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News biz will get a wake-up call

By MICHAEL LEARMOUTH NEW YORK

Katie Couric's move to CBS, after a very public courtship by the net's Leslie Moonves, will shake up two long-entrenched areas of the network news business: the traditional evening newscast and the morning race.

Today marks Couric's 15th anniversary on "Today," and the carefully timed, long-awaited announcement sets off a domino effect in the morning and network news, two dayparts CBS Corp. topper Moonves has been unable to influence, despite the network's primetime success. By robbing NBC's "Today" of its biggest star, CBS puts the show's dominance in peril; the move also has caused NBC, which usually promotes from within, to take the unusual step of looking outside for talent.

NBC is bidding with Meredith Vieira, host of ABC's "The View" and the syndicated "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire," for a deal worth \$10 million a year to become Matt Lauer's new partner on "Today."

Insiders said Couric's CBS deal will be on a par with her current Peacock pact, giving her a salary of roughly \$15 million a year over four to five years.

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Couric

CANNES FLEXES 'X'

Fox actioner, 'Fountain' fly to France

By DEREK ELLEY

How do you say "Wolverine" in French?

The 59th annual Cannes Film Festival will have a strong Hollywood presence thanks to Fox's "X-Men: The Last Stand" and Warner Bros.' "The Fountain," both starring Hugh Jackman, plus a 20-minute preview of Paramount's Oliver Stone pic "World Trade Center" and a slew of other

U.S. pics, including toons and docs. Stone will also be honored as part of a 20th anniversary tribute to "Platoon."

Until the official selection lineup is unveiled April 20, nothing is written in stone. But, with a reported 12 of the 20-plus competition titles now in place, the mix is dominated by English-language and European pics, while light weight titles on Asian



As previously announced, the festival gets off to an American-international start on May 17 with Sony's "The Da Vinci Code," helmed by Ron Howard and starring Tom Hanks.

The only other title officially announced by the fest is the multi-director "Paris, I Love You," which opens official selection sidebar UN Certain Regard on May 18.

Fest artistic director Thierry Fremaux, as usual, is opting for an eclectic mix.

After a fallow year, DreamWorks returns to the fest with its latest ton, "Over the Hedge," about a raccoon (voiced by Bruce Willis) and a turtle battling encroaching suburbia. Pic is targeted for a non-competing slot, as is "X-Men: The Last Stand," which opens worldwide during the fest's second week.

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Netflix seeks rent control

By JENNIFER NETHERBY and PAUL SWEETING

Netflix filed a patent-infringement lawsuit against Blockbuster on Tuesday, asking a Northern California federal court to shut down its rival's online DVD rental service and award Netflix damages.

The two-count lawsuit accuses Blockbuster of copying Netflix's method of alternate-date rental and managing an online list of movies they wish to rent.

The other count covers the basic subscription rental model itself, which Netflix introduced in 1999.

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Wife swap

Lifetime inks with Buena Vista TV for rerun rights to "Desperate Housewives."

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Netflix was granted a patent on managing an online queue of movies in 2004 but held off on seeking to enforce it even after Blockbuster launched a similar service in late 2004.

Suit was finally triggered Tuesday, after Netflix was granted a broader patent covering the entire online subscription rental business model.

"From top to bottom, Blockbuster has deliberately and willfully copied Netflix's business model," Netflix spokesman Steve Swasey said.

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China censors 'unlock 'Code'

By CLIFFORD COOMAN BEIJING

Sony's "The Da Vinci Code" has moved swiftly past China's censors and will become the first day-and-date release of 2006 when it bows May 19.

Some had worried that "Da Vinci" might have a tough time as neo-gods and spiritual matters are no-go areas for movies in China.

And after sustaining a blow when "Memoirs of a Geisha" fell afoul of the censor amid anti-Japanese

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Lion king finds new lair

By BEN FRITZ

There's a new live-action studio in town, with a Hollywood veteran in charge.

Chris McGurk is joining IDT Entertainment—a division of New Jersey-based telco IDT that has invested heavily in animation, TV and homevideo over the past few years—to build live-action production and theatrical distribution operations.

That process is expected to take about a year, after which McGurk will head up both units.

For now, though, the former MGM vice chairman is serving as senior adviser, new ventures, a role that also calls for him to develop plans for digital platforms.

IDT's live-action production is expected to focus on low-cost genre pictures such as horror and sci-fi. The company also hopes to distribute its own CG toons with Fox as part with Fox expires in 2008.

The move answers the question of what McGurk will do next. He previously held top roles at Disney and Universal before becoming No. 2 at MGM from 1999 until it was sold to a consortium of investors, including Sony, last year.

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McGurk

U DONS GLOVES FOR 'DANCE'

By GABRIEL SNYDER



Cage



50 Cent

Universal Pictures has set Nicolas Cage and 50 Cent to star in "The Dance," a film based on the life of prison boxing coach Billy "The Kid" Roth.

Project is based on a 2003 doc helmed by John Darling Haynes and produced by Eric Gedeon. Cage and Noem Golightly exec produced the doc through their Saturn Films banner with an eye to developing a feature project based around Roth.

Once a successful prizefighter, Roth has spent more than 40 years as a volunteer boxing coach in Louisiana state prisons. Turn to page 13

Super snit in 'Smallville'

By DAVE MCNARY

There's a big dispute in "Smallville."

A federal judge in Los Angeles has found that the WB's young Superman sken may be infringing on the copyrights held on the Superboy character by the widow and daughter of Jerome Siegel, originator of the comicbook series.

The March 23 summary judgment by Judge Ronald S.W. Lew also found that Joanne Siegel and Laura Siegel Larson had successfully recaptured the Superboy rights as of Nov. 17, 2004.

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Superboy



Phone fight

Comcasts and carriers battle for mobile content revenue. Begins after page 8