

delivering carefully targeted viewers, much as precisely aimed Web sites ads fetch 5-10 times the cost per thousand of TV ads.

Billotti, however, while not down on interactive commercials, contends that it will "change the face of advertising" beginning in 2003.

The problem is that the gains from interactivity will be offset by acceleration of audience fragmentation. Viewers with substantially more choices means the "mass" media—both broadcast and mature cable networks—will reach relatively less of the TV audience. That will put pressure on pricing,

particularly because of magnified competition for ad dollars.

Also, he expects pay networks to be the biggest beneficiaries from digital—capturing 9% of TV viewing hours versus 5% today. That's because movie networks like Home Box Office and Starz! are commercial-free. ■



## Discovery buys piece of Fanfare

Discovery Communications will take an ownership stake in Fanfare, the 24-hour classical music basic cable network being created by noncommercial WETA-TV and investor and Fanfare Chairman Jack Clifford.

## SCBA pushes for protection

The Small Cable Business Association (SCBA) wants Congress to include provisions in satellite TV reform that would protect small cable operators for the three years after satellite companies are required to carry all local broadcast signals.

"The standards aren't working right now," said SCBA President Matt Polka. "There have to be mechanisms that [protect] small cable." Satellite TV reform bills moving to the floor in the House and Senate include measures that would not require satellite companies to carry all local broadcast signals until Jan. 1, 2002.

SCBA wants lawmakers to include a provision that would allow community broadcasters in top-20 markets to apply to the FCC for satellite carriage before that time, if not being carried is harming

their business. The association also wants full and immediate satellite must carry for all markets smaller than the top-20.

## A name change to avoid confusion

The Small Cable Business Association (SCBA) is changing its name to the American Cable Association, citing a need to reach out to cable distributors of all sizes, as well as frequent confusion with fellow trade organization, the Satellite Broadcasting and Communications Association (SBCA).

"We've run into barriers when we talk to cable operators because they don't perceive themselves as small," said SCBA President Matt Polka. With the demise of the Cable Telecommunications Association (CATA), the cable industry needs an organization to represent the needs of cable distributors separately from cable programmers, said David Kinley, president of SunTel Communications and an SCBA board member.

## MTV exec joins BET

Stephen Hill is leaving his post as MTV's director of music programming to head up music programming at Black Entertain-

ment Television. Hill's new post will have him overseeing BET's music shows such as *Rap City* and *Planet Groove*, videos, creative services, art and on-air promos. He will join BET in June.

## Track league jumps to pro circuit

Track and field launched its first outdoor professional league last week. The league, called the Track & Field Association, will debut June 6 with the TFA ProChampionships at the Mitchell Athletic Complex in Uniondale, N.Y., the site of last year's Goodwill Games. The June 6 meet, the only one scheduled for this year, will have 15 events, and will be televised on ESPN from 1-3 p.m. ET.

## HBO courts Gen X with laughs

Home Box Office will launch 24 hours of comedy and alternative entertainment next week. HBO Comedy and HBO Zone—two new channels—will debut May 6, rounding out HBO's six-channel digital package, HBO The Works.

HBO Comedy will recycle movies, series and live comic productions from the original HBO network, sprinkled with

four half-hour specials spotlighting new comics in HBO Workspace Presents. HBO Zone is for the *Clerks* and *Wayne's World* crowd.

Those titles, plus music videos, *The Chris Rock Show* and original documentaries such as *Autopsy* and *Real Sex*, which are set to air at midnight, round out the schedule. Carriage discussions are under way for the channels, which will be available on digital feeds on both the East and West Coasts.

## Weather Channel takes a long hike

The Weather Channel is sponsoring a research team attempting to climb Mt. Everest in order to place weather probes on the peak. If the team is successful, the four battery-powered, satellite-uplinked probes will relay information about the weather on Everest to a ground station for first-time continuous monitoring of conditions on the mountain. Climbers will be able to access the information through e-mail before attempting a climb. On average, one out of every five people who attempt to reach the summit dies. The team of Massachusetts Institute of Technology students and researchers will be led by Peter Athans, whose five successful round trips to the summit are a record for any Western climber.