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FALL TV 2013

Taking a look at Fall TV



CBeebies' Sarah + Duck from Karrot Animation

Cartoon Network

With a raft of returning hits and new hopefuls, Cartoon is taking a holistic approach to nurturing shows

BY BRENDAN CHRISTIE

The net Cartoon Network reaches nearly 100 million homes in the US and can be found in 166 countries around the world. According to the network, it ranks as TV's number-one destination for early primetime (7 p.m. to 9 p.m.) delivery among boys six to 11 and nine to 14 to date. It has an equally expansive reach in social—over 20 million fans have liked the channel's main Facebook page, and it maintains a social presence for most of its shows.

According to Scott Thomas, the net's VP of consumer marketing, CN skews slightly boy and aims to be a little edgy, but the emphasis is always on fun.

Current hits When it comes to what's popping on CN, it's an embarrassment of riches. The net has a raft of hits in its catalogue, across all forms of animation, including newer series such as *Adventure Time*, *Regular Show*, *The Amazing World of Gumball*, *Johnny Test* and *Annoying Orange*, as well as classic staples like *Looney Tunes* and *Tom and Jerry*.

In September, for example, premiere episodes of *Regular Show* (Monday, 7:30 p.m.) and *Adventure Time* (Monday, 7 p.m.) both ranked number one in their respective slots with boys six to 11 and nine to 14, increasing average delivery by double-digits among targeted kids and boys vs. the same time period last year.

The challenge Trying to nurture current hits while finding room in the schedule for new programs.

The strategy When it comes to hits like *Adventure Time* and *Regular Show*, SVP of programming and scheduling Stacy Isenhower says, "We aggressively program those shows to have premieres most weeks out of the year." (Cartoon has also changed the shows' slots for the fourth quarter so that they are stripped at 7 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., respectively.)

"We nurture them a little and let them get an audience," she says. "We let them hit and then expand them into strips in our after-school and fringe daypart. In 2014, we're going to start nurturing [*Adventure Time* and *Regular Show*] in a bigger, event-sized way...celebrating some of the other characters as our audience gets more familiar with the shows."

Isenhower takes a holistic approach to the primetime schedule. "One of the things we did this year was to say that every night at 7 p.m., Monday through Thursday, we would have something new—something to anchor the night. So, we can then drive from the new episode at 7 p.m. to the new series at 7:30 p.m. and then to the next new show at 8 p.m." The goal, she says, is to create momentum from night to night, until the week wraps on Friday with the best of CN in the form of *Pizza Night with Pizza Steve*—a character from the new show *Uncle Grandpa*. Weekends are about action, feature films and sampling.

Fall hopefuls CN's new series include *Uncle Grandpa* (20 x 11 minutes)—a fast-paced, gag-filled animation for six to 11s created by Pete Browngardt (*Secret Mountain Fort Awesome*)—and *Steven Universe*, created by writer and storyboard artist Rebecca Sugar (*Adventure Time*). It's told from the perspective of Steven, the youngest member of a team of magical Guardians of the Universe.

Returning franchises with new seasons include DreamWorks' *Dragons: Defenders of Berk* and *Total Drama: All Stars* (Fresh TV through Cake Entertainment). It's a series Isenhower deems "the gift that keeps on giving...It reinvents itself every season."

Marketing Mix Thomas notes that CN's big hits don't tend to follow seasons—they run throughout the year—which limits the big "season premiere push" some nets have. "We look for promotable moments, and we'll build a marketing campaign around [them]," he says. "We've got a lot of returning hits that we have to take care of from a marketing perspective, and there are limited resources, whether it is our air time, or our marketing dollars, social media space or what have you. We'll try to find the moments that we want to celebrate so that they are not all happening at the same time. In other words, we don't create our own logjams."

Cartoon dedicates plenty of its own air to promo, although it will bring in competitive air, digital, social and web as required. Often those messages pair current hits with new shows to double up on impact.

Hiccup and Toothless are set to fly again in the latest edition of DreamWorks' *Dragons* franchise—*Defenders of Berk*





Set in a secret hospital for superheroes, *Mighty Med* is the latest sitcom from It's A Laugh to join the Disney XD lineup

Disney XD

It's all about serving the audience, wherever it may be hanging out

The net Disney XD is a 24-hour network that reaches more than 78 million households in the US. (There are 26 Disney XD channels in 141 countries worldwide, beaming into more than 260 million households.) It features a mix of live-action and animated programming for kids ages six to 14, hyper-targeting boys.

Paul DeBenedittis, SVP of Programming Strategy for Disney Channels Worldwide, says the goal is to be laugh-out-loud funny, relevant and aspirational.

Current hits The channel is coming off its biggest year ever, having set yearly ratings records in both primetime and total day for boys six to 14, tweens nine to 14 and boys nine to 14. The net boasts live-action hits such as *Kickin' It* (with ratings up double-digits over season two), *Lab Rats* (currently the channel's number one series) and *Pair of Kings*, as well as animated toppers like *Avengers Assemble* and *Ultimate Spider-Man*. Add to that newcomers *Crash and Bernstein* and *Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja*.

"I think we are fortunate to work with some really talented writers and production teams," admits DeBenedittis. "They are constantly able to keep the stories engaging, keep the characters developing, take the adventure to another place, and on top of all that, keep the audience laughing along the way."

The challenge Keeping the party going—reaching the biggest audience possible, evolving current shows and developing new hits.

The strategy "I'm really programming to the audience 12 months of the year," observes DeBenedittis. "I'm not about one season in time...I'll have bursts of episodes throughout the year. The wonderful thing about what we do in cable is that we can create sustained plans, with stunting and

theming and packages, for both linear and digital, that allows us to build the awareness of the show with something exciting throughout the year."

DeBenedittis says he takes full advantage of digital platforms in order to reach mass audiences. "I have to make sure that I have a digital play with collections online and with additional content on Watch Disney." That also includes working with partners like Marvel and iTunes to make sure content is available in different forms on different platforms.

"I am not a believer in 'one size fits all,'" he notes. "It's really thinking about the themes. What is that ultimate connection between points A, B and C? That's how we strategize around our content and how we work with marketing, so that ultimately the digital platforms are a blend of content strategy and marketing."

Fall hopefuls Disney XD has high hopes for *Mighty Med*, a half-hour live-action series from It's A Laugh Productions that follows the adventures of two teenage best friends who land after-school jobs at Mighty Med, a secret hospital for superheroes and sci-fi and fantasy characters.

"It stars Bradley Steven Perry and Jake Short, who are two familiar actors from Disney Channel series," notes DeBenedittis. "What I love about the series is that you don't have to be a superhero fan or a sci-fi fan to love it. It's laugh-out-loud funny—really the story of two best friends, finding themselves and realizing that they have a place in this world."

Also just launching this fall is Marvel Television's 26 x 30-minute *Hulk and the Agents of S.M.A.S.H.*, a new addition to the Sunday Marvel block that stars Hulk, Red Hulk, A-Bomb, She-Hulk and Skaar, an unlikely family that tackles threats too enormous for other heroes to handle.

Marketing mix Working with digital is key when it comes to promo for Disney XD. That includes showcasing series such as *Mighty Med* on digital first to build excitement for the linear launch.

"We're not afraid to promote to and let the audience know that there is a digital world," says DeBenedittis. "So if we are going to do something in Watch that is unique for a particular show, we'll promote that. It's not just something that we are adding to the mix—we really want people to engage with the content on those other screens."

He says the linear channel will also do events and themes, such as this November's Pranksgiving—a month-long comedy theme tied to the US Thanksgiving holiday. In its second year, the event's 2013 edition will be bigger and better, with two new series premiering—the game show *Japanizi: Going, Going, Gong!* and hidden-camera prank series *Just Kidding*.

These series "diversify and complement our schedule," says DeBenedittis. "And with everything under the Pranksgiving umbrella, it really allows the message to be about Pranksgiving and everything associated with that. We'll use our entire digital portfolio to spread the word—a lot of that will happen in Watch XD, with some content that we will put on in advance of linear."



One of CBeebies' biggest shows last year, *Old Jack's Boat* is back for more

CBeebies

With a wide public-service remit, CBeebies wants to be as inclusive and representative as it can be, bringing every child along for the adventure

The net UK diginet CBeebies targets boys and girls up to about age six, with a broadcast day that begins at 6 a.m. and wraps at 7 p.m. The channel is free-to-air, something controller Kay Benbow describes as a "very privileged position." And because of that, she strives to serve the widest possible audience. "I think it is about being accessible and inclusive," she notes. "So I think we try to do things that other broadcasters won't do."

Current hits Top performers last year included *Old Jack's Boat*, which features legendary actor Bernard Cribbins telling stories (reaching a high average audience of 365,000), as well as CGI series *Octonauts* (with 356,000 viewers) and one-offs such as the ever-popular *CBeebies*

Panto, which attracted 358,000 viewers when it aired on December 21 last year. Also doing well is 2D toon *Sarah & Duck*, which returns this year, along with mixed-media series *Let's Play* and toon *What's the Big Idea?*

"I think it's about finding the right talent that works for our audience," says Benbow of hits such as *Old Jack's Boat*. "It doesn't have to be a stereotype. Bernard Cribbins is now in his 80s, but it has been the most phenomenal success because he can tell stories as brilliantly as he did when I was a child. He has been a part of so many peoples lives for so long that he crosses the generations, and I think helps with family viewing and co-viewing."

The challenge Continuing to serve a wide audience by pushing boundaries and taking programming risks. Also, adding programming with female leads to redress the gender balance.

The strategy CBeebies kicks off the programming day with energy in the form of the Get Set Go block, before turning to the programming heartland, which targets preschoolers (primarily two and three-year-olds), with the Discovery and Do block. From about 3 p.m. until 6 p.m., it's Big Fun Time, with content that skews a little older. The day wraps with the Bedtime Hour from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m., when the channel shuts down—think *In the Nightgarden* and *CBeebies Bedtime Stories*. Weekends are slightly more family-oriented and energetic to encourage co-viewing.

Fall Hopefuls "I think what we want CBeebies to do is inspire young children to explore the world and discover things," observes Benbow. "I hope that all of our content does that in one form or another."

To that end, the channel has a number of high-profile launches this fall, including *Melody*, a 20 x seven-minute mixed-media show produced by Wish Films and LAAH Entertainment with support from the RNIB. *Melody* is a partially sighted girl with an incredible imagination who discovers a piece of classical music each episode and visualizes stories and characters to match.

Topsy and Tim (60 x 11 minutes), meanwhile, is based on the popular books by Jean and Gareth Adamson that have sold 21 million copies over the past 53 years. The live-action series explores family life from the perspective of five-year-old twins and is created by Darrall Macqueen.

Also launching is a series from the BBC NHU called *Andy's Wild Adventures*, a 40 x 15-minute CGI series that will take advantage of the Natural History Unit's extensive archives and expertise to introduce young viewers to the world of dinosaurs.

Marketing Mix CBeebies has the advantage of its parent-targeted website-within-a-website called Grownups, and it also leverages Facebook and Twitter to get messaging out. Add to that plenty of promo on the channel, and some throws from BBC1 and BBC2, and it has access to a wide parent-targeted audience.

Nick UK

Though access to US hits gives Nick UK an advantage, it's all about meeting domestic expectations

The net Targeted at kids four to 15, the Nickelodeon UK family (Nickelodeon, Nickelodeon HD, Nick +1, Nicktoons, Nick Jr., Nick Jr. +1 and Nick Jr. 2) reaches more than 10 million viewers a month and is available in 14 million cable and satellite homes in the UK and Ireland.

Nick is a general entertainment channel, and VP of scheduling Tim Patterson, notes that it aims to be “relatable, confident and surprising.”

Current hits Many of Nick UK’s hits, including *Victorious* and *iCarly*, are US imports. *iCarly*, which recently wrapped, averaged 338,100 viewers for its final broadcast—954,500 in total for the special during its repeats. (Old episodes of this hugely successful Nick franchise will continue to air in the UK.)

The net also had its best-ever ratings for the 2013 Kids’ Choice Awards, which was the number-one show on all kids channels in its time period, with an average audience of 269,400, representing a 43% increase over last year’s audience for the slot.

Dance Academy (an Australian import) was also a hit for Nick UK in its 6:30 p.m. slot.

For Patterson, it’s less about where his shows come from, but rather that they speak to his audience. “What I’m finding is that for our main battlefield blocks, which are the hour before school and the two hours after school, our audiences are perfectly satisfied with shows that are coming from the

States, as long as they are the quality that we expect,” he says. “And they will vote by switching off, if we do not maintain that quality.”

The challenge Continuing to build on present success and, according to Patterson, “refocusing on the funny” by organically infusing more comedy into the schedule.

The strategy Patterson is very strategic when it comes to scheduling, factoring in everything from the influence of PVRs to the moves of his competitors in order to find specific demographics or time slots he can take advantage of.

“We’re trying to identify chinks in our competitors’ armor and play and promote our shows accordingly,” he notes. So if a show is popping, Nick might double it up, strip it across the week at a specific time, or use the momentum to power other shows.

On the weekend, when viewing is more passive and the day tends to divide more by demographic (young kids in the morning, older later on), Patterson says he is happy to do more zoning or stacking of shows, such as putting on a two-hour block of *iCarly* or *Victorious*.

Fall hopefuls *Sam & Cat* looks to be the natural successor to *iCarly* and *Victorious*. (In fact, it features two of the stars from those series.) The live-action series from Dan Schneider “is almost like a ready-made hit for us,” says Patterson. “It has already done fantastically well in the States, which is a really lovely thing to see. So what we are going to be doing is launching it on Monday and then encoring it through the week. We are going to be building up that momentum weekly, as opposed to the more traditional strip.”

Also new is *Extreme Babysitting* (22 x half hours), a hidden-camera prank show from General Purpose Pictures and YTV that puts teenagers to the ultimate babysitting test, as well as a fellow live-action series *Haunted Hathaways* (26 x 22 minutes). It launches in November and is created by veteran comedy-writer and producer Robert Peacock. Returning will be new series of hits such as *Dance Academy*, *Victorious* and *The Legend of Korra*.

Marketing mix With so many Nick brands, much of Patterson’s promo occurs on his own air. “There is a serious look at how we use our million pounds worth of airtime as effectively as possible,” he notes. “And we are investing in new software to ensure that we are optimizing our messaging as much as possible.

“Whether it’s Instagram and Twitter or online, or watching other channels, the end game is about making sure you get your message out there clearly and succinctly. I’m lucky with the type of quality shows coming down the pipe, but the most important thing in this brave new world—which is not that new anymore, it’s just brave—is about understanding your audience. What they are doing and how they are viewing?”

With a pedigree stemming from *iCarly* and *Victorious*, new sitcom *Sam & Cat* is sure to be a hit





Gulli hopes to make network stars out of the three leads featured in its new variety show *Gu'Live*

Gulli

The most popular destination for kids in France, Gulli is hoping to put a few more familiar faces on the channel this fall

The net Gulli ranks number one in France for four to 10s, attracting a cumulative audience of about six million viewers every day. Its website (gulli.fr) leads the youth universe, with 700,000 unique visitors each month—garnering a total of 13 million views in August alone.

A free-to-air channel, Gulli recently turned eight, the same age as its average viewers. (Although, it targets a wide four to 14 demo.) “We have a responsibility to all those kids,” notes Caroline Cochaux, head of programming for Kids & Family Channels at Lagardère Active (Gulli, CANAL J, Tiji, Santa Claus Channel). “Both parents and children should feel safe in terms of the programs that we offer.”

Current hits Last year’s hits for the channel included *Legends of Chima* (23.4% share), *SpieZ!* (21.6%) and *Pokémon Black and White Adventures* (20.1%), as well as one-offs such as *My Little Pony: Equestria Girls*.

Gulli picked up series one through 17 of *Pokémon*, so it was able to air five-hour marathons, attracting audiences across a wide spectrum. “If you put *Pokémon* on at 6 p.m., you get a young audience from eight to 12,” observes Cochaux. “If you program it later, you will get an older audience. That is the way it works with most of our programs...

The parents can have fun and the children can have fun, but mostly they will not have fun for exactly the same reason.”

For live action, she points to successes such as *Les Parents*, which the channel picked up from Montreal’s LP8 Media and dubbed into Parisian French. “It is very light, very funny and made the North American way, with fun every 20 seconds,” she says. “It was a big success and children loved it, so we are releasing seasons two and three now.”

The challenge Developing appointment viewing and creating more personalities for the channel to promote around.

The strategy “For the new season, I wanted the programs to be more [accessible],” says Cochaux. “I created some special blocks that children can watch and create a habit around. So, on the weekend we created *Code Adventure* and *Girl Power*.”

Code Adventure skews towards boys, featuring series like *Power Rangers*, *Beyblade*, *Max Steel* and *Legends of Chima*. *Girl Power*, meanwhile, has *Atomic Betty*, *Monster High*, *Littlest Pet Shop* and *Rosie*. “We tried to give to the audience points that they can fix on,” Cochaux notes.

The channel has also created *Ciné Gulli*, a Tuesday 8:45 p.m. slot for feature films. (Many French kids don’t have school on Wednesday mornings.)

Cochaux notes that Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays are treated like traditional schoolday blocks—action early in the morning, then educational, and then cartoons for lunch. The day builds again until 4:30 p.m., with live action until 7 p.m., and then slightly older skewing programming afterwards. Wednesdays are treated more like weekends.

Fall hopefuls New for fall is live-action game show *Tahiti Quest* (six x 90-minutes) from Ah! Productions, which sees families competing to remain the last one standing and win big prizes in French Polynesia. It’s hosted by Benjamin Castaldi, a famous French TV personality, who Gulli can promote around.

Gu'Live from J2F Production is a 26-minute live-action variety show hosted by three young actors that features stars, dancing and games.

The channel has also returned with a new version of the classic *L'École des Fans* (*Fan School*) from Enibas Productions, in which kids compete to win a VIP day with their favorite celebrities. The 10 x 52-minute series is hosted by comedian Willy Rovelli.

Marketing mix Cochaux says promoting *Tahiti Quest* was simple enough—“I don’t know many journalists who wouldn’t come to Tahiti.” Normally, however, the main part of the channel’s marketing muscle comes in the form of promos supporting Lagardère’s diverse offerings, though Cochaux says she will turn to other media when it’s appropriate.

The channel also relies on its online offerings, and the Gulli app has already been downloaded more than a million times. – Brendan Christie