

Fox faces tough schedule changes

'Simpsons' may go to Sunday: Spelling soaps may shift; fall schedule due out tomorrow

By Steve Coe

Fox executives, putting the final touches of their fall schedule, apparently are faced with two major decisions affecting their two most successful nights.

The first is whether to move *The Simpsons* from its successful Thursday night slot to Sunday after Fox's newly acquired NFC football coverage. The network was said to be considering airing the animated show immediately after the games at 7 p.m., but several sources said it is more likely the series will be scheduled at 8 p.m., if it is moved at all.

The other major consideration is whether to break up the network's successful Wednesday night block of *Beverly Hills, 90210* and *Melrose Place*. Sources said Fox is considering several options, including shifting the Monday night movie to Tuesday and using one of the nighttime soaps to anchor Monday night.

Models, Inc., Aaron Spelling's next project, already has been picked up for the fall and may be paired with one of the two established Spelling soaps on Monday or Wednesday.

Fox plans to announce its fall



If Fox decides to move 'The Simpsons' from Thursday to Sunday, 'Martin' would take its place.

schedule tomorrow, May 24.

Sources said Fox may add more dramas to its schedule due to stronger development of hours than comedies. Probable drama entries are Columbia Television's *Party of Five* and *Fortune Hunter*, producer Dick Wolf's *Uptown Undercover* and Warner Bros.' *Medicine Ball*. Fox already has ordered a full season of *Mantis*, a sci-fi action show that one source said may be paired with *The X-Files* on Friday.

Among the more probable comedy hopefuls are *Something's Gotta Give* from Columbia, which is being considered for a post-*Married...With Chil-*

dren slot on Sunday night; *Platypus Man* from Paramount; *Wild Oats* from Twentieth Television, and *Bull Pen* from Disney Television. The network already has committed to the ABC-cancelled *The Critic*.

If Fox does move *The Simpsons* from its Thursday lineup, one possibility has the network moving *Mar-*

tin and *Living Single* out of the Sunday night lineup and slotting the pair on Thursday from 8-9 p.m. Fox then might use one of its new drama projects as a lead-out to the one-hour comedy block.

As for series that are on the bubble for renewal, one source said Fox is giving more consideration to renewing *The George Carlin Show* due to the network's weak comedy development. Both *Roc* and *In Living Color* are seen as long shots to return, and high production costs and mediocre ratings apparently have done in *The Adventures of Brisco County Jr.* ■

Bertice Berry may go to cable

Twentieth Domestic Television may sell its low-rated *Bertice Berry* syndicated talk show to cable for the 1994-95 season, a knowledgeable source said last week.

"They are talking about letting it grow a year or two on cable and then bringing it back," said the source, who added that at least two cable networks are negotiating with Twentieth for the show.

The source refused to name the cable networks involved and said that syndicating the show another year or killing it are still options. A final decision will be made after the end of the May sweeps.

Officials at Twentieth Domestic Television would neither confirm nor deny the report. "We believe in Bertice Berry and we will do whatever is best for the show," said Twentieth Domestic Television spokeswoman Dana Freedman.

The daytime show has averaged a 2.3 Nielsen rating since being launched in September and has been downgraded by more than 15 of the 120 stations carrying the



show. Coverage is down from a peak of 90% to 85%, with at least five additional stations considering downgrading or dropping the show.

However, the source said that Twentieth Television officials still feel the show, which is produced by Fox Center Productions at WTTW(TV) Chicago, has potential.

The show had one of its strongest ratings yet for the week of May 9-15, a 2.5, with indications of similar ratings for last week.

Executive Producer Sol Feldman continues to tweak the show, adding more topical and relationship-oriented material.

Ninety-three stations are under contract to carry the show in the 1994-95 season. Of stations running the show, 70% are in the middle of two-year contracts. The source said that stations would be given sufficient notice to find new product elsewhere if the show is pulled.

One cable network that will not bid is Fox's new fX network. Said the source: "They don't want to be a dumping ground for Twentieth Television product." —DT