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French twist: Fox World is shopping foreign versions of "The Simple Life."

## 'Simple Life' on road trip for Fox World

Aussies looking for telefilms at MIPCOM. Story on page 6.

By Steve Brennan

*Mais non!* Your eyes do not deceive you. This is not Paris Hilton and farm pal Nicole Richie from Fox's "The Simple Life." Meet the pitchfork-wielding stars of one of the first international versions of the series, "La vie rurale" for French Canadian TV.

See "SIMPLE LIFE" on page 77

## O'Brien to succeed Leno

'Late Night' host switching to 'Tonight' in '09

By Andrew Wallenstein

NBC revealed its late-night succession plan Monday, announcing that Conan O'Brien will step in as host of "The Tonight Show" when Jay Leno steps down in 2009.

The announcement caught Hollywood by surprise: Leno, 54, had signed a five-year contract extension worth \$100 million this year but had given little indication of abdicating his late-night throne 17 years into his reign. He also has enjoyed a commanding lead over CBS rival "Late Show With David Letterman."

"When I signed my new con-



Leno



O'Brien

tract, I felt that the timing was right to plan for my successor, and there is no one more qualified than Conan," Leno said in a statement. "Plus, I promised (my wife) Mavis I would take her out for dinner before I turned 60."

O'Brien, 41, had about one

year left on his deal with NBC, where he has hosted "Late Night" since 1993. Although sources say O'Brien always had his eye on taking over "Tonight," he was said to have ABC and Fox in pursuit of his talents as well as potential leverage in the recent resignation of time-slot competitor Craig Kilborn from CBS' "The Late Late Show."

NBC Universal declined to make any executives available for comment on the decision, explaining that the company preferred to let Leno speak for himself when he was expected to announce his successor on Monday's edition of "Tonight," which coincided with the show's 50th anniversary.

But the silent treatment also is likely a maneuver to avoid any  
See "TONIGHT" on page 83

## TW, Comcast eye Adelphia

By Kathleen Anderson and Georg Szalai

NEW YORK — Industry giants Time Warner and Comcast Corp. confirmed Monday that they are exploring a joint bid for bankrupt cable operator Adelphia Communications, as Wall Street insiders had long expected they would do.

However, sources said the two companies are considering a joint takeover of all of Adelphia rather than the buyout of just some of the seven cable clusters into which Adelphia has divided itself in an attempt to sell as many parts for as high a price as possible.

Most insiders had expected TW  
See ADELPHIA on page 83

## Developing situation at CBS for Davis

By Nellie Andreeva

Geena Davis has inked a development deal with CBS.

Under the pact, the network will develop a series to star the Oscar-winning actress targeted for next season.

The deal marks Davis' first collaboration with CBS. It also reunites Davis with CBS entertainment president Nina Tassler, her friend from their days at Boston University.

Davis won an Oscar in 1989 for  
See DAVIS on page 83



Davis

## Lifetime: Television and advocacy for women

Influence, shows back causes

By Gail Schiller

After being dragged from her home and raped in the woods in broad daylight, Debbie Smith devoted herself to passing legislation that would fund DNA testing to help authorities find and arrest rapists. And she got a lot of help rallying support for her cause from an unlikely source: Lifetime Television.

In a rare tactic for a commercial television outfit in the business of generating ratings, Lifetime has made advocacy, education and bipartisan legislative campaigns on women's issues an integral part of its on-air profile and corporate culture.

And during the past five years, as Lifetime has been on a roll as one of the top general entertainment cablers under the lead-

See LIFETIME on page 69



Actress Angie Harmon, left, Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-La., and Susan Wilson at '02 news conference on video voyeurism

Linda Spillers/WIREIMAGE.COM

## Lifetime

*Continued from page 1—*

ership of Carole Black, the network — celebrating its 20th anniversary this year — has intensified its advocacy and legislative work on behalf of women.

On Monday, Lifetime hosted a breast cancer heroes luncheon in Beverly Hills honoring survivors of the disease including the mothers of Eric McCormack, Christina Applegate and Carson Daly. And tonight, Lifetime is taping its fifth annual WomenRock! concert, featuring such performers as Kelly Clarkson and Blondie, to raise awareness for breast cancer. It will air Oct. 28 on the network.

Marketing and political experts call Lifetime's embrace of such causes as breast cancer research, rape victims' rights, ending female genital mutilation and baby brokering a "brilliant" strategy to brand the network as a force for good with its core audience while contributing what it can — mostly a strong platform for raising awareness of issues — to worthy causes.

"They really have made a difference in helping policy-makers advance policies that help women, children and families," says Rep. Carolyn Maloney, D-N.Y., who worked with Smith and Lifetime to push the Debbie Smith bill, which calls for funding to clear a backlog of some 200,000 untested rape kit samples sitting on laboratory shelves around the country. The measure passed the House of Representatives last fall, and similar legislation is now awaiting a full vote in the Senate.

Lifetime, jointly owned by the Walt Disney Co. and Hearst Corp., has walked a fine line in picking causes that are nonpartisan to avoid alienating potential viewers as well as legislators it is trying to work with. And to earn credibility in the passionate world of grass-roots activists and avoid the taint of exploitation, the network also has had to demonstrate its commitment to causes with investments of money and time, not just talk.

"All of the networks lobby on Capitol Hill on issues like cable regulation, licensing of the airwaves — things like that that are core to their businesses," says Martha Burk, chair of the National Council of Women's Organizations, an umbrella entity representing some 200 nonprofit groups. "But when we're talking about

advocacy on social issues, to my knowledge Lifetime is the only one that does anything like this."

Lifetime's activism is woven into the fabric of its programming through franchises like WomenRock! and its partnership with Eve Ensler's V-Day, an international organization seeking to stop violence against women and girls. Beyond that, the network's legislative agenda is sometimes worked into the story lines of its original series and longform productions. It's a unique synthesis of entertainment and information that has clearly resonated with its audience, marketers say.

"I think there is no better way to lock and load a viewing customer for life," says Erik Stroman of Entertainment Marketing Partners, an entertainment marketing firm. "This type of altruistic marketing indirectly supports Lifetime's brand and is as good as marketing gets."



**"This bill may bear my name, but it is truly a Lifetime bill. When this bill passes, it will be due in large part to their efforts."  
— Rape victim Debbie Smith, who has worked with Lifetime Television to rally support for legislation to fund DNA testing to help law enforcement officials find rapists.**

By working with a core group of at least 100 organizations that represent tens of millions of women, Lifetime gets the added benefit of finding content for the network. Lifetime senior vp original movies Trevor Walton estimates that about 25% of Lifetime's original movies stem from the network's public affairs work. "We have great programming at least due in part to our advocacy," he says.

Just this summer, Lifetime signed with Smith to make a movie about her life story and the 6½ years she lived in fear that the man who raped her — who was sent to prison for another crime six months later — would make good on his threat to return to kill her or harm her family if she reported the rape. Mandatory DNA testing of all convicted felons in the state of Virginia ultimately led police to Smith's rapist.

Lifetime also made a movie about Susan Wilson of Louisiana, who was secretly videotaped by a neighbor who planted a hidden surveillance camera in her bedroom and bathroom. Wilson credits Lifetime with helping her and Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-La., rally support for a bill that would make

video voyeurism a federal crime. The movie, "Video Voyeur," aired in January 2002, but Lifetime is still working with Wilson on getting legislation passed. A different version of a video voyeur bill passed in the House last week.

One issue that Lifetime has championed for nearly a decade but has yet to make a movie about is ending so-called drive-through mastectomies, a health insurance policy that forces women to be discharged from the hospital the same day they undergo surgery. Tami Agassi, sister of tennis star Andre Agassi and a breast cancer survivor, credits Lifetime with enlisting her in the campaign to lobby for legislation to stop the practice.

Lifetime executives acknowledge that the network's championing of women's causes helps build viewer loyalty but insist that helping women — not marketing the Lifetime brand or individual Lifetime programs — is their true

ers — are extensive.

Through these organizations' Web sites and message boards, newsletters, petition drives, mailings and other activities, Lifetime generates promotional exposure, including arranged screenings for its movies and series.

"They're able to position themselves as an important part of their viewers' lives, and all those pieces work together whether Lifetime is trying to push breast cancer awareness or promote a specific television program," says Mitch Litvak, president of entertainment marketing firm the L.A. Office. "All their efforts combined should do more than build their brand; at the end of the day, it has to have an effect on their ratings as well. It's a brilliant philosophy, and it's what Lifetime is all about."

But does a big advocacy campaign usually translate to big ratings for a similarly themed program?

"It's hard to quantify how it helps, but it certainly doesn't hurt," Haskins says.

Beyond its own air, Lifetime posts its petitions and information on its advocacy campaigns on its Web site; holds screenings and hosts receptions, briefings and other events to raise public awareness;

enlists celebrities as advocates; organizes news conferences; attends congressional hearings; and lends its name and occasionally its financial support to women's groups.

During the production of the movie "Baby for Sale," starring Dana Delany, Lifetime executives persuaded Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, D-N.Y., to support a bill raising penalties for baby brokering that was introduced days after the movie premiered in July.

After it aired "Video Voyeur," Lifetime sent the movie's star, Angie Harmon, to join Wilson and Landrieu at a news conference in Washington announcing video voyeur legislation. "When my movie was made, I told them how I wanted to work on federal legislation, and they were just so supportive of that," Wilson says.

For the Debbie Smith bill, Lifetime posted a petition on its Web site for which it has so far collected more than 100,000 signatures. It has brought those names to members of Congress, asking them to support the legislation.

"This bill may bear my name, but it is truly a Lifetime bill," Smith says. "When this bill passes it will be due in large part to their efforts." ■