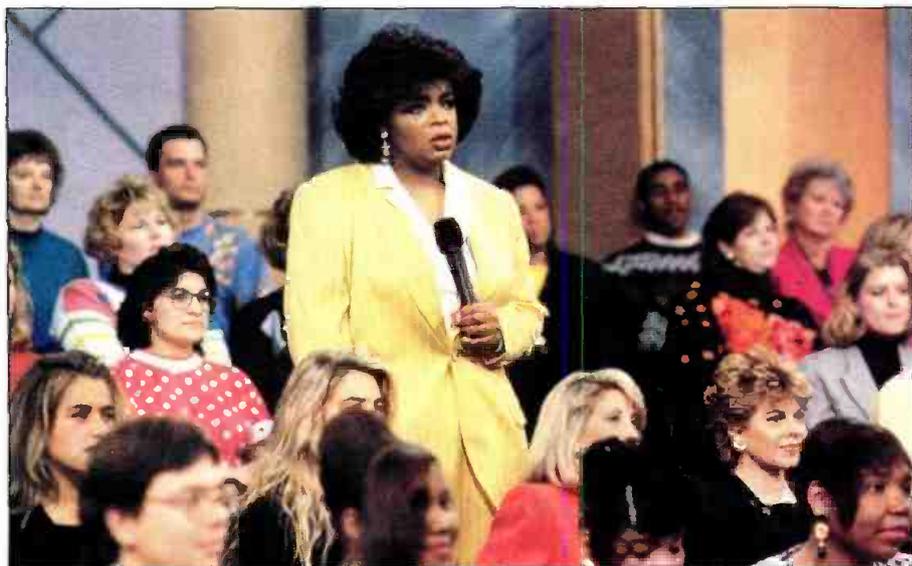
According to a station source, WWOR(TV) New York, KCOP(TV) Los Angeles, KRON(TV) San Francisco and WPWR-TV Chicago (Gary, Ind.) have acquired the cash-plus-barter (three minutes national) project.

While Alan Perris, CPTD's senior vice president, first-run programming, declined comment pending an expected formal announcement, he did say that independent stations are "expressing a much stronger interest in creating younger-skewing talk show blocks" as a counter to affiliates with established talk show strips.

The *Ricki Lake* vehicle was brought to Columbia by former Fox Broadcasting Co. executive Garth Ancier, whose production company (The Garth Ancier Co.) was responsible for last season's test of teen-skewing *Jane Pratt* (editor of *Sassy* magazine) on Fox O&O WNYW-TV New York, which led some industry watchers to conclude Lake would be similarly targeted to the teen audience. Perris says that is a mistaken impression.

"*Ricki Lake* is not a teen-based talk show," Perris insists. "We're selling *Ricki Lake* as an 18-49 talk show, but basically we'll be focusing on the twenty- and thirty-something demos. *Jane Pratt* scored very well with the teen demographics, but with *Ricki Lake* we're going to have to target 18-34-year-olds to sell this as a transitional lead-in to local news."

Rysher is going after the slightly younger 12-34 demographic group with *Wavelength*, a traveling "talk/



Oprah continues to set the standard for daytime talk