

while roughly 18% of WB's coverage will come from cable coverage provided by Tribune superstation WGN.

### The game changes

Launch details aside, the very existence of the new networks likely will change the face of television, say analysts.

"The emergence of these two new networks attests to the viability of the traditional local television stations as a distribution mechanism, and it marks a real end to the production cycle whereby a producer would make it up in syndication," says PaineWebber analyst Christopher Dixon. "With fin-sin's repeal leading to concerns that the traditional networks will program their own shows over outside product, here you have two producers who have decided to self-distribute their own programming on a day-and-date system rather than enter the highly fragmented syndication market. The winners are the advertisers, who get to play one network off another, and maybe the viewers, who may get better programming."

The losers may be the other broadcast networks, which could see top studio product diverted away from their pipelines (see story, page 37), and syndicators, who will watch the new networks occupy many valuable time slots and make it even more difficult to pencil-out and clear first-run product and lower-end off-network product.

"Ultimately, if both networks go to full schedules, or even if just the WB network does, it most likely will shut down [Warner Bros. Domestic Television Distribution's Prime Time Entertainment Network action-hour block], as well as all the syndicated action hours," WBTD President Dick Robertson told BROADCASTING & CABLE earlier this year. "Long term, in either of those cases, I would expect PTEN would cease to exist in five years."

The good news for both networks is that they launch in fair advertising weather, with a tight inventory market that has made placing ads with them nearly unavoidable for some advertisers.

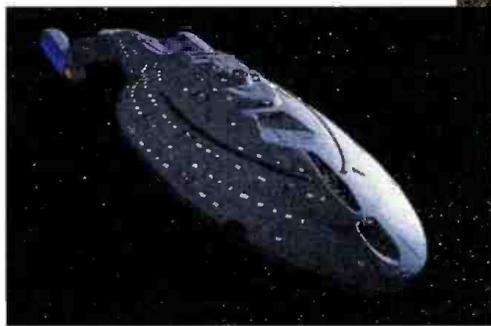
UPN, promising a 7 prime time household rating, has sold out its first quarter ad inventory. Kellner says

WB, which is promising a 3 rating, also has experienced strong sales demand, but has held back 20% for make-goods in case of lower-than-predicted ratings and because the scatter market looks to be very strong. Differences in the guaranteed ratings are partly explained by UPN's high expectations for *Voyager*.

### The lineups

Standing between the possible and the present for the two networks are programming and distribution challenges—although analysts agree that with enough hit shows any likely distribution problem can be overcome.

Here, most observers say the surest bet of either network is *Star Trek: Voyager*, whose hit syndicated predecessor *Star Trek: The Next Generation* was killed off last season to put its cast in movies and avoid competition with *Voyager*. (Paramount Domestic Television continues to distribute *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* in first-run syndication.) The one-hour show nor-



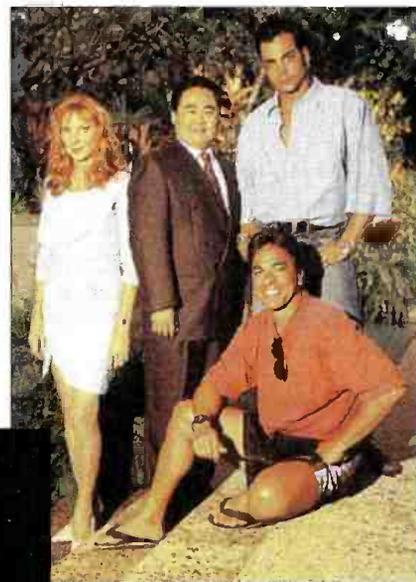
'Star Trek: Voyager'



'The Watcher'



'Pig Sty'



'Marker'



'Platypus Man'