

the idea was strong enough that we got a good sampling quickly. And then I don't think we delivered what we originally set out to do. *Savannah* was supposed to be "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof," and it became a soap opera with po' boys.

The British game show *In the Dark* appeared to have so much potential as a midseason show for The WB. Why did you decide not to air it?

Again, we had an execution problem on the show. We didn't feel it was up to the standards we had for this network. The stunts didn't deliver the kind of comedy we wished for. It puts a lot of burden on the host [Britain's Julian Clary] to be very, very funny. And it forced him to reach.

Any plans to expand your dayparts beyond the kids lineup?

We don't really have a plan beyond trying to roll out the prime time schedule and the kids. But there are a lot of interesting things that can be done once you have the consensus from your affiliates.

When do you expect The WB to offer seven nights of programming?

We're going to try to add a night each year. Whether we do that isn't particularly important to me and will be dictated by how well we're able to establish the new night we put on in the current season. ■

The WB vs. UPN: The battle escalates

Networks square off over Sinclair affiliation switch

By Lynette Rice

In this corner, a network looking for retribution over the loss of five key affiliates.

In this corner, the nation's 15th-largest station group, with the power to yank its business at a moment's notice.

The enormity of the \$84 million Sinclair affiliation deal with The WB became all too apparent last week, as UPN came out swinging in an attempt to stop the five top 100 stations from defecting in January. What began as a warning letter to Sinclair Communications quickly became a lawsuit in Los Angeles County Superior Court, with UPN looking for a permanent injunction against the Sinclair deal.

UPN claims that Sinclair failed to provide written notification of its plan to switch affiliations—thereby automatically extending the station group's deal with the Paramount/Chris Craft network for three years.

Sinclair announced July 14 that five stations now affiliated with UPN—WPTT-TV Pittsburgh, WNUV-TV Baltimore, WSTR-TV Cincinnati, KRRT(TV) San Antonio, Tex., and KOCB(TV) Oklahoma City—will switch to The WB. The deal marked the first time The WB has compensated any affiliate.

Early last week, Sinclair first countered with threatening letters by claiming that UPN defamed its reputation with published reports of UPN's so-called breach-of-contract claim and demanded that it "cease and desist from any further tortious actions."

Sinclair attorney Robert E. Quicksilver reminded Paramount Television

Group Chairman Kerry McCluggage by letter that CEO-designate Barry Baker told UPN brass in person about the defection July 14 before the press conference announcing the deal. Multiple published reports about Sinclair, Quicksilver wrote, provided the so-called proof in writing.

Ultimately, Sinclair filed a counter-suit in Baltimore that essentially asks the court to ratify the affiliation agreement. In the meantime, Baker has asked its stations to stop discussing the issue with Paramount while the station group "reevaluates its relationship with them," he told BROADCASTING & CABLE.

UPN's only acknowledgment of the Sinclair issue came indirectly last week during Viacom's second-quarter earnings conference call Tuesday. Chairman Sumner Redstone told analysts that Viacom does not intend to pay compensation to affiliates and that "we don't think [The WB] did us any good or themselves any good in paying that kind of money for distribution."

Redstone's comments struck Baker as "comical," given that UPN offered compensation to Sinclair in an effort to keep the station group. Programming and branding, not just compensation, prompted Sinclair to switch to The WB, Baker said.

"Nobody understands what they're doing.... It's incredible stuff," Baker said. "If I were a UPN affiliate, all I'd want them to do is focus on getting ahead of the network and worrying about programming in the fall, not this.

"It's not leaving a great taste in our

mouths," he said. "We are evaluating our whole relationship based on this."

Speaking about the other Sinclair stations that remain affiliated with UPN, Baker said: "We lived for a long time in Milwaukee and Birmingham with no affiliate, purely independent. Certainly there are options for stations not to be affiliated with parties."

Meanwhile, UPN kept up its promise to take stations from The WB and announced new primary affiliation agreements with WAWB(TV) in Richmond, Va., and WGVP(TV) Valdosta, Ga. (licensed to Tallahassee but with the majority of its viewing in the Albany, Ga., DMA). Both have been WB affiliates since January 1995 and both are switching to UPN Aug. 25. The release about the pickups read more like a scorecard of other steals from The WB in the past six months, including UPN's pickup of WDRG(TV) Roanoke, Va., WBNU(TV) Charleston, S.C., and WUBI(TV) Savannah, Ga.

"These two stations have tremendous potential, and we are thrilled to add full-power primary affiliates under long-term agreements in these previously nonaffiliated markets," says Kevin Tannehill, UPN's executive vice president of distribution.

The WB countered that its programming can still be seen in Richmond via WGN-TV, while WGVP represents a bottom 100 market in which the network will create WeB stations bowing in 1998. "UPN is desperately trying to do whatever they can to reverse the blow dealt to them by losing the five strong, major-market Sinclair stations," said WB spokesman Brad Turell. ■