

# CABLE EAGER TO ATTRACT SMALL AUDIENCES

Wired world looks to tap into \$70 million in advertising to children

By Rich Brown

Cable programmers can't seem to get enough kids programming these days. Many of the established cable networks are trying to boost their kids offerings in prime time and elsewhere, while some of the newcomer networks—such as Sci-Fi Channel and The Cartoon Network—are looking to do the same.

At this point, more than 70% of all TV programming created for kids appears on cable TV, according to the National Cable Television Association. In the national marketplace, a sizable 52% of the total gross rating points for kids programming comes from cable, says Jon Mandel, senior vice president, Grey Advertising. According to Mandel, advertising revenue for kids programming on cable will total about \$70 million this year and should grow to about \$115 million next year.

"Finally, Madison Avenue has woken up to the fact that kids influence \$160 billion a year of purchases and spend \$10 billion a year on their own," says Geraldine Laybourne, president, Nickelodeon, among the cable networks that have known the strength of children's programming for several years. "Kids are deciding where they are going to take their vacation. Their parents are overworked. The kids have more economic power than ever before."

That has translated into a boost in ad spending on Nickelodeon by sponsors representing everything from pet food to fast food. Nickelodeon now regularly features ads from Burger King, Wendy's, Pizza Hut and McDonald's, a far cry from the days when McDonald's was the only fast-food sponsor on the network.

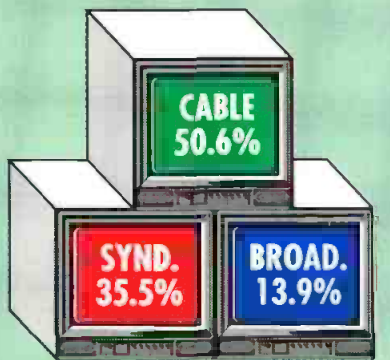
It was not all that long ago that 60% of all children's viewing went to broadcast network TV, says Laybourne. Due in part to the growing strength of cable and syndication, she says, the three broadcast networks now attract only about 14% of all kids' viewing, while cable is attracting about 60% of the pie.

## Nickelodeon

Nickelodeon, which initially targeted

## KIDS AND CABLE

Total viewing of children ages 2-11 for second quarter 92



Source: A.C. Nielsen

children ages 2-5, is expanding its base to include ages up to 15-year-olds. The "tweens" are among those being addressed with Nickelodeon's recently launched SNICK, a heavily promoted two-hour block of shows designed to target what the network's executives describe as an underserved young audience on Saturday nights. Featured in the prime time block are returning series *Clarissa Explains It All* and the animated *The Ren & Stimpy Show* as well as newcomers *Roundhouse*, a variety show, and *Are You Afraid of the Dark?*, a horror/suspense anthology series from the Cinar Group of Montreal.

The new shows are among more than a half-dozen other new series coming to Nickelodeon in upcoming

months (BROADCASTING, Aug. 17).

## The Cartoon Network

Prime time will also be a key target for Turner Broadcasting's upcoming Cartoon Network, the 24-hour cartoon channel set to debut Oct. 1. Cartoon Network executives are quick to point out that although Nielsen figures show that the highest levels of People Using Television for kids ages 2-11 are between 8 p.m. and 11 p.m., there currently is no regularly scheduled cartoon programming available during that time.

The Cartoon Network will target both baby boomers and kids with a prime time block featuring *The Flintstones*, *The Jetsons* and classic Warner Bros. cartoons. As it will be doing with most of its programming during the day, The Cartoon Network will strip the shows to help younger viewers develop a familiarity with the many classic cartoon characters in its library.

"We feel we are introducing kids to a lot of the characters for the first time," says Betty Cohen, executive vice president, The Cartoon Network.

## TNT and WTBS

Among the cable networks competing with The Cartoon Network for young viewers will be Turner-owned networks TNT and superstation WTBS-TV Atlanta, which both use cartoons to attract kids. TNT provides morning and afternoon cartoon blocks includ-

## NEW LIFE FOR SOME FAMILIAR FACES?

The Hearst Corp.'s long-ago purchase of the King Features Syndicate, with its library of *Popeye* and other cartoon shorts, has its Hearst Entertainment syndication and production division pondering a number of ways to exploit its stable of marquee cartoon characters. Bill Kunkel, senior vice president and general manager of Hearst Entertainment Distribution, says the company is mulling the development of animated series based on its newspaper comic strip characters Betty Boop, Beetle Bailey, the Phantom and Hagar, all of which have not been animated before. "We would have to put a contemporary spin on some of the older characters to make them play today," Kunkel says. "Betty Boop could be a Madonna and Beetle Bailey could be a hero from Desert Storm...something like that." Kunkel says the company may forgo the syndication route for a cable licensing deal. Such a deal could be in the offing for the 320 episodes of *Popeye* shorts with Turner, which also owns some *Popeye* cartoons from its purchase of the MGM library in 1986. —MF