

Transponders a hot ticket in Anaheim

Hughes sells out space on Galaxy 7 and 3R; plans to build more birds

By Chris McConnell

Satellite transponders were going fast at last week's Western Cable Show.

Moving to snatch up the rapidly diminishing supply of space capacity, Tele-Communications Inc. booked up to 12 Ku-band transponders on the Hughes Communications Galaxy 7 satellite for its planned "Headend in



the Sky" service and another four C-band transponders for its Netlink subsidiary on GE Americom's Spacenet 4. Hughes also announced a series of full-time leases that, with the TCI deal, cover about 34 transponders, says Senior Vice President of Galaxy Satellite Services Carl Brown.

The sales leave the Hughes Galaxy 7 and still-to-be-launched 3R satellites sold out, Brown says.

His company's deal with TCI provides the cable company with space capacity to deliver pre-compressed programming from its \$100 million National Digital Television Center near Denver. TCI's plan calls for delivering the compressed bitstreams from the center to its cable systems.

TCI hopes to begin transmitting the compressed material next summer, says Rich Fickle, TCI marketing and business development vice president.

TCI booked the Ku capacity in part due to the shortage of large blocks of C-band space. "That's a primary reason," Fickle says, adding that the Ku-band transponders also will enable TCI cable systems to receive the digital transmissions with smaller satellite dishes. TCI's long-term lease with Hughes gives it access to the Galaxy 7 transponders for more than five years.

Hughes also announced more C-band lease agreements with HBO and TVN Entertainment Corp. HBO will move three HBO feeds and one Cine-

max feed from AT&T Telstar 302 to Galaxy 7 and 1R satellites. The feeds, which reach the C-band home dish market, will shift to Galaxy 3R after its scheduled launch next September.

TVN, meanwhile, booked 11 C-

band transponders on Galaxy 3R. The programmer, which carries the *NFL Sunday Ticket* package for C-band viewers, will use the capacity to deliver pay-per-view programming to the backyard dish market and to cable operators. ■

UPN introduces itself to affiliates

The United Paramount Network is offering a one-hour Sunday morning kids block for fall 1995, a two-hour

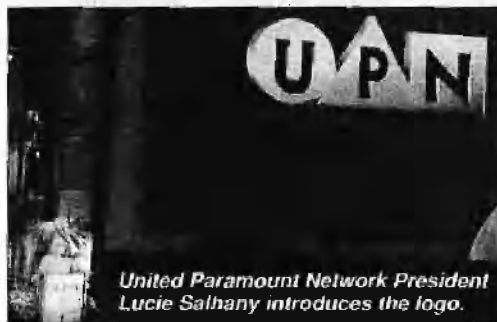
weekday kids block for fall 1997 and a prime time sci-fi series with Leonard Nimoy as producer, affiliates were told last week at the network's first affiliates' meeting.

They also got the first look at the new network's promotion campaign.

At the meeting, held in Los Angeles, station executives were told the network has added 22 new affiliates, bringing total clearance to 76% of the country via 94 stations. The new affiliates (11 primary, 11 secondary) include wsbk Boston, which the Paramount Television Group is purchasing from New World for \$100 million.

Kevin Tannehill, former president, MTM Television Distribution, was introduced to the affiliates as the new senior vice president, network distribution. He will be responsible for network distribution, affiliate relations and affiliate marketing for the network, which debuts on Jan. 16.

Affiliates also were told they would begin receiving promos for the network this week. The promos will be produced in the form of a rock opera that will tease viewers with clips from the new shows and hark back to previous Paramount-produced successes. The promos will be in 15-, 30-, 60- and 90-second lengths. Stations also were asked to air a 90-



United Paramount Network President Lucie Salhany introduces the logo.

second promo during their local newscasts.

Affiliates were shown clips from the network's five debut series and were given sketchy details about 8-10 back-up projects in development. "They're not going to sit around and wait on [the initial] programs if they're not working. They'll pull them and replace them with other programs," said Ray Depa, station manager, KZIA-TV El Paso, Tex.

Affiliates' reviews of the new shows were mostly positive. "Star Trek: Voyager looked better than Star Trek: The Next Generation," said Richard Doutré Jones, general sales manager, KVBK San Francisco. "It had much more action and a strong storyline."

However, while most affiliates were impressed with *Star Trek: Voyager* and sitcoms *Platypus Man* and *Pig Sty*, others had questions about dramas *Marker* and *The Watcher*. "Tuesday night [*Marker* at 8 and *The Watcher* at 9] is the big question mark," one affiliate employe said.

Haim Saban, chairman, Saban Entertainment and producer of *The Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*, also addressed the affiliate meeting, telling the group his company will co-produce, with the network, the one-hour Sunday morning kids block. —SC, DT