

# 5

## Paramount and Warner off and running for the fifth network

*Independent station groups the prize as each goes after 70%*

### Fifth network

Continued from cover

By Joe Flint

intentions this week.

"You sit there and you listen and you know that only one of these guys will make it," says one group owner who received same-day pitches by both studios.

As expected (BROADCASTING & CABLE, Oct. 18), Paramount will use its latest entry in the *Star Trek* series—*Voyager*—as an anchor for its network, which will kick off as four hours of programming over two nights in January 1995.

Between the Chris Craft independent stations in New York (WWOR-TV); Los Angeles (KCOP-TV); Portland, Ore. (KPTV-TV); Minneapolis (KMSP-TV); San Francisco (KBHK-TV) and Phoenix (KUTP-TV), and the Paramount stations in Philadelphia (WTXF-TV); Washington (WDCA-TV); Dallas-Fort Worth (KTXA-TV) and Houston (KTXH-TV), the Paramount network already has a reach of more than 27%.

Both studios are racing for the 70% national penetration

that the remaining true independent stations represent. Warner Bros. also expects cable to play a big part in its network, and there has been speculation that the studio will approach broadcasters who gained cable channels during retransmission-consent negotiations to become affiliates (BROADCASTING & CABLE, Oct. 25). Warner executives also are studying Fox's Fox Net cable service, which covers "white" areas, where no broadcast signal reaches.

Paramount executives also will consider using cable as well as offering its new network programming on an ad hoc basis to markets where no one station can carry the full Paramount lineup.

Warner Bros. is expected to make it official tomorrow, revealing its network plans and detailing the rollout schedule. Warner Bros.' Jamie Kellner—the former Fox chief who played a key role in that network's launch—has been meeting with group owners for the past four months. Privately, Warner Bros. executives believe they have commitment from enough stations to give its network at

least 70% national penetration.

Besides Tribune, whose seven major-market independents reach almost 20% of the country, Warner Bros. also appears to have signed up the Gaylord Broadcasting stations whose four independents—in Dallas, Houston, Tacoma (Seattle) and Milwaukee—reach almost 5% of the country. Warner Bros. already has a deal with Renaissance WZL(TV) Miami (BROADCASTING & CABLE, Oct. 18).

The Tribune stations would be a major victory for the new network. Most industry observers speculate that Tribune would be reluctant to cut back on its sports programming, which represents 16% of the total annual revenue for the station group.

Unclear is whether all the Tribune stations are on board. WGN TV Chicago, for example, carries both the Cubs and the White Sox as well as the Chicago Bulls. WGN-TV is also a superstation that would likely see its appeal to cable operators drop as sports programming disappeared.

While Warner Bros. is counting on Kellner's leadership to lure affiliates,

Paramount's decision to use the new *Star Trek* series—will also be a strong draw. "We feel confident this network has the best opportunity," says Kerry McCluggage, chairman, Paramount Television Group. "The *Star Trek* franchise is now established and [is] as close to a sure thing in programming as we are going to get. It's appointment TV and to start a network with that asset is a tremendous leg up. Ultimately, this will be the fifth network that will launch and be successful."



Paramount's Kerry McCluggage and Warner Bros.' Jamie Kellner separately engineered new networks.