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Eyemark eyes 'PM' revival

*CBS O&Os could team half-hour strip with
'Entertainment Tonight' in prime access*

By Cynthia Littleton

Eyemark Entertainment is the latest heavy-hitter to enter the first-run access fray for fall 1998.

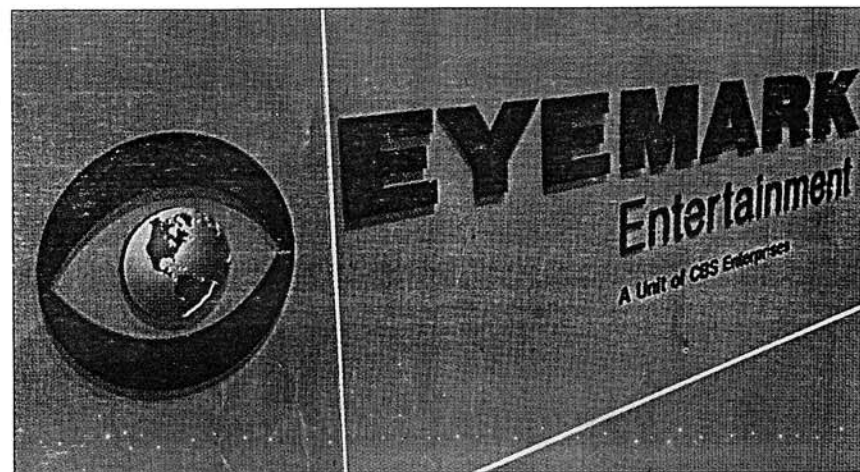
Station sources confirmed Wednesday that Eyemark is gearing up to revive "PM Magazine" as an access vehicle next year. Eyemark officials declined comment, but sources say the CBS O&O

group is considering pairing the half-hour strip with "Entertainment Tonight" in prime access.

The launch of "PM Magazine" may squeeze "Hard Copy" out of its access slots in the CBS O&O markets. Sources say the station group is anxious to renew the venerable "Entertainment Tonight," but "Hard Copy"'s ratings have declined

over the past three years since the CBS stations acquired Paramount Domestic Television's access block.

Eyemark's move adds more heat to the burgeoning battle among syndicators for lucrative access time slots next year, when most of the shows now airing in access are



Continues on page 19

Eyemark

Continued from page 1

up for renewal in key major markets.

The resurgence of "PM Magazine," whose 14-year run ended in 1990, may also complicate DreamWorks Television's efforts to launch an access strip next year with Connie Chung and Maury Povich.

DreamWorks has been pitching the show to station buyers this week, but the startup studio has yet to line up a distributor for the project. A high-ranking source said Eyemark passed on the opportunity to distribute the show in meetings with DreamWorks officials this week.

The ABC-owned station group is also out of the running for the Chung/Povich project, now that King World has clinched long-term renewals for its game shows, "Wheel of Fortune" and "Jeopardy!"

DreamWorks officials have said they're hoping to align the show with a distributor attached to a major station group with an established news operation to help feed stories to the news-driven show.

The NBC O&Os may still be a contender for the Chung/Povich project, depending on the fate of the struggling new entertainment magazine "Access Hollywood."

The Fox-owned stations recently have been very successful in access with off-network sitcoms, but the 10 major-market stations Fox has acquired from New World carry first-run programming in access. Those stations are also crucial outlets for "Access Hollywood," initially developed as a joint venture between NBC and New World.

Sources say plans to revive "PM Magazine" on the drawing board ever since Eyemark, CBS' syndication arm, was formed last year in the wake of the Westinghouse/CBS merger. Eyemark absorbed the assets of Westinghouse's Group W Productions, which distributed "PM Magazine" from 1976-1990. ■