Turner Pictures' debut slate

Turner has unveiled its first slate of original motion pictures to be produced under the company's Turner Pictures banner. Six of the films are scheduled to start production in 1996. The picture slate includes two movies from Atlas Entertainment, Dawn Steel and Chuck Roven's production company, which has an exclusive first-look deal with Turner Pictures. Denise Di Novi also has an exclusive, multiyear production agreement with Turner under her Di Novi Pictures banner. Films to start production next year include: "Edwards and Hunt: The First American Road Trip," "Michael," "The Jetsons," "Fallen," "Jackie Robinson" and "City of Angels." Turner Entertainment Group President Scott Sassa says the slate of films is the first step toward the company's long-term goal of producing eight movies per year by 1998.

Jetsons movie is in the works

Primestar ponders DBS options

Suing FCC, bidding against MCI, looking for alternative channels among possibilities

By Chris McConnell

Tempo DBS says it has no plans to sell its satellites to any would-be competitors

Primestar Partners is drawing up a "Plan B" list of DBS strategies following an FCC decision to auction channels on which the company had staked Plan A.

Plan A was to use 27 channels at the 110 degrees west slot to launch a high-power service. Plan B may call for:

■ Suing the FCC to overturn its decision to reclaim and auction those channels, and/or;

■ Bidding against MCI for the channels;

■ Seeking DBS channels at another orbital slot; or

■ Maintaining a medium-power service.

"We have not ruled anything out, or ruled anything in," says David Beddow, president of TCI subsidiary Tempo DBS.

Tempo had struck a $45 million deal with Advanced Communications Corp. to acquire the 27 channels at 110 degrees west and then lease them to Primestar. The FCC International Bureau thwarted the deal with an April decision to reclaim the Advanced channels. Early last week, the full commission affirmed the decision and voted to auction the channels.

At least one company—Advanced—will be taking the decision to court. Advanced President Dan Garner says the company plans to challenge the commission's finding that Advanced did not meet due diligence requirements in establishing a DBS service.

Several sources expect Primestar and Tempo to join in the legal challenge, although both companies last week were awaiting the text of the commission's decision before committing to a lawsuit.

Any lawsuit likely will be accompanied by a request for expedited review, since Primestar and Tempo are facing a series of deadlines. Tempo has set two dates next year for launching its high-power DBS satellites, and Primestar's current satellite is scheduled to run out of fuel next year.

Primestar beams a "medium-power" service—which requires larger receiving dishes than a high-power service—to some 750,000 subscribers from the GE Americom Satcom K1 satellite.

Primestar Chairman/CEO Jim Gray says the company has signed a one-year lease with GE Americom for enough Ku-band capacity to sustain the current service. The contract carries an option for two additional years if Primestar needs more time, Gray says.

But the company still will need DBS channel assignments if it is to move to a high-power service, and it will need them by July of next year if it is to make the first launch date scheduled for the Space Systems/Loral–built Tempo DBS satellite.

If the courts don't give Primestar the channels at 110 degrees, the company could bid against MCI for them. Primestar had argued that an auction would not allow the company to make its launch dates next year, but the FCC has said it plans to conduct a one-day auction Jan. 18.

The bids could go high, however. MCI has said it plans to open the bidding at $175 million, nearly four times Tempo's original deal with Advanced for the channels. Other potential bidders include the regional Bell companies, five of which this month asked the Justice Department for a waiver that would allow them to provide DBS service. A BellSouth spokesman, for