



TRADES

Wednesday, January 6, 2010

ABC buys two comedy pitches

With the broadcast networks already in a pilot-pickup mode, two multicamera comedy pitches fronted by familiar faces scored last-minute sales at ABC. The projects, one starring Carlos Mencia and the other toplined by Cedric the Entertainer, hail from Sony TV and studio-based Tantamount. The Mencia sitcom, from veteran comedy writers Mitchel Katlin and Nat Bernstein, is a family comedy based on Mencia's life and stand-up act. Co-produced by Brillstein Entertainment, it centers on a man in the middle of his very large multigenerational immigrant family. The Cedric comedy, from Al Higgins ("Til Death") and Devon Shepard ("Cedric the Entertainer Presents"), will feature the comedian as a retired baseball player-turned-radio host forced to re-evaluate the type of father he has been when his son and 6-year-old granddaughter re-enter his life. In their initial comedy pilot orders this season, the networks have shown preference for projects that have talent attached: ABC picked up "Awkward Situations for Men," starring British humorist and on-air personality Danny Wallace, and NBC greenlighted a starring vehicle for Adam Carolla.

Fox, CBS pick up pilots

Two more projects received pilot orders Tuesday. Fox greenlighted Shawn Ryan's cop drama "Ridealong," while CBS picked up Matt Tarses' multicamera comedy "True Love." Both projects already carried hefty commitments from the networks. "Ridealong," from 20th TV and Ryan's MiddKidd Prods., is described as a character procedural that follows one of Chicago's toughest cops as he struggles to clean up the violence and corruption in town. The order adds to a hectic schedule for "The Shield" creator, who also exec produces and runs the Fox drama "Lie to Me" and FX's upcoming series "Terriers." "Love," which Tarses is executive producing with his sister, Sony TV-based producer Jamie Tarses, is an ensemble comedy about four friends in New York looking for love. It will be shot as a multicamera but have the look and feel of a single-camera comedy. Sony TV, which developed "Love," will co-produce the pilot with CBS TV Studios. The project reunites Tarses with CBS, where he developed and exec produced the critically lauded comedy "Worst Week."

Daniel Battsek resurfaces at Nat Geo Films

Just a little more than two months after he was forced out as head of Disney's specialty label Miramax Films, Daniel Battsek is resurfacing at National Geographic Films. The company would not confirm Battsek's move on Tuesday, but it acknowledged that Adam Leipzig, who currently serves as president of National Geographic Films, is shifting over to executive producer status on two of the company's current projects. According to National Geographic president David Beal, "After six incredible years of setting the strategic course for National Geographic Films, Adam Leipzig's relationship transitions to executive producer of two in-process National Geographic Entertainment projects, Peter Weir's 'The Way Back' and the miniseries 'Undaunted Courage,' with HBO." "The Way Back" is a drama about a group of soldiers who escaped from a Siberian gulag in 1940 and stars Colin Farrell, Ed Harris, Jim Sturges and Saoirse Ronan. "Undaunted Courage," a mini-series about explorers Lewis and Clark, is being produced for HBO by National Geographic along with Edward

Norton's Class 5 and Brad Pitt's Plan B banners.

Duo tries their 'Luck' with HBO

David Milch is trying his luck again at HBO, teaming with filmmaker Michael Mann on a horse-racing drama. "Luck," which has received a pilot order from the paybox, is described as a provocative look at the world of horse racing and gambling told through a diverse group of characters surrounding a racetrack. Milch wrote the project, with Mann on board to direct the pilot. The two are executive producing with Carolyn Strauss, who, as HBO entertainment president, fostered Milch's close ties with the network. During his long history with HBO, Milch created and executive produced the series "Deadwood" and "John From Cincinnati" as well as the 2008 pilot "Last of the Ninth," a gritty period cop drama. Following an early start in television, where he worked as a writer-producer on several series, including an executive producing stint on "Miami Vice," Mann has been largely focused on the feature side, most recently writing, directing and producing the Johnny Depp starrer "Public Enemies." In a rare foray into TV, he executive produced the 2002 CBS cop drama series "Robbery Homicide Division."

Vince Vaughn set for Ron Howard pic

Universal has a cheating heart. The studio is putting the pieces together for a film project exploring the subject of infidelity that will be directed by Ron Howard and star Vince Vaughn. Imagine topper Brian Grazer came up with the idea and is producing with Vaughn, who will produce with his Wild West Picture Show Prods. Allan Loeb wrote the currently untitled script, which would go before cameras in the spring. The story follows a man who learns that his best friend's wife is cheating and must then navigate treacherous waters to decide what do with that knowledge. The project is said to continue Vaughn's interest of tackling the dark areas of relationships, which he did with "The Break-Up" and, to a lesser extent, "Couples Retreat," which ended up leaving its darker moments on the editing room floor. The script is said to walk a fine line of being comedy and drama, much like "Break-Up" did. Imagine's Kim Roth will serve as executive producer. Universal's vp of production Kristen Lowe will oversee the project for the studio. It's been a while since Howard tackled a comedy. While the CAA-repped director's last movie was "Angels and Demons," his previous comedic movie was 1999's "Edtv."

Central Talent Booking