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MUCHMUSIC



GET WITH THE PROGRAM

By Joe Schlosser

Povich's game

Following Regis Philbin's lead, talk show host Maury Povich is joining the game show circuit as host of NBC's remake of *Twenty One*, which network executives say will debut Sunday, Jan. 9. Povich received permission to host the game from Studios USA, the distributor of his nationally syndicated daytime talk show. *Twenty One*, will air four times in January (Jan. 9, 12, 16 and 19) replacing *Dateline NBC* at 8 p.m. each time. With the early January launch, NBC will get a jump on ABC's return of *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?*, which debuts as a regular series Jan. 11. As with the *Twenty One* in the '50s, contestants will face off in soundproof isolation booths racing to earn 21 points by correctly answering questions. Contestants will earn \$10,000 for each point, or a potential \$210,000 per episode.

Short subjects

UPN executives believe the young male viewer's attention span can't handle 30-minute or 60-minute programs, so they're developing a number of potential 15-minute series for next season. The network has three sketch-comedy projects in development,

including one from writer Harris Goldberg (*Deuce Bigalow: Male Gigolo*). Goldberg's project is entitled *The Messenger*, and follows the antics of an accident-prone mail carrier. *Choppy*, is a nerdy character created by *Groundlings* veteran John Crane. A buddy comedy's due from producers Chris Cox and Matt Sloan (*Swingblade*).

No Max deal

Hollywood production company Film Roman, the studio behind *The Simpsons* and *King of the Hill*, has pulled the plug on its first attempt in syndication, Max Degree TV. The \$50 million, hour daily programming block that studio executives announced this past summer, failed to get an international backer, says Film Roman Programming President Mark Lieber, and has been scrapped. Max Degree TV was to combine a pair of half-hour action series, *Mission Extreme* and *Sirens of the Deep*. The project was designed for viewers 12-34 and was scheduled for a fall 2000 launch.

Legal Cleese

ABC has ordered a pilot for a new comedy starring John Cleese from Warner Bros. Television and Granada Entertainment USA. Jeff Reno and

Ron Osborn (*Cupid*) have signed on as the producers for the series set in a cutthroat law firm. Cleese, a Monty Python regular, is writing and will serve as an executive producer on the series.

Independents of the world, unite

Talent scout Brian Nash and former NATPE International chairman Joe Weber are teaming up to launch the Global Association of Independent Television (GAIT). The organization is designed to support and promote independently produced TV programming.

Tiny CTW shows

The Children's Television Workshop is launching a new syndicated short-form show for children called *Tiny Planets*. The science-oriented animated series will consist of 65, five-minute episodes available for domestic and international distribution in the spring of 2001.

Movers and Shakers

Marlaine Selip has been named executive producer of Pax TV's ongoing series, *Treasures in Your Home*. Selip was formerly supervising producer for the five-day-a-week antiques and collectibles series.