

# CLOSED CIRCUIT

## Hollywood Chain reaction?

Matsushita-MCA deal may set in motion ownership change in stations other than WWOR-TV New York (see "Top of the Week"). MCA also has 11.92% attributable interest in three independent TV stations of Combined Broadcasting: WBFS-TV Miami, WGBO-TV Joliet, Ill. (Chicago) and WBFS-TV Philadelphia, which studio obtained as creditor of bankrupt Grant Broadcasting—reincarnated after court settlement as Combined. Depending on percentage of Combined stock held by other foreign-owned studios, such as MGM or Columbia, Matsushita purchase of MCA could raise direct foreign stake in Combined to more than 20% allowed by FCC. If that is case, solutions would be plentiful, including possible, though not likely, addition of MCA's Combined stake to new WWOR-TV company being spun off.

## New opportunities

In postscript to Matsushita's preliminary agreement to buyout MCA Inc. (see page 35), it has been widely anticipated that Creative Artists Agency co-founder Michael Ovitz, who reportedly stands to make \$40 million for helping broker deal for Japanese electronics giant, could bring influx of additional dollars and creative deals for client Steven Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment.

Amblin, which has longstanding working relationship with MCA's Universal Studios, is in posture to mount new projects under guidance of MCA Family Entertainment President Jeff Segal, including possible animated network series based on

mouse from "American Tail" theatrical. Already slated is "Fievel Goes West" film sequel for Thanksgiving 1991 release. Amblin spokesman said that mouse (named after Spielberg's grandfather) is being targeted for Saturday morning network series pitch. Additionally, source said pilot development is moving ahead for cartoon version of "Back to the Future" as likely 1992-93 network series ("Closed Circuit," Nov. 19).

## 'On Scene' expansion

Source at Group W Productions, who wished to remain nameless, confirmed rumor that syndicator is "seriously considering" expansion of weekly *On Scene: Emergency Response* to daily half-hour stripping for 1991-92 season. With "prevailing optimism" over its performance (4.1 rating/8 share in NSS overnights, week ending Nov. 23), Group W has commissioned production of separate

pilot that will "differ in pacing and format" from weekly reality-based half-hour hosted by producer Dave Forman. *On Scene*, which is currently being carried on 125 stations representing 86% coverage, is second-ranked new weekly first-run program behind Viacom Enterprises' *Super Force* action-adventure, according to source.

## Local boost

Even with early syndication launch of *The Chuck Woolery Show*, sources say Orion Television is sweetening local barter split to at least eight minutes local ad time, compared with six minutes national, to continue momentum and entice stations to promise quality daytime and early fringe clearances. Previously, Orion had been marketing hour talk show strip with even 7/7 barter split. As reported in BROADCASTING, Nov. 5, and confirmed by sources, Orion has just put

finishing touches on deals with four of five stations within Group W (exception being KDKA-TV Pittsburgh) and all four stations within Times Mirror Broadcasting group. Sources further indicate that *Woolery* has signed clearance deals with 40 stations—seven of top 10 markets—representing approximately 45% national coverage. Paramount Domestic Television's *The Maury Povich Show*, only other new talk show to launch sales earlier, is reported to have just over 60% coverage of U.S.

## Anaheim Loggerheads

Both Robert Wussler, president of Comsat Video Enterprises, and Brian McCauley, president of SkyPix, used Western Cable Show to express confidence that two can make deal to have Comsat bring more than \$100 million to SkyPix plan to deliver mid-power direct broadcast satellite service to small dishes by mid-1990.

But sources close to negotiations said Comsat Video's own financial status has emerged as concern among other potential investors, each in \$100 million neighborhood, in U.S. and abroad. Getting attention among those unnamed SkyPix suitors is securities analysis that reportedly quotes corporate Comsat executive saying consistent losses in CVE's hotel pay-per-view business mean investment in SkyPix would only give Comsat Video negative book. McCauley declined to comment but said Comsat is not only company that could serve as lead investor in system.

McCauley also declined to either confirm or deny report

## BEAUTY AND THE BOXER

The stars were out at the Western Cable Show last week as Vanna White (r), of *Wheel of Fortune*, was in the Home Shopping Network booth showcasing her new fragrance "Vanna."

Also, heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield was on the show's floor signing autographs at the Request TV booth.

