In Brief

While Lorimar Telepictures shareholders approved company's plan to merge with Warner Communications last Thursday (Dec. 8), **New York appeals court upheld state judge's decision preventing deal from going through.** Appeals court upheld Sept. 27 ruling that merger would violate Warner's shareholder agreement with Chris-Craft Industries. Agreement forbids Warner's ownership of televison stations while it holds 25% or more of stock in BHC, Chris-Craft's broadcasting subsidiary. By acquiring Lorimar, Warner would take ownership of Lorimar's two Puerto Rican stations, which it is attempting to sell, and its Pittsburgh station, which the company has a definitive agreement to sell. Warner had hoped that Lorimar's placement of stations in FCC-sanctioned trust would enable merger to go through. "Obviously, we are disappointed by the ruling, but we are working on alternatives, and it's our intent to consummate the transaction in January," said Warner spokesman Geoff Holmes. Holmes has previously said to close the merger, Warner would prefer not to cut down its 42.5% stake in BHC, but to have Lorimar complete its sale of the stations. Given usual timetable for station transfers, completion of station sales by the end of January may be difficult. It was not known whether Warner would continue its appeal.

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Paramount and MCA-Universal last week signed five-year film deal with UK direct-to-home project **British Satellite Broadcasting** reportedly valued in excess of $300 million. Contract with BSB, scheduled to launch in late 1989, follows by days $160 million signing with Columbia and earlier deals with Hollywood majors MGM-UA and Warner and independents Cannon and Nelson Entertainment. Paramount and MCA-Universal will supply between 800 and 1,000 films, including at least 150 first-run and 500 library films, 200 made-for-TV movies and some 30 new films per year. Among hits from Paramount, number two US studio, are the UK's top two box office grossers in 1988, "Fatal Attraction" and "Crocodile Dundee II." BSB's chief satellite rival, **Rupert Murdoch's Sky Television, meanwhile, is apparently in negotiation with Warner Bros.** for its own film package from studio, which earlier sold 94 films to BSB. Murdoch pay service, Sky Movies, on air next February if launch of Luxembourg satellite Astra went as planned last Friday night, Dec. 9, so far has film deals with number-one studio, Disney's Touchstone Films, and with Murdoch's 20th Century Fox Films. Sky Television last week also said it would add new ad-supported movie/arts service, Sky Classic Channel, to its five-channel package. Astra will have at least one other pay film channel, multilingual Filmnet service already in operation on Scandinavian satellite. Reportedly in competition for single remaining UK-based transponder on 16-channel Astra is Murdoch rival Robert Maxwell, said to be negotiating for music channel MTV Europe, jointly owned with Viacom.

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ABC announced several prime time schedule changes last week: *Fine Romance*, which was going to air on Sunday at 8 p.m., will instead air at same time on Thursday, replacing *Knightwatch*, which is being canceled after Jan. 19, 1989. Current Sunday, 8 p.m. show, *Mission Impossible*, which was developed to fill in during writers' strike, will continue in its time period. Following *Fine Romance* on Thursday will be *Heartbeat*, one-hour drama premiering Jan. 5, 1989. Until then, ABC will continue airing different entertainment and news specials at 10 p.m. *The ABC Mystery Movie*, which was to have aired beginning at 9 p.m. on Saturday, will instead occupy that time slot on Monday, currently filled by *ABC Monday Night Football*. Network is expected to announce soon whether it will continue with movies in Saturday night time slot, or introduce mid-season replacement programing.

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FM share of radio audience has climbed to 76%, according to Fall 1988 Volume I RADAR 38 report, up from 74% in last year's fall survey. Radio overall now reaches, on weekly basis, about 190 million people, or approximately 96% of population. Current RADAR figures, released by Statistical Research Inc., reflect radio usage based on 12,000 respondents from November 1987 to October 1988. SRI said RADAR 38 volumes II and III are slated for release next February.

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Bill Daniels and Home Sports Entertainment have merged interests they have in four regional sports networks, it was announced

Public TV and radio take long view

Both PBS and NPR boards of directors met last week, each adopting long-term strategic planning resolutions.

Budget options for next year dominated discussion at NPR's Dec. 7-8 Washington meeting, where some 50 station managers and other non-staff, non-board attendees were provided the opportunity to address the board. Chairman Wayne Roth stressed his desire to see the board move beyond pure maintenance to "build" a budget on the premise that NPR "is a growing concern."

NPR President Doug Bennet confirmed that the bottom line will be a 20%-25% NPR assessment increase for full service stations—the vast majority of members—in FY 1990. Inflation, overdue upgrades in current services and the effects of program carriage drops in the second year of unbundled news-performance programing explain over half the increase, said NPR, with proposed hourly newscasts and other "strengthened services" constituting the remainder. The board promised to provide more data on the budget options' effects on dues to the stations before its February 1989 meeting.

The board also resolved to create a strategic planning working party made up primarily of non-public radio members. The group of "diverse citizen leaders...would serve as an intermediary in exploring potential services." The proposed schedule calls for the group to be appointed next month and to submit a strategic plan for the 1990's by November 1989. Carolyn Sachs, executive director of the Benton Foundation, joined NPR last week as special assistant to the president for planning and research coordination.

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Topping PBS's Dec. 7-9 agenda in San Antonio, Tex., was a proposal to strengthen the National Program Service's (NPS) authority. Beginning with the premise that public TV's historically decentralized programing process "cannot be squared with economic reality" today, PBS staff presented an NPS mission statement to the board, which approved it Friday morning, Dec. 9. An attached set of principles call for increased NPS authority "to act decisively [and] to commission and acquire new...programing," as well as increased funding for NPS, which should "manage a single, multipurpose fund supported by general assessment revenues" while remaining "accountable to the stations." Those principles, said PBS, "will guide and inform" PBS's participation in the NAPTS system-wide programing funding task force, which aims to present a plan by April.

The PBS board also adopted a resolution to amend underwriting credit rules, changing "made possible by this and other public stations" to "made possible by the financial support of viewers like you" or similar language. And the board confirmed the positions of Howard Miller as senior vice president, broadcast operations and engineering (replacing Richard Green) and Elizabeth Wolfe as senior vice president, treasurer, (replacing Amy Fleishman).