



presence in syndicated kids fare via parent Turner Entertainment Co.'s acquisition of Hanna-Barbera Productions (including library series staples like *Yogi Bear*, *The Flintstones* and *The Jetsons*) and its longtime ownership of MGM's former library (which includes classic pre-1950 Warner Bros. cartoons). While it is expected that much of that library product will be exploited on Turner's 24-hour cable Cartoon Network, TPS syndication president Russ Barry says he and H-B President David Kirchner are conducting creative planning meetings for the 1993-94 season to "explore" opportunities to develop animated series based

on characters from the library.

Next month, TPS will also re-launch the two-hour *Funtastic World of Hanna-Barbera* weekday morning block, which will feature new episodes of *Robin Hood* (from Cinar Productions of Canada) and H-B's *Pirates of Blackwater*, in addition to existing episodes of *Yo, Yogi* and *Don Coyote*.

### Independent suppliers chase new opportunities

Although other independent suppliers have publicly expressed concern that Fox Children's Network would be a closed shop (in light of Warner Bros.' output deal), Saban Entertainment and

DIC Enterprises, two of the more established independent cartoon producers, have series cleared on FCN's Saturday morning schedule. "There are deals that can be struck with Fox and Turner, but with the majors chewing up time slots, it has forced us and other independents to be more innovative in our deal-making," said Haim Saban, chairman and CEO of Saban Entertainment.

Outside distribution deals have also been successfully mounted by Saban and DIC. Both animators have signed domestic distribution deals with Bohbot Communications: Saban, with *Around The World in 80 Dreams* for weekly syndication next season, and DIC, with *Sonic the Hedgehog*—based on the Sega video game—being readied for stripping in 1993-94.

Cluster Television, sticking to its traditional ties to the syndication marketplace, is distributing *Stunt Dawgs*, which is being produced by DIC's Rain Forest production division, for stripping beginning this September. Company President John Cluster estimated that 22 of the 83 stations (81% of the U.S.) clearing the animated half-hour are non-Fox affiliates, a possible sign that network affiliates in the medium to smaller markets are becoming increasingly interested in counterprogramming adult early fringe programming on affiliates.

"I think the coming season could be a watershed year for kids programmers," Cluster said. "The kids upfront [national advertising sales] market was very strong, so affiliates will be taking a good hard look at the revenue and rating returns to see if there is a continuing growth curve."

Cluster will also be introducing a new weekly cartoon, *Conan: The Adventurer*, from Sunbow Productions, which has been sold in 103 markets.

And Gunther-Wahl Productions, an emerging independent founded by veteran animators Lee Gunther and Michael Wahl, is co-producing a new fall 1992 syndicated strip, *The Adventures of T-Rex*. Wahl, president of the Los Angeles-based animation house, says Creativite Et Developpement of France and Kitty Films of Japan are co-venture producers of the series. All American Communications has been retained as domestic distributor.

G-W is also producing (with King World Productions) the Saturday morning series *The C.O.W.-Boys of Moo Mesa* for ABC this fall. ■

## DIC TARGETS TWEENS AND TEENS

**D**IC Enterprises, traditionally known as a producer of children's programming, is looking to branch out into the teen and adult viewing markets. DIC president and founder Andy Heyward says he is working with Guess Jeans founder George Marciano on an early fringe "infotainment" magazine strip geared to kids and teens—or what he calls the "tween" and "90210" audience—for the 1993-94 season. The strip will be produced by DIC's Rain Forest Productions division, which is headed by President Kevin O'Donnell. Heyward identified Western International Syndication as domestic distributor (and equity partner) on *Guess*.

Rain Forest is also developing a series of quarterly sports interview specials (possibly starting in the first quarter of 1993) to be hosted by NBC Sports commentator Marv Albert, who is the play-by-play voice of the New York Knicks and New York Rangers. Turner Program Services will serve as domestic distributor.

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