

CBS rising in ratings poll

NEW YORK (AP) — Maybe it's the cozy slogan. After all, a catch phrase worked for "must-see" NBC.

CBS sought to "welcome home" television viewers this fall to a place they had avoided lately, promising lots of old friends would stop by.

Enough people have responded to make CBS's comeback, together with the relatively desultory performance of its rivals, the story of the young television season.

"We're feeling that progress is being made," a cautious CBS Entertainment president, Leslie Moonves, said last week. "But crowing? No, hardly. You won't hear that out of me."

The memories of last season, when CBS finished a third among the big three networks with disastrous programming choices like the megahyped "Central Park West," are too fresh in his mind.

Moonves, brought in after the network bottomed out, dreaded opening his newspaper each week: When the top 20 shows in the Nielsen ratings were displayed, CBS frequently had as few as one.

In last week's Niensens, however, CBS nabbed nine of the top 20 spots. The network has finished a solid second behind ratings champ NBC during the TV season's first month, and its ratings are up over a comparable period last year, while NBC, ABC and Fox all are down. The declines are most marked at ABC and Fox, where early signs of panic are evident.

CBS banked on familiar faces like Bill Cosby and Rhea Perlman to anchor new sitcoms this fall, and both are among the new season's top performers — and that's before Ted Danson's show "Ink" begins Monday night. Weekend shows like "Walker, Texas Ranger" and the new drama "Early Edition" also are hits.

The network, traditionally a favorite among older viewers, abandoned last year's strategy of trying to copy Fox's success with the young crowd, which had conjured up the disconcerting look of a senior struggling into spandex.

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BILL CROSSDALE

president of network broadcasting at Western International Media

"They might have called last year's (slogan), 'Go away,'" media analyst Betsy Frank said.

"Welcome Home" beseeches those traditional viewers to return, and even the network's house ads, free of quick cutaways and jarring graphics, are soothing. If young people want to tune in, too, so much the better.

"He's turned the ship around," Bill Crossdale, president of network broadcasting at Western International Media, said of Moonves. "He's not attracted the audience that the advertisers want to attract, but advertisers are taking a second look at CBS."

Crossdale, who works with networks to set rates for advertisers, noted that CBS still needs one of its shows, like "Pearl" or "Everybody Loves Raymond," to become a hit with the younger viewers advertisers crave.

CBS is expected to score a coup Monday when the organizers of the Grammys, who considered abandoning their 22-year broadcast outlet, re-up for another five years. The network also is talking about trying to win back National Football League broadcasts.

CBS's success this year has come largely at the expense of ABC, which has slid into third place.

ABC's ratings are down every night except for Thursday, which already was weak, according to an analysis by the BJK&E Media Group. Michael J. Fox's "Spin City" is ABC's only breakout hit, while the public appears to be tiring of

past favorites like "Roseanne," "Coach" and "Lois & Clark."

"In some instances, they stayed with some shows for too long, while in other instances the creative product has begun to dry up," Crossdale said. "Coach" was sent on hiatus last week, along with two other shows in ABC's struggling Saturday night lineup.

ABC defends itself by pointing to its relative strength among younger viewers.

Only Fox stands between ABC and the network ratings basement. At least ABC hasn't suffered the indignities of Fox, which saw its now-canceled game show "Big Deal" beaten in the ratings by a Ross Perot infomercial.

Almost faster than viewers could notice them, Fox already has axed four new fall shows; only baseball and "The X-Files" has kept the network breathing this fall.

Fox also is talking about a major shift in focus. After building itself with young viewers interested in sex-soaked soaps like "Melrose Place," the network sought in the past two years to appeal to all age groups. Now, it's considering a return to the youthful emphasis, in a sort of "welcome home" of its own.

While NBC is expected to keep its ratings crown largely on the strength of its Thursday night lineup, some analysts worry that except for the time-slot blessed "Suddenly Susan," the network is failing to develop new shows.

Cigarettes star in movies, burn anti-smoking advocates

SMOKING from page 12

bomber pilot in "Broken Arrow," chain-smokes through a treacherous nuclear extortion plot. He also smokes in "Pulp Fiction" and "Get Shorty."

Willis is shrouded in smoke at a poker game in "Nobody's Fool"; a Marlboro box lies next to his cards. Across the table, Paul Newman, playing the town troublemaker, sucks on a stylishly thin cigar.

In a telephone interview, Newman voiced concerns that movie icons might unwittingly be luring people to smoke, particularly teen-agers. If old people "like me smoke, it doesn't make a difference," Newman said. "If you get John Travolta smoking, that's a different point."

The worries about under-the-table advertising hark back to 1989, when the issue flared in Congress. Memos had surfaced detailing product placement deals, in which marketers paid to have brand-name products appear in films.

The deals in question included \$350,000 paid by Philip Morris to feature Lark cigarettes in "License to Kill," a James Bond movie, and \$42,500 to have Lois Lane, played by Margot Kidder, smoke Marlboros in "Superman II."

The negative news stories compelled the makers of "License to Kill,"

in production that year, to belatedly add the surgeon general's warning to the credits.

Today, film and tobacco companies vehemently deny they are making placement deals, and the film industry insists only creative considerations now guide decisions to include cigarettes. If no money is changing hands, filmmakers contend, they're not required to run the health warning.

"Our position and our understanding is that (paid placement) hasn't been taking place for quite some time," said Larry Deutchman of the Entertainment Industry Council. The nonprofit group works on social issues with the entertainment industry.

"Our policy is very clear: We do not engage in paid product placement," said Walker Merryman, a spokesman for The Tobacco Institute, a lobbying group.

Others in Hollywood go further and suggest tobacco is no longer hip.

"Smoking is rather passe now," said John Parkinson. Parkinson is vice president of marketing for Danjaq Inc., whose subsidiary produced "Goldeneye," the latest tale of Agent 007, last year.

"It was one of the updatings of James Bond that we did. He still drinks, he still womanizes, but he doesn't smoke anymore."

Movie	Earnings
1. Sleepers	\$12.6
2. The Ghost and the Darkness	\$7.6
3. First Wives Club	\$7.1
4. The Long Kiss Goodnight	\$7
5. That Thing You Do!	\$6.1
6. D3: The Mighty Ducks	\$5.8
7. The Chamber	\$5.3
8. Get on the Bus	\$2.3
9. Fly Away Home	\$1.4

SOURCE: AP

Musical revue an energetic mix of tunes

REVUE from page 12

This piece had more of a raw edge, a surprise in the first half but more than expected in the second.

"ENTR'ACTE" highlighted the band ensemble's true talents. Everyone was equal, but when a performer had a solo, it was exceptional.

When Welton Mays sang "Your Feet's Too Big," he showed the essence of downtown music. The audience found the piece very humorous.

With so few performers, the audience was treated to an intimate setting. Every performer was featured so the audience got to know them.

Throughout the performance, the audience was treated to a history lesson, too. Besides a couple of introductions, like explaining what a stride piano was, the music and performers gave direct and indirect references to the time period.

Subversive action and the police were mentioned a couple of times, but the big theme was sex.

Each song had varying degrees of sexuality, but when the performers got down and dirty, having fun in the second half, college students could have learned a lesson or two about dirty dancing.

Technically, the costumes and much of the choreography was appropriate. A few kinks with sound levels were worked out after the first few songs.

A standing ovation from the almost full house gave hope that the ensemble will continue "Ain't Misbehavin'" far into the future.

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