

PROMAX & BDA

From real life to animation,
syndicators preview promotions



By David Tobenkin

Distributors at the Promax & BDA Conference and exhibition continued to unveil marketing plans for their shows last week (also see page 19), including an MCA TV promotion that pushes the envelope on timeliness for spots.

■ **MCA TV** will support the launch of its new late-night show *Last Call* by providing affiliated stations with spots that include topics from the day's news for airing the same evening.

That process was demonstrated at the convention, where a 30-second promotional spot taken from the day's headlines was shot, edited and delivered in six hours for a workshop.

For a show in which panelists are asked to make witty conversation about the day's events, the topical approach makes sense, says the show's executive producer, Brandon Tartikoff. "Until we sell [the audience] witty people, the show doesn't sell," says Tartikoff. "There are so many generic promos that are clever but don't sell anything. This is something different." The show will also be promoted through national third-party promotions not yet finalized.

Additional support will be provided by having the show on at least one of the three major online computer services, allowing viewers to interact with the show. MCA will provide cop money matching any amount stations are willing to spend on promo-

tion, says Bobbi Fisher, MCA's VP of creative services.

■ **Twentieth Domestic Television** will support the syndication launch of *The Simpsons*—this season's biggest off-network introduction—with spots that combine the show's animated characters with live-action movie clips.

An "Unforgettable Movie Classics" spot will feature Bart piloting an X-wing fighter from "Star Wars," Bart as General George Patton addressing the troops in front of a giant flag, Homer and Bart as Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, and Marge Simpson as Cleopatra entering Rome with a following of thousands, said Fox Senior Vice President of Advertising and Promotion David LaFountaine.

The spots will begin airing in July and August.

■ **Saban Entertainment** announced that former "Doublemint Twins" Cynthia and Brittany Daniel will star as the twin heroines of *Sweet Valley High*, a half-hour live-action show. *Sweet Valley* is based on Francine Pascal's bestselling young-adult novels. The series, cleared in more than 75% of the country, will premiere this fall.

■ **Promotion of Tribune Entertainment Co.'s *The Road*** will challenge stereotypical assumptions about who listens to country music, said Tribune executives. "This is not your father's country music," said Tribune's vice president of creative services, Jim Corboy.

The spots feature anecdotes from a

diversity of speakers who describe why they like country music while top country hits play in the background.

The Road promotion, which covers the weekly TV show, a weekly radio program, pay-per-view events, concerts, country-themed performance clubs and home video releases, will be helped by the project's crosspromotions, said Mary Beth Hughes, Tribune's director of creative services. For example, stations carrying the TV show will also be the exclusive home of television promotion for "Road" concerts in that market.

■ **Rysher Entertainment** this week will send affiliates a four-minute montage from *Lonesome Dove*, the first footage that stations have received on the new show. The promotion will consist of three stages, said Rysher Senior Vice President Henry Urick. The first will include adventure and action spots. The second will focus on youthful protagonist Newt Call (Scott Bairstow) and the third on the show's other characters.

■ **Warner Bros. Domestic Television Distribution's *Extra***—*The Entertainment Magazine* featured clips illustrating the show's tone. Host Arthel Neville's interview with Sharon Stone had the tone of two girlfriends chatting. Another clip featured blockbuster action film producer Joel Silver leading viewers on a behind-the-scenes tour of a film exhibition convention.

Promotional materials for the launch will show viewers that the program presents entertainment from new and varied angles, and will explain why it's called *Extra*. To highlight the former element, WBTD will provide stations with "proof-of-performance" promotions that highlight the show's exclusives and "first breaks."

■ **Columbia TriStar Television Distribution** will promote its new late-night sketch comedy show *The Newz* with spots that highlight the show's irreverence.

Jones & Jury is adding former Brooklyn Deputy District Attorney Jerry Green as senior legal consultant. Most recently a Los Angeles lawyer in private practice, Green was show host Star Jones's first supervisor when she became a prosecutor. The show may also be promoted with a series of spots featuring Jones giving viewers legal tips. ■