

United/Paramount pitches sitcoms

'Pig Sty' and 'Platypus Man' are among shows said to be in development

By David Tobenkin

While *Star Trek: Voyager* was the first, and so far only, show announced for the new United/Paramount Network, BROADCASTING & CABLE has learned of several shows that have been pitched to advertisers.

Sources confirm that *Pig Sty*, a half-hour sitcom produced and written by *Cheers* writer-producers Rob Long and Dan Staley, has been given a green light. The show features five

twentysomething guys coping with life in a Manhattan apartment.

Another show in development and considered likely to receive a green light is *Platypus Man*, a half-hour featuring stand-up comic Richard Jeni as the host of a cable TV show. *Golden Girls* executive producers Mort Nathan and Barry Fanaro are executive producers of the show, which originally was developed for Fox.

The United/Paramount Network will launch in January with two nights

of programming (two hours each night). A Paramount spokesman refused to discuss which shows are in development, adding that Paramount will not release its programming schedule until September.

Several sources say Paramount officials have told them *Voyager* will premiere Mondays at 8 p.m., followed by *Pig Sty* and *Platypus*. One source confirms the lineup, but with *Platypus* at 9 p.m., preceding *Pig Sty*. Other sources say the schedule remains flexible. ■

Goodson takes chance on state lotteries

Produces Illinois TV lottery; negotiates for other states

By David Tobenkin

It's been four years in the making, but Mark Goodson Productions Chief Executive Jonathan Goodson finally is seeing the first fruits of his plans to revolutionize televised state lottery programs the way his father revolutionized the game show world.

On July 9, Tribune superstation WGN-TV Chicago quietly replaced its staid Illinois Lottery show with a slick program produced by Goodson featuring high-tech graphics and a former MTV veejay as host. Goodson says he is in final negotiations with five of the 36 other states that have state lotteries to produce shows for them.

"Thirty-six other states have televised state lotteries and thirty-six need improved shows," says Goodson. "Lotteries are being challenged left and right by Indian gambling, river gambling and, in an increasing number of states, legalized gambling. It makes sense for them to do anything they can to get more attention."

Although Goodson announced two weeks ago that the company likely would be sold to pay estate taxes (BROADCASTING & CABLE, Aug. 1), the lottery division will not be sold as part



of that deal. "[Mark Goodson Productions'] value is from the old formulas and the things my dad did. This division is my baby," says Goodson.

Rather than serve as an end in itself, some analysts say that the lottery business will allow Goodson to posi-

tion himself to take advantage of the confluence of gambling and interactive television. "This is ground floor for Jonathan," says Bishop Cheen, an analyst at Carmel, Calif.-based consulting firm Paul Kagan Associates Inc. "There is a national, televised lottery that you can be sure is coming. And interactive television of the future will clearly feature games of chance. Doing this, [along with] Jonathan's experience in designing game

shows and interactive game shows, will make him uniquely qualified to take advantage of that."

At WGN-TV, there has been some ratings impact since the revamp of *Illinois Instant Riches*, with the program rising from a 5 rating and a 9

Multimedia goes international

Multimedia has formed an international programming unit, Multimedia Enterprises, to produce and invest in programming for the international marketplace. The unit will be headed by Ethan Podell, VP, International development. Podell was among the founders of Orbis Communications and worked for HBO and CBS Cable. Multimedia also announced that *The Vanessa Feliz Show*, a talk show co-production of Multimedia and Anglia Television, will begin airing on England's ITV Network in September, following its successful test run on the network. —JE