

Homes reached: **78 million**Average homes viewing: **885,000**Programming budget: **\$301.5 million**

# TBS Superstation

**A**t TBS Superstation, documentaries and *National Geographic* specials are no longer part of the network's original-program offerings. This year, TBS began airing original movies and introduced a new weekly half-hour comedy series, *The Chimp Channel*, while documentaries were shifted to co-owned CNN.



In January, TBS will roll out a one-hour weekly reality series, *Ripley's Believe It Or Not!* The superstation has ordered 22 episodes of the show from Columbia TriStar Television Distribution.

"We're very proud of our original-programming franchise. It's the cornerstone of our branding strategy going forward," says TBS' Jim Head, senior vice president of original programming. In order to compete effectively, he says, "You have to have original programming. You have to offer your viewers and cable operators programming that's unique and exclusive to you."

TBS is premiering four original movies this year and at least four next year. "Ultimately we want to do eight to 12 movies a year," says Head. "Our movie franchise is premised on creating movies that fit our audience. We do high-concept, male-oriented movies that are female friendly." TBS will be sticking with action-adventure movies, disasters, thrillers, Westerns, and courtroom dramas.

In March, *Fatal Error* with Antonio Sabato Jr., Janine Turner and Robert Wagner, debuted, followed in June by *Silent Predators*, starring Harry Hamlin. In August, the superstation says, *First Daughter* with Mariel Hemingway attracted TBS' largest audience ever for a single program, with 5,309,000 households watching.

*The TimeShifters* with Casper Van Dien and Martin Sheen, premieres Oct. 17.

And in development for possible air date next year: *Nowhere To Land*, an airplane disaster movie; *Sinkhole*, about a sinkhole that threatens to envelop New Orleans during Mardi Gras; and *Sweepers*, about a CIA assassin. The superstation is also working on a remake of *High Noon* for 2000.

Head wouldn't say specifically how much TBS is spending on its original movies. "We spend what it takes to create a high-quality original television movie. We spend commensurate what the networks spend on original movies," he says.

He also points out that *Ripley's Believe It Or Not!* is a show that was sought after by the broadcast networks. Columbia chose TBS. "We competed toe-to-toe with the broadcast networks and we got the show. That shows you how the television landscape has changed. Series that might have in the past gone to the broadcast networks are now premiering on TBS Superstation," says Head.

—Kim McAvoy

(w) weekly series; (d) daily series; (mo) monthly series;  
(m) movie; (ms) miniseries; (sp) special

## At a glance

**Description:** 24-hour, basic, ad-supported network that features movies, original programming, sports and special events

**Owner:** Time Warner

**Launched:** December 1976

**Avg. homes in prime time (rank):** 1,332,000 (5)

**Signature shows:** *WCW's Thunder* (w); *The Chimp Channel* (w); *Fatal Error* (m); *Silent Predators* (m); *First Daughter* (m); *The TimeShifters* (m)

**In the works:** *Ripley's Believe it Or Not!* (w), *High Noon* (m); *Philip Margolin's After Dark* (m); *Sweepers* (m); *Nowhere To Land* (m)

**Highest-rated original program:** *First Daughter*; Aug. 15, 1999; 5.3 million households



The series 'Dinner and a Movie' (above) is a staple for TBS. 'The Chimp Channel' (far left) debuted this year, and the movie 'First Daughter' (l) brought in the highest ratings this season.