



Wednesday, December 16, 2009

Golf Channel to tee 'Trump'

Golf Channel has greenlit "Donald J. Trump's Fabulous World of Golf," a celebrity-infused nonscripted series, for an April 26 primetime launch. Trump is recruiting actors, musicians, politicians, business execs and pro athletes to compete against each other for charity on the show -- which, to be sure, will also offer a heavy dose of friendly views of Trump-owned courses and Trump himself. The six half-hour episodes, airing Mondays at 9 p.m. Eastern/6 p.m. Pacific, will feature such matchups as NFL legends Jerry Rice vs. Lawrence Taylor. In addition to determining a winner for the day, the competitions will offer a number of intermediate challenges, such as a pre-determined hole that will be worth \$10,000 for the celebrity golfer's chosen charity. Skein joins another Golf Channel foray into the celebrity world, "The Haney Project," whose second season (with Ray Romano) begins in the spring. Samuel L. Jackson and Anthony Anderson also host different series on the cabler. Trump's "Celebrity Apprentice" is also scheduled for its next season premiere in the spring, on NBC. Golf Channel is producing "Donald J. Trump's Fabulous World of Golf" with Pennsylvania-based the Workshop.

Chris Columbus fast-tracks 'Help'

Chris Columbus' 1492 Prods. has fast-tracked a screen adaptation of "The Help," the bestselling Kathryn Stockett novel about African-American domestic servants and their wealthy white employers in Mississippi before the civil rights era. Tate Taylor has written the script and will direct; 1492 partners Columbus, Michael Barnathan and Michael Radcliffe will produce with Brunson Green of Harbinger Pictures. The novel has been on the New York Times bestseller list for 35 weeks since its publication in February by Putnam imprint Amy Einhorn Books. Taylor got involved well before it became a literary sensation for Stockett, a first-time author who was reportedly rejected by 50 agents. Taylor grew up with Stockett in Mississippi — his mother inspired one of the Mississippi matriarchs in the novel — and was so helpful to the author that she gave him an early peek; an option was made well before the book came out.

HBO finds time for 'Tim'

HBO toon comedy "The Life and Times of Tim" has set Feb. 19 as the premiere for season No. 2. Skein, which has been off the air since November 2008, is currently in production and will once again air 10 episodes. In addition, cabler has given "Tim" an attractive Friday timeslot: At 10:30 p.m. immediately following the new half-hour animated series "The Ricky Gervais Show," based on the comedian's popular podcasts. Previously, "Tim" was paired with "Summer Heights High," which lasted only one season. Much like the cabler's "Curb Your Enthusiasm," "Tim's" premise is that he finds himself in awkward situations and usually does an awful job of finding an easy way out. "Tim" was created by Steve Dildarian, who also exec produces along with Tom Werner, Jimmy Miller, Mike Clements and Leynete Cariapa. Media Rights Capital produces.

Berlin picks Polanski, Scorsese pics

BERLIN -- The Berlin Film Festival continues to show its support for beleaguered helmer Roman Polanski. His pic "The Ghost Writer" and Martin Scorsese's Leonardo DiCaprio starrer "Shutter Island" will be among films premiering in competition, as the 60th edition of the Berlinale unveiled its first titles for the main section on Tuesday. Polanski is under house arrest in Switzerland and facing possible extradition to the U.S. in connection with his 1978 conviction for having unlawful sex with an underage girl and his subsequent escape to Europe. "The Ghost Writer," which was shot in Germany and received more than \$6 million in local subsidy coin, was widely expected to unspool at the fest. Pic stars Ewan McGregor, Pierce Brosnan, Kim Cattrall and Olivia Williams. Summit recently picked up North American rights to the film.

Sony nabs 'Girl with the Dragon Tattoo'

Sony Pictures has optioned the English-language screen rights to "The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo," the first of three titles in the Millennium Series of crime thriller novels by late Swedish journalist-activist Stieg Larsson. Steve Zaillian is in talks to write the script. Scott Rudin will produce with Ole Sondberg and Soren Staermose of Yellow Bird Films. The novels focus on journalist-investigator Mikael Blomkvist and a precocious computer hacker named Lisbeth Salander. The duo become embroiled in life-threatening mysteries as they attempt to expose institutions that pull the strings behind the scenes. The deal hasn't closed yet; it's been gestating for six months because of a rights dispute between Larsson's parents and his longtime partner, Eva Gabrielsson. Sony's pursuit began last summer, when Michael Lynton and Amy Pascal sparked to the novel series.

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