

# It's CBS, ABC, NBC in November

First fall sweeps victory for CBS since 1984; NBC takes three of four key demos

By Steve McClellan & Steve Coe

**C**BS won the November sweeps in a competitive three-network race, but third-place NBC earned some demographic bragging rights.

CBS averaged a 13.0 household rating/21 share, just three-tenths of a rating point over ABC's 12.7/20 mark. NBC posted a 12.1/20. Fox averaged a 7.5/12. It was CBS's first November sweeps win since 1984.

According to Ted Harbert, president, ABC Entertainment, ABC accomplished what it set out to do in the sweeps: attract the largest audience among adults 18-49 and deliver the largest audience to the 10:30-11 p.m. time period, leading into late local newscasts on affiliate stations.

CBS's David Poltrack countered that CBS affiliates also can expect a boost in late local news numbers, and a younger-skewing viewer profile, as a result of *David Letterman's* move to the network this fall, providing a lead-out for late local news.

Among adults 18-49, ABC was tops with an average 7.5 rating, followed by NBC's 7.4, CBS's 6.9 and Fox's 5.2. CBS was tied for top honors among men 25-54. Harbert conceded that CBS will repeat as season champ this year, given that they will have 17 days of Olympic coverage next February from Lillehammer, Norway, but



Highest-rated sweeps show: 'Frasier'

he said the contest among regular shows will be close. Harbert also said ABC made a point not to do as much stunting as it did last year.

Despite its third-place finish, NBC had something to cheer about, finishing first in three of the top four demographic groups. NBC led the networks among adults 25-54 and women 18-49 and 25-54. Among adults 18-49, it was one-tenth of a rating point behind first-place ABC. Compared with last

November, NBC was up in all demographic categories, including households, where the network improved 7% over last year.

In the household category, CBS also was up, by 8%, while ABC and Fox saw declines of 3% and 7%, respectively.

Chief among NBC's growth series was *Seinfeld*, which increased 91% among adults 18-49. Overall, NBC had 11 series that grew compared with last year in households, compared with eight for ABC, five for CBS and three for Fox.

The network scored the highest ratings for its November miniseries despite competition on CBS and ABC. NBC's *A Matter of Justice* pulled in a 17.3 rating in households, vs. CBS's *Return to Lonesome Dove* (16.4) and ABC's *JFK: Reckless Youth* (8.7). The three miniseries did not compete head to head.

Fox, which completed its first November sweeps with a full seven-night schedule, boasted demographic strength among its core 18-34 audience. On Wednesday night (*Beverly Hills, 90210* and *Melrose Place*), the network was number one among adults 18-34 and teens, and second among adults 18-49 behind ABC. In addition, the network led viewers 18-34 from Wednesday through Sunday. ■

## WB Network signs WGN-TV

Warner Bros. has been cleared by Tribune Broadcasting to use the latter's superstation WGN-TV Chicago as an affiliate for the fifth network.

Using the superstation, WB Network executives say, will give it a national reach of 73%. Ratings for the superstation range from .05 to 1.2, a figure WB executives hope to improve through heavy local advertising. WGN-TV also will be the WB Network affiliate in Chicago.

Tribune originally was not going to commit WGN-TV to the WB Network for fear of diluting the station's strong local presence and its value to cable operators as a sports programmer. WGN-TV is the strongest independent in Chicago. That bodes well for WB, which originally planned to affiliate with WGBO-TV there.

The deal with the superstation is not long term. As WB Network picks up affiliates in other markets, WGN-TV will be able to continue its usual broadcasts. "WGN-

TV is not a permanent part of the distribution," says WB Network CEO Jamie Kellner.

In markets where there is already a WB affiliate, WGN-TV will black out WB programming, and a second feed will be provided by United Video Inc.

Cable systems have reacted positively to the plan, Kellner says. Cable systems pay for distant signals, such as WGN-TV, and could be concerned about the loss of the station's sports.

But Kellner anticipates having an established broadcast distribution service by the time the WB Network reaches the point where WGN-TV's sports commitments could create scheduling conflicts.

Rob Stengel, senior vice president, Continental Cablevision, says that he would like WB to offer operators ad time to sell in return for clearing the WB Network. "It would be of mutual benefit. I hope they are thinking along those lines," Stengel says. —JF