

Carsey-Werner arms for syndication

Buys back rights to 'Cosby,' 'Roseanne' and 'A Different World'

By David Tobenkin

The Carsey-Werner Co. last week bought back domestic syndication rights to off-network episodes of *Roseanne*, *The Cosby Show* and *A Different World* from Viacom Inc. to revive its in-house distribution unit.

The deal, first reported in *BROADCASTING & CABLE* Nov. 21, will supply C-W with enough programing to relaunch an in-house syndication sales pipeline that will handle C-W's ABC hit *Grace Under Fire* when that show is ready for stripping in fall 1997.

"The reacquisition of these programs has been a company goal that we have aggressively pursued over the past three and a half years," said C-W Chief Executive Stuart Glickman. "We deeply believe in exciting growth opportunities that exist and will broaden as a result of the expanding need for programing in the years ahead."

The sunseting of the financial interest and syndication rules, which block networks from syndicating their shows domestically, and the possible elimination or modification of the prime time access rule, which prohibits top-50 market affiliates from airing in the access hour shows that first appeared on the Big Three networks, both suggest the company should gain control over distribution of its product, Glickman said.

The new syndication unit, Carsey-Werner Distribution Co., will distribute the firm's own network programing, new first-run product it develops and produces, and programs it acquires from third parties.

A president for the division will be selected by January. Currently, syndication consultants and former studio syndication heads Bob Jacquemin and Joe Zaleski are consulting C-W on its launch.

Negotiations for the three shows took years, with both sides unable to come to terms on the value of the shows. C-W declined to comment on the purchase price, but some industry reports estimate that the shows sold for \$40 million-\$60 million.

Glickman said that by early



'Roseanne' and 'Cosby' return to the C-W fold.

spring the unit will sell the second cycle of *Roseanne*. That show has been the highest-rated off-network

sitcom for the past three seasons since premiering in fall 1992 and is up 50% from last season. The show, which made a relatively low \$1.5 million per episode in its first, recession-impacted syndication cycle, likely will sell for considerably more than \$900,000 per episode in its second cycle, said Glickman.

The company also will sell the veteran *Cosby* show's second cycle to the 40% of the U.S. where it remains unsold and *A Different World* to the 40%-45% of the country that still does not receive the show's first cycle. ■

CBS affils form new venture

By Steve McClellan

CBS affiliates are forming a limited liability corporation (LLC) through which to explore various business ventures among themselves, with CBS and with outside parties.

According to Mick Schafbuch, who is overseeing the project, many businesses will be explored, including program syndication and efforts to sell ad time on stations. The ad sales initiatives could focus on regional buys or perhaps even targeted markets around the country, depending on specific advertiser needs, Schafbuch says.

The first project is a joint marketing venture with CBS to sell videos from the CBS Video library. So far, about 130 affiliates have agreed to participate, including the CBS-owned stations. In January, those affiliates and O&Os will air direct response ads to market a "My Fair Lady" video gift set from the CBS Video library. Proceeds to affiliates will be based on sales from their markets determined by buyer ZIP codes.

The LLC is being formed under the direction of the affiliates' business development task force, which Schafbuch was named to head after retiring last month as executive vice president of KOIN-TV Portland, Ore.

The task force is working with the

network on several other projects, including two video-on-demand tests in which CBS has agreed to participate with TCI in Denver and Glen Ellyn, Ill. The network will supply both entertainment and news programs to air on local cable channels around the clock.

For affiliates, says Schafbuch, the key issue is what impact, if any, time-shifted network programs would have on viewing patterns in local markets: "If it does anything to erode the affiliate audience, we would need to talk about that. And if it does and the network is going to make money on video on demand, it stands to reason we ought to share" in those profits.

The affiliates also have raised the issue of whether there is a national or international market for the NewsPath affiliate news feed service, which contains both affiliate and network-originated news material.

The business development task force also is spearheading several other efforts, including affiliate input concerning revisions in the standard provisions of the network affiliation contracts. Schafbuch says the affiliates have given the network "about six pages" of proposed revisions to the standard agreement and that lawyers currently are reviewing them. ■