

Walt Disney Co. officials last week declined comment on a Knight-Ridder wire report that the company might sell Capital Cities/ABC's 21 radio stations

once it completes its \$19 billion purchase of the broadcast group. Disney spokesman John Dreyer and CapCities/ABC spokeswoman Julie Hoover said they would "not comment on rumors." However, Hoover said, "Once the merger becomes effective, it is a Disney decision in any case." Industry brokers estimate that CapCities/ABC's radio holdings, which include revenue leaders WABC(AM) New York and KABC(AM) Los Angeles, could sell for \$1 billion. Disney CEO Michael Eisner has said that Disney is not interested in selling the radio assets.

The FCC last week adopted its social contract with Time Warner Cable.

The deal, proposed in August, settles 946 cable rate complaints against Time Warner Cable and calls on the company to refund \$4.7 million in the form of subscriber bill credits.

X-Files creator Chris Carter has signed a five-year exclusive deal to produce feature films and TV series for 20th Century Fox Television.

Carter, also executive producer of *X-Files*, will develop projects for the studio through his Ten Thirteen Productions company. A new sci-fi series, reportedly titled *Millennium*, could air on Fox next fall. An *X-Files* film also is reportedly in the works and may be directed by series co-star David Duchovny.

CBS's midseason drama *Matt Waters* joins the network's Wednesday schedule as does *American Gothic*, which was pulled from Friday last month. Both shows debut Jan. 3. *Matt Waters*, which stars talk show host Montel Williams as a high school science teacher, takes over at 9-10, and *American Gothic* airs at 10-11. The shows replace *Central Park West*, which is on hiatus, and *Courthouse*, which has been canceled.

The USTA Friday asked the FCC to insure that the **Time Warner/Turner merger leaves telcos fair access to programming.** The filing, joined by Bell Atlantic and others, cited Time Warner/Turner's programming deal with TCI and asked that other video competitors get equal treatment.

'Frasier' top draw for top dollars

After 10 weeks on the off-network auction block, Paramount Domestic Television's *Frasier* has been sold in 42 markets covering 61% of the country.

As of press time last week, the sales tally for the hit sitcom, now in its third season on NBC, included 24 of the top 25 markets. The show's license fees are on track to reach \$2 million per episode, putting the Emmy-winning series in the elite club of such powerhouse sitcoms as *Home Improvement*, *Seinfeld* and *The Cosby Show*.

"In some markets, we've even beaten the *Home Improvement* and *Cosby* prices," says Joel Berman, president of distribution for Paramount Domestic Television. *Frasier* will bow in syndication in fall 1997.

Separately, *Frasier* star Kelsey Grammer last week unveiled a slate of projects in development at his Paramount-based production company, Grammnet Productions. *Fired* is a buddy sitcom in development with NBC about two women who are forced to go into business together. *Logan Square*, a drama centering on a Hispanic couple living in Chicago, is under way with ABC.

Revising talk show prospects

The chances of Twentieth Television launching a first-run talk show with defense lawyer Leslie Abramson next fall are getting slimmer because of a scarcity of available early fringe time periods.

Twentieth had intended to market the half-hour strip *Exclusive with Leslie Abramson* (previously titled *Flashpoint*) as an issues-oriented show designed to serve as a news lead-in. But that territory already has been staked out by established talkers such as *Oprah Winfrey* and magazines such as Group W Productions' *Day & Date* and Twentieth's own *A Current Affair*.

Additionally, Warner Bros. Domestic Television Distribution has the same news lead-in marketing plan for its upcoming talker *Maureen*. But WBTD had the early advantage by clearing the show in the top four markets through its growing relationship with the NBC station group.

Twentieth officials stressed last week that they remain committed to launching *Exclusive*, possibly with CNN or another cable network. It may be retooled as a first-run hour better suited for daytime slots, although Twentieth already has a health-oriented talk show, *Donna Willis, M.D.*, in the works for daytime next fall.

There was speculation that the decision to re-evaluate the show's first-run prospects was made by incoming Twentieth Television President Rick Jacobson, who takes over from Greg Meidel, the newly appointed chairman of the MCA Television Group, on Dec. 18.

More to watch from UPN

UPN will launch its third night of programming on Wednesday, March 6, with a live, two-hour broadcast of the second annual *Blockbuster Entertainment Awards*.

On March 13, UPN rolls out its regular Wednesday prime time slate, consisting of two hour dramas. Kicking things off at 8 is *The Sentinel*, a Paramount Television-produced show about a police detective, played by Richard Burgi, who develops heightened sensory powers while stranded for 18 months in a Peruvian jungle. An offbeat anthropologist helps the detective learn to use his new powers to solve crimes.

Following at 9 is a New York-based crime drama from *Law & Order* and *New York Undercover* producer Dick Wolf and Universal Television. *Swift Justice* deals with an ex-cop who works "outside the system on cases too hot for the standard avenues of justice."

UPN, which premiered on Jan. 16 with four hours of programming on Monday and Tuesday nights, also plans to expand its Sunday children's block from one to two hours next fall.

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