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HBO trumpets Saturday night at the movies

Spends \$5 million on marketing campaign

By Rich Brown

ome Box Office next week plans to debut a \$5 million marketing campaign designed to promote the network's guarantee of a new, first-on-cable movie premiere every Saturday night.

The marketing blitz—billed as the largest single campaign ever for HBO—will include network TV spots and a 54-market radio promotion as well as a mall tour, a sweepstakes and print ads in *People* and *TV Guide*. The marketing efforts run Aug. 15-Sept. 11, culminating with a free preview weekend of HBO and its sister service, Cinemax.

The campaign is aimed at both new and current subscribers. HBO marketing research conducted in February found that frequent reinforcement of the Saturday Night Movie message would improve HBO's value among nonsubscribers. The research also showed that single-pay subscribers who were aware of the Saturday Night Movie guarantee were more likely to keep HBO.

HBO has held the number-one ratings position for three out of four weeks since introducing its HBO Saturday Nights guarantee in June 1992, according to ratings data supplied by the network. HBO averaged a 13.1 Wanna Sure Thing? HBO Ghunday Mighta

A.C. Nielsen Co. rating in HBO homes during first quarter 1994. Its closest competitor during the quarter was CBS with a 10.9 rating.

HBO's growing marketing efforts are one way the programing service has tried to jump-start the pay TV category in the past year. The Cable Act of 1992 also has helped by establishing pay TV networks as an unregulated revenue stream for cable system operators. And a growing number of distribution options, such as wireless cable TV and direct broadcast satellite TV, also are helping to spur growth.

HBO distribution now stands at more than 18 million homes, up roughly 1 million from a year ago. HBO executives are projecting growth of another 1 million households in the year ahead.

Schiller to TBS Sports

Turner Broadcasting System may get a piece of the 1996 Atlanta summer Olympics after all. That is one item on the agenda of Turner's newly named president of Turner Sports, Harvey Schiller, who has served as executive director of the United States Olympic Committee since 1990. "I'm optimistic about this," Schiller says.

"Turner has been an excellent partner both to the Olympics and to the city of Atlanta," Schiller says. As head of the USOC, he has discussed the issue with NBC Sports President Dick Ebersol, letting him know that organizers want "as much Olympics coverage on the air as possible." Earlier this year NBC said it would put the games on without a cable partner. "I know there are challenges, given the view of NBC affiliates, but I'll continue the dialogue to see if at all possible we can make that happen." Schiller replaces Terence McGuirk as head of TBS Sports. McGuirk said last week that the move would give him more time to devote to his other duties as TBS executive vice president, including sales and marketing, finance, research, government affairs and public relations.