NO DILLER DALLYING
EXEC SAYS HE'S CONTENT, THOUGH HE COULD SHAKE UP COMCAST, DISNEY ... PAGE 11

UPFRONT NAVIGATOR
KIDS & TEENS TV: THE CHALLENGE OF CAPTURING YOUNG VIEWERS ... PAGE 25

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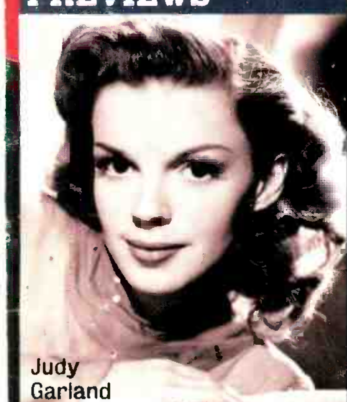
PREVIEWS



Judy Garland

END OF THE RAINBOW

"Judy Garland: By Myself" is the title of a new American Masters documentary airing Wednesday evening on PBS. It focuses on the career of the popular singer, actress and television show host, who starred in "The Wizard of Oz" and other classic films. It recalls her life from her birth in 1922 through the beginning of her film career at age 14 to her death from an accidental drug overdose in 1969.

EMMY LOVES BILLY

The 76th Annual Academy Awards, hosted for the eighth time by Billy Crystal, will be televised live Sunday from the Kodak Theater in Hollywood, with a half-hour national arrivals program and cable and local coverage preceding the ceremony. It airs on ABC in the United States and on affiliated networks in more than 150 countries worldwide for an audience of more than 1 billion viewers. Mr. Crystal doesn't hold the record for hosting the most Oscars ceremonies—the late Bob Hope hosted 18—but he has received more Emmy nominations than any other host: eight; he has won three times.

GLOBAL BAZAAR

More than 7,000 TV and movie buyers, sellers and financiers from around the world converge on Southern California beginning Wednesday for the 24th annual American Film Market. The market will include seminars, and more than 600 movies will screen for potential buyers, but the real action is in the suites, where more than half a billion dollars in deals will be made, usually country by country. The market ends March 3. ■

Turner Develops Ad Meetings

Taking a Page From Broadcasters, Cabler Offers Agencies and Clients Programming Previews

By Wayne Friedman

For the first time in its history, Turner Broadcasting Co. will hold meetings with advertisers and their media agencies next month to discuss first-run programs they are developing, agency executives said.

The meetings will be held in New York and are similar to presentations the broadcast networks have traditionally held in Los Angeles each spring. The aim is to give potential advertisers a preview of future programming plans—and entice them to make an early marketing or advertising commitment.

Development meetings give advertising executives an opportunity to talk at length with network programming executives. Unlike meetings in May tied to upfront ad sales, these development meetings aren't intended to offer specifics as to exactly where shows will run on their future schedules.

STEVE STERNBERG

"It's an image thing," said Steve Sternberg, executive VP of programming for Magna Global USA. "Cable is trying to elevate itself so people will think of them as interchangeable with broadcast. Turner has been taking the lead in all of this. Turner [with all its networks] could have a lot to talk about."

In broadcast presentations, network executives will discuss up to 40 programming projects—some accompanied by video. "A lot of this stuff doesn't make it to air," Mr. Sternberg said. "But it gives us an idea of the direction they are going into. It gives us, for example, how many dramas they have in development, whether they are going to concentrate on comedies, and what producers they have deals with."

Other media agency executives have been scratching their heads about Turner's development plans. Historically, Turner has not had a large development slate of first-run shows to discuss. Mostly the Turner programming discussions have been about its off-net comedies and dramas. "They might only have two shows to talk about," said one media agency executive. "It could be a very short meeting."

A Turner spokesman said, "It's *continued on page 32*

NBC Reclaims 18 to 49 From CBS

CBS, UPN Still the Only Networks to Show Year-to-Year Growth in Sweeps

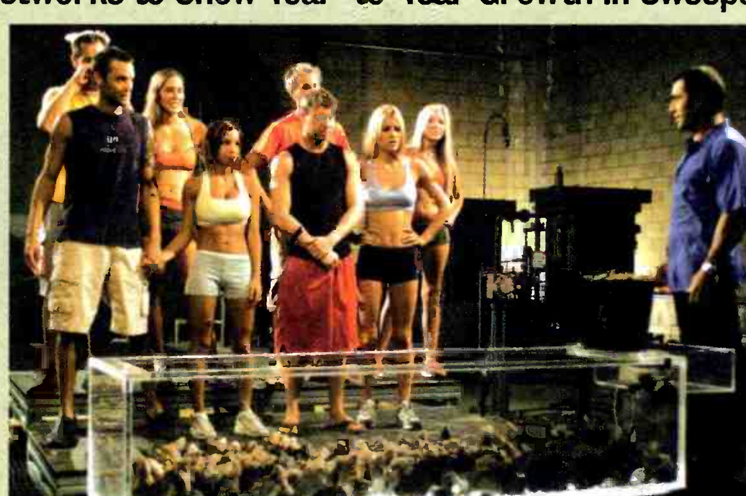
By Leslie Ryan

After two weeks of February sweeps, NBC has taken the lead over CBS in adults 18 to 49, while CBS retains its total viewer lead.

In the first week, the Grammy Awards telecast helped propel CBS to first place in the demo.

In the second week, NBC held a 7 percent advantage over CBS in the demo. NBC was fueled by its Thursday night lineup of "Friends," "The Apprentice" and "ER" as well as standout performances by "Fear Factor" on Monday and the Sunday night movie "Shrek."

"Fear," which aired the last episode of its seven-episode cou- *continued on page 29*



FEARLESS A seven-episode couples "Fear Factor" arc on NBC brought the show's highest ratings ever in the 18 to 49 demo.

Fox Snatches 'Raymond' From Tribune

Fees on Par With 1st Cycle

By Chris Pursell

How exactly did Lachlan Murdoch and the Fox owned-and-operated stations steal off-network hit "Everybody Loves Raymond" away from the Tribune station group?

That's the question operators throughout the syndication business have been asking since the deal was announced last week. The industry went on the spin cycle, on and off the *continued on page 32*

Fox, NFL Talking Sports Net

Comcast May Be Involved in Service, Which Would Directly Challenge ESPN

By Diane Mermigas

The Fox Entertainment Group is in preliminary talks with the National Football League and some cable operators about creating and launching a national sports television service, said Rupert Murdoch, chairman and CEO of News Corp., which holds a controlling interest in Fox.

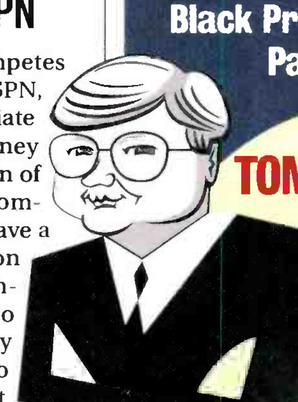
Fox already has a major presence in sports through a series of regional networks, but it does not have a single national sports outlet that competes directly with ESPN, which is an affiliate of The Walt Disney Co. The addition of a well-heeled competitor could have a major impact on sports economics. "We'd have to proceed very carefully if we do it. We'd certainly do it *continued on page 20*

RUPERT MURDOCH

SPECIAL REPORT

AFRICAN AMERICAN TV

The Effectiveness of Black Programming, **Page 21**



TOM SHALES

HDTV: A Better Picture of a Lot of Junk, **Page 35**

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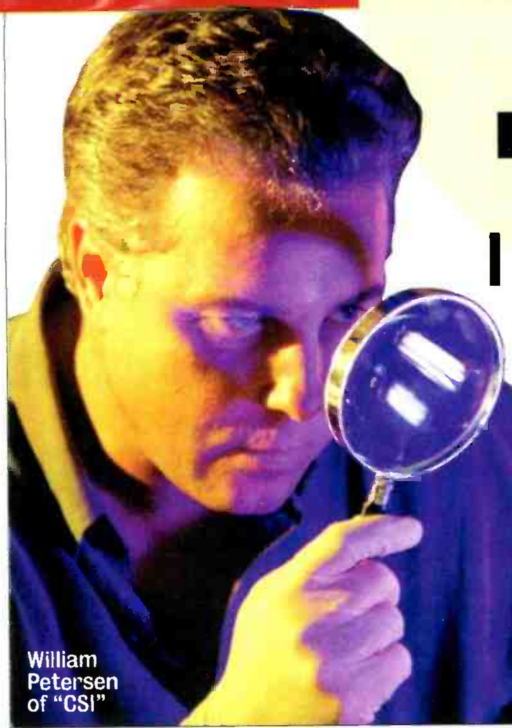
THE NEWS BEHIND THE NEWS



William Petersen of "CSI"

I Want My 'CSI'—No, I Demand It

While Disney may be giving Comcast the cold shoulder, CBS and NBC are both in discussions with the nation's largest cable system operator about participating in an ongoing test of a video-on-demand service Comcast calls On Demand, currently available to about half of the MSO's more than 20 million subscribers. This appears to be an expansion of an earlier agreement to offer programming from CBS News and MTV Network.

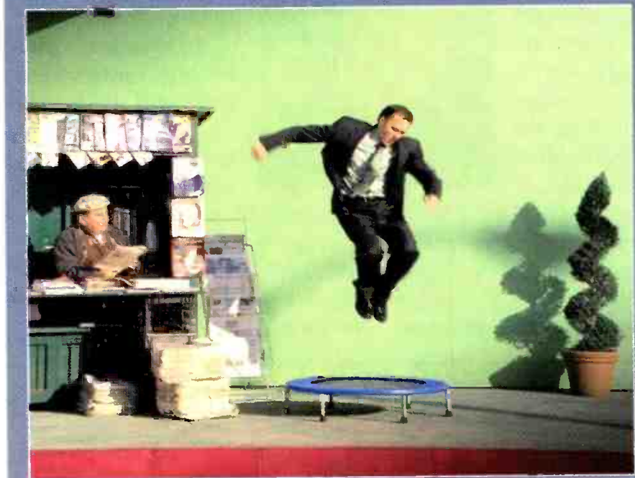
Among the shows being discussed for the prime-time schedule are hits "CSI" and "CSI Miami," said **David Poltrack**, CBS's executive VP of research and planning, and CBS spokesperson **Dana McClintock**. Mr. Poltrack stressed the discussions are preliminary. NBC is also in discussions with Comcast, along with a couple dozen cable networks. A deal for a series as popular as "CSI" may take a while. Sources close to Comcast said the program suppliers are not being paid at this point, given the experimental nature of the VOD test. Comcast spokesperson **Chris Ellis** said his company does not discuss negotiations with programmers. ■

MAYBE JACK IS IRREPLACEABLE?

The short list to succeed **Jack Valenti** as chief of the Motion Picture Association of America got even shorter last week, with word that Rep. **David Dreier**, R-Calif., has privately indicated that he is not interested in the $1 million-a-year job. Rep. Dreier, chairman of the House Rules Committee, is the last known congressman on the MPAA short list. Sen. **John Breaux**, R-La., has removed himself from consideration, his spokesman confirmed. Sen. Breaux became the leading contender for the slot after Rep. **Billy Tauzin**, R-La., turned it down to work for a pharmaceutical industry trade association. A spokesperson for Rep. Dreier said Rep. Dreier "is running for re-election for the House." Still said to be under consideration are a pair of former congressional staffers: former MPAA lobbyist **Matt Gerson**, senior VP for public policy and government relations at Vivendi Universal, and **Tim Boggs**, Time Warner's former top lobbyist in Washington. ■

JACK VALENTI

LEAPING ONTO THE SCENE



The jumping man to the left appears in "Fit TV Every-Man," one of two 30-second spots that design company 21 Boom created for the launch of FitTV. The spot, along with its counterpart "FitTV Every-Woman," airs on FitTV and other channels owned by parent Discovery Networks as part of the basic cable network's relaunch of what was formerly known as The Health Network. They air through at least the end of March. According to a press release, FitTV challenged 21 Boom to come up with "a game plan to deliver results that both reflect the visually exciting and high-energy programming of the network and appeal to men and women who want to look and feel good." ■

PLIMPTON IS GONE; DAYNA TV LIVES

Dayna Devon spent a decade in TV news before joining "Extra" in 1999; she is now anchor. She looks like a movie star but never wanted to act. That hasn't stopped her from doing more than half a dozen acting gigs in the past month on "Jag," "The Young and The Restless," "Las Vegas" and "Half & Half" and as one of Barker's Beauties on "The Price Is Right." She is making the acting rounds to raise about $10,000 for The Fulfillment Fund, a nonprofit organization that provides support to disadvantaged youth. On an upcoming episode of NBC's "Scrubs," Ms. Devon's job is to tell Dr. Reid to attend to a stabbing victim. On the first take, she walked up to **Zach Braff** and delivered her line. The problem is Dr. Reid is played by **Sarah Chalke**. Ms. Chalke motioned Ms. Devon over and asked, 'Big fan of the show, Dana?" Ms. Devon recalled. That cracked up the crew. After that, Ms. Chalke would "mess" with her, Ms. Devon said: "You know that little tape they use to measure the distance from the actor to the camera? She goes over and grabs that and starts measuring me. Then she acts like she's craft [food] services, bringing me things like I'm a real diva. So I look to our camera crew like I'm this demanding, you know, bitch. It was so funny, it brought tears." Ms. Devon's antics will air on "Extra" in a DaynaTV segment Tuesday, the same day she can be seen playing a nurse in a cameo on "It's All Relative." "I have my own theme music," enthused Ms. Devon. "What more could a girl ask?" ■

Sarah Chalke, Dayna Devon on the "S[crubs]" set

content

Columnist renderings by Risko

On the Web
Look for the Station Dish column at TVWeek.com.

Correction
In "Alhurra Gallops Into Mideast Media Mix" (*TelevisionWeek*, Feb. 16), Lambie-Nairn created the branding campaign for Alhurra. ■

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TV CURRENTS

Nets Enforcing Contract Clause

| Cable | Restrictions Constrain Marketing of Rejected Projects

By James Hibberd

It sounds like a network programmer's dream come true—a legal restriction that prevents rejected projects from being produced by competitors.

Variously called a "turnaround rights restriction," an "exclusivity clause" or a "turnaround provision," the restriction is becoming more integral to development contracts between major broadcast and cable networks and their production partners.

Under certain circumstances, such restrictions can prevent a writer or producer from taking a series or television movie elsewhere, even if the original network declines to produce the project.

"It's a relatively new concept in television that's a lousy deal for producers," said Carrie Stein, head of long-form television packaging for ICM. "If you have a chance to make a project somewhere, you should be able to make it."

TelevisionWeek spoke to agents, producers and network executives for this story. Very few were willing to go on the record.

Rights restrictions are a standard element of studio development contracts that has recently become prevalent in the historically more communal television industry. Two factors that led to its introduction, sources said, are the growth of expensive, theatrical-quality projects at outlets such as HBO, TNT and FX and the rising number of quality cable networks producing original programming.

> "It's unfortunate that some studios and networks feel they have to take things off the market to limit their competition."
>
> A television producer who asked to remain anonymous

"These are not unusual clauses by any stretch of the imagination," one agent said. "What's new is that networks are adhering to [them]. It used to be a bit of gentlemen's club. Now people are more concerned about the embarrassment factor—how can you give up something that might turn out to be a hit, and then will be used as a club against you?"

Here's how a turnaround rights restriction typically works: Once a network abandons a project, the owner has 1½ to two years to make a deal elsewhere or the rights revert to the network. However, if any material changes are made to the story line (or in some cases, if a key attachment such as a director or actor changes), the original network once again has first rights to the project.

For this reason, agents frequently tell their talent to line up competing interests prior to a project officially being declared dead at the original network, because once the project is put into turnaround, "The clock starts ticking."

Industry insiders contacted for this story stressed that each contract is unique, and that a producer's or writer's relationship with a network can be far more important in a dispute than the words on the contract.

The network most often associated with using legal restrictions

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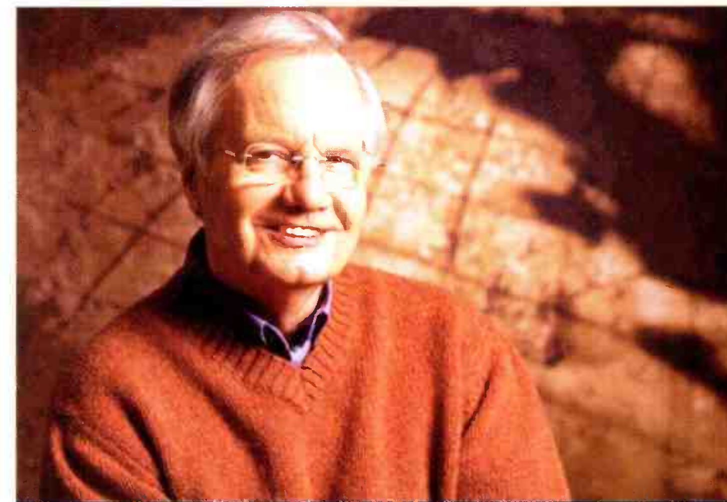

WANTS TO WRITE Bill Moyers is leaving "Now" to concentrate on a book.

'Now' or Never for PBS Series

| Broadcasting | Program Could End or Change to Half-Hour After Host Moyers Departs

By John Motavalli
Special to TelevisionWeek

Though Bill Moyers will depart as host of "Now With Bill Moyers" in November after the presidential election, PBS is looking at ways to keep the show on its schedule, especially with plans under way to create a new public affairs channel.

PBS spokesperson Lea Sloan said Mr. Moyers will be hard to replace, because hosting "Now" requires a lot more than to simply be a talking head. "[The host] has to raise money for it," she said.

The 69-year-old Mr. Moyers, who has spent 30 years in television, said last week he is leaving to write a book on President Lyndon Johnson, for whom he once worked as press secretary.

Pat Mitchell, president and CEO of PBS, lamented Mr. Moyers' decision in a prepared statement. "Bill Moyers is one of America's most respected journalists. Bill and Judith Moyers have produced some of public television's path-breaking television, including 'Bill Moyers' Journal,' 'Creativity,' 'Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth,' 'World of Ideas,' 'Genesis,' 'Healing and the Mind,' 'The Public Mind' and most recently, 'Now.' The list goes on and on. PBS would like to thank Bill for his marvelous contribution to 'Now' and wish him well as he moves into this next phase of his work. We are in discussions with the executive producer, John Siceloff, about 'Now's' future in the new year."

Those discussions include keeping "Now" on the air on Friday nights but cutting the show to half an hour from its current one-hour format, sources said. David Brancaccio, the former host of

continued on page 34

WGA Prepares for DVD Residual Fight

| Labor | SAG Extends Pact; Writers Go Solo

By James Hibberd

With the actors guild's decision last week to extend its current agreement, the Writers Guild of America is preparing for a solo battle with Hollywood producers over its contract, which is set to expire May 2.

No date has been announced for the commencement of negotiations, but sparks are already flying as the WGA has taken its premier issue—DVD residuals—to its members and the press in hopes of generating understanding of and support for its cause.

"The profit margin on DVDs is 66 percent," said Cheryl Rhoden, WGA West's assistant executive director. "For every $300 dollars of sales, they make $200 in profit. And of that, the writer receives $1."

The position has received overwhelming support from guild members, with 96 percent recently voting to affirm the WGA's "pattern of demands" for the talks.

The home-video residual formula, however, has been essentially unchanged for decades, and few expect the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers to give up ground easily.

"Nobody is going to negotiate the DVD issue standing out there all by itself," one industry insider said.

"When writers talk about how profitable DVDs are, they have to talk about how nonprofitable movies are. It's a low-margin business, and the costs of DVDs are going up."

The insider noted that studios have to produce extras for DVDs and market them like event films while still selling them at increasingly con-

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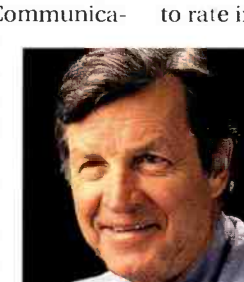
Cox, ESPN Pound Out Pact

| Cable | Sports Net Gets Smaller Rate Hike in Nine-Year Carriage Deal

By Jon Lafayette and Jay Sherman

After a bruising heavyweight bout, ESPN and Cox Communications emerged from the ring last week with a new nine-year carriage deal under their belts.



JIM ROBBINS

The deal means neither party risks knockout punches from subscribers or Washington.

Before last week the high cost of sports programming had cable operators complaining and lawmakers investigating. In its agreement with Cox, which had been uncharacteristically public in its negotiations, and in a separate agreement with Charter Communications, ESPN agreed to rate increases far smaller than the 20 percent hikes it had been getting annually for its main channel under its current contracts.

Moderating the increase in programming costs is a key objective for operators.

"We are resolved to protect the value of cable television service for our customers, and with this agreement we believe we made material progress in accomplishing that objective," said Jim Robbins, Cox president and CEO, in a statement.

But as Sean Bratches, executive VP at ESPN, points out, even smaller increases add up fast because ESPN is already by far the highest-priced network on basic cable, with an average fee of $2.67 per subscriber.

"It's the perfect deal after the perfect storm," Mr. Bratches said. "We were seeking to moderate our annual adjustments in exchange for long-term agreements and the rollout of new products and services."

Mr. Bratches said Comcast's bid for ESPN parent, The Walt Disney Co., did not affect ESPN's strategy. In fact, he said, he was

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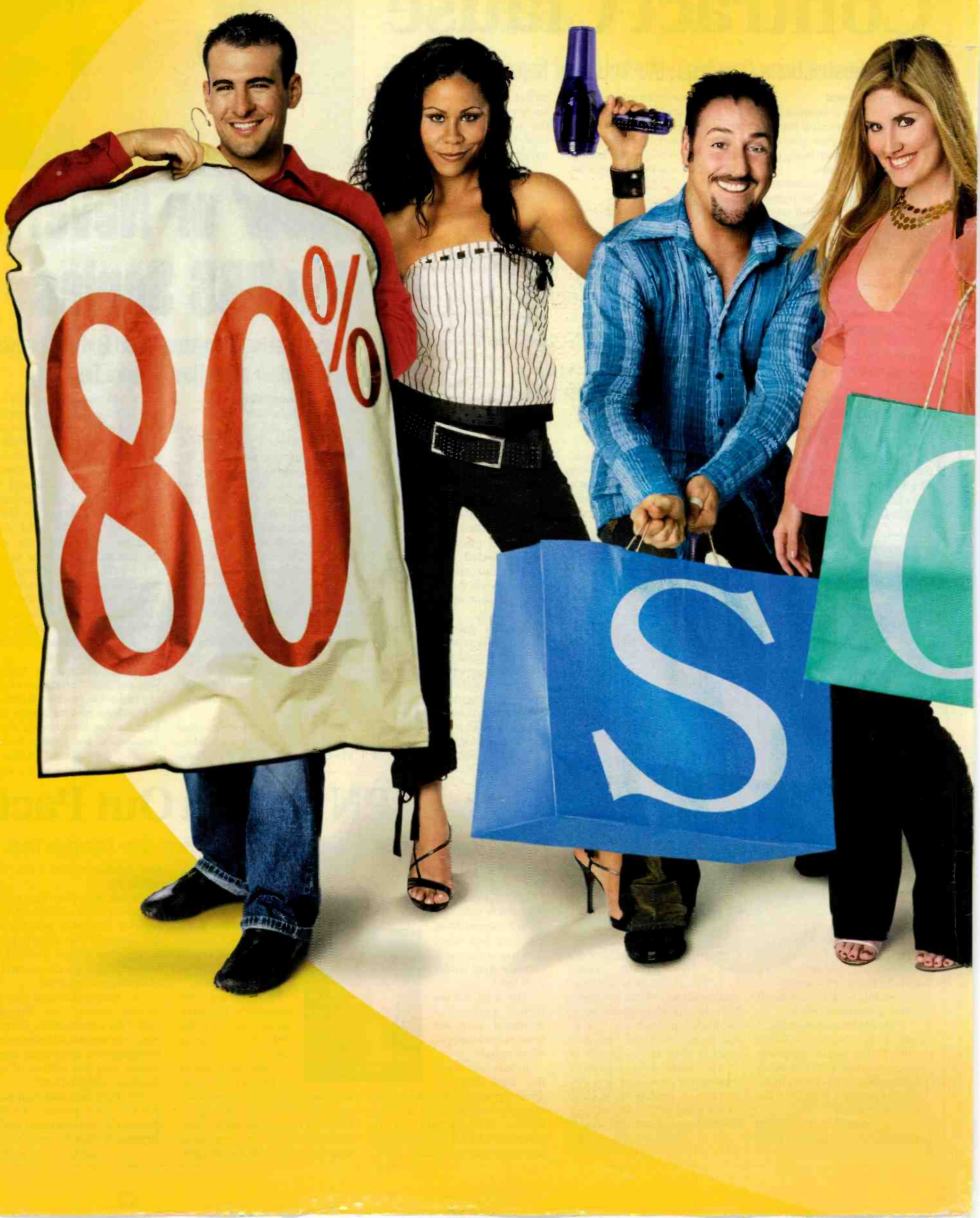
The Makeover Take



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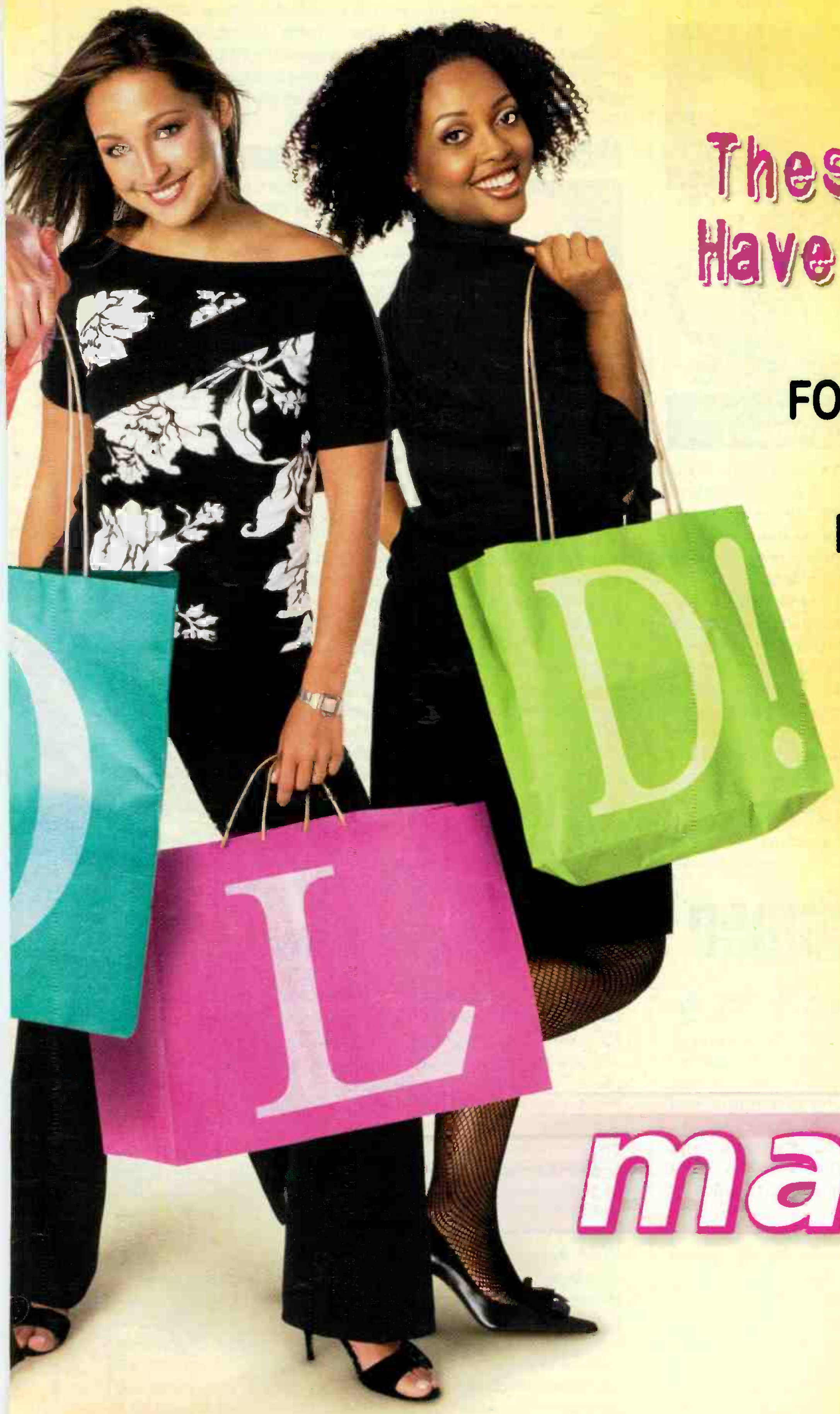

These Station Groups Have Got It In The Bag:

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TV CURRENTS

NAB, Nets to Hold Indecency Summit

| Regulation | Three of Big 4 Confirm They Plan to Participate

By Doug Halonen

Under the gun from federal regulators, representatives of all of the major TV networks except NBC last week confirmed plans to attend an industry summit this spring aimed at toning down indecent programming.

As of late last week, a date for the National Association of Broadcasters gathering had yet to be announced.

Spokespersons for ABC, CBS and Fox said the networks plan to participate but have not decided whom to send. NBC declined comment on its plans.

CATALYST Lawmakers and industry leaders remain focused on the indecency issue in the wake of Janet Jackson's Super Bowl appearance.

In a Feb. 10 letter to top executives of the Big 4 TV networks and the NAB, Federal Communications Commission Chairman Michael Powell urged the industry to get together to adopt a "voluntary code of conduct" aimed in particular at governing "indecent, profane and violent programming."

MICHAEL POWELL

NAB agreed to host a session on programming standards without specifically committing to the concept of a code.

"At this meeting, a diverse cross-section of broadcasters and key stakeholders will meet to consider how the industry can best address current programming-related concerns," NAB President and CEO Eddie Fritts said in a letter of response to Chairman Powell.

In a joint Feb. 17 letter to Mr. Powell, CBS Television Chairman and CEO Leslie Moonves and Viacom Television Stations Group President Fredric Reynolds, said they plan to work with their affiliates at the NAB summit to figure out the "best ways for us to work together to ensure that no inappropriate programming reaches viewers' homes."

On a related front, Mr. Moonves and Mr. Reynolds said they have directed the CBS Network and the company's owned-and-operated stations to review their standards and practices for live programming, scripted fare, commercials and promotional spots.

"With respect to CBS and UPN affiliates, we reaffirm here

continued on page 34

ABC Family Seeks Programmer

| Cable | Network Reshapes Management Team, Searches Outside Disney

By Jon Lafayette

ABC Cable Networks Group President Anne Sweeney plans to fill the top programming job at ABC Family from outside The Walt Disney Co.

The hire is part of a plan to clean house at the channel, which lost its president, Angela Shapiro, after ABC Family was made part of Ms. Sweeney's division in October. ABC Family's senior VP and head of programming, Linda Mancuso, died of cancer in December.

ANNE SWEENEY

The new channel's management will be modeled after that of the Disney Channel. Executives responsible for original entertainment and marketing will report to the president of entertainment.

After Ms. Mancuso's death, Ms. Sweeney hired executive search firm Carlsen Resources.

There is no shortage of candidates interested in the job of president of entertainment—despite Comcast's takeover bid for the channel's parent, The Walt Disney Co.—according to Ms. Sweeney. She had interviewed 12 candidates as of last week and had brought four back for second interviews. More candidates may be interviewed, Ms. Sweeney said in New York last week during a reception for the new Jetix action-adventure block on ABC Family and Toon Disney.

Ms. Sweeney said she hopes to have a top executive in place by the time the network conducts upfront meetings with advertisers next month.

During the upfront meetings, Ms. Sweeney and the new chief programmer will lay out the new strategic direction for ABC Family, Ms. Sweeney said. That strategic direction has been approved and is supported by top Disney management, including CEO Michael Eisner, she said.

Shortly after Disney acquired it for \$5 billion, ABC Family became home to a number of repurposed ABC programs. Ms. Sweeney said that being a second home for ABC shows was not "a big enough idea" and would not be an important part of the ABC Family plan. Instead, the channel will embrace the "Family" part of its name, though she declined to go into detail.

Some Disney insiders said Rich Ross, president of entertainment at the surging Disney Channel and one of Ms. Sweeney's top executives, was her top choice to run ABC Family. But Mr. Ross apparently turned down the job. "I have the best job in television," said Mr. Ross, who was also at the Jetix event.

As part of the ABC Cable Networks Group, ABC Family will share some functions with the other channels in the group. Last week, Disney Channel executives Gary Marsh and Michael Healy were given oversight of ABC Family film projects. ■

NEWS Briefs

NBC Nabs Rights to 'Contender'

NBC knocked out the competition to buy the rights to "The Contender," the latest project from reality guru Mark Burnett. "The Contender" will follow a nationwide search for the next real-life Rocky. Mr. Burnett, DreamWorks' Jeffrey Katzenberg and actor Sylvester Stallone, who played the title role in numerous "Rocky" feature films, will executive produce the show. The three principals also plan to launch their own boxing federation.

Museum of Television & Radio Chooses Brotman

STUART BROTMAN

Stuart Brotman, a communications consultant and academic, has been named president of the Museum of Television & Radio after what board Chairman Frank Bennack Jr. described as a "very exhaustive and thorough search" for the successor to Robert Batscha, who died in July 2003 after 22 years at the helm of the museum. Mr. Brotman will take his new position March 1.

Disney Acquires 'Muppets' Assets

The Walt Disney Co. has acquired the "Muppets" and "Bear in the Big Blue House" properties from The Jim Henson Co. The value of the deal is about \$60 million plus profit sharing from future revenues, according to published reports. The deal will include all Muppets assets, including the characters Kermit, Miss Piggy, Fozzie Bear, Gonzo and Animal; the Muppet film and television library; and all associated copyrights and trademarks, as well as all the "Bear in the Big Blue House" characters, television library, copyrights and trademarks. The two companies announced last week they have signed a binding purchase agreement and expect the transaction to close within two months. The deal does not include the "Sesame Street" characters, such as Big Bird and Elmo, which are owned by Sesame Workshop. The deal also includes non-exclusive production and consulting agreements under which Henson will develop potential new programming featuring the Muppets and "Bear in the Big Blue House" for Disney.

KERMIT THE FROG

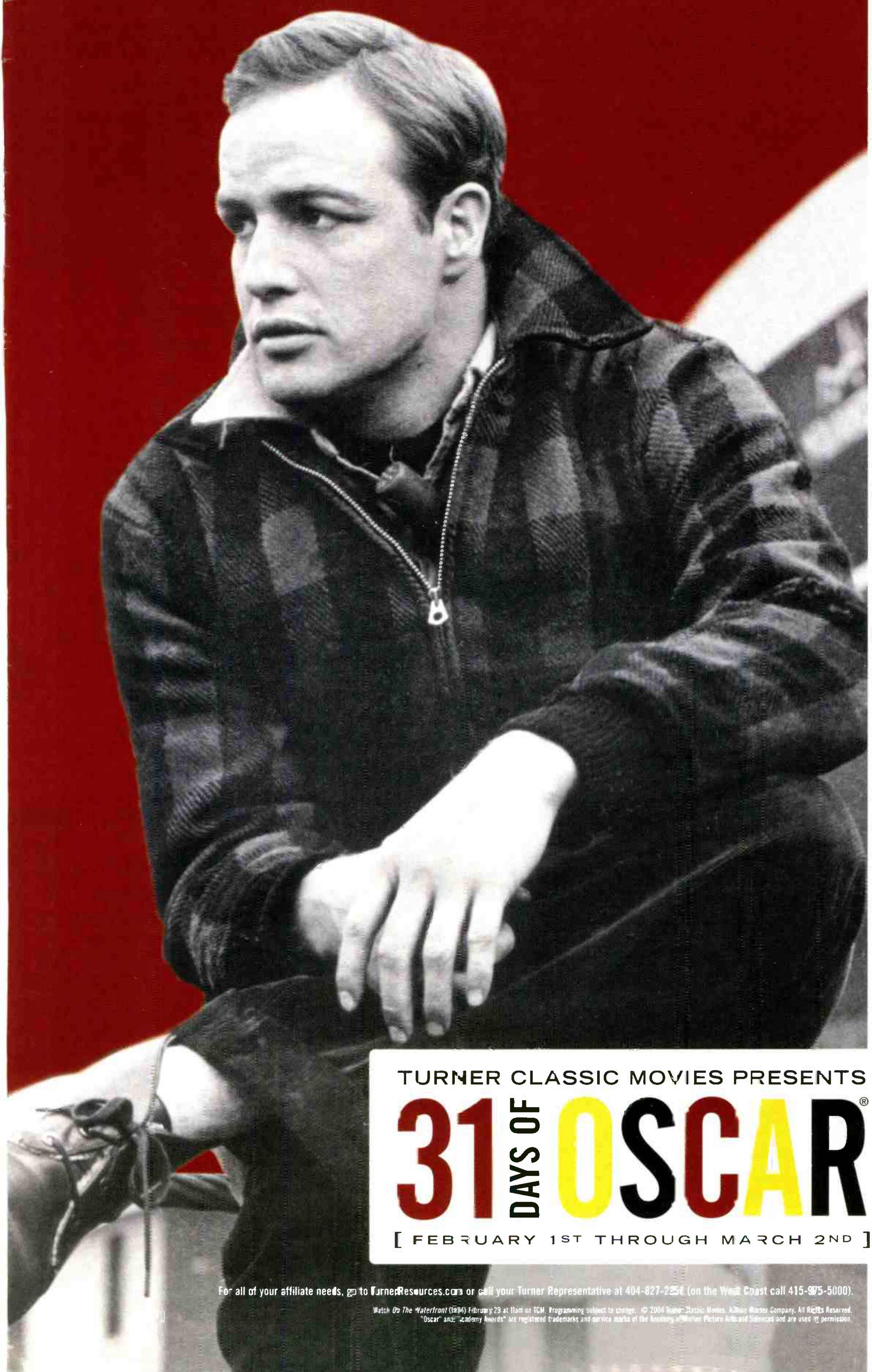
Academy Fine-Tunes Reality Emmy Rules

The Academy of Television Arts & Sciences has changed the rules for awarding Emmys to reality television programs and has made several other changes in the nomination procedures for prime-time programs. Reality and competition programming will now fall under the competition category of Outstanding Reality/Competition Program, which will have only one winner. Previously, reality programming fell under a Special Class programming category, which meant that one, more than one or no program could win the award. That arrangement led to reality shows such as "Survivor" being lumped into the same category as shows such as the Bob Hope specials. The Outstanding Reality/Competition Program category will include all game shows and any program that awards a prize or is a contest or competition. Another procedural change is allowing the 12,000 academy members who nominate shows cast up to 10 votes per category, instead of the current five-vote maximum. The top five vote-getters in each category will be nominated. The academy also increased to six from three the minimum number of episodes required for consideration to be nominated in the comedy and drama series categories. Once nominations are revealed, the number of episodes submitted for the final round of judging to determine the winners is now six episodes, instead of the eight episodes previously required.

Linkletter to Receive Christopher Award

Art Linkletter, who became "America's grandfather" through his 19 years of hosting "People Are Funny" and his 26 years with "House Party," will receive the Christopher Life Achievement Award at the 55th annual Christopher Awards program Thursday, Feb. 26, at New York's Time-Life Building. The Christopher Awards recognize those who use their talents to raise the standards of public life. ■

JUST THE CONTENDERS,
NOT THE PRETENDERS.



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12:00 AM	Lawrence of Arabia ('62)
4:00 AM	Midnight Cowboy ('69)

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27

6:00 AM	The Broadway Melody ('29)
8:00 AM	The Life of Emile Zola ('37)
10:00 AM	Around the World in 80 Days ('56)
1:00 PM	The Apartment ('60)
3:30 PM	Marty ('55)
5:30 PM	Oliver! ('68)
8:00 PM	From Here to Eternity ('53)
10:00 PM	West Side Story ('61)
1:00 AM	Annie Hall ('77)
3:00 AM	The Last Emperor ('87)

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28

6:00 AM	Gigi ('58)
8:00 AM	An American in Paris ('51)
10:00 AM	The Best Years of Our Lives ('46)
1:00 PM	It Happened One Night ('34)
3:00 PM	You Can't Take It With You ('38)
5:30 PM	Rebecca ('40)
8:00 PM	Driving Miss Daisy ('89)
10:00 PM	Kramer vs. Kramer ('79)
12:00 AM	Rain Man ('88)
2:15 AM	Mrs. Miniver ('42)
4:30 AM	Grand Hotel ('32)

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 29

6:30 AM	Cimarron ('31)
8:45 AM	Chariots of Fire ('81)
11:00 AM	On the Waterfront ('54)
1:00 PM	In the Heat of the Night ('67)
3:00 PM	The Bridge on the River Kwai ('57)
5:45 PM	Rocky ('76)

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Scripps Touts Study of Viewer Interest

| Advertising | High Levels of Engagement Noted for its Niche Programs

By Jon Lafayette

Scripps Networks expects advertisers to pay close attention to a new viewer engagement study.

With its group of special-interest channels—HGTV, Food Network, DIY-Do It Yourself and Fine Living—Scripps has for years claimed that its viewers watch more intently than do viewers of other networks and have a greater interest in the products that are advertised.

Last week Scripps released the results of an independent survey conducted by Simmons Market Research Bureau on viewer engagement. In the past Scripps has conducted such research itself, but this time it commissioned Simmons to do the study and included input from some of the leading ad buyers, who thought their clients would find an independent study more persuasive.

FAJITA FEAST Food Network celebrity chef Sara Moulton, center, showed New York Giants players Amani Toomer, left, Tiki Barber, Luke Petitgout and Will Allen how to whip up fajitas during an episode of "Sara's Secrets."

Scripps networks scored very high among a field of 35 broadcast and cable services. Steve Gigliotti, Scripps executive VP for advertising sales and emerging media, said that getting a high score in engagement just before the beginning of cable network upfront presentations "could be worth more than ratings points" to some advertisers.

Because the networks appeal to people with specific interests—cooking, decorating, remodeling—advertisers in those fields already pay relatively high costs per thousand to reach those viewers.

The new survey likely will buttress that appeal. An advertiser would have to be intrigued by a network that scored high when viewers said they were "more inclined to buy products and services advertised on this channel" and Scripps networks rank 1, 2, 3 and 4 in the Simmons survey.

Scripps Networks were also the top responses to the statements "You can trust products advertised on this channel," "The ads are informative" and "The ads are relevant."

The survey is based on interviews with 25,000 adults. ■

Eye on Product Placements

| Network | CBS Will Use iTVX Software to Mine Shows for Sales Opportunities

By Jay Sherman

CBS has partnered with product placement valuation company iTVX to help the network explore how to put price tags on product placements in several series on CBS and UPN.

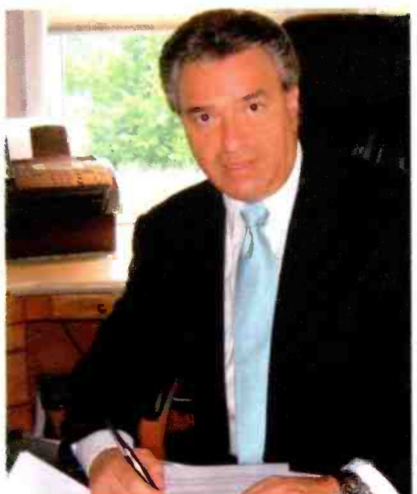
Described as a small deal that's exploratory in nature, the pact calls for iTVX, a New Rochelle, N.Y.-based software company, to use its product-placement valuation tool, Instant Access, to evaluate such things as how well a product placement is integrated into a scene, the clarity of a brand's logo and the overall presence of the product in a scene to derive a dollar value of that product placement. Both companies declined to put a dollar figure on the venture.

The shows expected to be evaluated include "Everybody Loves Raymond," "Yes, Dear," "King of Queens," "Survivor" and "CSI" on CBS and UPN's "Girlfriends."

CBS is the first broadcast network to partner with iTVX, but company President Frank Zazza expects others to do so soon. Already, iTVX counts as clients Unilever, Snapple, Best Foods, Verizon and Kraft Foods.

While CBS officials declined to say what the networks might do with the valuation information once they get it, Mr. Zazza believes product-placement valuation data provides networks with a raft of sales opportunities to exploit.

Among them is the ability of a network to approach a company whose product generated a high valuation in an episode and offer that company the first advertising position that follows the product placement event during a repeat airing of that show.



PLACEMENT PRICE TAGS Frank Zazza, president of iTVX, has a deal with CBS to evaluate aspects of product placements to determine their worth.

Such opportunities also create links between a program and the advertiser, Mr. Zazza said. "Ninety-seven percent of product placements are not structured deals between the network and the product marketer," he added. "This allows you to pay on results, not investment, because it takes what is already out there and measures it."

The latest version of Instant Access, which was introduced in September, generates product placement values based on information provided by a user. Among the criteria considered are how clearly the brand logo stands out among other items; how clearly identifiable the logo is and whether a character from the show walks past or touches the product or utters the brand name. The software can also evaluate the seamlessness of the product placement—an important factor in judging the success of the placement.

The tool is seen as helping advertisers reach consumers at a time when many viewers are growing tired of being bombarded with ads and when personal video recorders are permitting viewers to fast-forward through commercials.

"Frank has turned this thing into something that gives agencies and clients a deeper look into the value and comparisons of product placements," said Peter Gardiner, partner and chief media officer of Interpublic Group of Cos.' Deutsch, a New York-based advertising agency, one of the early adopters of iTVX's product. "I think this is the first step toward changing a part of the business." ■

PIXEL-PACKED Keeping "Survivor's" Richard Hatch's privates covered is adding hours of work for the post-production crew.

The Insider

By Michele Greppi

EYE ON 'SURVIVOR'

When Jeff Probst said during a recent installment of "The Ellen DeGeneres Show" that after the Janet Jackson bared-breast incident, "Survivor" was ordered to enlarge the digital blur over the ever-naked Richard Hatch, the ever-naive Insider wondered whether that edict had any post-production ramifications.

Turns out it does. It has added a couple of hours to the post-production of each "Survivor" episode, according to a post-production source who said the challenge segments are literally a challenge for the pixelators, who have to work frame by action-driven frame.

It also turns out that the blur has been made more opaque by increasing the number of pixels deployed in each frame to record levels for the eight-season reality hit.

RIPA RIPE FOR SLIME TIME

Kelly Ripa will be sitting—and knitting—pretty when she pays off the Super Bowl bet she lost to Regis Philbin by *not* talking for the duration of the host chat segment on the Feb. 23 airing of "Live With Regis and Kelly."

KELLY RIPA

The "penalty" negotiations ended Friday with the agreement that Ms. Ripa can communicate with flash or cue cards. Other nonverbal options also are open to her—"Not speaking is not *speaking*," said "Live" executive producer Michael Gelman—but a slip of the lip will result in her being slimed.

After last Friday's show, on which Ms. Ripa said she'd bring her knitting Feb. 23, Mr. Gelman told The Insider that the exact formula (as well as when and by what kind of slime bucket the slop would be dropped) still was being worked out. But The Insider is confident the goo will be green. "I think green is the grossest color," Mr. Gelman said.

RE-ENTER LAUGHING

The Insider hears that Dennis Miller might be taking himself less seriously on his weeknightly CNBC show, which debuted in late January to big ratings only to plummet to very unfunny lows thereafter.

Steve Friedman, the former "Today" and "The Early Show" executive producer, has been brought in as a consultant on "Dennis Miller" and is certain to help lighten things up, and he could expand the show into the empty space at the far end of Mr. Miller's Burbank studio to accommodate an audience.

For the record, CNBC says it always planned to hire a consultant, that Mr. Friedman's role is to help fine-tune "Miller" and that it truly believes in Mr. Miller and the show. ■

PressRoom

A FORUM FOR IDEAS, COMMENTARY AND OPINION

EDITORIAL

Can Comcast Build a Better Mouse House?

As mega-mergers go, Comcast's proposed takeover of Disney is less frightening than most. Disney has been one of the more dysfunctional media giants in recent years and may well benefit from the new, more focused priorities the Comcast management team would bring to the table.

Still, a move of this size and potential impact warrants a wary eye by media watchers, government regulators and the industry as a whole. Consolidation has been speeding ahead at an alarming pace in recent months, with the GE-Vivendi Universal combination pending and News Corp.-DirecTV already a done deal. We now have more than enough evidence of the impact of such mergers. AOL and Time Warner are an example of the consequences when a merger doesn't work. Media concentration in general has produced a less competitive marketplace and a loss of industry jobs. Consumers have been hurt by higher prices and a move toward more formulaic programming. Diversity efforts, local news, community involvement and other public service commitments have also suffered.

But the proposed Comcast-Disney deal is one case in which bigger may not necessarily mean worse. Disney remains a great company in many ways but has suffered from one management crisis after another in recent years. The problems have been particularly obvious in broadcast, where the ratings woes of the ABC Network are well documented. In cable, ESPN is a top performer but has been in a public dispute with several top cable system operators over its efforts to raise rates, apparently in an effort to pass on higher costs. And the $5 billion acquisition of ABC Family has never lived up to its promise. The current power struggle between Roy Disney and Michael Eisner remains a very visible reminder of the problems that have plagued The Walt Disney Co.

It is this internal turmoil and a low stock price that made Disney vulnerable to a takeover. Enter Comcast, the biggest gatekeeper in cable, with an eye on creating an integrated mega-corporation that would control both content and distribution. Unlike other recent mergers, this combination presents a minimum of overlapping businesses and a vision of how technology and programming can be integrated. That vision may be just what's needed to turn Disney into a success story again.

The move is fraught with possible pitfalls. If Comcast makes the same mistakes Disney has made, such as relying too heavily on in-house productions for its broadcast and cable outlets, it is unlikely to turn things around. If, however, Comcast avoids the rigid bottom-line-oriented mentality and puts long-range thinking ahead of a narrowly defined push for profits, it has an opportunity to create a successful model for future integrated media giants. ■

QUICKTAKES BY NAOMIE WORRELL

Where do you get your political news?

"I get my morning political briefing from ABCNews.com's The Note, which I download every morning. The Note is terrific because it's well-written, comprehensive and has links to all the actual publications it quotes. When you're through reading it, you've scoured every important publication in the country."

R.J. Cutler, executive producer, "American Candidate," Showtime

"I get most of my political news ... from NPR. I trust the public television program 'NewsHour With Jim Lehrer' and national newspapers like The New York Times and the Los Angeles Times."

Ellen Nathan, national program director, BookPALS, Screen Actors Guild Foundation

GUEST COMMENTARY By Ira Sussman

Cable an Alternative to the Sweeps Game

The rules may work against you. Media buyers and sellers evaluate all local television based on sweeps, the four periods each year when Nielsen surveys all designated market areas. Sweeps are also the times when broadcasters, networks and syndicators air their best and newest programming or run contests, which invariably inflate program ratings. During nonsweeps months viewers are likely to see a repeat telecast, and ratings averages are lower.

As Erwin Ephron has said, "Nielsen samples weeks as well as people."

It is the practice of media buyers to estimate the delivery of broadcasts in nonsweeps periods using the only measurement available—the hyped ratings of the most recent sweeps period.

This industry practice can force advertisers to pay for higher-rated programs while having their product ads actually air on consistently lower-rated broadcasts.

The Cabletelevision Advertising Bureau analyzed the period from 1999 through 2002 to better understand this situation. Broadcast TV delivers 5 percent to 7 percent fewer household impressions in nonsweeps months than the 12-month-average audience delivery. Cable provides 5 percent to 7 percent greater household delivery in nonsweeps months vs. the average month. Overall, cable delivers bonus impressions vs. the sweeps estimate, while broadcast underdelivers for eight of the 12 months.

In addition, in individual months, because a nonsweeps estimate is based on the preceding hyped period (for example, using a May book's rating for a June schedule), you could overestimate the actual delivery by 15 percent to 25 percent.

We further analyzed additional data from the AdCom Television Research continuous measurement sample, which yielded similar results. AdCom collects viewing data from cable set-top-box meters in a number of markets 365 days per year, allowing us to see the actual effect of the hyped sweeps on broadcast network viewing at the local level.

Comparing April 2003 to the May 2003 sweeps period, ad-insertable cable showed increased ratings (+2.2), share (+6.0) and HH impressions, while the broadcast networks showed declines (rating –7.1, share –7.9).

Nielsen is now rolling out local People Meters, which employ continuous measurement. They are currently available in Boston, will be used in Los Angeles, New York and Chicago later this year, and will be implemented in all top 10 local markets over the next few years. The chart above shows the effect of 12-month measurement on broadcast ratings using local People Meters in the Boston DMA when comparing the May sweeps with the next three months for adults 25 to 54.

The chart shows a clear example of how a broadcast buy based on a sweep month (in this case May) could dramatically overestimate the subsequent months' delivery of broadcast ratings while ad-insertable cable ratings remain level.

Nielsen's local People Meter will allow buyers to negotiate, buy and sell on actual ratings data. Until then, local advertisers should beware when buying local broadcast television.

While some suggest the solution is to buy broadcast stations whose numbers have been deflated during sweeps, I say buy local cable. It's the only way to ensure you are getting the coverage you bought because cable is the only delivery system that delivers more viewers in nonsweeps months.

Local cable has made great inroads in spite of the fact that current rules of the game are stacked against it. For the most part, local TV ratings still depend on viewers filling out diaries during sweeps periods. We know diaries vastly underestimate demographic audiences viewing cable.

Ad-supported cable has just come off a banner year, achieving milestones in growth of viewership and audience share. In the first quarter of 2003 cable surpassed broadcast in prime share, and in May cable beat broadcast share for the first time during a sweeps month.

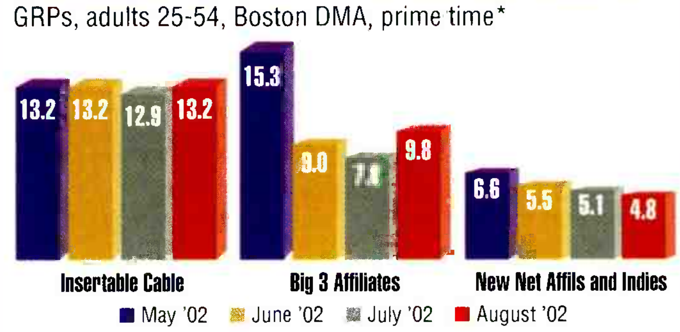
In addition, local cable has worked hard to clean up its act. Best practices for calculating sellable and insertable impressions for local cable, which do not include alternate delivery system homes, have been developed and implemented at the multiple system operator level. Local cable operators have pushed Nielsen to release, starting with the November 2003 sweeps, the total viewing source DVD, which will allow buyers to access local wired cable ratings (without ADS homes) on a DMA-equivalent basis. Early next year Nielsen will include universe estimates for large MSOs and hard interconnects in each VIP book, so buyers will have third-party developed coverage areas for their buys.

Before playing in the local TV ad marketplace, be sure you understand the rules of the game. ■

Ira Sussman is VP of research for the Cabletelevision Advertising Bureau.

SWEEPS VS. NONSWEEPS

GRPs, adults 25-54, Boston DMA, prime time*



*Monday-Saturday, 8-11 p.m.; Sunday, 7-11 p.m.

Source: Cabletelevision Advertising Bureau

TV CURRENTS

COOL CUSTOMER Kett Turton plays Paul in ABC's "Kingdom Hospital."

'Kingdom' Promo Mixes Fiction, Fact

| Network | ABC Plans Record Push for Series

By Wayne Friedman

For "Stephen King's Kingdom Hospital," ABC's upcoming 13-week limited series, the network will structure a massive multi-million-dollar marketing campaign that includes "Blair Witch"-like marketing techniques mixing fiction with what appear to be real events.

"We are treating this like a movie opening," said Mike Benson, senior VP of marketing, advertising and promotion for ABC Entertainment. "We want people to get in the first night. We know if we get them in there the first night, we are going to get people to come back. The series is that good."

ABC is marketing "Kingdom" with more promotional time than the network has ever put into a TV series—some 1,000 gross ratings points. Typical new network shows might get only some 500 GRPs. That includes heavy exposure on ABC itself as well as on Disney-owned cable networks ESPN, Lifetime, A&E Entertainment and ABC Family. "It's a massive campaign," Mr. Benson said. "It's as big as any campaign that we have done, if not bigger."

The marketing effort launched in late January, when almost 90 percent of ABC stations aired a half-hour "fictional" documentary promoting the series, which will debut March 3.

Stephen King wrote the series, which is based on the Danish miniseries "Riget" ("The Kingdom") from director Lars von Trier. It revolves around mysteries surrounding a fictional medical center—Kingdom Hospital—in Lewiston, Maine, the town where Mr. King lives. The series was shot in Canada.

"We have this great fictional hospital that looks like it's part of a real documentary in hopes that the audience will say, 'Wait. There really is a Kingdom Hospital?'" Mr. Benson said.

In the summer of 1999 the surprise theatrical hit "The Blair Witch Project" built a marketing campaign using the Internet and TV to publicize the supposed real-life disappearance in 1994 of its filmmakers, who were looking to find the urban legend of the Blair Witch.

ABC on-air promos are built around Mr. King's name. Voice-overs in multiple promo spots say, "From the man who brought you 'The Shining,' 'Carrie' and 'The Green Mile' ... ." In one major spot, a man is running down an isolated, wooded road and a truck appears to hit him. In a real-life incident, Mr. King was hit by a truck on a road in Maine.

Says the voice-over in the promos: "Coming from the mind of Stephen King—something so personal only he could tell it."

Cross-Promotion

To help build marketing buzz, ABC partnered with Hyperion Books, another Disney division, which published the book "The Journals of Eleanor Druse," on which Mr. King supposedly based the series. In promos, a voice-over says, "Read the book before the premiere."

Book retailers are cross-promoting the series, and ABC is offering retailers co-op advertising for in-store displays and other marketing materials. The book jacket features a blurb telling people to watch the ABC show.

ABC is deliberately not giving away much else of the story in marketing materials. "The thing that attracts people to Stephen King is the whole sense of the unknown—even though it's fictional, it could be real," Mr. Benson said. "We are trying to capture that essence in the marketing campaign—that there really could be a haunted hospital."

"Kingdom Hospital" is the network's first limited series that isn't a miniseries. ABC will air one new episode every week for 13 weeks with no reruns. The first and last episodes are two hours, while the others run one hour. ■

ALEX BEN **BLOCK**

BRUCE DAVISON: CHARACTER COUNTS

IN CHARACTER Bruce Davison as the "arrogant" Dr. Stegman

On the upcoming ABC miniseries "Stephen King's Kingdom Hospital," Bruce Davison plays Dr. Stegman, the chief neurologist of a very strange medical facility who is described in media notes as "hopelessly arrogant and mean-spirited."

Though Mr. Davison has enjoyed a varied career, this role is a departure for him. He is better known for serious and sensitive parts on TV, such as his role of an accused murderer on "The Practice" and in TV movies such as 1999's "A Memory in My Heart," feature films, including "Runaway Jury" and "X-Men," and signature roles in films such as 1990's "Longtime Companion," where he played a gay man caring for his lover who was dying of AIDS. The "Companion" role earned him a Golden Globe award and an Academy Award nomination.

How Mr. Davison came to get the "Kingdom" role is a story in itself, one that is instructive about what it takes to sustain a career despite the preponderance of typecasting and ageism in Hollywood.

For Mr. Davison this tale begins with a job he didn't really like—being a voice actor for audio books. "I really hated doing them because there's not much money in it and it's just so killing to be in that booth and do all of that work in three or four days," Mr. Davison recalled last week while in L.A. on a break from the "Kingdom" set in Vancouver, Canada.

Nearly three years ago Mr. Davison got a call from his long-time reps at the Gersh Agency. Stephen King was doing an audio version of his book "From a Buick 8" and wanted him in the cast. Mr. Davison had never met Mr. King but was a big fan of his work. "I couldn't turn that down," he recalled.

"When you are out there for all these years you don't realize maybe somebody's been watching from their living room," Mr. Davison said. "So I did the King book and got a beautiful letter from him saying, 'You did a great job. Anytime you want to do something, you are the man.' So I kept the letter on my wall."

Mr. Davison decided long ago that he wasn't going to worry about being the star in every project. Director Robert Aldrich once advised him to be a character actor because character actors always get work.

A year after working on "Buick 8," Mr. Davison heard about the "Kingdom Hospital" project and called his agent. "And they said, 'Well, you are on the list,'" meaning he was one of the actors under consideration.

"And I said, 'The hell with that. Here's this letter. Take this letter to the producers, to the powers that be, and tell them I am the man!"

Mr. Davison knew the odds were against him. Despite his ability to be a chameleon on-screen, he knows all about typecasting and ageism. It is particularly difficult when dealing with young casting directors who think he can do only the kinds of roles he has done in recent years.

A week later the phone rings in his L.A. home and it's Stephen King. "He said, 'I'm a real fan.' I said, 'Well, gosh ... yes, I am too, sir.' He asked me, 'Why do you want to do this?' I said, 'I think the part can really work if it had a kind of vulnerability to carry off all the evil, and I can do that.' He said, 'Well, you go in and do what you can. I'll do what I can.' And he put his head down and he got me the part, finally, after reading and auditioning and everything else. It's not something I'm usually cast as. [Dr. Stegman] is bombastic. He's big and arrogant and totally self-involved. It's a blast. I'm having the best time ever."

Mr. Davison also said it has been one of the most difficult experiences of his career. He has spent eight months in Canada, working in a former food processing plant that has been turned into 28,000 square feet of stages and sets. "Long hours. A lot of pressure. Not enough money to make this monstrous piece, and everybody's trying to hold it together," he said. "And it has been raining since I got off the plane. It can get a little grim."

And that is only the physical challenge. "I usually try to learn my lines and then forget them and fly by the seat of my pants," Mr. Davison said. "With this character I really had to know the state of his mind, almost on a map or chart. Because we will do a scene in the morning where he is 75 percent crazy. After lunch he might only be 20 percent crazy. And at dawn I'll be playing him as if he were normal. I don't know where I am lots of times. This is a hard character because he is really tortured. And those tortured roles are hard to hang up when you come home at night."

He has enjoyed playing a larger-than-life, outrageous character. "This is eat-the-grapes-off-the-wallpaper kind of stuff," he said with a laugh. "This character is extremely self-centered. He walks around in his insanity and tells everyone, 'I am the big one.'"

Whatever happens, it has been a great experience for him, if only because he has gotten to know Mr. King, who has a small role in the miniseries.

"Remember the line in 'Stand By Me' where he says, 'You know, I never had a friend like when I was 12 years old'? He's like that guy who used to be your friend. He's like the kid you always wanted to play with."

Mr. Davison's blond hair is showing a touch of gray, but the blue eyes still blaze. He has had a passion for acting since he was a college kid at Penn State, not far from where he grew up in Philadelphia. Despite success on TV, in movies and on the stage, he frets between jobs that he will never act again. "I remember Henry Fonda used to say, 'Yeah, there's one good job this year and they're going to give it to [Jimmy] Stewart,'" Mr. Davison said. "That's true for me as well. I never feel I'm going to work again."

If he can't act, Mr. Davison would like to direct again. He helmed "Off Season" for Showtime in 2001, starring Hume Cronyn and Sherilyn Fenn. It received five Emmy nominations and won two. He is slowly developing other projects.

Looking back, Mr. Davison wouldn't trade his career for any other. And at this stage he said he really doesn't know how to do anything else. "I'm very grateful I've had the longevity I've had," he said. "And it's great to have this opportunity now. I love my life." ■

> "This is eat-the-grapes-off-the-wallpaper kind of stuff."
>
> Actor Bruce Davison on his role in "Kingdom Hospital"

TV CURRENTS

Diller Shuns Knightly Role

| Finance | Rumors Swirling That IAC, Liberty Will Intercede to Rescue Disney From Comcast Takeover

By Diane Mermigas

ANALYSIS

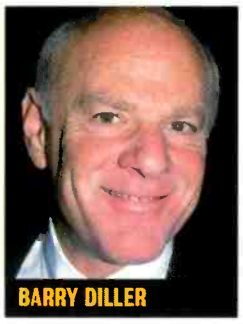
Despite mounting speculation on Wall Street that Barry Diller and John Malone will counter Comcast Corp.'s hostile pursuit of The Walt Disney Co. as white knights for longtime friend and embattled Disney Chairman Michael Eisner, so far both moguls are remaining mum.

In an interview with *TelevisionWeek* shortly before Comcast made its bid on Feb. 10, Mr. Diller insisted that he has no interest in a return to traditional media. "I have no intention of going back," said Mr. Diller, who reiterated his commitment to InterActiveCorp and its interactive interests.

"This is where my interests lie. These are the kinds of possibilities that excite me. This is where I am concentrating most of my time and effort," Mr. Diller said, referring to the Internet and how IAC's interactive businesses compare with traditional media companies such as Universal, USA, Fox and ABC, where Mr. Diller made his reputation and fortune.

"How can anyone compare the two? One is a place where businesses are born; the other where they keep being tested. This is a far more interesting place to be," he said.

Mr. Diller, who has not spoken to the press since the Comcast bid, declined requests to update the interview based on recent events as rumors swirl that he is playing a behind-the-scenes role as an adviser to Mr. Eisner.



BARRY DILLER

Despite the denials, there continues to be widespread speculation that at some point Mr. Diller might assist with or be part of a counterbid for Disney or a defensive move. Such moves could include acquisitions of companies such as Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer or a key TV station such as KRON-TV in San Francisco, which would increase Disney's $12 billion debt. Disney also could seek alignment with a friendly media giant or private equity investors.

However, Disney's financial advisers late last week ruled out a friendly merger with a "white knight" for now, insisting that Disney could fend off a takeover based on its own strengthening balance sheet. Still, Disney last week consummated its long-running negotiation to acquire The Jim Henson Co. for an undisclosed price, believed to be less than $200 million.

Any move by Mr. Diller and Mr. Malone, whose Liberty Media Corp. is IAC's largest shareholder, to help Disney could come before the second round of bidding for Disney gets under way, perhaps by Disney's annual shareholders meeting March 3, sources said.

It might make perfect sense if Liberty didn't have a nearly 10 percent voting interest in Rupert Murdoch's News Corp., which many investors believe is well-positioned to eventually absorb all or part of Liberty's diverse portfolio of assets and investments.

Also, Mr. Diller has spent the year since he resigned as VUE chairman expanding and simplifying his portfolio of Internet-related companies (including Ticketmaster, Expedia and Lending Tree) as chairman and CEO of InterActiveCorp, which claims Liberty as its largest shareholder. IAC is on its way to becoming the world's largest consumer e-commerce business in travel, personal finance, local entertainment and even the dating game. Any move away from that stance would surely draw the ire of IAC shareholders and financial backers, sources close to the company said.

But that doesn't keep Mr. Diller's name from showing up on a short list of industry powerbrokers who could influence what is sure to be the ongoing tug-of-war between Comcast and Disney.

It certainly would be a way for Mr. Diller to pay back Comcast CEO Brian Roberts for snatching control of QVC years ago, a move that has been the source of friction between the two men.

Disney recently hired Martin Lipton, a veteran merger attorney and a friend of Mr. Diller, fueling more speculation that Mr. Diller's return to the traditional media fold is afoot.

One obstacle to any deal may be the fact Mr. Diller and IAC remain major shareholders in Vivendi Universal, whose U.S. assets are in the process of being acquired by NBC.

Any interest Mr. Diller has in coming to the rescue of Disney and Mr. Eisner, with whom he once worked at ABC and Paramount Pictures, could make it necessary for IAC and Mr. Diller to sever their complex ties and settle their lawsuit with Vivendi—a task that is proving nearly impossible to accomplish.

"We're talking about trying to pull apart an ownership agreement Diller made when he sold USA Networks to Vivendi that was designed not be dismantled," said an executive close to

continued on page 13

CONVERGING Media & Technology

WHERE TV INTERACTS WITH THE INDUSTRIAL ARTS

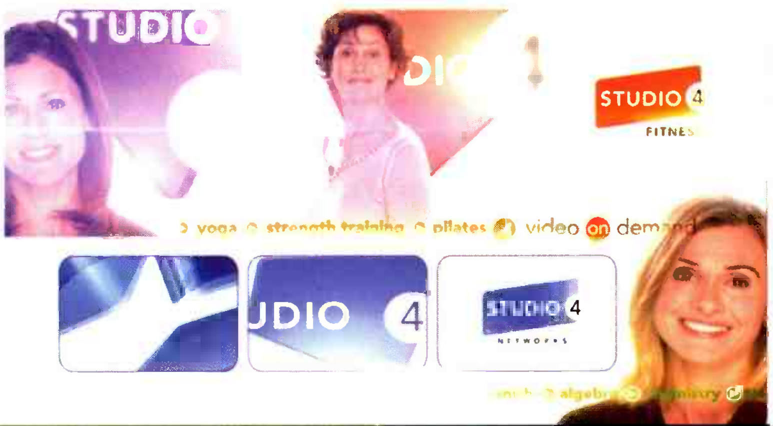
Niche Nets Arise as VOD Advances

| Cable | Compelling Content Helping Services to Emerge and Brand

By Daisy Whitney

As video-on-demand moves beyond the early-adopter phase and into the common lexicon, increasingly smaller and more specialized VOD services have sprouted up.

Their presence raises the question of what content will survive in the VOD world. Many of the successful niche services agree that leverage is the key for a lesser-known on-demand brand.



NICHES Studio 4 Networks, above, offers uniqueness; My Music Choice, left, gives users variety.

Emerging and growing VOD services like Anime Network, Studio 4 Networks, My Music Choice and others that don't have the big-name cachet of an HBO or a Showtime have dealt with the critical issue of how to brand their services in a VOD world that is becoming increasingly cluttered.

Music Choice is planning a June launch of its new on-demand service, My Music Choice, which allows users to create their own digital music channels from more than 100,000 combinations available. "If you like to hear pop music and top 40 but not rap, you can take our hit list and take all the rap out. Or if you want to combine classic rock with alternative rock, you can," said David Del Beccaro, CEO of Music Choice.

The service debuted in Moline, Ill., on MediaCom late last year and is available to about 25,000 digital cable homes, but the national launch will come in June.

JOHN SIDEROPOULOS

The parent service, Music Choice, provides digital music channels and exclusive music shows to about 33 million homes, including 95 percent of digital cable homes and 100 percent of DirecTV homes. My Music Choice is the company's play in the VOD world, and it hopes to gain traction by leveraging the Music Choice brand.

On the 45 linear music channels for Music Choice, a button appears on the on-demand service My Music Choice, allowing viewers to access the on-demand portal through the linear music channels.

That will help the service stand out, Mr. Del Becarro said. To attract users, on-demand programming needs to either be compelling content, such as what is found on HBO, or offer something very useful, he said. "The reason we will stand out in the VOD interface is because we are so different," he said. "With most services you don't get to create anything or affect anything."

Branding firm 3 Ring Circus has been charged with helping Studio 4 Networks get noticed in the on-demand world. The Studio 4 service, which consists of fitness and education videos, is carried in 5 million homes, including those served by Comcast, Adelphia, Charter, Insight and MediaCom, said John Sideropoulos, CEO of 3 Ring Circus.

He said the key to getting carriage for a niche service such as Studio 4 has been to emphasize the fact that Studio 4 Networks has unique programming that can't be found elsewhere. "This made it easier to sell the product. It's successful because [Studio 4] isn't offering another movie," he said.

Anime Network, which is solely a VOD service offering the popular Japanese animation, has made quite a name for itself as a niche service on operators' on-demand platforms, including Comcast, Time Warner and Cablevision.

Anime is one of the top-performing networks on Comcast, with double the views per user of Comcast's next most-watched on-demand network, said Cathy Rasenberger, who handles marketing and distribution for Anime. Comcast does not disclose the specific ranks of content partners for its on-demand service.

What has helped Anime is that it is part of a larger company, A.D. Vision, which includes home video distribution, novels, comic books and toy merchandising for the entire anime genre. That allows Anime Network access to a number of targeted channels to promote the VOD service.

Despite some successes, VOD is still in the early stages for the niche players, said Bruce Leichtman, president of Leichtman Research Group. "It's so reminiscent of the early days of broadband. Unless you're in it for the long run, it's going to be a real challenge," he said.

To date, the cable industry has been effective in promoting VOD. According to a CTAM study released earlier this month, about half of all respondents were familiar with VOD, while 74 percent of digital cable customers were familiar with the service. ■

PHILLIP SWANN

TIVO OWNERS: DON'T GET PARANOID

This is my last column for *TelevisionWeek*. (The sound you just heard was the popping of a champagne bottle in the office of Michael Powell, the Federal Communications Commission chairman.) I want to thank everyone at the magazine for their support and encouragement over the past 15 months. And in my final commentary I want to address the growing hysteria of privacy advocates when it comes to digital technology.

TiVo, the digital video recording service, recently issued a press release that revealed the viewing habits of its customers during the Super Bowl. The findings, which included the 10 most-watched commercials during the game, were based on a sampling of 20,000 users, and TiVo said no one's personal data was made public.

However, just a few days after the release, you would think that TiVo CEO Mike Ramsay had sneaked in the back door of each DVR owner. Many journalists, myself included, were bombarded with e-mail calling for TiVo to stop releasing subscriber data.

The e-mail apparently paid off, leading to news articles with alarming headlines such as: "TiVo Users Beware: Big Brother's Watching" (Chicago Sun-Times); "TiVo Watchers Uneasy" (CNET); "TV Might Be Watching You" (Toronto Star); and "TiVo's Voyeur Power" (Motley Fool).

In the CNET article, one TiVo owner was quoted as saying the press release caused him to experience "the most severe form of anger ... deriving from a perceived betrayal of trust."

The "most severe form of anger"? One can only hope that this TiVo owner is not an employee of your local post office.

IN A LATHER

The reaction to the TiVo release is neither new nor surprising. TiVo has been frequently criticized in the past for releasing subscriber samplings and for its recent partnership with Nielsen to provide aggregate data to the TV industry. Privacy advocates and some consumers are concerned that digital technology makes it all too easy for TV services to collect information on what we watch and when we watch it. The mere suggestion that a company may release this data puts some people in a lather.

Though we need to closely monitor possible abuses, an individual's privacy is not threatened when a company provides a sampling of data drawn from thousands of users. In fact, our understanding of new technologies—and how people use them—is enhanced by this information. For example, the TV industry is now trying to determine how the DVR's

Privacy advocates are concerned technology makes it too easy for TV services to collect information on what we watch. The suggestion that a company may release this data puts some people in a lather.

commercial-skipping feature might impact the future of advertising. Subscriber data that sheds light on this issue is invaluable.

However, the privacy "hystericas" don't see it this way. They believe they must oppose the release of all subscriber data to ensure that no one's personal information will ever be revealed. Like many other special-interest groups, they live by the credo that if you give them an inch they will take a mile. In other words, permit TiVo to release subscriber samplings and they will try to release your personal data next.

This is the position of paranoids. ■

Phillip Swann is president and publisher of TVPredictions.com. He can be reached at Swann@TVPredictions.com.

TV CURRENTS

DILLER

continued from page 11

the situation.

In a recent interview with *TelevisionWeek*, General Electric Vice Chairman and NBC Chairman Bob Wright said he is resigned to the possibility of Mr. Diller and IAC remaining influential shareholders in the new NBC Universal, as long as Vivendi fulfills its commitment to settle all financial and legal obligations to Mr. Diller and IAC over time. That includes a lawsuit Mr. Diller has filed against Vivendi over tax-related issues and payments.

"I don't think it would be the ideal solution and I don't think it is the monetization of his interests that Barry eventually wants, but it would be a solution for now," said Mr. Wright, who speaks to Mr. Diller regularly.

Sources close to the situation say GE and NBC may prefer simply to use cash rather than GE stock in the company's VUE transaction to allow Vivendi to buy out Mr. Diller and IAC for about $2 billion, so that NBC can own VUE free and clear.

For now, Mr. Diller said he prefers to simply stay put.

"I'm not a deal maker or breaker. We have a deal. We have a very, very clearly articulated, memorialized transaction with VU and VUE. That's it," Mr. Diller said.

"We have no great ambition to change it. If anybody wants to change it, they can call us up and discuss it, which we are happy to do. But we're also happy to stay where we are," Mr. Diller said. "We don't know what will happen."

Even while his future role in the traditional media and entertainment worlds he has helped to transform remains unknown, Mr. Diller is juggling a new set of challenges with IAC's Internet-related businesses.

> **"I do not think there is any additional value that can come from putting together HSN and QVC."**
>
> Barry Diller, InterActiveCorp chairman and CEO

Even in the new media space, Barry Diller faces some old, familiar problems.

For instance, in recent months, IAC has gone from being a $27 billion Wall Street darling to being taken to task by industry analysts about the wisdom of some acquisition strategies and the long-term profit picture of core businesses. It is a dilemma that vexed his USA Networks Inc., which Mr. Diller concedes he was never able to grow beyond what he called a "second-tier" entertainment player.

"We did not have the scale we needed to be a first-tier player, and contrary to popular belief, I was not driven to get it," he said.

Within a year after selling USA's cable networks and studio to Vivendi Universal, Mr. Diller resigned as chairman of VUE to devote all of his time to IAC. He traded a lifelong concern about program ratings for tracking the likes of online travel ticket sales and mortgage lending rates. He also assumed the controversial position of urging the adoption of new regulations to curb the power of broadcast and cable networks.

Now that the dust has settled on his interactive empire, some analysts and investors have taken to characterizing it as a "faith stock," even though its growth is many times that of most media companies.

On the other hand, IAC is being compared by some to Berkshire Hathaway, and Mr. Diller's vision for creating a new media world order to the genius of Berkshire Hathaway Chairman Warren Buffett, with a high target price of $47 per share and net income growing by more than a third to top $1.1 billion this year.

Even a forecast for generating $11 billion in free cash flow over the next five years hasn't won him unconditional support on Wall Street, even though more limited acquisitions of up to $1 billion this year and a possible stock buyback are in the offing, analysts said.

"I think it takes time. We are a new player. IAC has only been in its current confirmation for about one year. It will take a long time for people to understand and to be comfortable with our business concept," Mr. Diller said.

"We survived and actually thrived the first time around a Kool-Aid market by staying grounded and making sound bets on real businesses, and we do not intend to lose that discipline," he said. "It's one reason we have de-emphasized acquisitions and we have been so focused on internal growth."

But that new reserve will not keep IAC from responding to acquisition opportunities and "being as creative as the markets will allow," he said. IAC still has more than $1 billion in cash and marketable securities to tap.

Despite longstanding speculation to the contrary, Mr. Diller said he has no plans to sell HSN or merge it with QVC, which is 100 percent owned by Liberty Media Corp., the largest (19 percent) stakeholder in IAC.

"I don't think so. I do not think there is any additional value that can come from putting together HSN and QVC. We have competing services. HSN has begun to aggressively compete with QVC. It has gained share in every quarter for the last four quarters," Mr. Diller said.

He added that he sees no way, at the moment, that Mr. Malone would seek to leverage his company's majority stake in IAC, or provide a link between the two companies and News Corp.

Having spent close to $10 billion on targeted acquisitions in the past two years, Mr. Diller has signaled IAC may slow down its buying spree while remaining opportunistic.

"We certainly have critical mass. We have over $1 billion a year in hard earnings. So acquisitions for us have to fit a certain profile that they didn't before," Mr. Diller said. IAC more likely will acquire select online transactional businesses while securing stronger distribution pacts with national portal companies. ■

Cable Connection

BASIC AND PAY CABLE'S PROGRAMMING AND DISTRIBUTION NEWS

Kaplan Sets His Sights on Firing Up MSNBC

New Chief Likes the Cable News Net's Current Direction, Plans No Wholesale Changes

By Michele Greppi

When Rick Kaplan gets a call on his cellphone, he hears the opening bars from Iron Butterfly's '60s hit "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida." "When my phone rings, I know it's my phone," he said.

Last week it was Mr. Kaplan whose name was ringing throughout the cable news business after he was named the new head of MSNBC. The veteran news executive moved quickly to quiet concerns within MSNBC that he had been hired to make wholesale changes.

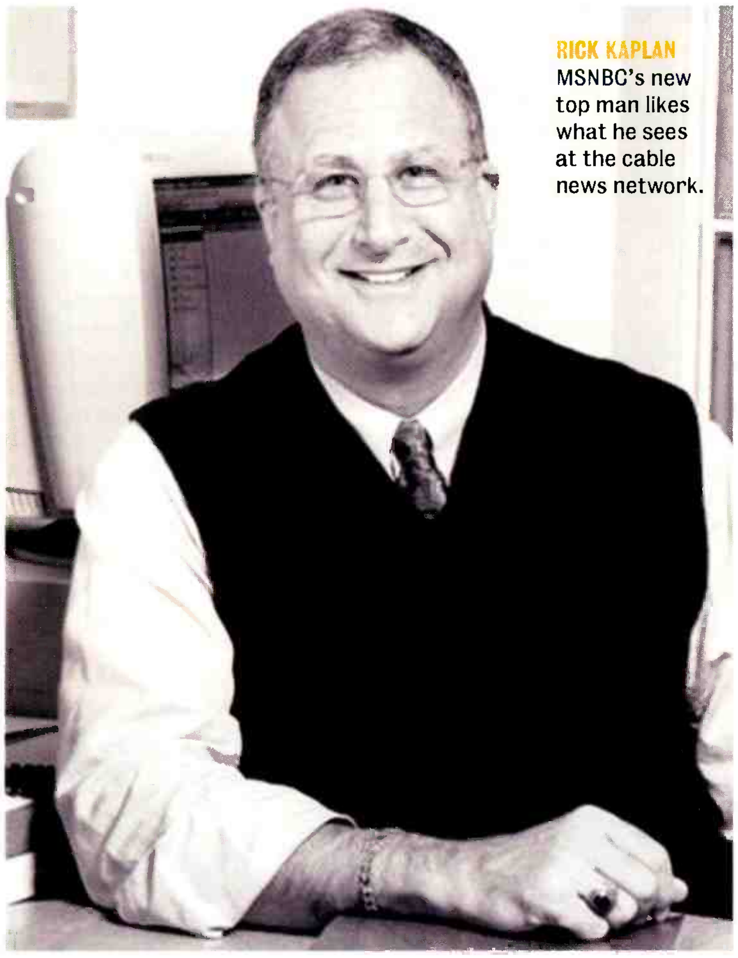
Instead, Mr. Kaplan said his job is to fulfill MSNBC's original mission to attract younger viewers. It is a mission he believes is already well under way, even if progress has been slower than originally anticipated. The network has been criticized for not having a clear vision of what it was and where it was going.

"We clearly have an opportunity here, and you can see it in the way the ratings are kind of moving in an iceberg-like way, but we're still moving in the right direction," Mr. Kaplan said.

MSNBC was founded in July 1996 as a joint venture between NBC News and Microsoft. It was conceived as the place to go for a hip, wired and plugged-in younger generation of TV news consumers and as a venue in which NBC News could amortize its network news programming costs by replaying and repackaging video and personalities.

The network is reportedly in the black but has been frustrated by placing no better than third among cable news networks, behind CNN and ratings leader Fox News. Even a small increase in viewership, by a mere 1,000 viewers over a year, could boost annual advertising revenues by as much as $100 million, according to sources.

Mr. Kaplan's "no change" mantra suggests he has been promised a relatively free hand in managing the network. That has not always been the case in the past, with NBC executives being known to micromanage both the talent lineup and the network's direction. This has led to some high-profile blunders, such as the hiring and quick firing of liberal talk show pioneer Phil Donahue, the short tenure of right-wing commentator Michael Savage and the quick cancellation of a show starring former Minnesota Gov. and professional wrestler Jesse Ventura.



RICK KAPLAN MSNBC's new top man likes what he sees at the cable news network.

Mr. Kaplan said he could not be free to make key decisions with his staff with that kind of interference. He said he is so confident, he did not even demand that those assurances be put in writing.

"There's such a professional understanding between me and them that it wasn't necessary to say, 'All right, let's spell out: What will I be able to do? And when will I be able to do it? And how much money will I get?' We didn't have to do that because there's just a lot of mutual respect," Mr. Kaplan, 56, said last week. "I didn't feel the need to get those kind of things. If we're on the right track and doing the right thing, this is NBC and they're going to do what it takes to win."

Mr. Kaplan spent 22 years at ABC News, building a reputation as a brilliant, brash and ambitious producer on signature shows such as "Nightline," "PrimeTime Live" and "World News Tonight." The 6-foot-7 executive was one of the most visible of the producers shaped by the late ABC News and ABC Sports President Roone Arledge.

Mr. Kaplan left ABC to join CNN. His three years there were contentious. He ran into an old guard that did not want him to succeed in making the cable news channel look more like broadcast news. His tenure was colored by the bungled, and later retracted, "Operation Tailwind" story that charged the United States used nerve gas on American deserters during the Vietnam war. Sweeping changes at CNN in 2000 included his ouster.

It was a more mature and subdued Rick Kaplan who returned to ABC News last year without a long-term contract to oversee coverage of the war on Iraq. ABC named him senior VP in charge of ABC News' hard news and political programming last June.

"I think he'd tell you he's not the same guy he once was. We are all changed by our experience and tempered by what we've gone through," said NBC News President Neal Shapiro, who worked for and with Mr. Kaplan at ABC News and who now is Mr. Kaplan's boss.

Erik Sorenson, who ran MSNBC for five years, was ousted in the transition but is expected to return to NBC news in Manhattan for special assignments that will make use of his background as a news producer and executive and his articulateness.

Mr. Kaplan arrives at a time when MSNBC seems to have the potential to fulfill its stated mission to be a news channel for the next generation.

"It's clean," Mr. Kaplan said. "It does good work and it's got a great network behind it; and if it's had any problem in the past, it's been simply that they didn't stick with the vision, if you will. The vision was too mobile. Erik kind of settled that all down, and now we're in a position where it's in a great place to improve it."

MSNBC has long been able to console itself with having the youngest viewers. In January its median viewer age was 54 for total day and prime-time evening. Fox's median age was 59 for total day and 61 in prime time. CNN's median age for total day was 60, and for prime time 63.

Chris Matthews of "Hardball" is the most recognizable face and most resonant voice on MSNBC. "Hardball" is picking up ratings momentum and buzz under new executive producer Tammy Haddad, and the show is running a tight race with CNN's "Anderson Cooper 360°," which is leading by 4,000 viewers but lagging by 11,000 in the 25 to 54 demo for February. At the other end of the weeknight lineup is "Scarborough Country," which grew 47 percent from fourth quarter 2003 to first quarter 2004 in the 25 to 54 demo.

As for "Countdown With Keith Olbermann" and "Deborah Norville Tonight," the sarcastic Mr. Olbermann suffers in year-to-year comparisons with "Hardball" while the upbeat Ms. Norville's show launched in late January and has been interrupted for extended presidential election primary coverage anchored by Mr. Matthews. ■

NUMBERS DOWN FOR ALL CABLE NEWS NETS

By Michele Greppi

Rick Kaplan takes over MSNBC at a time when all news channels are finding it hard to match year-ago ratings performances. It seems the Democrats' march to the presidential nomination has been of less interest than last year's loss of seven astronauts and the nation's march to war.

So even the potent Fox News Channel, which averaged almost double the audience of nearest rival CNN the week of Feb. 9 to 15, was posting double-digit year-to-year viewership losses, according to data released last week by Nielsen Media Research. For the week, Fox News was down 24 percent in total day (averaging 802,000 viewers) and in prime time (1.3 million).

CNN was off 36 percent for total day (443,000 viewers) and 40 percent in prime time (715,000). MSNBC was off 19 percent for total day (232,000) and 28 percent in prime time (312,000).

Averages for Dec. 29, 2003, through Feb. 8 show less dramatic decreases. Fox News' total viewership over the first six weeks of the year was down 2 percent for total day and 6 percent in prime time. CNN was down 25 percent for total day and 22 percent in prime time. MSNBC was down 17 percent for total day and 12 percent in prime time.

Among 25- to 54-year-old viewers, the core news demographic group, there were double-digit decreases across the board year-to-date as well. Fox was down 12 percent for total day and 12 percent in prime time. CNN was down 23 percent for total day and 23 percent in prime time. MSNBC was down 17 percent for total day and 11 percent in prime.

In the same period, the biggest night for Fox was Jan. 20, when President Bush delivered his State of the Union address (3.9 million viewers, 1.26 million in the demo). The speech also gave CNN its biggest night so far this year (1.59 million viewers, 664,000 in the demo).

For MSNBC, the biggest prime-time telecast in total viewers was the Jan. 29 Democratic debate in South Carolina (725,000 viewers). MSNBC's biggest night in the 25 to 54 demo was Jan. 1 (378,000). ■

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Advertising

TV BUYERS AND SELLERS: STRATEGIES AND RESULTS

Upfront Reformers Pin Hopes on 2005

Carat CEO Claims 'Philosophical' Agreement Exists to Change Frenzied Atmosphere

By Jon Lafayette

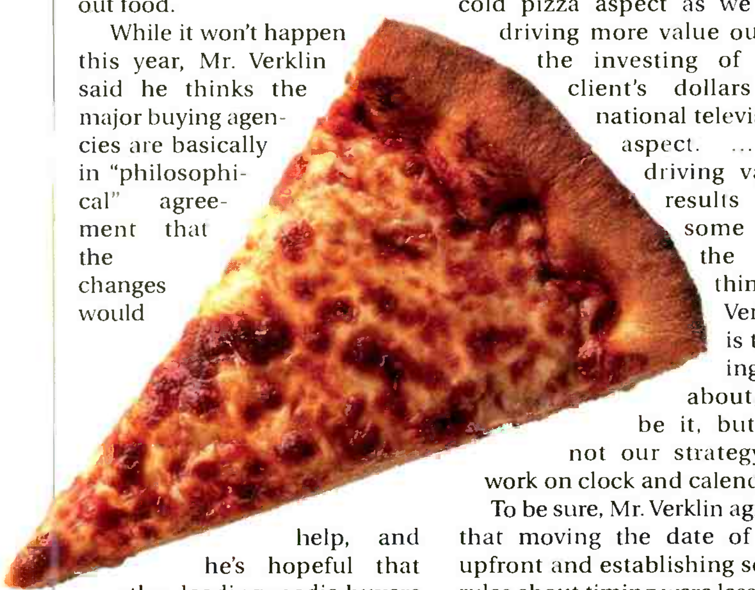
Get ready for more cold pizza this May.

Despite bold predictions that the network upfront buying process could be tamed, David Verklin, CEO of Carat North America, conceded that it will be business as usual this year.

Mr. Verklin has called for the upfront, during which the bulk of prime-time network television ad time is purchased, to be moved from May to September to better accommodate marketers' budgeting and planning cycles. He also proposed that the buying and selling take place between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. to prevent mistakes in orders worth million of dollars that are taken in the middle of the night by tired executives fueled by stale coffee and take-out food.

"There are no indications yet that [the upfront] will be excessively strong or excessively weak."

Tim Spengler, director of national broadcast, Initiative Media



While it won't happen this year, Mr. Verklin said he thinks the major buying agencies are basically in "philosophical" agreement that the changes would help, and he's hopeful that other leading media buyers will help convince the networks and marketers to implement them in time for the 2005 upfront.

The networks have benefited from the current system, which encourages buyers to stampede late at night in fear that prices will rise and commercial time in important shows will disappear if they wait until morning. In return for giving up such a tactical advantage, the networks would get firm orders in two quarters. Under the current practice, buys made in the upfront are firm only in the fourth quarter. In the following three quarters, buyers can return up to 50 percent of the commercials that they buy.

Because of his reputation as something of a maverick, Mr. Verklin said, he's hoping that a more venerable media executive—MindShare CEO Irwin Gotlieb—taking a leading role on the issue will make it more palatable to the industry.

Mr. Gotlieb was traveling last week and could not be reached.

But another senior media executive had only faint praise for the effort. "I hope David makes progress," said Ray Warren, managing director, OMD. "We are not so focused on the cold pizza aspect as we are driving more value out of the investing of our client's dollars in national television aspect. ... If driving value results in some of the things Verklin is talking about, so be it, but it's not our strategy to work on clock and calendar."

To be sure, Mr. Verklin agreed that moving the date of the upfront and establishing some rules about timing were less significant to clients than being able to pay reasonable prices for television commercial time.

Mr. Verklin said that after two years of paying double-digit increases to the broadcast networks in the last two upfronts, clients are angry—angry enough to seriously consider alternatives to broadcast networks. Those alternatives include cable TV, local TV, syndicated TV and no TV, he said.

SEEKING CHANGE David Verklin, CEO of Carat North America, has led the charge to alter key components of the upfront process.

Given that anger, Mr. Verklin said he expects the networks to seek pricing that is flat to up in the low single digits during this year's upfront. They will moderate their asking prices because seeking more risks is killing the "golden goose" the broadcasters have been feasting on for years.

In most years, media buyers begin their posturing months in advance of the upfront. They cite low demand from their clients and tepid interest in the new programming being developed for the networks as reasons why prices won't skyrocket once the selling begins in earnest.

IRWIN GOTLIEB

This year, predictions that the upfront will be moderate at best seem to ring true, especially considering that the 2004-05 broadcast season will occur post-Olympics and mostly post-election.

At a recent media conference in New York, Tim Spengler, director of national broadcast at Initiative Media, said he expected the upfront to be "moderate." In a follow-up interview, Mr. Spengler said it was too early to be more specific. "There are no indications yet that it will be excessively strong or excessively weak."

At the same conference, MindShare's Mr. Gotlieb reportedly predicted that the broadcasters would take in $9 billion during the upfront, down from $9.6 billion last year.

Even the networks are saying that the big cost-per-thousand increases of the past couple of years won't be repeated this year. In public statements, CBS Executive VP for Research and Planning David Poltrack acknowledged the "frustration" felt by advertisers. But he said he expected the upfront market to be strong and that broadcasters will end 2004 with a 10 percent increase in revenues, compared with a 3 percent increase in 2003. ■

SUCCESS STORY

SPONSORS COMMIT TO WEDDING PROMOS

Love is not only in the air but also on the air as stations from coast to coast found success with wedding ad sales promotions in the weeks leading up to Valentine's Day.

LIN Television Corp.'s NBC affiliate WWLP-TV in Springfield, Mass., lined up several sponsors for its wedding show and supplemented the sponsorships with an online wedding guide chock full of advertisers.

Joe Duest, owner of Elite Wedding and Portrait Studios in Palmer, Mass., signed on for a second time this year; last year he provided the $1,600 wedding package grand prize.

He is one of three wedding photographers who linked to their Web sites from wwlp.com's Wedding Guide Vendor Listing. "The hits I get are phenomenal," Mr. Duest said. "It is worth every dime."

KREX-TV in Grand Junction, Colo., has seen such great success with its "The Wedding Planner" promotion that the CBS affiliate was honored for it last year at the National Association of Broadcasters Hundred Plus convention.

The Hoak Media-owned station lined up sponsors who donated everything from the bridal party gowns to the rings and flowers for a local couple, who happened to be the station's news director and her fiancé. The viewing audience voted on which items the couple should get.

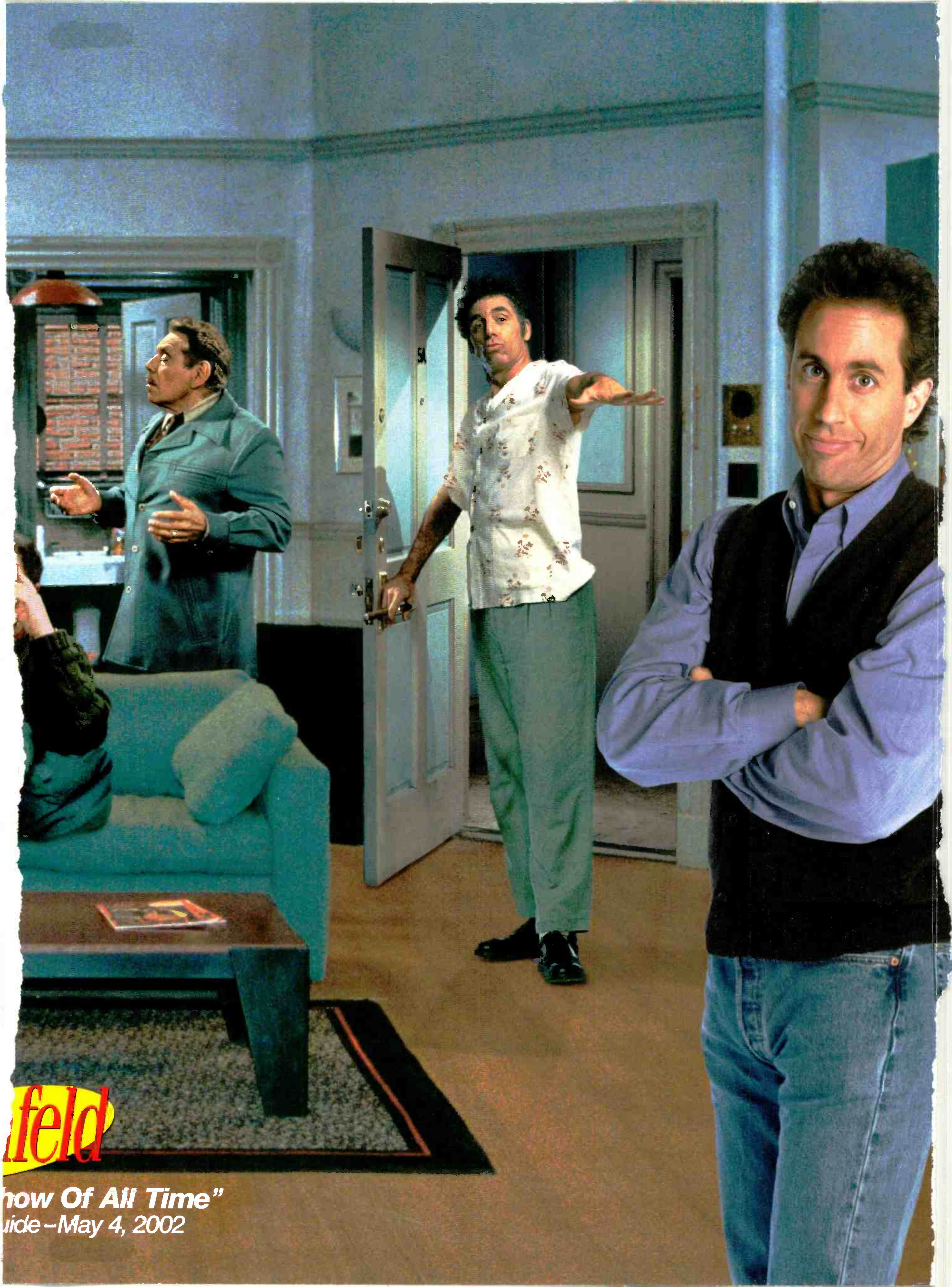
"Weekly spots ran on open rotators and inside the news. The package cost $1,500 for two minutes [plus the sponsor's] name on promos," said local sales manager Shawna Grieger. "We yielded $13,000 in revenue."

For the 2005 promotion, KREX hopes to lure sponsors ranging from limousine services to vacation destinations.

Ms. Grieger's suggestion to other stations looking to do a wedding promotion: "Start six months early to get it organized and to have time to find a couple that is willing to let you pick out all of their stuff for them." ■

—SHEREE R. CURRY


Ranks #1 on stations all across America.
Source: NSI, WRAP Sweeps, Nov '03, M-F, A25-54 Rtg; #1 strip on its station (excludes news), WNYW (NY), KCOP (LA), WFLD (CH), WTXF (PH), KTVU (SF); LA = unrounded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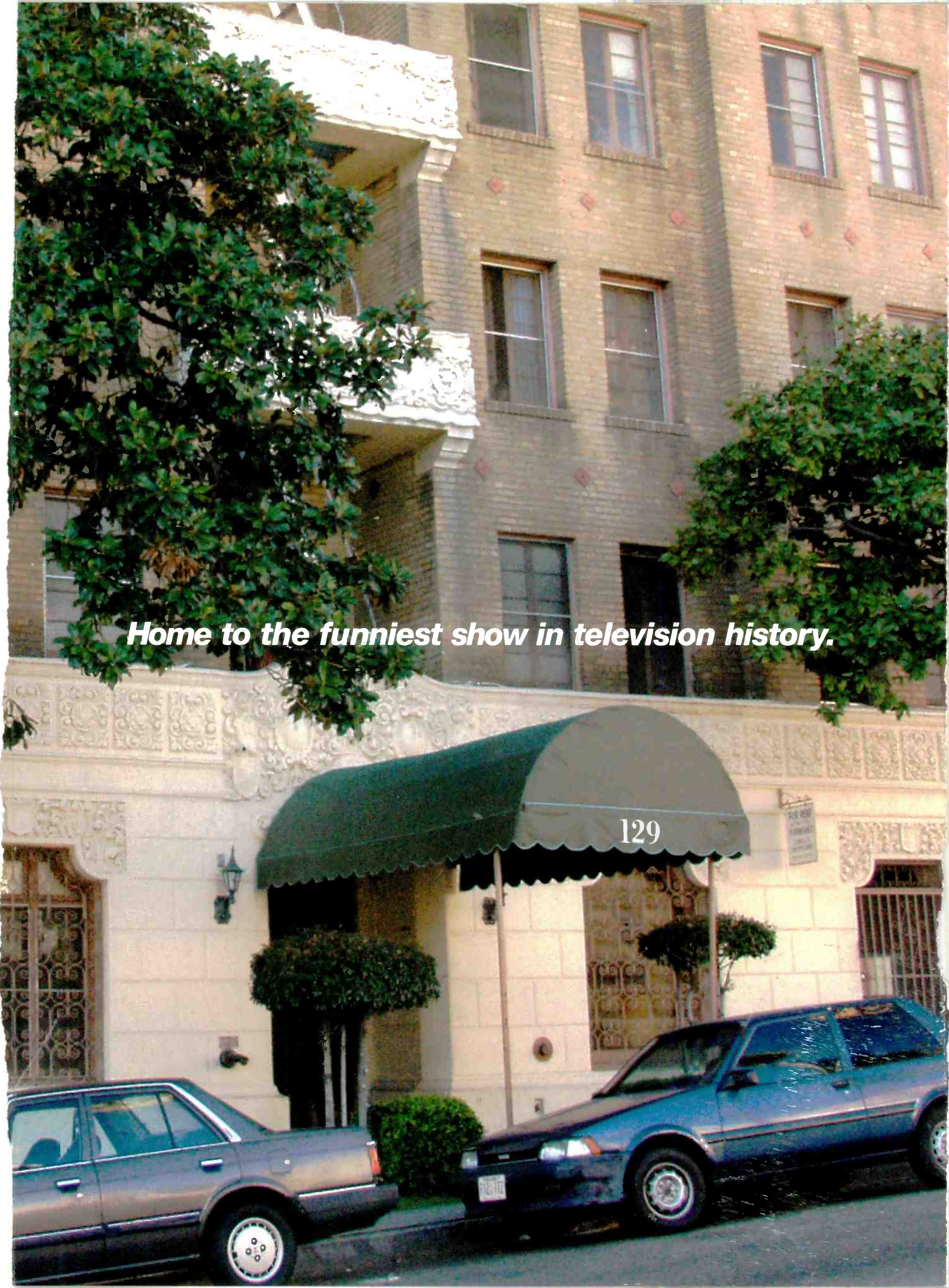
Home to the funniest show in television history.
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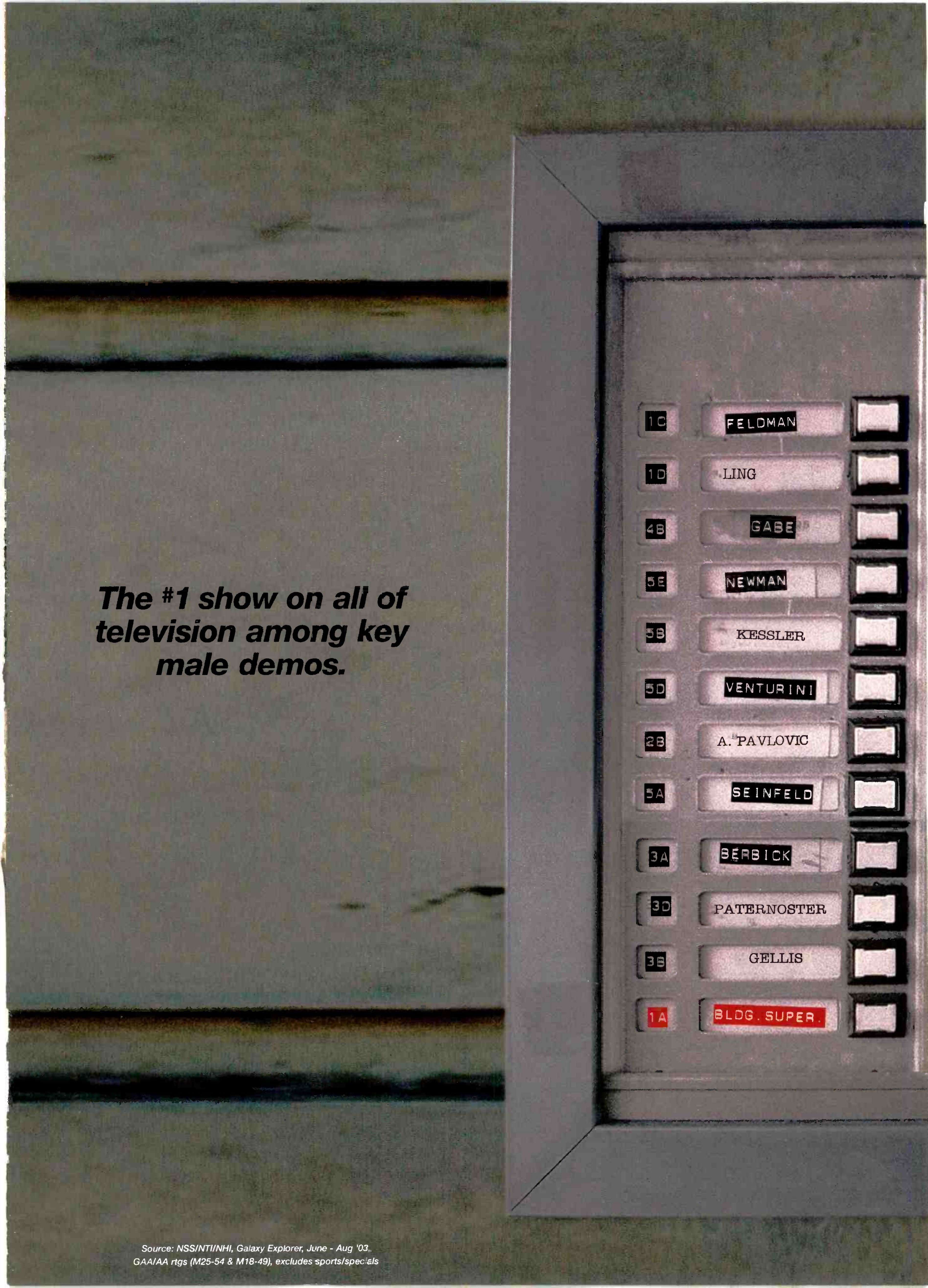


1C FELDMAN
1D LING
4B GABE
5E NEWMAN
5B KESSLER
5D VENTURINI
2B A. PAVLOVIC
5A SEINFELD
3A BERBICK
3D PATERNOSTER
3B GELLIS
1A BLDG. SUPER.
The #1 show on all of television among key male demos.
Source: NSS/NTI/NHI, Galaxy Explorer, June - Aug '03,
GAA/AA rtgs (M25-54 & M18-49), excludes sports/specials

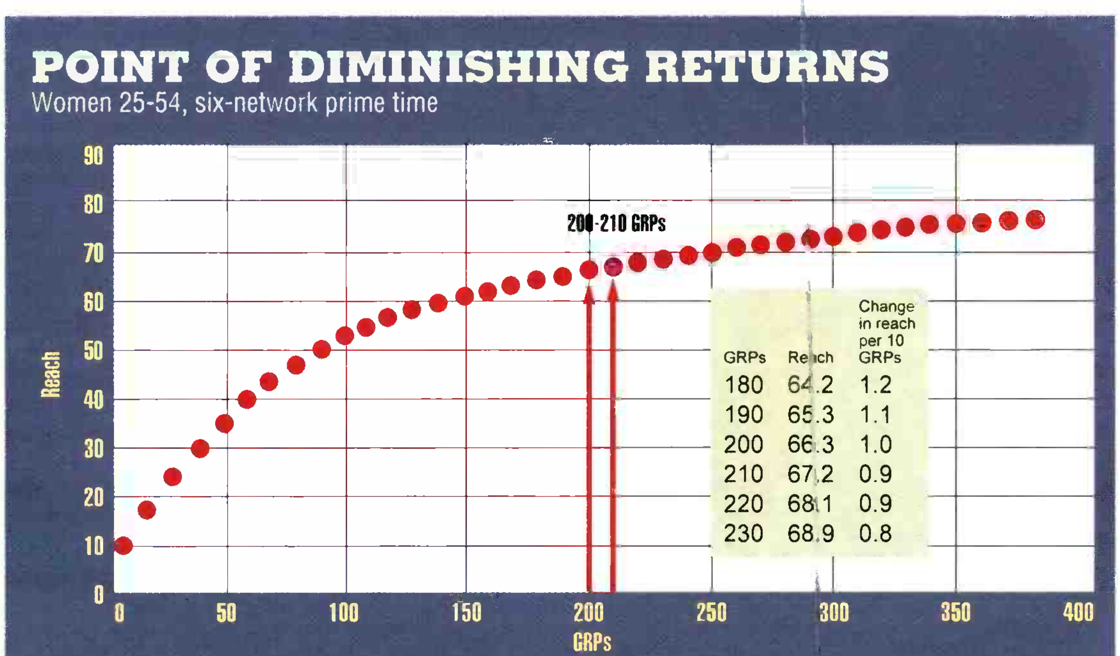
Many Ways to Make a Point

To Understand the Level of GRPs Where Returns Start to Diminish, Planners Must Realize It's a Judgment Call

By Roger Baron
Special to TelevisionWeek

One of the most difficult tasks facing planners is deciding how much media weight is needed to meet media and marketing objectives. It is common knowledge that reach builds quickly at first, but beyond a certain point—the point of diminishing returns—additional GRPs yield mostly frequency.

Some planners think this point, this GRP level, is the answer to the perennial question, "How much is enough?" The following discussion shows a way to calculate the point of diminishing returns and addresses considerations that limit the value of this mathematical answer to an essentially judgmental question.



Point of diminishing returns = the GRP level where 10 additional GRPs yield exactly one additional reach point. Lower levels yield more than one point; higher levels yield less.
Source: Reach-2000, Nov. 2001—generic six-network curve

Calculating the Point

Since reach accumulation takes the shape of a smooth diminishing returns curve, there is no obvious point where GRPs start yielding more frequency than reach. At first glance, it might seem the point is where one additional GRP yields less than one additional point of reach. But this doesn't work because the scales are so different. Reach on the Y axis is a percentage that goes from 0 to 100 percent. There is no limit to the number of GRPs on the X axis. One way of calculating the point is to assume a 10:1 ratio between GRPs and reach, allowing us to define the point as "the place on the television reach curve where 10 additional GRPs yield less than one additional reach point."

The point of diminishing returns for national prime time and daypart mixtures is in the neighborhood of 200 GRPs—a bit more or less depending on the demo and daypart mix. For individual dayparts that have less reach potential, the point occurs at fewer GRPs.

Assumptions Affect Results

The concept is simple enough, but to use it the planner must make a number of arbitrary assumptions that directly affect the result.

◗ Calculation methodology. There is disagreement over how the point should be calculated. In our example, we assumed the point was where 10 additional GRPs yielded less than one incremental reach point. Others might define it in terms of changes in cost per reach point. Still others might say it occurs where the change in percent of incremental reach is less than the percent change in GRPs or dollars. Each method is equally valid, but each gives a different point.

◗ Number of weeks. Since all campaigns will eventually reach the point of diminishing returns, the planner must decide whether the GRP level relates to one week, four weeks, a quarter, a season, a purchase cycle, or something else.

◗ Commercial length/execution. If the advertiser uses a mixture of :15s and :30s, the calculation assumes they have equal communication value. If not, then the GRPs must be weighted in some arbitrary fashion. The same issue arises when looking at commercial executions in a pool.

◗ Daypart and venue mix. The smooth reach accumulation curve applies only to individual dayparts or to GRPs that are proportionally allocated across dayparts. Planners must decide whether the point should be calculated for each daypart or for the schedule as a whole. But to be accurate, the analysis should reflect changes in the daypart mix as the GRP level increases.

◗ Demographic. Since the reach curve is different for each demographic, when there are primary and secondary demos, setting the point according to the primary demo will likely put weight for the secondary demo above or below its diminishing returns point.

◗ Conflict with other priorities. The point of diminishing returns is a generic concept that has no connection to a brand's media/marketing objectives that are the primary factors influencing media weight. These include the need to maintain a competitive share of voice, promotional requirements, seasonality, product introduction vs. sustaining weight, historic advertising-to-sales ratios and other considerations.

To sum up, this article was written in response to occasional planner and client requests for a point of view on the point of diminishing returns. Because the process requires so many arbitrary assumptions, it is our opinion that knowing the GRP level of that point doesn't make a planner any smarter. It is a number in a vacuum that only complicates an inherently judgmental decision. ■

Because the process requires so many arbitrary assumptions, it is our opinion that knowing the GRP level of the point of diminishing returns doesn't make a planner any smarter.

Roger Baron is senior VP, media research director, FCB.

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SPORTS

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with partners," Mr. Murdoch, the chairman and EO of News Corp., confirmed in a recent interview.

"We have to consider the capacity of pay television subscribers to pay for two ESPNs," Mr. Murdoch said. "It will depend entirely on the terms."

A key element in launching such a basic cable sports venture would be the participation of major cable operators such as Comcast Corp., which has had its own preliminary discussions with the NFL about acquiring the rights to Sunday Ticket. Well-placed sources said Comcast is interested in participating in the formation of a new national sports entity that would give ESPN a run for its money. There is no comment from the NFL or Comcast.

Comcast is already negotiating to acquire Cablevision Systems' stake in many of the Fox Regional Sports Networks, which would also provide a foundation for a new service.

"We'd love that. They [Comcast] are very aggressive competitors. You get a lot quicker answers from them," Mr. Murdoch quipped. "There are many things we could do together. We'll see."

"We have to consider the capacity of pay television subscribers to pay for two ESPNs."

Rupert Murdoch, chairman and CEO, News Corp.

An ironic twist to these discussions is Comcast's recent hostile bid for The Walt Disney Co., which relies on ESPN for nearly a third of its overall earnings and 75 percent of its cable networks unit earnings. Theoretically, Comcast could find itself with a stake in competing national sports services with its dominant 22 million cable subscribers.

Based on its monopolistic hold on virtually all of its hometown sport in Philadelphia and the bold move it recently made in Chicago, taking over Fox's regional sports networks andTV rights to the city's major teams, Comcast is savvy enough to know what to do with that kind of power. And so is Fox.

Fox's Regional Sports Networks and Speed Channel already are valued by Wall Street at $3 billion, with the regional Fox Sports networks alone generating more than $200 million in annual earnings.

There is considerable upside growth for Fox Sports, whose ad revenues and affiliate fees are about half those of ESPN. Advertising revenue per subscriber is about 46 cents at Fox's regional sports networks compared with about $1 at ESPN, and Fox Sports' affiliate fees average $1.07 per subscriber, compared with $1.75 per subscriber for ESPN, according to Credit Suisse First Boston analyst William Drewry.

ESPN last week scurried to secure new license agreements with cable operators Charter Communications and Cox Communications rather than find itself in a blackout or forced onto pay tiers.

PIGSKIN TALK Comcast has had preliminary discussions with the NFL about acquiring the rights to Sunday Ticket.

The pacts represent a major compromise and reduction in profits for ESPN, which, in the case of Cox, settled for an average 7 percent fee increase over nine years—far below the 15 percent to 20 percent increase ESPN initially sought. Although the first-year fee increase is 13 percent, it ramps down to only 5 percent in the final years of the new pact, and radically cuts Cox's payments to ESPN if it loses the rights to Sunday night NFL football telecasts.

ESPN will go from making $2.61 per Cox subscriber today to making $4.38 per subscriber in nine years, over which Cox saves $550 million as a result of resisting ESPN's initial asking price.

"ESPN still has a fat enough checkbook to keep almost everyone else out of the serious sports rights bidding world," said a source close to the negotiations.

The fee increase is about what Viacom settled for with Comcast for carriage of its MTV networks. With nearly four times the number of subscribers as Cox, Comcast could seek an even more stingy fee deal with ESPN in its negotiations later this year—just as it has secured with all other major cable programmers based on its newfound scale.

In truth, Comcast's hostile bid for Disney could arguably be the ultimate attempt to clip ESPN's overt fee-fixing capabilities. The new agreement with Cox also appears to table for nearly a decade the prospect of moving pricey sports en masse to pay tiers or a la carte services, as Cox had threatened to do.

Cox's new pact assures a majority of ESPN's fare will remain on basic cable.

In the end, and under a extraordinary pressure, Disney and ESPN executives probably figured it best to battle in the future under less volatile circumstances.

The concept for a new sports entity has been unsuccessfully floated before. It could take hold this time because of the potent distribution afforded by a partnership involving the largest TV station group (Fox), the dominant domestic satellite provider (News Corp.-controlled DirecTV) and possibly the largest U.S. cable operator (Comcast).

Other cable operators such as Cox also have been casually approached or have expressed preliminary interest in such a venture as a means of countering ESPN's pricing power.

The loss of all or part of its current NFL rights in the next contract negotiations for their potential new television sports entity could be ESPN's undoing, since ESPN's new licensing agreement with cable operators such as Cox is predicated on delivering the same level of popular professional sports.

Such an upset could begin to unfold later this year, after the start of the next NFL season, when the NFL and its television licensees begin renegotiating their existing pacts, set to expire after the 2005 football season.

High-level sources said Fox will aggressively bid for all of the NFL rights it can wrestle away from the competition. Current contracts with ABC, CBS, Fox and ESPN put the collective cost of NFL games rights at about $3 billion, well-placed sources said. ESPN and ABC reportedly pay about $2 billion for their combined NFL rights and have a "first right to respond" provision in their existing pact.

"It's open bidding. You just don't know," Mr. Murdoch said. "We're waiting to find out what the NFL wants before we do anything."

"It's very important for us to do two things: to keep our relationship with the NFL, which is a very good one, and secondly, not to do it at a loss," said Mr. Murdoch, whose companies took nearly $1 billion in write-downs on their sports contracts in 2002.

"The NFL is entering in a few months into its perennial round of labor negotiations," Mr. Murdoch said.

"When that's all through, before the end of the year, they will be testing ideas on all the franchise holders—including broadcasters—and then we'll turn our attention to it," Mr. Murdoch said. ■

BIZ Briefs

Analysts See Wait Benefiting Comcast, Disney

As a staring contest takes shape between cable operator Comcast and The Walt Disney Co. over a possible merger, Wall Street analysts said the cable company could prove a formidable opponent to Disney, since each company has a long list of reasons why it should hold out until the other blinks.

Indeed, people close to Comcast point out that Disney's rejection last week of the cable company's $54.1 billion offer rings familiar to Comcast management, which was rebuffed in the summer of 2001 after it made a bid for cable systems owned by AT&T Broadband, only to snag the systems later.

Further, the longer Comcast waits, the more likely Disney's stock, which shot up immediately following Comcast's announcement that it had made a hostile takeover bid for the media giant, will return to pre-announcement levels. So far, that has been the case: Disney shares late last week were trading at a slightly more than 12 percent premium over pre-announcement prices, down from an 18 percent premium the day after Comcast's offer was made public.

As for Disney, holding out better positions the company to come up with a plan that could fend off Comcast. The company hired attorney Martin Lipton, the creator of the corporate so-called poison pill defense, and is said to be examining options that could make it tough for Comcast to swoop in. A long shot would be a "white knight" emerging with a rival bid. However, many of the names bandied about either have officially said they're not interested or are seen as unlikely to step up with an offer. Officials at Disney and Comcast declined to comment.

Stations Wary of Comcast-Disney Merger

Station group executives are casting a wary eye at the proposed merger of ABC parent Walt Disney Co. and Comcast, fearing the marriage would put affiliates at a disadvantage in negotiations while at the same raising hope that regulatory approval would provide relief from rules limiting duopolies.

ABC affiliates' biggest fear about the proposed $54 billion merger is that the deal would result in a cable operator—broadcast's chief rival—having significant leverage over affiliate issues.

Chief among the issues: The potential for Comcast to exact "onerous" affiliation agreements on ABC stations and the possibility of Comcast bypassing affiliates that don't sign those agreements. Other worries include the potential for Comcast to eliminate any chance affiliates might have to get retransmission consent compensation for their signals on Comcast systems and to deny carriage of affiliates' digital multicast signals.

Then there's the issue of ABC's continued weak performance. "I am not sure Comcast owning ABC gives me more comfort," said an executive at an ABC affiliate group.

Comcast declined to comment.

Meanwhile, some station groups believed they could get relief on the rules limiting station groups' ability to own more than one station in a market if the merger gets approved.

Earnings Roundup

MGM reported a 3 percent increase in fourth-quarter profit to $60.2 million, or 25 cents a share, compared with a year-earlier profit of $58.7 million, or 24 cents a share. Revenue dropped 13 percent to $543.1 million, as film and television revenue declined in the quarter. For the year, the company posted a widened loss of $161.7 million, or 66 cents a share, from red ink of $142.2 million, or 57 cents a share, a year ago.

Television station company **Young Broadcasting** last week reported a widened fourth-quarter loss of $13.2 million, or 67 cents a share, compared with year-ago red-ink of $582,000, or 3 cents a share, on a 17 percent decline in revenue to $55.1 million, as the 11-station group posted gains in local and national advertising revenue, helping to offset declines in political advertising. For the year, the New York-based owner of KRON-TV in San Francisco reported a full-year loss of $49.1 million, or $2.48 a share, compared with year-ago red ink of $66.5 million, or $3.48 a share. Revenue slipped 8 percent to $207.7 million.

World Wrestling Entertainment said last week that it swung to a fiscal third-quarter profit despite posting a decline in revenue for the period, attributable to fewer live events, declining attendance and lower advertising revenue. Stamford, Conn.-based WWE recorded a profit for the three months ended Jan. 23 of $8.9 million vs. a year-ago loss of $16 million, or 23 cents a share. Revenue sank 15 percent to $79.1 million. ■

—*JAY SHERMAN*

Doug Halonen contributed to this report.

AFRICAN AMERICAN TV

DEMOS ARE DIFFICULT TO DEFINE

By Joe Mandese
Special to TelevisionWeek

When it comes to targeting African American media buys, the process on Madison Avenue isn't always, well, black and white.

While African Americans are one of the largest ethnic groups, it's not always clear exactly what "African American media" is. Unlike other ethnic groups whose media preferences are clearly delineated by language, African Americans read, watch and listen to the much of the same media as the general population.

If African American media options are a bit fuzzy, so are the approaches for managing them. Many marketers simply use their general market advertising agencies, while others employ multicultural specialist shops to create ads and develop media strategies for targeting African Americans.

When it comes to actually executing those media buys, some marketers depend on the media services divisions of their general market agencies, while others have begun tapping media buying specialists that focus exclusively on the African American marketplace.

"On the one hand, you have all of your general market media specialists, agencies like MindShare, or OMD or Carat or Mediaedge:cia, that buy a lot of African American media because their clients target African Americans, and they use their general market agencies to do it. On the other hand, you've got African American specialty agencies like Burrell Communications, UniWorld or Carol Williams Advertising that specialize in making ads for the African American marketplace. But a lot of them don't necessarily handle the buying," said Monica Gadsby, CEO of Tapestry, a Chicago-based unit of Starcom MediaVest Group that specializes in buying multicultural media.

Tapestry is a kind of

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TOP SHOW UPN's "Girlfriends" was the highest-rated TV program in black households, with a season-to-date rating of 19.2.

Viewership Splits Along Racial Lines

UPN a Heavy Draw, but Few Shows Cross Boundaries

By Lee Alan Hill
Special to TelevisionWeek

Thirty years ago, if African American viewers wanted to see black performers on TV, their choices were limited to, roughly, "Soul Train," "Good Times" and the waning days of "The Flip Wilson Show."

Today that universe has expanded considerably. Not only is UPN programming entire nights with series featuring predominantly black casts, but cable and premium networks are aggressively targeting black demographics as well.

Additionally, the Big 4 networks have slowly begun to make progress in racially diversifying their casts. But with the exception of football and other sports, black viewers generally are choosing to watch programs with black performers in a black milieu over choices that could be called more mainstream.

THE WHOLE PACKAGE "Half & Half," a popular program among black households, contributes to UPN's successful Monday lineup.

The divergence between the top 10 programs among African American households and the top 10 shows among all viewers is so great that, based on the Nielsen ratings, only a handful of shows can be said to be popular across racial lines, "Monday Night Football," "CSI" and "American Idol" among them.

UPN's "Girlfriends" earns a 19.2 rating among black households and is its most-watched show in that demo, but it rates only a 2.8 when all U.S. TV households are factored. On the flip side, fans of "Friends" are mourning the end of that series' long run, but among African American households the show ranks only 49th. "Everybody Loves Raymond," one of CBS' reigning hits, ranks 105th.

"On Monday nights, we have an 80-20 split between African American audiences and non-black audiences," said Eric Cardinal, UPN's senior VP for research. He said UPN's 9.4 overall rating among black households puts it first among networks with that demographic,

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"Eve"

HIGHEST-RATED TV PROGRAMS AMONG BLACK HOUSEHOLDS

Ratings figures for African American households, season-to-date, Sept. 22, 2003-Jan. 18, 2004

Show	Network	Produced by	Premiere	Rating	Total African American viewers
Girlfriends	UPN	Happy Camper Productions and Grammnet Productions/ Paramount Network TV	2000	19.2	3.296 million
Eve	UPN	Greenblatt-Janollari Studios/Warner Bros. TV	2003	18.8	3.288 million
Half & Half	UPN	Sister Lee Productions/Eye Productions	2002	18.6	3.152 million
My Wife and Kids	ABC	Touchstone TV	2000	17.0	3.073 million
All of Us	UPN	Overbrook Entertainment/Warner Bros. TV	2003	16.3	2.970 million
The Parkers	UPN	Big Ticket Television	1999	16.0	2.793 million
NFL Monday Night Football	ABC	ABC Sports	1970	14.1	2.310 million
Bernie Mac	Fox	Regency TV/20th Century Fox TV	2001	13.5	2.683 million
One on One	UPN	Greenblatt-Janollari and Daddy's Girl Productions/ Paramount Network TV	2001	13.1	2.347 million
Next Top Model 2	UPN	10 by 10 Entertainment/ Ty Ty Baby Productions	2003	13.1	2.559 million

Source: Household and viewership figures courtesy of Nielsen Media Research

LINES

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almost 2 full points ahead of ABC's second-place 7.5 rating. UPN's Monday and Tuesday night lineups boast seven of the top 10 shows for black households, season-to-date, along with football, ABC's "My Wife and Kids" and Fox's "Bernie Mac."

"Mondays and now Tuesdays are very much appointment viewing for us with African Americans," said Dawn Ostroff, UPN's president, entertainment. "But we consider our target audience to be all women 18 to 34, and our marketing has that in mind. All our shows have multiethnic casting and are very universal in stories and themes. As it happens, one-third of that 18- to 34-year-old audience are minority, so if you market to them you will get a larger African American audience."

DAWN OSTROFF

UPN's series, which have made stars out of such performers as Mo'Nique of "The Parkers," also have a higher percentage of African Americans in key creative positions behind the scenes. Nine of its 13 series that have aired this season have minority showrunners.

CROWD PLEASER Fox's "Bernie Mac" is ranked eighth season-to-date in black households.

In the world of syndicated television, many programs heavily watched by African Americans are in daytime and prime access. "The Oprah Winfrey Show" is known for attracting a crossover audience, and it remains a top draw for African Americans as well. So do several court shows, including those with black hosts, such as Judge Joe Brown and Judge Greg Mathis. Unlike in prime time, where there is a divide between what black audiences and others watch, in syndication, there is a narrower gap. Everyone, it seems, likes "Wheel of Fortune."

African Americans who watch public TV have favored specials and episodes of existing prime-time series with black history themes, though not exclusively. The top show on PBS among black households last season, with a 4.6 rating in black households, was the "POV" episode "Two Towns of Jasper," which dealt with the horrific dragging death of a black man, James Byrd Jr., by three white men in Texas.

But another highly rated PBS show in black households was an episode of "Reptiles," with a 4.0.

African American households watch, on average, 13 percent more prime-time TV than does any other demographic, according to Nielsen figures. Broadcast networks do not have a policy of targeting only one audience, but cable networks have emerged that aim for African American households.

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PROFILE

Yvette Lee Bowser

Bowser Beat the System by Becoming a Producer

Yvette Lee Bowser realized early in her career that as big as the television industry is, there isn't much room in it for someone like her.

Ms. Bowser had just come off a charmed five-year stint at "A Different World," during which she rose from office assistant to producer, and was exercising her writer-producer chops at "Hangin' With Mr. Cooper." But while Carsey-Warner, which produced "A Different World," is culturally diverse, the staff of her new show did not at all reflect the ethnic makeup of its African American cast. Ms. Bowser, who is black, soon found she couldn't seem to make her voice heard at the writers table.

"That was my first taste of predominantly white, predominantly male Hollywood," she said. "I could see that if I didn't create my own show, I wouldn't be working in the business very long."

Ms. Bowser went on to do just that, becoming the first black woman to run her own network series, with "Living Single," which reigned as the top-rated program in black households during its five-year run on Fox. She's now executive producing "Half and Half" for UPN's Monday night urban comedy block. It's the fifth show she's shepherded to the air, all with mostly black casts.

"I enjoy telling stories that are then depicted by people who look like me," said Ms. Bowser, who is in her late 30s. "If I'm not telling my stories, I'm leaving them to be told by someone who doesn't know them as well as I do."

Ms. Bowser said she has had chances to develop stories for nonblack talent, but that is not her goal. Besides, those opportunities can seem forced. "If there's a project that needs to be supervised with a Caucasian star, I'm not the first person [network executives] think of," she said. "Projects about us are open to Caucasian writers, but the reverse is not necessarily true.

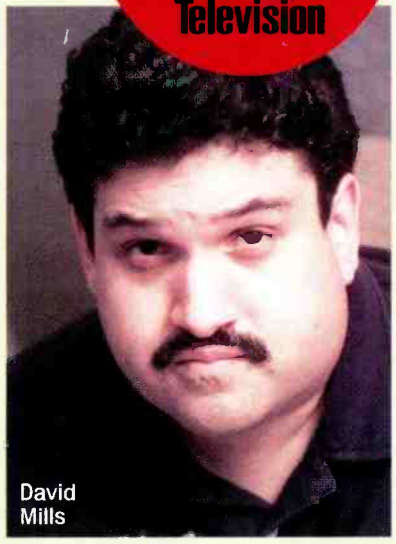
"There's a misconception in the industry that the way we write is race-specific," Ms. Bowser said. "I came up through the 'Cosby' family, which taught me the opposite: If you write the truth, people will watch." ■

—*ERIC ESTRIN*

SPECIAL REPORT
African American Television

PROFILE

Mills: Economic Reality Limits Black Opportunity


David Mills

CBS had a one-hour pilot script called "The Mayor of Baltimore" a couple of years ago that executives were ready to greenlight if they could find the right star. For weeks, they tossed around ideas with the story's creator, Emmy-winning writer-producer David Mills. Alec Baldwin, Treat Williams, Tom Berenger—all were either unavailable or not quite right.

At one point, an executive made a bold suggestion to Mr. Mills: What about Ving Rhames? Mr. Mills, who is African American, jumped at the chance to sign a strong black actor for the lead role.

The next day the same executive came back and apologized. "He said, 'Forget I brought it up,'" Mr. Mills said. "'This show will never sell internationally with a black star in the lead.'"

Mr. Mills said he views the story not as an example of racial prejudice in the industry but as a sad commentary on how the economics of the business results in wasted black talent. "I don't say it's racist. It's reality. If only 11 percent or 13 percent of the mainstream audience is black, it doesn't make sense to target those viewers. Thank God there is an HBO and a Showtime [where black viewership is somewhat higher]," he said.

Mr. Mills has reason to be thankful. His miniseries depicting Baltimore's largely black inner city, "The Corner," won Emmys when it aired on HBO in 2000. But Mr. Mills, 42, has been equally successful in writing and producing a raft of critically acclaimed shows with predominantly nonblack casts—"Picket Fences," "ER," "NYPD Blue" and "Kingpin," a limited series about Latin American drug trafficking that he created for NBC last year. He's currently developing with Jerry Bruckheimer Productions and Warner Bros. a show for NBC starring Jimmy Smits as a Los Angeles private investigator to the stars.

"I see great opportunities to tell stories involving black characters, because that's just part of L.A.," he said of the new show. Mr. Mills said he welcomes that chance, especially in light of network reluctance to cast black stars in dramatic series. "I'm hamstrung," he said. "Hey, if they were willing to make a show with an all-black cast, or even a black lead, I'd be all over it." ■

—ERIC ESTRIN

DEMOS

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minority itself. It is one of the few media agencies to actually specialize in targeting ethnic media buys.

"To my knowledge, Tapestry and Unity Media are the only two entities in the country that call themselves African American media specialists," Ms. Gadsby said.

Bob Tassie, president of New York-based Unity, agreed.

"It's not surprising when you understand how the business evolved," said Mr. Tassie, who founded Unity in 1991. "Ten years ago, what you ran into was a marketing budget that was dispersed for general market media and the ethnic market media, but it was all being handled by the general market agency. It was just more efficient for the general market agency to make the buys because they were handling so much of the client's other business."

The problem, Mr. Tassie said, is that the general market shops don't always understand the nuances that can make a difference on media buys aimed at blacks. And it means not only making sure that the ads run in the right media, but in making sure they also are the right ads.

Ms. Gadsby agreed, noting many examples of general market "creative"—ads created to reach a mainstream audience—that run in black-targeted media. Occasionally the inverse happens, and ads targeted at African Americans run in general market media buys.

"Burrell handles McDonald's creative and the media planning, but OMD is handling the media buying," she said. "I happen to know for a fact that Burrell creative is running in African American media, but it's also running in general market media like 'Friends.'"

While it is not necessarily a bad thing for African American ads to run in general market media buys, specialists said it can be inefficient if not properly thought out. For example, Unity's Mr. Tassie said he has recommended that African American ads be placed in ABC's "Monday Night Football," one of the highest-rated general market media buys—and one of the most expensive—because the index among African American viewers was high enough to justify it on a cost-efficiency basis.


A GOOD BET One media buyer recommended placing ads on "Monday Night Football," though an expensive buy, because it has a high index of black viewers.

In fact, Mr. Tassie took an even more extreme view, noting that general market agencies often buy shows like "Monday Night Football" to reach African Americans but make the mistake of running general market ads in those spots. "They're not making the best use of the buy," he said.

Clearly, there is more gray area, but the practice is likely to get even more complicated as the complexity of the media marketplace increases and as the complexion of the African American market begins to change.

For one thing, blacks are not one homogenous subset of the American population. While African Americans do account for the majority of that population, emigration of Caribbean and Haitian blacks to the United States is growing in faster numbers, forcing multicultural specialists to change the way they look at the black audience.

Meanwhile, some media shops have become responsible for more than just buying media that reaches consumers. As the field of media planning morphs into the science of communications planning, planners aim to reach consumers at the right time and place and in a frame of mind where they will be culturally attuned to the messages they receive.

That practice is sometimes referred to as contextual media planning, and a few big agencies, including Tapestry's parent Starcom MediaVest Group, have dozens of contextual planners working for their general market media accounts. "We're looking at doing that too," said Ms. Gadsby, adding, "We have to, because our clients are asking us to." ■

Ad Cost Picture Is Clouded

Lower CPMs for Black Media Buys? Depends on How You Target Them

By Joe Mandese
Special to TelevisionWeek

If buying African American media is tricky, the cost advertisers pay to reach black consumers is even harder to grasp.

The perception is that media buys targeted at African Americans command a lower relative advertising cost than comparable general market media buys. While that may be so in some cases, the exact opposite more frequently is true.

The differences come down to how you look at and define African American media buys. If you define them specifically as media that exist purely to serve African Americans, the relative costs are often—but not always—less than comparable general market options.

When it comes to television, not many properties are discretely targeted at African Americans. The one cable network most associated with that audience—Viacom's BET—does in fact fetch market costs per thousand that are lower than comparable general market cable networks.

The differential can be as much as 20 percent, media buyers said.

Part of that differential exists because of historical patterns. When BET first launched, the demand from mainstream marketers for multicultural media was not as great as it is today and the network had to cut ad deals that were priced competitively at that time. BET has done a good job of closing the gap, but still has some catching up to do, just as a new network—TV One—aimed at African American viewers is launching.

The cost of reaching black viewers can often be considerably higher than that of mainstream audiences.

But looked at another way, the cost of reaching black viewers can often be considerably higher than that of mainstream audiences. Since African Americans don't use only African American media, media buyers often target them through general market buys, including some of the top-rated network TV shows.

While buyers tend to select shows that index high among African Americans, such as UPN's lineup and some shows on Fox, the cost-efficiency can vary considerably. As a rule, these shows will always index higher among African Americans simply because African Americans are typically a smaller part of the audiences.

COST DIFFERENTIAL

Prime-time CPMs (broadcast and cable) for blacks vs. general audience (adults 25 to 54)

	Network Prime Time General	Network Prime Time Black	Cable Prime Time General	Cable Prime Time Black
2001	$21.51	$178.42	$10.54	$69.93
2002	$22.04	$180.80	$11.66	$73.58
2003*	$23.89	$187.35	$13.41	$82.63

Source: Nielsen Monitor-Plus
* Figures for January through November

On average, the cost-per-thousand to reach African American adults on network prime-time TV is about eight times greater than reaching total adult viewers, while the cost of reaching them on prime-time cable TV programs is about six times higher, according to an analysis of Nielsen Monitor-Plus data compiled for *TelevisionWeek*.

"The perception is that when you're buying a specialized market like African Americans, the CPM is cheaper, but over the years, we've found the opposite is true—in many cases the CPM is much higher," said Doug Alligood, senior VP, special markets, at BBDO, New York.

The reason, he said, is simple mathematics.

"Unless you're buying a show that indexes higher with that audience, the CPM has to be higher because the advertising rates are the same," he said. ■

LINES

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BET was the first to do so. The network began operation in 1980 and grew to encompass an array of digital networks: BET Jazz, BET Gospel and BET Hip-Hop. It's now a subsidiary of Viacom, which also owns CBS and UPN, and programs many popular shows featuring music and music videos. Its "106 & Park: Prime" debuted in January 2003 with 1.1 million total viewers.

"You can say we want to be a Lifetime Channel for African Americans."

Johnathan Rodgers, president and CEO, TV One

BET recently broke its own ratings record for a premiere with "College Hill," a reality series following the lives of eight black college students at Southern University in Baton Rouge, La. The initial episode attracted 1.4 million total viewers, good for a 1.4 rating.

"Finally, a reality show where the only African American isn't the Angry Black Man," said Stephen Hill, BET's senior VP for music, entertainment programming and talent. "That is what our audience is telling us."

Positioning itself as a premium movie channel for the black audience is Black Starz!, which is part of the Starz! Encore package and has been in operation since 1997. While its programs feature mostly films with African American stars—"Undercover Brother" and "John Q" have been hits for the network—it also has run some originals, mostly documentaries. "Sisters in Cinema," about black female directors, premieres this month, and "Last of the Mississippi Jukes," which focused on the history of the backwater jazz and blues clubs, was a success last year.

"Our audience wants the Hollywood hits," said Stephen Shelanski, senior VP, program acquisitions, planning and scheduling, for Starz Encore Entertainment Group. "But they've also asked for our annual 'Pan-African Cinema,' which is the only American program to feature films from Africa, many of which have no theatrical release here."

JOHNATHAN RODGERS

Also requested is the "Focus on Black Filmmakers" series, which offers films by undiscovered blacks as well as the early films of black directors who have since established themselves. "The Firing Squad," directed by Tim Story, who went on to make the successful 2002 MGM release "Barbershop," is an example.

TV One, a partnership of Comcast and Radio One, launched last month as a basic or extended basic, advertiser-supported network targeting black adults 25 and older, a demographic it feels is underserved. The channel features such off-network series as "Good Times," "City of Angels" and "Under One Roof." TV One also offers originals such as "B. Smith With Style," which looks at lifestyle trends and has included celebrity guests. Radio One has provided a series hosted by radio DJ Tom Joyner.

Actor-producer-director Tim Reid is a senior executive supervising producer and program supplier to the channel.

"You can say we want to be a Lifetime Channel for African Americans," said Johnathan Rodgers, TV One president and CEO, who in the past has headed the CBS Station Group and the Discovery Networks.

"Blacks watch more television than any other group," Mr. Rodgers said. "The audience is broader than just one that wants sitcoms or hip-hop culture. That audience wants to be reached, and we can do it." ■

PROFILE

Veasey's Road to Drama Showrunner Cobbled With Industry Preconceptions

Pam Veasey worked her way from office assistant on "Gimme a Break" to executive producer on one of the Fox Network's hottest series of its time, "In Living Color." But when it came time to move on, the only offer she got was from the African American ensemble comedy "Living Single."

Pam Veasey

"It was a great show," Ms. Veasey said, "but it would look the same on my resume as what I had just done. You can't let the business decide you're just a 'black writer,' or that's all you'll ever be."

So Ms. Veasey took a pass.

Turning her back on a job that could have meant a mid-six-figure salary, she opted instead to write spec scripts that would help her branch into TV dramas. A University of Southern California graduate in political science, she also took time to work outside show business on Michael Dukakis' and Walter Mondale's presidential campaigns. Now in her 40s, Ms. Veasey runs "The District" on CBS, making her the only black female showrunner on a network drama. She bounced between comedy and drama for years before getting there, attending many job meetings in the process.

"They'd literally go, 'We need a black writer,' or 'We need a female writer,'" she said. "I'd go to these interviews with the other five black writers in town, and they'd pick one of us and fill their quota, and they'd feel good about that."

Ms. Veasey said the studios' minority outreach has opened doors, but not often the ones she wanted. She said she turned down a producer-level staff job on "Friends," for instance, because she had already established herself at a higher executive producer level. She was willing to drop back to lower-paying producer jobs when she first switched to drama, even though white males in a similar position haven't always had to take that demotion, she said.

Still, Ms. Veasey is pleased with the way things have worked out. She compared her career path to that of her father, who moved the family from Texas to Utah to Washington to Wyoming, accepting affirmative action jobs that eventually allowed him to earn his doctorate.

"In my family, it was always about the opportunity you were provided," she said. ■

—ERIC ESTRIN

PROFILE

Tavis Smiley

Smiley's New PBS Talker Could Widen His Audience

Tavis Smiley, host of the first PBS talk show to originate on the West Coast—from KCET-TV in Los Angeles—is hardly a new personality in TV public affairs. But he is growing in stature and resonance.

"The Tavis Smiley Show," which premiered Jan. 5, is seen on 140 stations and is an outgrowth of the 39-year-old Mr. Smiley's popular talk radio effort on National Public Radio. It is a show with a mission both for content and purpose.

"We want to do three things," said Mr. Smiley, whose active life seems to be scheduled to the millisecond. "We want to have a show that is ethnically diverse, one that is ideologically challenging, and also one that can appeal to a younger demographic, to bring that age group into a forum where issues and ideas are discussed."

Born in Mississippi and raised in Indiana, Mr. Smiley has always been loquacious, so much so that when he was a teen an aunt asked him why he would never be quiet. He responded, "Because I have a lot to say."

Mr. Smiley still has a lot to say. He was the host and executive producer of cable TV's "BET Tonight With Tavis Smiley" from 1996 to 2001, a talk show for which he snagged a coveted interview with Cuban President Fidel Castro. When that show ran its course he became a contributor to CNN and a special correspondent for ABC's "Good Morning America," while simultaneously contributing political and social commentary to Tom Joyner's high-rated Radio One daily show.

Mr. Smiley is already popular with blacks due to his broadcasting as well as his seven books and frequent lecturing on empowerment. The PBS series has the potential to give him the widest and most diverse TV audience he has ever had. His guests—newsmakers, cultural personalities, athletes and others who are celebrated in their fields—have been from all races.

"There is a mission to this," Mr. Smiley said. "We want the format to be one where there is an opportunity not just to sell something but to say something. Information is power. Knowledge is power."

"I'm enjoying this," he said. "It's an opportunity to reach a broader audience with a format that has been underappreciated and underused." ■

—LEE ALAN HILL

KIDS & TEENS

NO-SELL ZONE "Pokemon" is popular among kids, but advertising show-related merchandise within the program is prohibited.

Advertising to Kids Limited

1990 Law Restricts Product Placements

By Ivy Brown
Special to TelevisionWeek

From snack foods on "Survivor" and soft drinks on "Friends" to paint on "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy" and cleaning products on "Trading Spaces," product placement is a growing presence in television.

But one place you won't find this burgeoning advertising strategy is in the world of children's television.

That's because the 1990 Children's Television Act gave the Federal Communications Commission the power to limit the amount and type of advertising on children's TV.


JOHN WAGNER

"The reality is that the restrictions as to what you can do in children's programming, even on cable, are far different than for adults," said John Wagner, media director for Starcom USA. "It's pretty regulated. For instance, we can't advertise the 'Pokemon' game inside the 'Pokemon' show, and things like that."

Specifically, these "kid vid" rules say that broadcasters and cable networks can include no more than 10.5 minutes of ad time per hour of children's programming on weekends, and no more than 12 minutes per hour on weekdays.

What's more, advertising and programming must be clearly separated within kids shows. So any advertising-related message within the content of a program—showing the 'Powerpuff Girls' playing with Barbie, for example—would result in the entire 30-minute episode's being classified as an advertisement, not a program.

"Product placement is regulated and not allowed in kids programming, so you won't find any," said Kim McQuilken, who oversees ad sales and marketing for Cartoon Network and the Kids' WB. "You can't put in products that are identifiable. You can have a generic product in there, but you couldn't have a cartoon character holding a Coca-Cola."

Melissa Caldwell, director of research and publications for the Parents Television Council, a nonprofit media watchdog organization that is vocal in the industry, said the FCC has done a good job making sure that advertisers' messages don't bleed over into programming.

The FCC doesn't want children to be confused about whether they are watching a TV show or an advertising message, Mr. McQuilken said. "And we are constantly working with our advertisers to ensure that does not happen. All of the significant kids' advertisers are very aware of these rules and regulations and they absolutely want to be compliant," he said. ■

'THE FAIRLY ODDPARENTS' The Nickelodeon show draws 6- to 14-year-old viewers—the core audience for the channel.

More Venues Divide Kids

Capturing Young Viewers Is Major Challenge

By Ivy Brown
Special to TelevisionWeek

It used to be that if advertisers wanted to reach kids, they had to get their commercials on Saturday mornings and weekday afternoons. But the kids marketplace has undergone a complete transformation in recent years, creating a challenging environment for advertisers.

"The notion that there's a 24-7 network for kids and not only one but multiple 24-7 networks for kids, just isn't something that existed 10 years ago," said John Wagner, media director of the media-buying firm Starcom USA. "So I think the biggest challenge [for advertisers] is just breaking through."

That challenge is tough enough, with several kid-specific cable networks competing around the clock for young eyeballs. But kids also have more distractions outside TV than ever before.

"While kids maybe aren't watching less television," Mr. Wagner said, "they are certainly doing other things more than they were before. They are on the telephone; they are on the Internet; they are listening to the radio; they are playing video games. They are truly in a multi-screen, multimedia environment. Television isn't going away, but just television, in some cases, isn't always enough."

The kids demographic is perhaps the most volatile of all age groups. When children outgrow their favorite shows, the age group coming up behind them might have completely different tastes.


JIM PERRY

"If you're in the kids space, there is an argument to be made that kids viewing habits and trends are difficult to keep up with," said Jim Perry, senior VP, Nickelodeon advertising sales. "They're fickle."

They also have short attention spans, said Kim McQuilken, who oversees ad sales and marketing for Cartoon Network and the Kids' WB "The No. 1 challenge is that kids need new, fresh content constantly," Mr. McQuilken said. "That's why when we generate a hit show, it's very important to have a lot of new episodes in the pipeline."

Starcom USA's Mr. Wagner agreed but said there are ways for advertisers to overcome these challenges. "There's watch and win. There's sponsorships. There's a lot of things," he said. "While there's maybe some restrictions on commercial content and certainly restrictions on product placement, what you can do in the gray space [is significant]. There's a lot of those things—tagged promos, tagged tune-ins. It's really promotionally driven."

As an example, Mr. Wagner cited McDonald's' "I Can Do It" campaign on Nickelodeon, a series of six 30-second vignettes that celebrate achievements of 4- to 6-year-olds. Nickelodeon

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VENUES

continued from page 25

produces them and McDonald's sponsors them on a brought-to-you-by basis. Youngsters are shown learning how to shoot a basketball, for example, or how to use a camera.

These interstitials will probably run 30 or 40 times a month on Nickelodeon and another 10 or 20 times a month on Noggin, its educational channel for preschoolers. "Ideally, the audience begins to recognize you as the long-term sponsor of that property or that platform," Mr. Wagner said.

Another example of a kid-targeted promotion is Lego's NBA All-Star Slam that ran last weekend on the Time Warner-owned Cartoon Network. The network aired sports-themed episodes of key cartoons such as "Johnny Bravo" and "The Powerpuff Girls" as the lead-up to the NBA All-Star Game, which aired on TNT, another Time-Warner cable network. The NBA and Lego were already in business together through an NBA-licensed Lego basketball-style game.

"We also look at if there's some kind of promotional television aspect—a marathon, a special set of episodes—were they able to drive interest in the promotion? Are the ratings for that particular program or that block up vs. a comparable time

TOON FOR TWO "Teen Titans" does well on Kids' WB and Cartoon Network; both are Time Warner companies.

SPORTY Cartoon Network ran "Powerpuff Girls" as a lead-up to TNT's 2004 NBA All-Star Game.

period or a year ago?"

Mr. Wagner said these types of promotions are necessary in light of the increased competition for children's audiences in today's marketplace. "That's why the broadcast guys really aren't a player anymore," Mr. Wagner said. "They do what they have to do to be [Federal Communications Commission-]compliant or make sure their affiliates are FCC-compliant and move on."

Indeed, many broadcasters, including CBS, NBC and Fox, have dramatically reduced their children's programming or have leased their kids programming to outside providers, as NBC has done with Discovery Kids.

"They've all decided to get out of it because it was just a very unstable business," said Nickelodeon's Mr. Perry. "If you're just a part-time player, you really don't have the opportunity to build a brand and to tap into the hearts and the minds of kids, and then you become entirely show-driven. And that's why Nickelodeon and even for that matter Cartoon Network have done well—because we are there making a connection with kids."

One notable exception to the rule is the Kids' WB, a broadcast kids outlet that airs Monday through Friday from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday mornings from 8 a.m. to noon.

"Kids' WB still does a pretty substantial number when it's on," Mr. Wagner said. "The reason why they are most successful in broadcast is that they have unique offerings."

Because both Kids' WB and Cartoon Network are Time Warner companies, the two outlets have begun looking for ways to make each other stronger.

"We've been experimenting with cross-programming both networks," Mr. McQuilken said. "So we've had some shows that have been co-produced by Warner Animation for both networks, and they've run on both networks. That includes new episodes of 'Scooby-Doo' and a show called 'Teen Titans' that's very popular and doing very well on both networks."

Trouble With Teens

While reaching a kids audience has its own set of challenges, reaching the 12 to 17 teen demographic is even more problematic.

"Teens are a difficult demographic to reach in traditional broadcast nowadays," said Ray Dundas, senior VP, group director, national broadcast, for the media-buying firm Initiative.

KIM McQUILKEN

"Teens are, very, very program-conscious," Mr. Dundas said. "Generally, the audience gets progressively older as their programs move along. And you don't have the hot new programs out there right now.

"They will gravitate to programs that are water cooler for their age group, and if they can't find that, then they'll go back to the music genre programming that they enjoy," Mr. Dundas said. "It's becoming a problem for our teen clients, quite frankly—finding viable dayparts and programs to reach teens."

But there are ample dayparts for children. The core demographics that most advertisers target for kids are 2 to 11 and 6 to 11. Within that is the preschool demographic, which is 2 to 5.

"Today kids are watching TV around the clock in a lot of different time periods."

Jim Perry, senior VP, advertising sales, Nickelodeon

And then there is the "tween" demographic of 9 to 14.

"If you're targeting kids 6 to 11, you're still going to get your fair share of 2- to 5-year-olds," Mr. Wagner said. "Now if you just want 2- to 5-year-olds, it's easier to target them and not get 6-to-11s, but you're still going to get some aspirational afternoon watching by 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds with big sister or big brother, if you're targeting kids 6 to 11.

"Most of our clients are targeting 6- to 11-year-olds, and I think in most cases, that's a smarter way to go," he said.

"Most ads tend to run a bit older for the actual target demo because boys and girls tend to be aspirational," Mr. McQuilken said. "They tend to look up to the older kids, and they tend to want to buy things that older kids have. "The buyers in the business want to buy 2 to 11," Mr. McQuilken said. "The 2 to 11 and 6 to 11 make up the great majority of the money spent in the kid business. Then, secondary demos would be 9 to 14, 12 to 17 and 2 to 5. But overwhelming is 2 to 11 and 6 to 11."

Round-the-clock cable networks have the advantage of being able to target different demographics at different time periods throughout the day.

"At Nickelodeon we target from 2 to 14 years old," said Mr. Perry. "We program to our specific audiences. We've got Nick Jr., which is a sub-brand of Nickelodeon, which is all of our preschool interactive programming—things like 'Blues Clues,' 'Dora the Explorer.' But that is a daypart that airs from Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m., and it's delivering the younger preschool audiences.

"Then you begin to target a group—for instance, 6 to 11, 6 to 14—and that is more your core kid audience. And that's when you get into 'SpongeBob SquarePants,' 'The Fairly OddParents,'" Mr. Perry said.

Emerging Tweens

RAY DUNDAS

The "tween" market of 9- to 14-year-olds, in particular, is becoming more important to advertisers.

"These kids are very media-savvy," Mr. Perry said. "They're very tech-savvy. They've got their own money to spend. They influence how mom and dad spend their money, and they're very brand-conscious at a young age."

As a result, Nickelodeon includes tweens in its overall programming mix with its TeeNick block of mostly live-action programming later in the day.

Notions about kids watching only children's programming on Saturday mornings or weekday afternoons have long evaporated. With cable networks able to provide programming around the clock, advertisers must look around the clock. "Prime time is absolutely huge," Mr. Perry said. "Today kids are watching TV around the clock in a lot of different time periods. Saturday morning is not a really important daypart anymore. From 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. is where the highest ratings basically come from."

"It opens up a lot more opportunities," Mr. Wagner said. And one of those opportunities is the ability to capture a few adults while advertising in time periods traditionally meant for kids.

"The preschool morning block from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. is when the other kids have gone off to school," said Mr. McQuilken, "and you get a lot of co-viewing with moms and preschoolers. So you might buy an 18 to 49 demo on Cartoon Network because you're actually shooting for mom sitting there with the preschooler at 9 a.m."

Boys vs. Girls

Gender plays an important role, too, as advertisers and programmers alike have to balance the differences between boys and girls.

"To some extent, girls will watch shows that skew to boys or feature boys, but you don't necessarily see a lot of boys watching shows that skew [toward] or feature girls," said Mr. Wagner. "So the reality is, most of the programming skews toward boys."

There are some networks that have had success focusing on girls, particularly tween girls, Mr. Wagner said, citing the non-ad-supported Disney Channel as an example.

"Certainly boys and girls do watch different things, but they also watch a lot of the same things," Mr. Perry said. "You look at what we've been able to do on Nickelodeon, which is develop programming that delivers both audiences. We create characters, whether they are male leads or female leads, that are appealing to both sexes."

Despite all its challenges, the kids TV business is going strong, Mr. Dundas said.

"Nickelodeon continues to lead the pack in terms of overall viewers," he said. "They came out of the fourth quarter at about a 5 percent increase in ratings for kids 2 to 11, so they are doing fine in terms of their programming skew, and Nick controls anywhere from 40 percent to 50 percent of the rating points to reach kids in general.

"Then you have Cartoon Network, up 11 percent, so Cartoon is coming back a little bit. They've refocused a little in terms of their programming. From a cable standpoint, it seems to be a pretty viable marketplace and kids are certainly going to those two cable networks," Mr. Dundas said.

Kids also watch popular adult shows, but there's a significant drawback for advertisers targeting them there.

"You can get a big number on any of the major networks prime time, especially in the 8 o'clock hour for some of the shows," said Mr. Wagner, "but it's just not cost-effective."

"Children still love their own kids shows," he said. "There's a formula for what really keeps kids coming back, and the children's broadcasters know what that is," Mr. McQuilken said. ■

PERFORMANCE TRACKER

Nielsen Prime-Time Ratings

WEEK OF FEB. 9-15

Household ratings and shares (18-49 rating in parentheses)

Time-slot winner by households

Nightly winner by households

Monday

	8 p.m.		9 p.m.		10 p.m.		Avg. Rtg./Share
ABC	4.9/8 (2.1)	4.6/7 (2.4)	Movie: The Mummy Returns 4.4/6 (2.2)	4.3/6 (2.3)	4.4/7 (2.5)	4.4/7 (2.5)	4.5/7 (2.3)
CBS	Yes, Dear 7.8/12 (3.7)	Still Standing 8.2/12 (4.1)	Everybody/Ray 11.7/17 (5.9)	Two/Half Men 11.1/16 (6.0)	CSI: Miami 14.1/21 (7.5)	13.9/23 (7.3)	11.1/17 (5.8)
NBC	Fear Factor 9.6/15 (7.4)	10.5/16 (8.6)	Las Vegas 7.9/12 (5.4)	7.4/11 (4.8)	Average Joe: Hawaii 7.6/11 (5.8)	8.0/13 (6.5)	8.5/13 (6.4)
FOX	That '70s Show 4.4/7 (3.1)	That '70s Show 4.4/7 (3.2)	My Big Fat Obnoxious Fiance 7.9/11 (6.0)	9.0/13 (7.0)			6.4/9 (4.8)
WB	7th Heaven 3.9/6 (2.1)	4.3/6 (2.3)	Everwood 3.9/6 (2.1)	4.0/6 (2.3)			4.0/6 (2.2)
UPN	The Parkers 2.3/4 (1.3)	Eve 2.6/4 (1.5)	Girlfriends 2.8/4 (1.7)	Half & Half 2.5/4 (1.7)			2.6/4 (1.6)


"My Big Fat Obnoxious Fiance" (Fox)

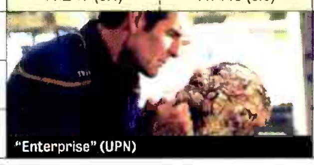
Tuesday

	8 p.m.		9 p.m.		10 p.m.		Avg. Rtg./Share
ABC	8 Simple Rules 5.1/8 (2.6)	I'm With Her 3.9/6 (2.2)	According to Jim 5.9/9 (3.9)	Less Than Perfect 5.5/8 (3.4)	NYPD Blue 6.9/11 (3.9)	7.4/12 (4.2)	5.8/9 (3.4)
CBS	Navy NCIS 8.2/13 (2.7)	8.7/13 (3.0)	Guardian 6.8/10 (2.1)	7.2/11 (2.3)	Judging Amy 8.1/13 (2.6)	8.4/14 (2.7)	7.9/12 (2.6)
NBC	Friends 5.7/9 (3.6)	Will & Grace 5.9/9 (4.1)	8.2/12 (5.8)	Scrubs 7.5/11 (5.2)	Law & Order: SVU 9.0/14 (5.5)	9.3/15 (5.6)	7.6/12 (4.9)
FOX	American Idol 13.9/22 (10.5)	15.7/23 (11.8)	24 6.9/10 (4.7)	5.7/9 (3.9)			10.6/16 (7.7)
WB	Gilmore Girls 3.3/5 (1.8)	3.3/5 (1.8)	One Tree Hill 2.7/4 (1.5)	2.9/4 (1.6)			3.1/5 (1.7)
UPN	One on One 1.9/3 (1.1)	All of Us 2.3/3 (1.2)	America's Next Top Model 4.3/6 (3.2)	4.9/7 (3.7)			3.4/5 (2.3)


"I'm With Her" (ABC)

Wednesday

	8 p.m.		9 p.m.		10 p.m.		Avg. Rtg./Share
ABC	My Wife and Kids 6.5/10 (3.6)	It's All Relative 4.8/7 (2.3)	The Bachelorette 7.4/11 (4.7)	8.1/12 (5.4)	Celebrity Mole: Yucatan 5.5/9 (4.2)	5.3/9 (4.2)	6.3/10 (4.1)
CBS	60 Minutes II 7.6/12 (2.7)	6.8/10 (2.6)	King of Queens 7.8/12 (4.1)	King of Queens 8.2/12 (4.5)	48 Hours 7.6/12 (3.5)	7.3/12 (3.1)	7.5/12 (3.4)
NBC	The Apprentice 5.1/8 (2.8)	4.8/7 (2.9)	The West Wing 7.3/11 (3.4)	7.7/11 (3.5)	Law & Order 11.2/17 (5.4)	11.4/19 (5.6)	7.9/12 (3.9)
FOX	That '70s Show 7.6/12 (5.7)	American Idol 13.8/21 (10.5)	The O.C. 7.6/12 (5.4)	6.7/10 (4.7)			9.0/13 (6.6)
WB	Smallville 3.0/5 (2.1)	3.2/5 (2.1)	Angel 2.4/4 (1.8)	2.4/4 (1.7)			2.8/4 (1.9)
UPN	Enterprise 2.6/4 (1.5)	2.6/4 (1.6)	America's Next Top Model 1.7/3 (1.2)	1.8/3 (1.3)			2.2/3 (1.4)


"Enterprise" (UPN)

Thursday

	8 p.m.		9 p.m.		10 p.m.		Avg. Rtg./Share
ABC	Extreme Makeover 4.1/6 (1.4)	4.8/7 (2.0)	Extreme Makeover 5.3/8 (2.6)	5.7/8 (2.8)	PrimeTime 5.5/8 (2.3)	5.6/9 (2.3)	5.2/8 (2.2)
CBS	Survivor: All-Stars 12.2/19 (7.6)	13.8/20 (8.6)	CSI 18.2/27 (10.1)	18.5/27 (10.4)	Without a Trace 12.8/20 (6.5)	12.6/20 (6.2)	14.7/22 (8.3)
NBC	Friends 15.9/24 (11.0)	11.4/17 (8.6)	The Apprentice 11.7/17 (9.0)	12.1/18 (9.5)	ER 14.4/22 (10.1)	14.7/24 (10.2)	13.8/21 (10.0)
FOX	Tru Calling 2.7/4 (1.7)	2.8/4 (1.9)	My Big Fat Obnoxious Fiance 2.8/4 (2.0)	3.2/5 (2.3)			2.9/4 (2.0)
WB	Harvey's Big Time 2.2/3 (1.4)	About/Andersons 1.8/3 (1.2)	The Surreal Life 1.5/2 (0.9)	1.5/2 (1.0)			1.8/3 (1.1)
UPN	WWE SmackDown! 3.1/5 (1.7)	3.4/5 (2.1)	3.5/5 (2.2)	3.8/6 (2.4)			3.5/5 (2.1)


"The Surreal Life" (WB)

Friday

	8 p.m.		9 p.m.		10 p.m.		Avg. Rtg./Share
ABC	George Lopez 4.6/8 (2.5)	Married/Kellys 4.1/7 (2.4)	Hope & Faith 5.0/9 (3.1)	Life With Bonnie 4.8/8 (2.8)	20/20 6.1/11 (2.5)	6.4/12 (2.6)	5.2/9 (2.6)
CBS	Joan of Arcadia 6.7/12 (2.7)	7.1/12 (2.8)	JAG 7.0/12 (2.2)	7.4/13 (2.6)	CSI: Miami 7.5/13 (3.4)	7.6/14 (3.4)	7.2/12 (2.9)
NBC	Dateline 7.3/13 (3.0)	7.6/13 (3.1)	7.9/13 (3.4)	8.2/14 (3.8)	Third Watch 6.5/11 (3.2)	6.4/11 (3.4)	7.4/13 (3.3)
FOX	Celebrity Spelling Bee 2.7/5 (1.8)	2.8/5 (1.9)	When Animals Attract 2.2/4 (1.5)	2.5/4 (1.7)			2.6/4 (1.7)
WB	Reba 2.9/5 (1.5)	What I Like/You 2.0/3 (1.1)	Grounded for Life 1.9/3 (1.2)	Like Family 1.6/3 (0.9)			2.1/4 (1.2)
UPN	Movie: Shaft 1.8/3 (1.0)	2.0/3 (1.1)	2.0/3 (1.2)	2.2/4 (1.3)			2.0/3 (1.2)

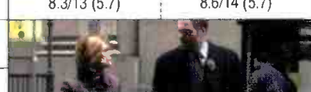

"JAG" (CBS)

Saturday

	8 p.m.		9 p.m.		10 p.m.		Avg. Rtg./Share
ABC	Charlie Brown 3.3/6 (2.0)	4.0/8 (2.0)	Wonderful World of Disney: The Princess Diaries 5.2/10 (2.6)	5.6/10 (2.8)	5.2/10 (2.7)	5.4/10 (2.9)	4.8/9 (2.5)
CBS	Star Search 4.9/9 (1.8)	5.4/10 (2.1)	Hack 5.2/10 (1.8)	5.2/9 (1.7)	The District 5.8/11 (1.8)	5.6/11 (1.7)	5.4/10 (1.8)
NBC	Tracy Morgan 2.6/5 (1.3)	Whoopi 2.6/5 (1.5)	Law & Order 4.1/7 (1.9)	4.8/9 (2.4)	Law & Order: SVU 5.4/10 (2.7)	5.9/11 (3.0)	4.2/8 (2.1)
FOX	Cops 5.0/10 (3.6)	5.4/10 (3.8)	4.8/9 (3.6)	4.8/9 (3.2)			5.0/9 (3.5)

Sunday

	7 p.m.		8 p.m.		9 p.m.		10 p.m.		Avg. Rtg./Share
ABC	America's Funniest Home Videos 4.9/9 (2.3)	6.0/10 (3.2)	Extreme Makeover: Home Edition 6.1/10 (3.6)	7.0/11 (4.5)	Alias 5.6/8 (3.9)	5.6/8 (3.9)	The Practice 5.5/9 (3.1)	5.6/9 (3.2)	5.8/9 (3.5)
CBS	60 Minutes 9.6/17 (3.1)	10.2/17 (3.3)	Cold Case 10.6/17 (4.0)	11.1/17 (4.3)	9.5/14 (3.1)	Movie: It Must Be Love 9.6/15 (3.1)	9.6/15 (3.1)	9.6/16 (3.0)	10.0/16 (3.4)
NBC	6.2/11 (4.4)	7.1/12 (5.5)	Movie: Shrek 7.6/12 (5.9)	8.1/12 (6.1)	American Dreams 6.1/9 (4.3)	6.2/9 (4.5)	Law & Order: Criminal Intent 8.3/13 (5.7)	8.6/14 (5.7)	7.3/11 (5.3)
FOX	King of the Hill 3.2/6 (2.1)	Oliver Beene 3.0/5 (2.1)	The Simpsons 5.3/8 (4.3)	Bernie Mac Show 4.0/6 (3.1)	Malcolm/Middle 4.2/6 (3.2)	Arrested Dev. 3.0/5 (2.2)			3.8/6 (2.8)
WB	Smallville 1.5/3 (0.9)	1.7/3 (1.1)	Charmed 2.6/4 (1.9)	2.7/4 (2.0)	The Surreal Life 2.5/4 (1.9)	3.2/5 (2.4)			2.3/4 (1.7)


"Law & Order: Criminal Intent" (NBC)

Source: Nielsen Media Research

THE RATINGS Wizard

BY LESLIE RYAN

Monday, Feb. 9, 2004-Sunday, Feb. 15, 2004
TV Season Week No. 21

NBC's Thursday night lineup and a dose of "Fear Factor" lifted the network to a win in adults 18 to 49 for the week with a 5.2/14. In total viewers, CBS took the crown with 14.2 million.

Top Shows of the Week

Adults 18 to 49: "Friends" (NBC, Thursday) 11.4/29
Total viewers: "CSI" (CBS, Thursday) 30.9 million

Top Shows by Day

MONDAY

Adults 18 to 49: "Fear Factor" (NBC) 8.0/21
Total viewers: "CSI: Miami" (CBS) 21.8 million

TUESDAY

Adults 18 to 49: "American Idol" (Fox) 11.1/28
Total viewers: "American Idol" (Fox) 26.2 million

WEDNESDAY

Adults 18 to 49: "American Idol" (Fox) 10.5/27
Total viewers: "American Idol" (Fox) 24.5 million

THURSDAY

Adults 18 to 49: "Friends" (NBC) 11.4/29
Total viewers: "CSI" (CBS) 30.9 million

FRIDAY

Adults 18 to 49: "CSI: Miami" (CBS) 3.4/10
Total viewers: "JAG" (CBS) 11.4 million

SATURDAY

Adults 18 to 49: "Cops" (Fox) 3.5/11
Total viewers: "The District" (CBS) 8.9 million

SUNDAY

Adults 18 to 49: "Law & Order: Criminal Intent" (NBC) 5.7/14
Total viewers: "Cold Case" (CBS) 17.3 million

Basic Cable Ratings

For the Week of Feb. 9-15

RANKED BY HOUSEHOLD AUDIENCE PROJECTIONS		HOUSEHOLD RATING	COVERAGE RATING	HOUSEHOLDS (000)
1. NBA All-Star Game, Sun., 8:56 p.m.	TNT	5.1	6.2	5,525
2. NBA All-Star Pregame, Sun., 8:27 p.m.	TNT	4.2	5.2	4,585
3. Monk, Fri., 10 p.m.	USA	3.5	4.3	3,804
4. NBA All-Star Postgame, Sun. 11:29 p.m.	TNT	3.4	4.2	3,726
5. SpongeBob, Sun., 9:30 a.m.	Nick	3.2	3.9	3,476
t. The Fairly OddParents, Sat., 10 a.m.	Nick	3.2	3.9	3,472
t. Movie: The Perfect Husband, Fri., 8 p.m.	USA	3.2	3.9	3,466
t. The Fairly OddParents, Sun., 10 a.m.	Nick	3.2	3.9	3,415
9. SpongeBob, Sat., 9:30 a.m.	Nick	3.1	3.8	3,348
t. WWE Raw Zone, Mon., 10 p.m.	Spike	3.1	3.8	3,334

Note: Coverage area ratings are within each cable network's universe. Total U.S. ratings and household projections are based on 108.4 million TV homes. Ranking does not include programs under five minutes. Audience estimates are based on average minute tuning. *Source: Nielsen Media Research*

Top 10 Cable Network Ratings

For the Week of Feb. 9-15

HOUSEHOLDS

Prime Time

	RATING	(000)
1. USA	2.1	2,312
2. TNT	1.8	2,000
3. Nickelodeon	1.6	1,750
4. HBO	1.5	1,635
5. Disney	1.4	1,525
6. Cartoon	1.2	1,304
t. TBS	1.2	1,264
t. Lifetime	1.2	1,257
9. Fox News	0.9	1,001
t. History	0.9	925

Total Day

1. Nickelodeon	1.4	1,467
2. TNT	1.0	1,126
t. Disney	1.0	1,059
4. USA	0.9	956
t. HBO	0.9	943
6. Cartoon	0.8	913
t. Lifetime	0.8	839
8. TBS	0.7	789
9. Fox News	0.6	659
10. History	0.5	537

TV CURRENTS

Sweeps Kickoff Buoys Newsmags, Weeklies

| Syndication | 'Dr. Phil' Sole Daytime Strip to Rise Week to Week

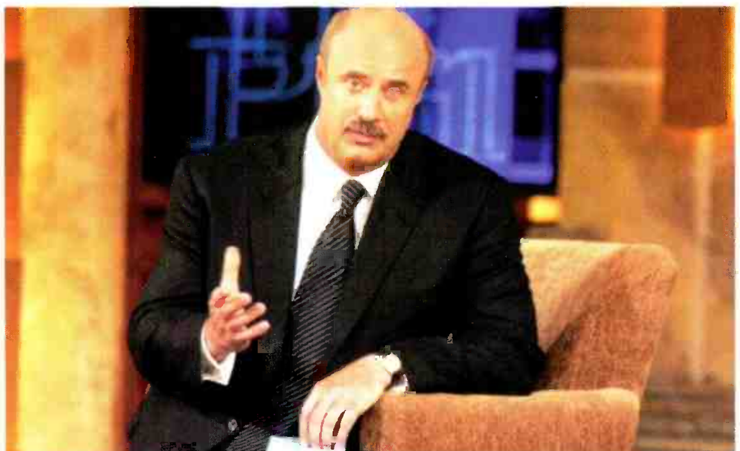
By Chris Pursell

Among the syndicated masses, newsmagazines, "Dr. Phil," and weekly hours benefited from the February sweeps kickoff, according to Nielsen Media Research for the week ending Feb. 8.

The Janet Jackson Super Bowl controversy on Feb. 1 propelled three newsmagazines to season highs. Paramount's "Entertainment Tonight" soared 8 percent to a new season high of 6.9 for the week, topped by a 7.5 on Monday, Feb. 2, for a Super Bowl recap. King World's red-hot "Inside Edition" took its best numbers in six years as the newsmagazine continued to climb, jumping 10 percent for the week to a 4.5. The Monday episode scored a 4.6.

Third place went to NBC's "Access Hollywood," which dipped 3 percent to a 3.4 coming off of its season high the previous week. Its Super Bowl wrap-up nabbed a 3.9 that Monday. Telepictures' "Extra" scored a season-best 3.1 for the week, rising 3 percent.

Among daytime strips, only King World's "Dr. Phil" showed growth compared with the previous week. The strip has grown three weeks in a row and is up 10 percent during that period. The series climbed 2 percent this week to a 5.6.



RATINGS UP King World's "Dr. Phil" has improved for the past three weeks, moving up 10 percent during the period.

Helping "Dr. Phil" during the sweeps have been its time slot upgrades in a number of markets. Doing particularly well are the markets where the King World strip replaced 5 p.m. news programs. At the halfway point of the sweeps, "Dr. Phil" is up in all three markets where it replaced a 5 p.m. news program.

On Philadelphia's KYW-TV, the strip has averaged a 7.6 rating/14 share so far in the sweeps. That marks an increase of 111 percent over year-ago numbers for the newscast, which averaged a 3.6/6. In Atlanta on WXIA-TV, "Phil" is earning a 7.0/13, up 89 percent over the previous February's newscast average of 3.7/7. On Tampa's WTSP-TV, ratings have gone from a 3.0/6 to an 8.7/17, a rise of 190 percent.

Meanwhile, for the first weekend of the sweeps, Paramount's "Entertainment Tonight" weekend edition got a flying start with a 4.7 national rating, scoring a new high for the season. The number is up 4 percent for the week and 15 percent year to year.

Tied for second place were Warner Bros.' "The West Wing" and MGM's "Stargate SG-1" at a 2.3. "West Wing" in its freshman year was unchanged for the week, while "Stargate" slipped 8 percent for the week and 8 percent from last year.

Right behind them were Warner Bros.' "ER" at a 2.2, unchanged in both week-to-week and year-to-year comparisons, and MGM's "She Spies" at a 2.1. ■

"CSI"

SWEEPS

continued from page 1

ples arc, scored its highest ratings ever in adults 18 to 49 (8.4 Nielsen Media Research rating/21 share) and total viewers (18.8 million). The broadcast premiere of "Shrek," which garnered a first-place 5.5/15 in adults 18 to 49, boosted NBC to a rare Sunday night victory in the demo.

CBS was home to half of the 10 most-watched shows during the second week of sweeps (Feb. 12-18). "CSI" set a series high in total viewers with 30.9 million. "Survivor" (22.5 million), "Without a Trace" (20.1 million), "Everybody Loves Raymond" (19.8 million) and "CSI: Miami" (19.6 million) were also in the top 10.

FEBRUARY SWEEPS

Through Week 2

	Adults 18 to 49	Total viewers (in millions)
NBC	4.9/13 (-2%)	12.3 (-3%)
CBS	4.6/12 (+28%)	15.0 (+16%)
Fox	4.1/11 (-20%)	9.4 (-15%)
ABC	3.1/8 (-24%)	8.8 (-19%)
UPN	1.7/4 (+6%)	4.0 (+7%)
WB	1.6/4 (-24%)	4.0 (-15%)

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate percentage change from same period last year.

Source: Nielsen Media Research (Jan. 30-Feb 12, 2003 vs. Feb 5-18, 2004)

CBS and UPN—both owned by Viacom—continued to be the only broadcast networks to show gains in February sweeps over last year. CBS is up 28 percent in adults 18 to 49 and up 16 percent in total viewers. UPN is up 6 percent in adults 18 to 49 and up 7 percent in total viewers.

UPN, which got another solid performance from "America's Next Top Model" this week (3.1/7 in adults 18 to 49 and 6.4 million total viewers), edged by The WB for fifth place in adults 18 to 49 two weeks into sweeps with a 1.7/4 to The WB's 1.6/4 and is tied with The WB in total viewers with 4 million.

Along with The WB, ABC has seen the biggest declines, down 24 percent in adults 18 to 49 and down 19 percent in total viewers, putting it in fourth place. ABC is counting on the special five-night "Super Millionaire" event next week and the "76th Annual Academy Awards" broadcast Feb. 29 to get the network in the race.

Both ABC and The WB have seen their Tuesday and Wednesday night lineups battered by Fox's "American Idol."

Fox's big Tuesday and Wednesday night wins have been offset by extremely poor Thursday and Friday night performances, leaving the network down double-digit percentages in adults 18 to 49 and total viewers. ■

Cable *NOTES*

MTV Sued Over Dance Show

A performance artist is suing MTV for breach of contract and fraud over a dance show hosted by Britney Spears and 'NSYNC choreographer Wade Robson. According to documents filed in Los Angeles Superior Court, John Laraio (aka "Mobius 8") had a contract with the network, Mr. Robson and producer Paul Buccieri to create a competitive dance show. After Mr. Laraio, Mr. Robson and Mr. Buccieri jointly produced a pilot, the "Wade Robson Project" was picked up as a series and premiered last fall. But Mr. Laraio claims he was "cut out of the deal entirely." "It appears to be a pretty clear case," said Mr. Laraio's attorney, Glen Kulik. "Laraio brought Wade Robson to this project, together they produced a pilot ... and the next thing we know MTV is producing 'The Wade Robson Project,' and from what we can tell, it's the same show." MTV declined to comment on the accusations.

WADE ROBSON

Insight to Carry Start-Up Reality Central

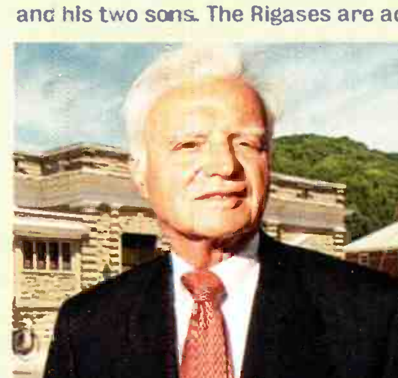
Reality Central will be carried by Insight Communications, the first multiple system operator to sign the start-up network. Insight serves 1.4 million customers, but the number who will receive Reality Central is unclear. The current agreement calls for the network to be carried on digital channels. The network, headed by President and CEO Larry Namer and Chairman Kay Koplovitz, intends to show original and repurposed reality content. Reality Central, which faces competition from the similarly themed Reality TV cable network, has delayed its planned spring launch until later this year.

Comedy Central Readying Three New Series

Comedy Central said it will premiere three new series in the third and fourth quarters of 2004. One show features a United Kingdom-based sketch comedy group, the Hollow Men. Another is a strip called "Crossballs," which spoofs the debate show format. The third show is "Odd Todd," an animated series that follows the plight of a modern-day unemployed character.

Rigas Trial Begins This Week

Jury selection begins this week in New York in the trial of former Adelphia Communications Corp. executives John Rigas and his two sons. The Rigases are accused, along with former Adelphia executive Michael Mulcahey, of stealing hundreds of millions of dollars by illegally taking money out of the cable company, defrauding investors and misleading government regulators. All have pleaded not guilty. The primary issue will be a loan that the Rigas family made to itself that was guaranteed by Adelphia. The government also alleges that under the Rigas family Adelphia inflated its reported subscriber base and exaggerated the amount of its cable network that had been upgraded. In a pre-trial argument last week, U.S. Attorney Christopher Clark said he will present documents and electronic displays. U.S. District Judge Leonard Sand, who is presiding over the case, denied a motion by Michael Rigas' attorney, Andrew Levander, that would have admitted results of a 2002 lie-detector test. Jury selection is expected to take about a week. The judge has said he hopes opening arguments will commence around March 1. ■



JOHN RIGAS

Classified

Career Opportunities

WRITER/PRODUCER

World-class skiing, 300 days of sunshine a year, and 650 miles of paved bike trails. Since you have to work, why not work someplace great? Come to Denver, Colorado! Tribune owned WB2 (KWGN-TV) is looking for a creative, experienced Writer/Producer to join our Creative Services team. We want a hands-on pro with 3+ years experience producing and editing promos on Avid, Smoke or D-Vision. Send your resume and reel to: WB2 (KWGN-TV), HR Dept. WP-CS#51, 6160 South Wabash Way, Greenwood Village, CO 80111. EOE.

TVWeek.com: Writer, Producer

DIRECTOR OF SALES

KHOU-TV, Belo's Houston CBS affiliate is accepting resumes for Director of Sales. Min. 5 yrs. exp. in directing the sales efforts of a top market TV station. Strong communication skills, a proven track record in leading business development initiatives, the ability to work well with people, exp. with yield mgm't. systems, a solid foundation in research and knowing how to plan ahead are requirements to be successful in this position. Send cover letters, resumes and 90-day business plan including strategic and tactical activities to greatjobs@khou.com. EOE

TVWeek.com: Sales

GENERAL SALES MANAGER

Raycom Media is seeking a GSM for it's Fox affiliate in Albany Georgia. The ideal candidate will be a strong leader with the proven ability to train and motivate a local sales staff, manage inventory and rate structure, and oversee the successful operation of the entire sales department. Your past experience should demonstrate your ability to work well with other departments to reach the station's revenue goals. We offer a challenge coupled with a great opportunity. Send resume and salary requirements to General Manager WFXL-TV, P.O. Box 4050, Albany GA 31707. EOE - M/F/D/V

TVWeek.com: Sales

SITUATION WANTED

Master Control Operator in CA with 10yrs experience seeks position. Willing to relocate. Contact: Deej Jones at 310.676.9921 or email deej90260@yahoo.com.

TVWeek.com: Situation Wanted

GENERAL MANAGER

WGMB TV, the Fox affiliate in Baton Rouge, LA (95th) market is seeking an experienced, energetic and forward-thinking individual to lead the station. Responsibilities will include all phases of daily operations for WGMB and WBRL (the WB affiliate). A successful background in station management with an emphasis on sales is preferable. Individual must be a highly motivated, strong communicator with a proven track record in developing new business. Send resume to:

Human Resources
PO Box 53708
Lafayette, LA 70505
Or e-mail to
greg.boulanger@comcorpusa.com

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TVWeek.com: Management

NEWS PRODUCER

Richmond's No. 1 news organization has immediate opening for creative and dynamic news producer. Successful candidate must be strong writer, energetic, self motivated and strong leader. No show stackers...just an experienced leader with vision and skills to develop content. Send cover letter, resume and non-returnable VHS demo tape to Frank Jones, Assistant News Director/Executive Producer, WWBT, P. O. Box 12, Richmond, VA 23218. Phone calls welcomed. EOE M/F/D

TVWeek.com: News

ASSISTANT DESIGN DIRECTOR / WASHINGTON DC

Assist the Design Director in creation and production of all broadcast design and animation for FOX 5 News, WTTG/WDCA Promotions & Sales Departments. Works effectively w/ design director to enhance overall graphic presentation of Stations. Assists in mentoring designers. Manages department in Design Directors absence. Hardware/Software used: Macintosh/Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop, After Effects, Quantel Paintbox. Must have 2 yrs broadcast design, motion graphics design, and related software experience. BA in Graphic Design and previous supervisory experience a plus. Strong typography skills needed. Web site: www.fox5dc.com.Resume & cover letter to: Human Resources, FOX 5/WTTG, 5151 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20016. EOE/M/F/D/V. Fax 202-895-3286.

TVWeek.com: Creative Services

ON AIR PROMOTIONS MANAGER / WASHINGTON DC

Assists the VP of Creative Services in creation and development of marketing strategies for duopoly in nations capital. Must have strong organization and communication skills. Supervises writer/producers. Must be skilled troubleshooter and creative problem solver in day-to-day operations. Hands-on writing, producing and editing of promotional messages (images/series/topical) a must, as well as a strong understanding of topical news promotion. Works in newsroom trenches, meeting deadlines in a fast paced environment. 3-5 years experience in medium to major market required. For a more detailed description refer to www.fox5dc.com Click on "Inside Fox 5". Resume & cover letter to: Human Resources, FOX 5/WTTG, 5151 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20016. EOE/M/F/D/V. Fax 202-895-3286.

TVWeek.com: Creative Services

NEWS DIRECTOR

Seeking a strategic planner with solid news judgment and communication skills to build and lead a winning team; motivate, coach and manage individuals; recruit, develop and retain talent; manage resources effectively; and serve viewers with quality journalism, innovation, flexibility, personal integrity and passion. We're an Emmis Communications-owned NBC affiliate with a focus on people and product. Send resume and news philosophy to Ken Selvaggi, GM, KSNT-TV, 6835 NW HWY 24, Topeka, KS 66618 or e-mail kselvaggi@ksnt.com.

TVWeek.com: News

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE

WTVD, the ABC owned station in Raleigh-Durham, NC, is seeking an energetic and highly motivated individual to join our team of sales professionals. Must have experience servicing and negotiating with agencies. Prefer minimum of 3-5 years experience. Looking for a media consultant who can also prospect, develop and close new business accounts. This creative individual will have experience selling promotions, community campaigns and vendor programs. Knowledge of CMR, Scarborough, Excel, Word and Power Point required. Please send resume to: Andrew Lashbrooke, LSM WTVD ABC11 411 Liberty Street Durham, NC 27701 or andrew.p.lashbrooke@abc.com. No phone calls please. EOE

TVWeek.com: Sales

NEWS DIRECTOR

WTOV TV, the #1 station in the Wheeling, West Virginia/Steubenville, Ohio market, is looking to grow with the help of a creative and aggressive News Director. Ideal candidate will have three years of management experience, impeccable news judgment, and be able to hire, train and motivate an aggressive staff in a main newsroom and two bureaus. WTOV's newsroom features the latest in news gathering and editing technology waiting to be best utilized by a staff led by a dynamic News Director.

WTOV-TV is an Equal Opportunity Employer M/F. Send resume with cover letter and salary history to:

MarySue Gallabrese
Human Resources Administrator
WTOV-TV
PO Box 9999
9 Red Donley Plaza
Steubenville OH 43952

TVWeek.com: News

SPECIAL PROJECTS PRODUCER

Chicago's number one rated news station has an immediate opening for a special projects producer. We are looking for someone who can participate in all aspects of our specials unit. Superior writing skills, 3-5 years experience writing and producing in-depth stories, and previous newscast experience required. In addition, strong editorial skills needed to participate in year round planning process of special segments. College degree a must. Send tape and resume to Janet Hundley, Assistant News Director, WLS-TV, 190 N. State, Chicago, IL 60601. No phone calls please. EOE.

TVWeek.com: News

WSB-TV 2 ATLANTA

wsbtv.com

PROMOTION WRITER/PRODUCER

The premier station in the south wants you! WSB-TV, a Cox Television station, is looking for a creative veteran to produce topicals, news series and station image promotion. Here is your chance to work at one of the top stations in the country. New digital facility-Edit Box Suite. Send tape to:

Barry Sinnock
Promotion Manager
WSB-TV
1601 West Peachtree Street
Atlanta, Georgia 30309

WSB Television is an equal opportunity employer, m/f.

TVWeek.com: Promotions

IMMEDIATE OPENING - HOTELEVISION AD SALES PLANNER

Innovative, national media company seeks an intelligent, motivated individual who wants to enter the fast track in advertising sales. Bachelor's Degree preferred, Min 1-2 years television media experience. Technical Skills: Excel, PowerPoint The ability to multi-task in a fast-paced work environment, attention to detail a MUST, excellent customer service/ interpersonal skills, self-starter/entrepreneurial spirit, ability to work well both individually and as part of a team. Develop sales presentations and proposals for Hotelevision Account Executives. Maintain client/agency files. Interface with clients. Interface with Traffic Department on all orders. Fulfill requests for proposals. Complete MSA's and Posts in a timely manner. Secure creative by deadline. Pull customized research for prospective accounts using MRI. Perform other duties as needed and as directed by supervisor. Please send resume and cover letter to: Laurie Benson- EVP, Strategic Sales and Marketing, Hotelevision, Inc. lbenson@hotelevision.com

TVWeek.com: Sales

TVWEEK.COM

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#1 rated network affiliate in the Midwest has a rare opportunity for an ambitious Anchor/Reporter to co-anchor a dominant morning newscast. Must be a self-starter, with superb journalistic credentials, anchor skills, and the ability to work well with existing news team. College degree or equivalent experience required with at least five years reporter and/or anchor experience. EOE. Send tape and resume to:

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Box 0223
Los Angeles, CA 90048

TVWeek.com: On- Air

ASSIGNMENT EDITOR

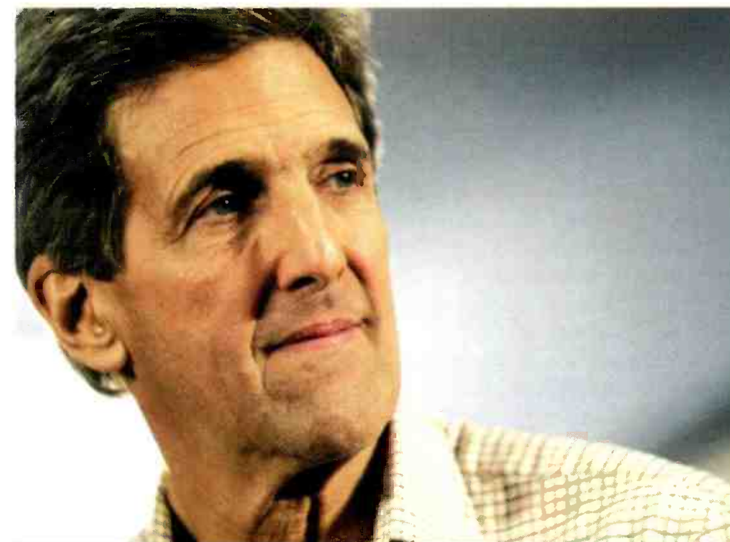
Aggressive newsperson with a history of dealing with breaking news and developing hard news stories; organized and an excellent communicator. Resume to: Jobs@wpecnews12.com or WPEC NEWS 12, 1100 Fairfield Drive, West Palm Beach, FL 33407. EOE

TVWeek.com: Editor

Watchdogs Seek Kerry's Support

| Politics | Democrat Frontrunner Unlikely to Oppose Disney Merger

By Doug Halonen



Reuters/Brian Snyder

CABLE SUPPORTER Sen. John Kerry has longstanding ties to the cable industry, whose top trade group has contributed to his campaign.

Watchdog groups that oppose big media mergers are trying to enlist Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., the leading Democratic presidential candidate, in their efforts to stall or stop Comcast's proposed acquisition of The Walt Disney Co.

However, sources said that as of late last week, Sen. Kerry's support for their efforts was unclear because of his long record of support for the cable TV industry.

Jeff Chester, executive director of the watchdog Center for Digital Democracy, a group leading the charge against Comcast, said the center hopes to find a natural ally in Sen. Kerry, who opposed a controversial Federal Communications Commission decision last year to relax major media ownership rules. Mr. Chester said they hoped to make to make "the Comcast grab of Disney" a presidential campaign issue.

JEFF CHESTER

The rules at issue last year applied only to broadcast station and newspaper ownership, not cable TV.

Sen. Kerry has a history of supporting the cable TV industry. He is remembered by anti-consolidation activists for promoting an effort to blunt rate regulation for the cable TV industry in the 1992 cable TV act—even though he supported the cable act after his amendment was defeated.

"In 1992 he was less firm than consumer groups would have liked him to have been," said Andrew Schwartzman, president of the activist Media Access Project.

Those activists also point to the media associations of Sen. Kerry's younger brother, Cameron Kerry, as an indication of his intentions. Cameron Kerry is an attorney for the Boston-based law firm Mintz Levin Cohn Ferris Glovsky and Popeo, which represents a number of major cable TV industry clients, including Cablevision and National Cable & Telecommunications Association.

According to the watchdog Center for Responsive Politics, major contributors to Sen. Kerry's presidential campaign include Mintz Levin, which has given $64,740, and Time Warner, a major cable operator, which has given $32,225.

Said Mr. Schwartzman: "Has Kerry been more receptive to the cable industry than most Democrats? The answer is yes."

Representatives of Sen. Kerry's campaign had not returned telephone calls on the Comcast issue last week. Also declining to return calls were Cameron Kerry and other Mintz Levin representatives. ■

Primary Ad Prospects Improve

| Advertising | Strong Showing Boosts Super Tuesday Ad Sales Prospects

By Ira Teinowitz
Advertising Age

North Carolina Sen. John Edwards' surprisingly strong showing in Wisconsin's Feb. 17 Democratic primary is rekindling hopes for Super Tuesday ad spending.

PRESIDENT BUSH

Sen. Edwards was running out of money for a major ad blitz and was expected to depend mostly on free media such as news appearances and interviews to carry him through March 2. But a quick increase in contributions following his showing in the dairy state, along with an upcoming federal matching money check, raised the possibility that he has sufficient funds for TV ads in smaller markets. The Edwards campaign said it received a record amount of Internet contributions the day after the Wisconsin primary. Other contributions were also up.

"We will be able to communicate with the voters we need to communicate with in the battleground states," said Kim Rubey, a campaign spokeswoman.

Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry, expected before Wisconsin to hoard ad money for the coming battle with President Bush, now may have to use some of that in Super Tuesday states. But his camp was mum on the issue last week. "We have the ability to [advertise in] all of them. It doesn't mean that we will," said Stephanie Cutter, a Kerry spokeswoman.

On Super Tuesday, New York, California, Ohio, Maryland, Georgia, Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island hold primaries; Minnesota holds a caucus.

Sen. Edwards last week sought to seize on Wisconsin for leverage. His campaign Web site featured a picture of him celebrating. A corner cutout said: "Momentum: Support is growing across the nation." One link was labeled "Help defeat George Bush. Join the campaign now," while another appealed for donations. On the trail he portrayed Wisconsin as creating a two-man race for the Democratic nomination.

Sen. Kerry, noting his wins in 16 of 18 states, stayed focused primarily on attacking President Bush.

Behind those stances, Demo-

continued on page 35

TV CURRENTS

ESPN

continued from page 3

in Cox's boardroom hammering out details when he first heard about the Comcast offer.

Cox's agreement calls for a 13 percent increase in 2004 and an 8 percent increase in 2005. In the last three years, the increases are 5 percent. Overall, the increases average about 7 percent, according to a Cox spokesman, who noted that while 7 percent is much less than 20 percent, it is still "on the high end compared to many quality networks out there."

The 7 percent hike is also higher than the 5 percent rate increases cable operators like to pass on to their customers.

If ESPN reaches similar deals with other operators, by 2012 ESPN will cost almost $5 per subscriber per month and, based on its current 88 million subscribers, generate $5.23 billion annually.

The agreements keep ESPN and ESPN2 on the expanded basic tiers for Cox and Charter subscribers. Cox had threatened to move the channels to a sports tier that customers would have to purchase additionally when its deal with ESPN expired March 31.

ESPN also gets carriage (and increasing rates) for ESPN2, ESPN Classic and ESPNews, ESPN HD and ESPN Deportes.

A Cox spokesman said ESPN Classic and ESPN News are carried on digital sports tiers and that the operator already was carrying ESPNHD under a one-year contract. ESPN Deportes will be introduced in selected markets with Hispanic populations, he added.

The spokesman said the fees for all of the other ESPN channels will also rise at a rate of about 7 percent over the life of the new pact.

Some Wall Street analysts were surprised at how well Cox fared after its public fight with ESPN and said the cable channel's willingness to accept a lower increase illustrates the upper hand that cable operators have in a programming-fee fight.

Aryeh Bourkoff, an analyst at UBS Securities, said that the Cox and Charter deals "indicate that ESPN may be losing some of [its] negotiating power, which may prove beneficial for Comcast in its bid for Disney."

In addition, the deal could mean bad news for Disney. Douglas Shapiro, an analyst at Banc of America Securities, said ESPN represents about 25 percent of Disney's earnings before interest and taxes. If ESPN cuts similar deals with other cable operators, its affiliate-fee growth could be cut from previous projections of 13 percent to an estimated 10 percent between fiscal years 2004 and 2010, he said.

Sports Renewals

The impact of accepting lower affiliate fees from cable operators could be minimized if Disney is considering not renewing some major sports contracts.

"Perhaps its willingness to cut this deal indicates the intention to forego some renewals," Mr. Shapiro said. "But all things [being] equal, we believe that the reduction in affiliate-fee growth has a material effect [on Disney]."

If ESPN were to pass on renewing some of its sports contracts, that could prove problematic for Cox, especially given the length of the ESPN-Cox pact, said Lara Warner, analyst at Credit Suisse First Boston.

"It exposes Cox to the risk that ESPN's value proposition to consumers declines over time," she said.

ESPN's Mr. Bratches maintained, however, that the Cox deal leaves ESPN "very well positioned to continue the growth of our company from a profitability and margin perspective."

Unlike Cox, Charter's agreement with ESPN was not about to expire, and Cox conducted its negotiations with the sports network quietly. "As a result of this early completion, we expect to enjoy meaningful financial benefits in the latter portion of 2004," Carl Vogel, Charter president and CEO, said in a statement.

Mr. Bratches said ESPN prefers to negotiate with customers privately, but declined to say whether Charter's tack earned it a better rate than Cox. "We certainly wouldn't disadvantage our friends at Charter," he said.

A Charter spokesman declined comment on the details of the agreement with ESPN. ■

TURNER

continued from page 1

not just new shows—we are talking about a little bit of everything. This is something that is hitting the marketplace a little bit early."

Other cable networks such as MTV Networks and USA Networks say they have no plans to follow suit this year.

While Turner is looking to show off future programming plans, the broadcast networks appear to be cutting back. Only three networks—Fox, ABC and NBC—have scheduled big development meetings this year.

Fox will do a presentation March 24 at its Los Angeles-area studio. "It is a benefit for us, since we have year-round development," a Fox spokesman said.

NBC will hold its presentation March 25 at its studios in Burbank. An ABC spokeswoman would say only that meetings will be held in New York and Los Angeles "sometime in March."

CBS and The WB will have lower-profile affairs. CBS, which hasn't done any big development meetings in years, prefers one-on-one meetings with agencies. The WB, which has held meetings in recent years, also will meet with agencies separately. ■

FOX FINAGLING "Everybody Loves Raymond" is the first A-list off-net series to jump ship since "Seinfeld" did it.

'RAYMOND'

continued from page 1

record, about the first A-list off-net series to jump ship to another station group since "Seinfeld" did it in 1998.

No matter how or why it happened, however, it's clear this move by Mr. Murdoch, the new chairman of Fox Television Stations, is a coup at the beginning of his tenure.

The Fox-owned TV stations bought "Everybody Loves Raymond" in eight cities, and the series will move from its Tribune stations in five of the cities, including New York, Los Angeles and Chicago. The deal will commence in March 2008 for 5½ years. Fox markets renewing the strip are Minneapolis, Baltimore and Washington.

With no diamond-caliber off-net players on the horizon, Fox executives hedged their bets and moved in the past two weeks to secure both "Raymond" and "Seinfeld" into the next decade. The pickup of "Raymond" from distributor King World follows last week's news (*TelevisionWeek*, Feb. 16) that all 19 Fox O&Os renewed Sony Pictures TV's "Seinfeld" in the third cycle, keeping the off-net series in the group through 2011.

The moves may prove to be wise, analysts said.

"Fox is placing their bets on some of the key perennials now," said Bill Carroll, VP and director of group programming for Katz Media. "Given the lack of success for any of the networks in being able to establish a breakout hit over the last few years, it makes a lot of sense to protect and go after the devil you know."

Some reports placed the deal's worth at two to three times the original license fee for the first cycle of "Raymond." If this is true, it would explain why Tribune didn't make a deal for the show. However, multiple sources said the numbers reported in other publications are wrong, and that Fox in fact got "Raymond" for dollars on par with the first cycle.

Frank Cicha, VP of programming for the Fox station group, would not confirm figures for the show but did note that the $600,000-an-episode figures reportedly paid for the strip in top markets New York and Los Angeles were "way off."

"This deal had to be done at an equitable level to complement what we're already doing on the stations," Mr. Cicha said. "The real figure is nowhere near what's been reported. That said, I can also say we didn't get it for free.

> **"Given the lack of success for any of the networks in being able to establish a breakout hit over the last few years, it makes a lot of sense to protect and go after the devil you know."**
>
> Bill Carroll, VP and director of group programming, Katz Media

Ultimately, I believe both sides are happy with the outcome."

During January's National Association of Television Program Executives convention, one Tribune station executive said the group was waiting for news of "Raymond's" fate on CBS before making a move to pick up the second cycle. The creative forces behind the hit series have reportedly met to discuss story lines for another season. There is not yet, however, a deal for more seasons. Many analysts expect a renewal.

That hesitation by Tribune may have cost the group one of its two biggest syndicated series. A Tribune spokesperson would not comment for this piece. However, one Tribune station general manager expressed frustration at losing the show and speculated that Roger King may have lost patience with the holdup in negotiations, which gave the Fox stations an "in" for the 2008 runs. Tribune does, however, have one hot show on the way in HBO's "Sex and the City," which will begin in September 2005.

However, Mr. Cicha noted that even if "Raymond" does not return for next season, the group considers itself fortunate to have clinched the heavyweight sitcom. By the end of this season, nearly 200 episodes of "Raymond" will be in the can.

"That was a risk we were willing to take," said Mr. Cicha of "Raymond's" potential series finale this spring. "In the particular markets where we acquired the show, 'Raymond' is going to be an important player for years to come and will be a key part of our duopoly strategy."

"Raymond" ranks third in national household ratings among off-net sitcoms, behind "Seinfeld" and "Friends," averaging a 5.7 during the most recent week for which ratings are available, according to Nielsen. Those three series, along with Twentieth's "The Simpsons" are considered to be the crown jewels of off-net series.

"If you're not in with at least two of those four, you could be having a rough time in the sitcom game," Mr. Cicha said. "If we pair 'Raymond' up with 'Seinfeld,' 'Simpsons' or even with itself, I think it's going to matter to stations a lot." ■

TV CURRENTS

CLAUSE

continued from page 3

to block material from being developed by competitors is HBO. Though the network declined to comment officially for this story, a source at HBO who is familiar with the contract process said the clause is merely a way of protecting its substantial investments in new programming.

The clause was added about three years ago, the source said, in response to a number of competitors seeking to imitate HBO's programming success by poaching from the network's development slate.

Since HBO is both a high-quality production company and a network, it makes sense that the company would take protection measures similar to those taken by a theatrical studio.

Others said HBO's use of the clause has a specific origin. Several sources noted that HBO's contracts have long included a restriction against projects going to Showtime. Three years ago, the network added FX to the restriction as the basic cable network began targeting HBO viewers and experiencing success with "The Shield."

MICHAEL WRIGHT

Ironically, HBO's biggest hit, "The Sopranos," came to the network after being developed by Fox.

Other networks said to be contractual quagmires include TNT and CBS.

CBS declined to comment. TNT's current administration denied that the network's contracts contain such restrictions. "We like to have positive collaborative relationships with the producing community, and that informs our decision as it relates to turnaround material," said Michael Wright, senior VP of original programming at TNT.

One producer who struggled in vain with HBO to get a project returned said he lost more than a year of time and revenue due to the restrictions.

"You basically have no recourse," the producer said. "It's unfortunate that some studios and networks feel they have to take things off the market to limit their competition."

Some Wiggle Room

The HBO source contended that even though the network's contract may seem harsh on paper, the company can be reasonable when approached by producing partners who wish to go elsewhere. As long as development costs are reimbursed, plus interest (and sometimes a piece of the back-end), most producers can wiggle free of their condition, the source said.

But according to one business affairs executive at a major agency, if HBO has a producer or writer in a contractual bind, "It's nearly impossible" to get a project back.

Not that the executive faulted the network's stance.

"We represent these producers and I can see their point of view," the executive said. "But part of the HBO argument is that it's not just their money, it's their time. They're not getting paid to develop projects for their competitors. Nobody wants to have egg on their face." ■

WGA

continued from page 3

sumer-friendly prices. "We're not crying poverty," the source said, "but it is cutting our profitability."

When told of the comments, one WGA source shot back: "It's a 'low-margin business'? Tell that to Wall Street."

Though the WGA released a statement of support for the Screen Actors Guild and American Federation of Television and Radio Artists' decision to delay their negotiations, the threat of an actors strike could have been a great benefit for tackling DVD issue.

MELISSA GILBERT

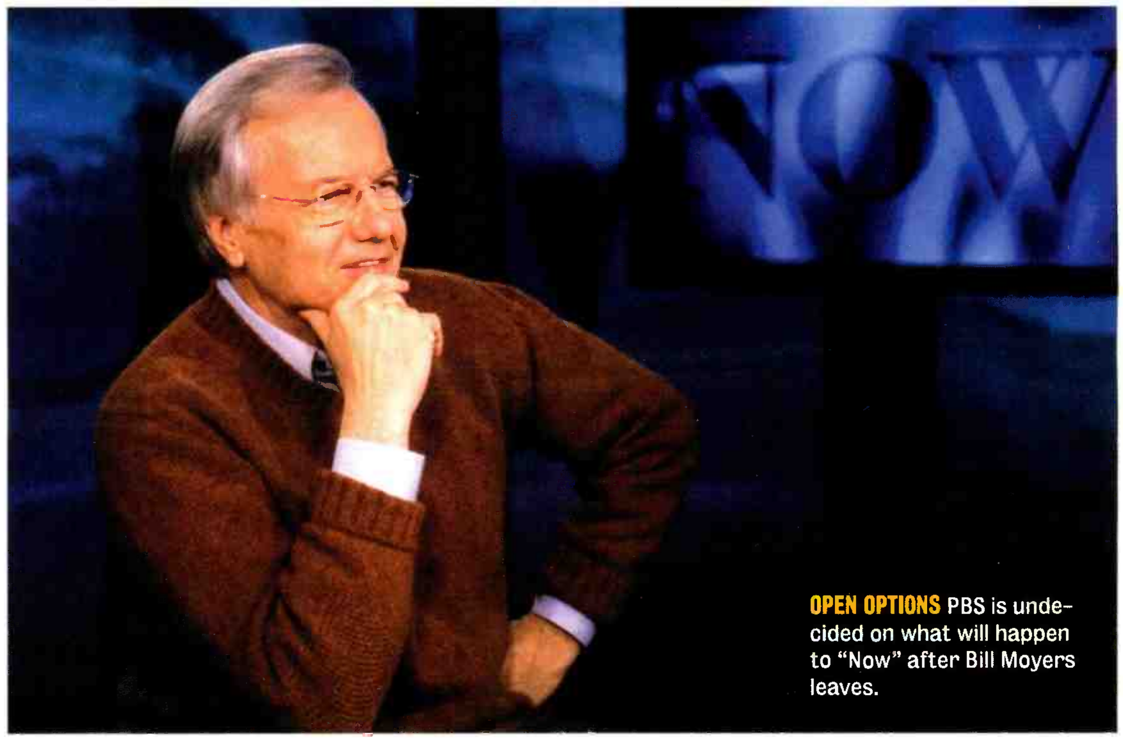
The actor guild's contract was set to expire June 30. The extension deal will go to a vote before SAG and AFTRA members within the next 30 days. Key provisions include a 2.5 percent minimum salary hike, a provision to allow SAG and AFTRA to jointly negotiate for future contracts and expanded guild coverage of performers in digitally produced programs on UPN and The WB.

"This agreement keeps actors working and makes significant gains in areas that matter most to our membership: equal pay for equal work, a raise in pay, a strengthened health plan, network salaries for WB and UPN actors and broader coverage for background performers," said SAG President Melissa Gilbert.

As for writers, so far there has been no evidence of producers ordering extra scripts in advance or stockpiling material in expectation of a strike.

At least, not yet.

"We've done a great deal of research into the current status of the industry, its business plan, and we will look at all the issues," Ms. Rhoden said. "We look forward to commencing negotiations." ■



OPEN OPTIONS PBS is undecided on what will happen to "Now" after Bill Moyers leaves.

'NOW'

continued from page 3

Minnesota Public Radio's "Marketplace" business news show who has been doing some co-hosting on the program has been mentioned as a possible host.

The problem is that Mr. Brancaccio lacks widespread name recognition.

Apparently Mr. Moyers' departure has been a possibility for some time. Former PBS program supplier Rory O'Connor, president and CEO of independent producer Globalvision, which produced two of the network's public affairs series, said Mr. Moyers had told intimates when he began "Now" two years ago that he would do the show for only a year. Neither Mr. Moyers nor his producer, Rick Byrne, was immediately available for comment.

Jeff Chester, executive director of the Center for Digital Democracy, called Mr. Moyers' departure "incredibly sad" and criticized PBS for not having a successor ready. "It illustrates PBS's failure in not developing a new generation of Bill Moyers-style journalists. PBS is not preparing well for the future in the digital age."

While Mr. Moyers is widely thought of as being on the progressive left side of the political debate, he is also a solid member of the mainstream journalistic establishment. PBS cannot simply replace him with another famous "progressive" without risking backlash from its major funding source, the quasi-governmental Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Others noted that Mr. Moyers' departure may come as welcome news to some in the PBS executive suites. "Now" and Mr. Moyers have been frequent targets of criticism by members of the Bush administration. CPB has refused to allocate any funds for the program. Given that history, the timing is opportune, this source said, because the House appropriations subcommittee, which handles appropriations for the CPB, is planning a hearing Feb. 25 that will deal with CPB's funding of PBS, a hearing that PBS's Pat Mitchell is expected to address, asking for further funding. "The timing of the Moyers announcement might be intended to send a signal to Congress," the source said.

Mr. Moyers infuriated the White House on Nov. 8, 2002, when he criticized the Republican Party's agenda. "If you like God in government," he editorialized, "get ready for the Rapture. These folks don't even mind you referring to the GOP as the party of God."

> **"It illustrates PBS's failure in not developing a new generation of Bill Moyers-style journalists."**
>
> Jeff Chester, Center for Digital Democracy

"Every time I hear one of Parson Moyers' sermons, it reminds me that he came to public attention as head flack for Lyndon B. Johnson," the late Robert Bartley, longtime editorial page editor of the Wall Street Journal, wrote after Mr. Moyers' commentary.

In June PBS will debut a new public affairs show, a weekly program hosted by Tucker Carlson, who represents the conservative side of the debate on CNN's "Crossfire."

PBS is also said to be working on a proposal for a full-time public affairs channel, with the working title Public Square, that could be offered on digital tiers on cable. According to a recent article in the public broadcasting publication Current, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation has come up with a $200,000 grant to study the feasibility of such a proposal. PBS programmer Coy Atlas told Current, "We plan over the next five months to identify what the voice of the new channel will be and ... come up with one or two distinctive shows unique to this channel."

Originally, the plan was to develop a two-hour public affairs block on Friday nights on PBS, but that plan fell apart because of funding concerns. ■

SUMMIT

continued from page 6

our written contractual commitment (memorialized in all of our affiliation agreements and incorporating the FCC's rule) to abide by an affiliate station's right to reject network progams that the station reasonably believes to be unsatisfactory or unsuitable or contrary to the public interest," the two executives wrote. "In short, our affiliates have the unlimited right to reject such programming for content-based reasons."

The summit is noteworthy because it promises to bring top network executives and the NAB together.

All of the Big 4 networks dropped their NAB memberships over the past several years in a dispute over the FCC's national ownership cap, a regulation that the networks wanted to relax but the NAB's affiliate-dominated board fought to keep in place.

"Our motive is merely to get all broadcasters in a room to discuss an appropriate response on issues surrounding program content," said NAB spokesman Dennis Wharton. "However, we've always maintained that affiliates and networks are in agreement on 99 percent of all issues."

On a related front, the House telecommunications subcommittee last week announced it will hold a hearing on broadcast indecency Feb. 26, with representatives of the TV networks and their affiliates invited to testify.

A witness list for this week's hearing was not released. ■

END PAGE

TOM SHALES

A BIG, BEAUTIFUL MEDIUM ABOUT NOTHING

That no good deed goes unpunished is a truism. It's also getting to look—in the omnivorous and insatiable 500-channel universe we live in—as if no bad idea goes unproduced.

It's wonderfully ironic, in a dismal sort of way, that HDTV is coming along just as television runs out of things worth looking at. Browse the prime-time schedule some night and ask yourself if you really want to see this stuff more clearly. And wider, much wider. Widening sounds like a dubious boon, unless you're talking about football or basketball or anything else done on a large rectangle.

HDTV will be like color TV was and just-plain TV before that; when it's new, people will be thrilled to see anything on it—trees, birdies, flowers, old National Geographic documentaries. Eventually, the thrill will wear off and we'll realize we're pretty much back where we started, except that we can see where the actors' makeup ends and where their aging, mottled flesh begins. It'll be a boon to Botox sales in Hollywood, where they must already be pretty good.

Meanwhile as we await the arrival of this latest technological marvel, television seems tentative, halting, at a vague crossroads, in a Bermuda Triangle of its own—pulled one way by the future and another by the past. Fox says the whole idea of a TV season is out of date while other networks talk about killing the sweeps and maybe tinkering with the idea of a 22-week season, opting for a replica of the British model: Do as many episodes as the material can reasonably justify.

But what happens to the syndication business? They can't run "Seinfeld" reruns forever. Oh wait—yes they can. And apparently will.

Among the most endangered traditional concepts is the whole notion of permanence and the idea that it can any longer be a plausible goal. The great shows of the past ran 20, 30 years, numbers that seem impossible now, except for the daily franchises—morning shows and late shows—and the soaps. You have to wonder whether any future sitcom will challenge the long runs of "Frasier" and "Friends"—and those are old shows. New hit sitcoms are the hen's teeth of the medium, though the networks pretend they have hits by lowering the bar down, down, down until a 10 share is a bonanza.

Occasional shows will get Super Bowl-size audiences, but only if we're talking about the audience in the stadium, not the one watching at home on TV.

Cable is full of examples that prove permanence is no longer a workable concept. Not only do shows come and go at a dizzying pace, but networks might just reformat themselves overnight. You could go to sleep to the Furniture Repair Channel and wake to find it's now the Kinky-Winky Network.

CNBC could stand for "Changing NBC" after all the programming and personnel alterations it's gone through. Dennis Miller's new series for the niche network—only nobody knows what niche it is—has existed for only about a month but already looks, as they say in that funny FedEx commercial, doomed! Irreverent old pro Steve Friedman has been called in to perform emergency surgery. Frankenstein needs a new brain.

Miller's is kind of a news program and kind of a comedy program and fails at both. Is CNBC a news channel or a chat channel? The status practically changes hour to hour. Its daytime schedule is solid, of course; nighttime is the hazardous inner city where drive-by cancellations are rampant.

As someone old enough to remember when HBO began and wasn't yet a 24-hour operation, I recall rather fondly the network's Saturday morning programming: Jolly old records of band music played without interruption until noon, when the network signed on. It was nice. It was pleasant. So why not give up on the thankless task of reinventing CNBC and bring back that band music? It might get a 1 rating, which would be better than Miller does.

Miller's is a news show produced by the entertainment division, but it's probably too late to worry about the blurring of that line. Such closely observed values, once the laws of TV, have proved sadly temporal too. As the election nears, candidates will find that silly appearances with David Letterman and Jay Leno are just as mandatory, if not more so, than serious debates. Democracy at work.

At CNBC's close corporate neighbor MSNBC, roads are similarly bumpy. On Monday night Erik Sorenson was on Linda Ellerbee's report for Trio, "Feeding the Beast: The 24-Hour News Revolution," and identified as president of MSNBC. By the next morning he no longer held that title. Rick Kaplan had been summoned back from the netherworld to come up with yet another new identity for the network, which has long since passed the multiple personalities in "The Three Faces of Eve."

Occasional shows will get Super Bowl-size audiences, but only if we're talking about the audience in the stadium, not the one watching at home on TV.

Television has assumed the helter-skelter, wildly transitory nature of radio and, appropriately, it's growing less and less visual; the big cable networks have been taken over by talking heads, a category that includes shouting heads and blithering heads. It will be thrilling indeed when these heads are made clearer and wider by HDTV. But it probably won't improve the quality of the blither.

And television, which used to be called radio with pictures when every American home still contained echoes from the old Philco console that piped out entertainment and information, will now be called—what? Radio with pictures you don't need to look at? Yes, dear friends, we live in changing times, to coin a phrase. But I don't want to live in changing times. I want to live in changed times. I want all the shaking-out to end so we can see what the hell kind of a system we've got.

Maybe times will never stop changing again. ■

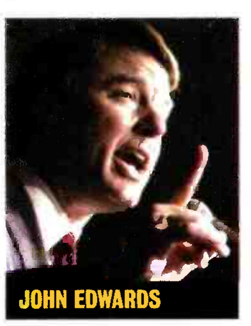
PRIMARY

continued from page 31

cratic consultants and media observers said, is a new campaign reality: Sen. Edwards needs to do more than start winning states; he needs to get 60 percent of the remaining delegates to win the nomination. Mr. Kerry, meanwhile, has some leeway, but a major win for him March 2 would end the nomination battle.

"Not only does [Sen. Edwards] have to win but he has to win by a substantial majority," said Carter Eskew, who four years ago led Vice President Al Gore's ad team. He added that Sen. Kerry's lead could give him considerable room to decide how to respond to Sen. Edwards.

Still, political pundits warned that the one clear message from the election so far is that Democratic candidates had better not take anything for granted. "You don't want to slip," said Evan Tracey, chief operating officer of TNSMI Campaign Media Analysis Group. "You saw in the Dean campaign that no one has enough money to counterbalance what goes on in the news [or how] the press is writing about them."



JOHN EDWARDS

Mr. Tracey noted that the high cost of buying ads in some of the markets in Super Tuesday states—particularly Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco and Atlanta—means that even if the candidates can advertise, they won't have money for heavy ad buys. As of last week, he said, almost $60 million had been spent on campaign ads, $44.1 million by candidates and $15 million by issue groups.

For Sen. Edwards, free media is more important because it may be his only way of separating himself from Sen. Kerry. Besides having less funding for ads and not being as well known, Sen. Edwards has tried to differentiate his candidacy by avoiding attack ads. That leaves TV interviews, debates and speeches as the best ways to distinguish himself from Sen. Kerry.

Mr. Eskew said TV also accentuates Sen. Edwards' youth and vigor compared with the graver image of Sen. Kerry. ■

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