

# Big Four networks gear up for 1994-95 ratings battle

BY JOHN CROOK

Watch for ABC to pull into first place next season, based on the fall TV lineup recently unveiled by all four networks.

ABC's victory seems likely as the network plays it relatively safe, adding a spartan six new primetime series to its fall lineup.

Among the missing are "America's Funniest People," "Phenom," "Thea," "George," "Birdland" and "Byrds of Paradise." "Matlock" and "Sister, Sister" are expected to return midseason.

New series include: "On Our Own," with six real-life siblings playing a family of orphans; "Blue Skies," a sitcom starring Corey Parker ("Flying Blind"); comic Steve Harvey in "Me and the Boys"; "All-American Girl" with Asian-American comic Margaret Cho; "My So-Called Life" starring Bess Armstrong, from the "thirtysomething" team; and "McKenna" with Chad Everett.

"These Friends of Mine" has a new title ("Ellen"), while "Thunder Alley" has axed mom Diane Venora (the part is being recast).

CBS, striving to minimize damage from Fox's raid on its affiliates, keeps Sundays and Tuesdays intact, but drops "Evening Shade" on Mondays in favor of "The Boys Are Back," with Hal Linden and Suzanne Pleshette.

Two freshman series, "Daddy's Girls" with Dudley Moore and "Touched by an Angel," a gender-switched "Highway to Heaven"-esque drama, are on Wednesday.

"Christie" will return as a mid-season replacement, losing its Thursday berth to "Due South," the Canadian Mountie series. Also new on Thursday is "Chicago Hope," a hospital drama from David E. Kelley ("Picket Fences").

The police mystery "Under Suspicion" joins the lineup on Fridays (replacing "Burke's Law," which will return later). "The Five Mrs. Buchanans," Judith Ivey's new sitcom, fills half the slot vacated by "Harts of the West" on Saturday, along with the last-minute-reprieved "Hearts Afire."

Missing in action are "The Road Home" and "Tom," as well as "In the Heat of the Night," which will air only as four two-hour TV movies.

NBC brazenly moves "Wings" and "Frasier" (with "The Martin Short Show" sandwiched in between them) from Thursdays to Tuesdays, opposite ABC favorites "Full House" and "Roseanne" - fueling industry speculation that Roseanne Arnold's highly publicized personal travails may leave her series vulnerable to strong challenger. Expect NBC to move "Frasier" to a safer berth, however, if ratings drop too sharply.

"Earth 2," a new Steven Spielberg series, joins "seaQuest DSV" on Sundays. "The Cosby Mysteries" gets a Wednesday berth.

On Thursdays, "Mad About You" and "Seinfeld" are joined by Courteney Cox in "Friends," "Madman of the People" with Dabney Coleman and "E.R.," a medical drama from Michael Crichton ("Jurassic Park").

"Dateline NBC 2" precedes the reprieved "Homicide" on Fridays, while "Young at Heart" with Gene Wilder and "Sweet Justice" with Melissa Gilbert and Cicely Tyson are new on Saturday.

Among the missing are "Nurses," "Winnetka Road," "Saved by the Bell," "Getting By," "Cafe American" and "The Mommies," which may return later.

Fox, flush with its new VHF affiliates and seven-nights-a-week programming (plus the NFL games), moves "The Simpsons" to Sunday, slides "Martin" and "Living Single" to Thursday and adds several new dramas.

The spy caper "Fortune Hunter," starring Mark Frankel, formerly of "Sisters"; "Party of Five," yet another "orphans" drama; Linda Gray in "Models, Inc.," the superhero series "M.A.N.T.I.S.," and "Uptown Undercover," a New York variation on "Miami Vice."

Also new are two sitcoms, "Hardball" with Dann Florek (Dave Meyer from "L.A. Law") and a Generation X comedy, "Wild Oats." "The Critic," dumped by ABC, is set to be a midseason replacement for Fox.

Casualties include "Roc," "In Living Color," "Slobad," "The George Carlin Show" (which may be back), "South Central," "Herman's Head" and the acclaimed but low-rated "The Adventures of Brisco County, Jr."

★ LEGEND ★

Channel	Station	City
11	WJBK	Southfield
11.1	WDIV	Detroit
11.2	WTBO	Southfield
11.3	WXON	Southfield
11.4	WXYZ	Southfield
11.5	CBS2	Wester
11.6	WTYS	Detroit
11.7	COMETV	Farmington
11.8	WGPR	Detroit
11.9	CSPAN	Government
12	TBS	Atlanta
13	WGN	Chicago
14	WADL	MI, Clemens
15	CICA	Troy
16	CTHD/EWTH	Birmingham
17	TWN	Newbury
18	VH-1	Video Mts 1
19	LIFE	Lifeline
20	DISC	Discovery
21	CHS	Hours
22	USA	New York
23	ESPN	Sports
24	MTV	Music
25	NICK	Nickelodeon
26	TNT	Ashville
27	AMC	Classics
28	FAM	Family
29	HBO	Premium
30	SHOW	Premium
31	MAX	Premium
32	TMC	Premium
33	DISN	Premium
34	PASS	Am Actor
35	VC1	Pay-per-View
36	HOT	Pay-per-View
37	FLIX	PREMIUM
38	COM	Comedy
39	TOON	Ashville
40	BCI	New York
41	ABC	New York
42	SCA	Woodbury
43	CHBC	France



Robert De Niro portrays crime lord Al Capone in "The Untouchables," Thursday on Cinemax.