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LOS ANGELES ■ NEW YORK

Auds crazy for 'Carol,' CBS laffers

By RICK KISSELL

Nearly 30 million viewers were glad they had gathered with the "Carol Burnett Show" gang Monday as the union special delivered monster ratings for CBS.

NBC and CBS again split weekly ratings honors, page 10

One-hour spec at 10 p.m. drew 29.7 million viewers to the Eyebrow Special — including a record 12.2 million of viewers too young to remember the original Burnett show. All four of CBS' comedies drew their largest audiences ever, making it the biggest non-sports turnout for a CBS Monday since May 1995 and putting an exclamation point on the net's November sweeps victory in total viewers.

Still to be decided for the month is the title between Fox and NBC for adults 18-49, still led by a tick (5.1/13 to 5.0/13) heading Tuesday night.

"The Carol Burnett Show: Show Stoppers" debuted its hour with an average of 29.7 million in adults 18-49 and a 12.0/26 in adults 18-29.

Spec drew a bigger audience than any day at 10 since a one-hour "Designing Women" finale of "Survivor: The Australian Outback" on Nov. 27.

STARSTRUCK FEST

'Laramie' kicks off celeb-laden Sundance

By TODD MCCARTHY

Opening-night attraction will be "The Laramie Project," an adaptation for HBO by Moises Kaufman and his Tectonic Theater Project legit theater troupe that

The centerpiece premiere will be another HBO production, "Hysterical Blindness," directed by Nair and starring her Venice Film Fest prize winner "Monsoon Wedding."

Tale of working-class women in New Jersey, circa 1987, and centering on a party girl (Thurman) who is desperately searching for love in her life, features Genie Francis as Thurman's mother and Juliette Lewis as her friend, Jen Guzzara, Bobby Tisdale as her ex-husband.

Among other world premieres are Victor Nunez's "Coastline," with Josh Brodin, Sarah Silverman and William Forsythe; David Mamet's "The Dancer Upstairs," an adaptation of Nicholas Nickleby's book starring Barry Corbin; Van Sant's "Jerry," toppling the film of the same name; and Nick Broomfield's investigation into the

Turn to page 18

PLAYERS



Bettis

Angela Bettis ("Bless the Child," "Girl Interrupted") is set to join Liam Neeson and Laura Linney in the Broadway revival of Arthur Miller's "The Crucible." She has been cast in the role of Abigail. "The Crucible" kicks off a 16-week run in March at the Virginia Theater; Richard Eyre will direct. Bettis can be seen in upcoming pics "Coastline," "May" and "Perfume."

Al Thompson, who stars with Shane West and Mandy Moore in Warner's romancer "A Walk to Remember," will star opposite Brian Dennehy in ESPN's frosh made-for-TV movie "On the Brink: A Year With Bob Knight and the Indiana Hoosiers," based on John Feinstein's bestseller. Thompson will portray Hoosier guard Delray Brooks. Pic is lensing in Winnipeg. Thompson can next be seen in "The Royal Tenebaums."



Thompson



Deschanel

Zoey Deschanel, Jennifer Aniston's co-star in "The Good Girl," is lensing "All the Real Girls" for director David Gordon Green ("George Washington") in North Carolina.

— Jill Feiwel

Busy Berry may Bond as villain

By MICHAEL FLEMING

NEW YORK — Halle Berry is poised to star alongside Pierce Brosnan as the femme fatale in the next James Bond film, which is fast mobilizing for a Jan. 14 start at Pinewood Studios. Lee Tamahori is directing.

Berry has been rumored for the role for several weeks and by all accounts very much wants to play the villainess. Potential scheduling conflicts are the reason a deal hasn't yet been closed. Berry is locked in to reprise her role as Storm in the "X-Men" sequel, which helmer Bryan Singer



Berry

Turn to page 18

INSIDE

4 'Altar' bound

ThinkFilm acquires Jodie Foster starrer "The Dangerous Lives of Altar Boys."

4 Moving on

Prexy/co-founder Norman Kurland ankles Broder Kurland Webb Uffner per centery.

5 Tube topper

ICM agent Bob Levinson is upped to head of worldwide television for the per centery.

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In other words, if a studio gets a \$1 million subsidy to shoot in Canada, the studio would then be required to turn around and fork over that money to the U.S. government. The countervailing tariff would be a condition for clearing the pic for distribution in the United States.

The Motion Picture Assn. of America and the Directors Guild of America are among the heavyweights opposing the tariff plan, saying it will ignite a trade war instead

Turn to page 18

the process tipping the scales in real ways. Attempts during the past several years to clear the air with urban comedies and dramas flopped, leaving ABC with no clear identity and what one industry vet calls a "leadership vacuum."

And with the November sweeps set to wrap tonight, ABC finds itself in fourth place in viewers and adults 18-49 for the key ratings frame — its second consecutive last-place finish in a sweeps.

Execs at the Disney-owned web finally seem willing to admit what those on the outside have been saying for years: ABC has lost its way and needs to find its roots to return to the top.

Turn to page 17