

will be provided by Warner Bros. Television Animation.

The big name among WB's new shows is an animated version of *Superman*, with voices provided by Tim Daly (*Wings*) and Dana Delany (*China Beach*). The series will premiere Sept. 6 with a 90-minute prime time movie on the WB Network.

Also new is the animated *Wayne's Head*, featuring the voice of Damon

Wayans, about a 10-year-old growing up in lower Manhattan. The show is "a little bit irreverent as well as 'street smart,'" MacCurdy says, yet tells stories that "have a social consciousness and...some real positive values."

MacCurdy describes the third new show, *Road Runners*, as "just fun, some really good times." It comes from the team that produces Kids' WB!'s *Animaniacs*, *Freakazoid!* and *Pinky &*

the Brain.

WB will package Saturday morning to give the entire block a sense of wholeness. "I think we provided an alternative entertainment in the sense that we put on six comedies. There's so much action/adventure on the other stations," MacCurdy says. Between shows, *Crazy Career* segments will describe a variety of jobs and the qualifications required. ■

Cable is there for kids

Decrease in children's programming on networks creates opportunity for cable

By Morrie Gelman

Nickelodeon dominates children's television on basic cable. The network's total day rating grew 18% in the second quarter, to a 1.7 household rating. In national ratings, according to Nielsen Media Research, Nickelodeon was up 42% from third quarter 1995 through second quarter 1996.

Excluding Nickelodeon, cable as a whole was up 25% in ratings for the period.

Another cable children's programer, Cartoon Network, was the fifth-highest-rated basic network for full-day coverage.

Audience, and inevitably advertiser, movement toward cable is evident. Linda Steiner, ABC vice president of children's entertainment, does not deny it: "The trend to cable really has put us on our toes. It would be silly not to acknowledge what's happened with Nickelodeon."

One weakness for ABC and CBS (but not Fox) is that they do not have Monday-through-Friday programming for children. And, say Nickelodeon executives, the broadcast networks ignore kids in early prime time as well. "The broadcast networks have abandoned kids at 8 p.m.," said Nickelodeon President Herb Scannell in announcing the cable service's \$30 million commitment to extend its programming day by a half-hour—to 8:30—Sunday-Friday, to provide "kids-first, family-friendly" prime time programming. "The obsession with reaching 18-to-49-year-old audiences translates into a tremendous programming vacuum for kids."

Cyma Zarghami, Nickelodeon's programming senior vice president, says

that the broadcast networks' failure to target kids at 8-8:30 p.m. provided "exactly the rationale" for Nickelodeon to run programming until 8:30.

There is a "vacuum" at the broadcast networks that is "our opportunity," Zarghami says, adding that the key to Nickelodeon's hot streak is to consistently focus on its core audience: "We sort of keep our heads down and stick to a plan."

It's no secret what cable programers would like to do with children's programming. Some are looking for a successful formula that does not duplicate Nickelodeon but creates a kids-friendly environment.

Showtime, for example, broke ground last year when it began producing a series of full-length features for children ages 8-14 under the umbrella *Showtime Original Pictures for Kids*. And The History Channel has a two-hour kids block on Saturdays and Sundays, as well as a family-viewing hour Sunday nights at 7.

A look at some of cable's fall kids programming follows.

A&E TELEVISION NETWORK

A weekend children's series, *Biography for Kids*, debuts on Sept. 1. The one-hour program will air around noon on Saturdays and Sundays and will showcase original productions as well as reformatted versions of the prime time *Biography* series.



There is plenty that will appeal to kids on the new channel, Animal Planet.

ANIMAL PLANET

Basic cable's newest national, ad-supported service, Animal Planet, which debuted June 1, features children's programming among its family-friendly fare. The shows created for kids include *Acorn*, *the Nature Nut*, making its cable premiere in the U.S., and *Buck Staghorn's Animal Bites*, a comedy series about silly and unpredictable animal behavior in the wild. *Acorn*, hosted by singer-scientist John Acorn, is shown in the morning, when Animal Planet airs three hours of programs for elementary school kids. Animal Planet promises that by early next year it will premiere its first original children's programming in the morning.

CARTOON NETWORK

Hanna-Barbera's new animated series, *The Real Adventures of Jonny Quest*.