



Thursday, December 3, 2009

Kevin Pollak to host 'Little Genius'

Thesp Kevin Pollak has signed on to host Fox's upcoming kid-centric gamer "Our Little Genius." Show, which tests children who are experts in various subject matters, launches behind "American Idol" at 9 p.m. on Wed., Jan. 13, and then settles into the Tuesday at 9 p.m. spot on Jan. 19. "I've been a fan of Kevin Pollak's work for many years," said "Our Little Genius" exec producer Mark Burnett. "His incredible humor, intelligence and quick wit are all perfect additions to an incredibly dynamic format. He instinctively knows when to add seriousness and when to add humor." Pollak has cultivated a new career as an Internet talkshow host, via his "Kevin Pollack Chat Show" website. His film credits include "A Few Good Men," "The Usual Suspects," "The Whole Nine Yards" and "Casino." Pollak will next be seen opposite Bruce Willis in Kevin Smith's "A Couple of DICS," as well as "Middle Men" with Luke Wilson and Giovanni Ribisi. Mark Burnett Prods. and Zoo Prods. are behind "Our Little Genius." Burnett, Barry Poznick and John Stevens are exec producers.

Anderson, Hoffman at Altar on Religion Pic

"There Will Be Blood" writer/director Paul Thomas Anderson has found religion, and Philip Seymour Hoffman, for his next film. Anderson has written an untitled period drama that is set up at Universal. Hoffman, who has played supporting roles in most of Anderson's past films, would this time be the centerpiece. Hoffman will play "The Master," as in "master of ceremonies," a charismatic intellectual who hatches a faith-based organization that begins to catch on in America in 1952. The core is the relationship between The Master and Freddie, a twenty-something drifter who becomes the leader's lieutenant. As the faith begins to gain a fervent following, Freddie finds himself questioning the belief system he has embraced, and his mentor. Anderson's treatment of religion was cynical in "There Will Be Blood." Here, the scrutiny isn't specifically directed toward faith-based movements like Scientology or Mormonism that are newcomers compared to established religions. Anderson explores the need to believe in a higher power, the choice of which to embrace, and the point at which a belief system graduates into a religion. . Universal, which has become very selective about green lighting adult dramas, won't make a decision on Anderson's \$35 million budget pic until he delivers his finished script. His hope is to make the picture next year, sources said.

'Sons' given third-season pickup

FX is getting back on the bike and has given a third-season renewal to "Sons of Anarchy." Move was highly anticipated as the motorcycle club drama starring Ron Perlman, Charlie Hunnam and Katey Sagal took off in its just-concluded second season. Tuesday night's finale drew 4.3 million viewers, the most in series history. Net has ordered 13 episodes for the new season, which will launch in September. All series regulars are set to return. Also, FX has signed a two-year extension with creator Kurt Sutter to exec produce and write for the show. Season two saw a 66% increase in total viewers over season one, as well as 75% increase in the 18-49 demo. Airing at 10 p.m. Tuesdays, skein's 13-week average was tops among men in the 18-49 demo and adults

18-34 in all of cable and broadcast. Cabler has a full slate of originals on the air and in the pipeline. Third season of Emmy-nominated "Damages" will launch Jan. 25 and final season of "Nip/Tuck" begins Jan. 6. "Sons," from Fox 21 and FX Prods. is also exec produced by Art Linson and John Linson.

Debbie Liebling nears Universal deal

Debbie Liebling has graduated from the shortlist to the negotiating table to take over as president of production at Universal Pictures. While the studio declined to confirm the talks, and Liebling was unavailable for comment, others close to the situation said Liebling and U are trying to work out a deal. Liebling is currently exec VP of production at 20th Century Fox, where she's worked since 2002. She has long been one of the more sought-after execs in town whenever top spots become available at studios or production companies. At Fox, she shepherded such laffers as "Borat" and "Dodgeball" before being tapped in 2007 as prexy of production of Fox Atomic, the younger-skewing genre label that lasted for only two years before shuttering this year. The division produced the horror films "Turistas," "The Hills Have Eyes 2," "28 Weeks Later" and "Jennifer's Body" and comedies "I Love You, Beth Cooper" and "Miss March." It also released the Renny Harlin actioner "12 Rounds," produced by World Wrestling Entertainment. She was a contender to run the film side of Peter Chernin's new Fox-based shingle, and she was reportedly considered to replace Daniel Battsek at Miramax Films; Walt Disney Studios' new chairman, Rich Ross, is a former boss from her days of working in TV. Should she get the job, Liebling would replace Donna Langley, who was upped to co-chair of the studio, alongside Adam Fogelson, in October. ([Read Full Story](#))

HBO to develop 'Honest' program

HBO is getting "Honest" with its development. Pay cabler is working on an hourlong script from Eric Simonson about a secretive man who goes on the run. Simonson is writing the project and will exec produce with former HBO Entertainment prexy Carolyn Strauss and Management's Dan Halsted ("Platinum"). Simonson's credits include writing and directing a miniseries adaptation of "Hamlet" for the Hallmark Channel. Strauss, who moved into a production deal with HBO, is involved with several upcoming projects at the channel, including David Simon and Eric Overmyer's "Treme," fantasy epic "A Game of Thrones" and sci-fi project "The World Inside."