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Weekly International Edition

# THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER®

75th year

November 2-8, 2004

a VNU publication ■ \$5.99 (U.S.) \$8.95 (Canada) £5.50 (U.K.) € 9.25 (EU)



## DreamWorks

With a hot IPO and the year's top-grossing film, Hollywood's youngest studio has much to celebrate in marking its first decade. **Section begins after page 24.**

## 'Over There' is here as series for FX, Bochco

By Andrew Wallenstein



**Bochco**

FX has ordered a pilot from Steven Bochco Prods. for a series set on the front lines of the conflict in Iraq. "Over There" is an ensemble drama that will explore the lives of a select group of Army soldiers in combat as well as the families they left behind. Bochco will serve as executive producer with Chris Gerolmo ("Mississippi Burning"), who will direct the pilot he wrote.

The pilot marks the first collaboration between Bochco, the veteran producer of gritty series like "Hill Street Blues," and 20th Century Fox Television since he sued 20th several years ago over the syndication sale of "NYPD Blue."

The series was originally set up at Paramount Network Television, where Bochco has an overall production deal, but the deal fell apart there because of concerns about

See **BOCHCO** on page 109

## Change in the airwaves?

### Election winner will get chance to reshape FCC

By Brooks Boliek

WASHINGTON — As voters go to the polls today, they probably won't be thinking about the makeup of the FCC. But whoever wins the presidency will get a shot at giving the nation's chief telecommunications regulator an extreme makeover worthy of a

network reality show.

A majority on the five-member commission, which has a say in everything from telephone rates to indecent television, goes to the party that occupies the White House. While a change in administrations would shift the balance of power on the commission to the Demo-

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## Rock the Vote irks GOP

By Gail Schiller

MTV and the nonprofit group Rock the Vote, partners in a massive public awareness campaign to encourage young Americans to participate in today's presidential election, have come under fire from Republicans accusing them of pushing a pro-Democratic agenda and challenging MTV and Rock the Vote's assertions that their get-

out-the-vote campaigns are non-partisan.

The charges stem mainly from a Rock the Vote campaign focused on the issue of a military draft. To get its point across, Rock the Vote sent out 660,000 e-mails in late September with a mock draft card signed by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.

"You are hereby ordered for

See **VOTE** on page 109



Sen. John F. Kennedy stumps during down-to-the-wire 1960 campaign.

## TV's coverage 'major force' in tight '60 race

By Paul J. Gough

NEW YORK — Ever since the messy Election Night of 2000, the TV networks have overhauled coverage, fine-tuned the use of exit polling and promised not to call a premature winner.

Casting about for a script for how this year's election may turn out, a number of observers look back to Election Night 1960. A relatively unknown Massachusetts senator and the sitting vice president battled in one of the tightest presidential elections in history. Just as it was 44 years ago with the race between John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon, Americans may go to bed tonight without knowing the winner of this year's bitter contest between President Bush and his Democra-

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## Vote

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induction into the Armed Forces of the United States, and to report to a polling place near you," read the draft cards.

In addition, Rock the Vote created two public service announcements focused on the issue of the draft and a third celebrity-packed PSA that referred to the draft as one of many issues young voters might be concerned about. At least one of the draft-themed PSAs ran on MTV for 10 consecutive days in September. Rock the Vote also has devoted a significant amount of content to the issue on its Web site.

Ed Gillespie, chairman of the Republican National Committee, sent a letter to Rock the Vote president Jehmu Greene on Oct. 13 warning her that Rock the Vote had an "obligation to immediately cease and desist from promoting or conducting" its draft campaign "as a nonpartisan organization that enjoys the benefits of being formed under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code."

Asserting that the "urban myth regarding a draft" had been "thoroughly debunked" by President Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney and Rumsfeld, Gillespie wrote: "This is the sort of malicious political deception that is likely to increase voter cynicism and in fact decrease the youth vote, as well as raising serious legal issues regarding the political motivations of your efforts."

Although the Republican Party's ire was raised by a Rock the Vote initiative, MTV — which has been aligned with Rock the Vote

for more than a decade and is one of the organization's financial supporters — became a target as well. Viacom co-president and co-chief operating officer Tom Freston and MTV Networks chairman and CEO Judy McGrath are founding board members of Rock the Vote.

Dozens of protesters from the California College Republicans demonstrated Oct. 22 outside MTV Networks in Santa Monica, shouting such slogans as "Pimp my ride, not my vote" and "Total Request Lies." Despite MTV's statements that it had nothing to do with Rock the Vote's draft campaign, many Republican critics refused to draw a distinction between the two organizations that have partnered to register young voters and educate them on issues before Election Day.

"The draft scare has credibility because of MTV," said Michael Davidson, chairman of California College Republicans. "Kids know about Rock the Vote because of MTV." Davidson also alleged that MTV and Rock the Vote present young voters with perspectives on the issues that he described as "clearly left of center."

MTV and Rock the Vote executives maintain that their campaigns are designed only to grab the attention of fickle younger viewers and have no partisan motivation.

"We've never endorsed a candidate; we've never endorsed a party," said Fred Goldring, chairman of the board of Rock the Vote. "We just raise issues that young people have told us are important to them."

Goldring said Rock the Vote had Republicans on its board who

knew about the organization's plan to raise the draft issue as a legitimate concern of young people that needed to be addressed by the two major-party presidential candidates. And he said Rock the Vote removed Rumsfeld's signature from the draft card as soon as complaints were lodged.

For its part, MTV said it has been fair and unbiased in its coverage of the candidates, doing its best to give equal time to Democrats and Republicans. While Kerry has been interviewed on MTV five times, MTV personalities have interviewed Bush surrogates like Gillespie, California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Bush campaign manager Ken Mehlman because the president has been unavailable, an MTV spokeswoman said.

"We are not biased in our coverage in any way, shape or form," MTV spokeswoman Jeannie Kedas said. "We are very proud of our efforts in that regard, and we've been recognized by our audience."

As part of its "Choose or Lose: 20 Million Loud" campaign, MTV has run a dozen long-format specials and about 120 news pieces about the election. Since the beginning of the year, its has aired nearly 4,000 public service announcements urging young people to vote, only a handful of which were produced by Rock the Vote.

Rock the Vote, along with its partners, has spent about \$40 million registering 1.4 million voters, nearly three times the number it registered in the 2000 election.

Rock the Vote's Greene said the organization never suggested that Bush favors the draft.

"The issue is not whether the politicians want a draft," she said. "The issue is when does the draft become necessary, and that's what young people want to know and need to know. It's not a partisan issue when young people of this country need a fair hearing."

Kedas stressed that MTV aims to focus on issues its young viewers are interested in both in its election-related programming and the PSAs it airs. "The driving factor in our making decisions about what we cover is the audience," she said. Of all the PSAs it has aired since the beginning of the year, about 90 were produced by MTV and fewer than a dozen were produced by other groups like Rock the Vote, Public Interest, P. Diddy's Citizen Change and Voto Latino.

The PSAs from Public Interest raised the issue of same-sex marriage in provocative ads urging MTV viewers to consider the issue of equal marriage rights for homosexuals before heading to the polls.

"No other network would touch this issue and donate airtime because it's such a volatile issue," said Michael Franzini, president and creative director of Public Interest, which makes no secret of its support of same-sex marriage. He said MTV did instruct Public Interest that the PSAs had to take a "fairly impartial, nonpartisan stand" and that a number of spots were killed because executives felt they crossed the line into advocacy.

Kedas said MTV accepts PSAs only from nonpartisan groups that are balanced in their content and that it accepted the Public Interest PSAs because they fell into that category. ■

## Bochco

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economic issues surrounding the project, particularly its prospects for foreign sales, sources said.

For FX president of entertainment John Landgraf, "Over There" represents the realization of a goal he set out to achieve when he joined the channel in January.

"The biggest arena I was interested in producing was a contemporary drama about war," he said. "When I got here, I knew who I wanted to do it with."

Landgraf envisions "Over There" not being pro- or anti-war but admitted that the show won't please everyone. "There's likely to be some controversy because the war is such a partisan football from both sides," he said.

Added Bochco in a statement, "Chris and I are very excited to be doing this show with Fox for FX."

"Over There" also marks Bochco's first project for basic cable. FX, which also is considering the drama pilot "Thief," starring Andre Braugher, has ordered four additional scripts of "Over There."

FX discussed producing a series on the Iraqi conflict with Bochco, who recruited Gerolmo to conceive story ideas. The network ordered a pilot shortly after receiving the script but had to backtrack when Paramount pulled out.

"They were gracious enough to give it back to Bochco," Landgraf said. "We let (20th) know the project was available, and they were phenomenal about stepping in."

Said 20th TV president Dana Walden: "Steven Bochco is one of

television's true geniuses, and it's hard to imagine anyone else who could tackle this kind of provocative and challenging subject matter in such an honest and thoughtful way."

The project moved from Paramount to 20th after the recent shake-up at the studio that resulted in the exit of Paramount Television president Garry Hart and the elevation of former CBS executive David Stapf to president of the Paramount Network Television unit. Sources close to the situation said that the new regime was concerned about whether the project would be economically viable for the studio over the long term.

Paramount has produced several Bochco shows, including an ABC series set for midseason, "Blind Justice." Bochco's rich production

deal with the studio is set to expire at the end of the year. Sources stressed that the new regime at Paramount Network TV has good relations with Bochco Prods. and has high hopes for "Blind Justice," set to premiere next year after Bochco's "NYPD Blue" winds up its 12-season run on ABC.

Bochco settled his legal dispute with 20th in 2001 after charging that the studio had failed to sell "Blue" at fair-market value.

"Over There" is expected to begin shooting in January with a budget said to be on par for what FX allots to the new series "Rescue Me." Locations have not been chosen, but battle scenes might be shot in Mexico.

Bochco is repped by CAA. Gerolmo is repped by Broder Webb Chervin Silbermann Agency. ■