

Raycom roundup

Unapix Entertainment has sold the French-produced series *USHUAIA: Adventures of Nicolas Hulot* to Raycom Inc. for \$1.65 million. The deal involves 22 new episodes of the action-adventure show, one of France's most popular programs, that will feature English-language wrap-arounds and is targeted for national syndication. Unapix owns the North American distribution rights to the series as well as the rights in the UK, Germany and Japan among other territories.

Raycom is producing and distributing *The Final Roundup*, an hour special previewing the final season of Southwest Conference collegiate football and looking back at great moments in conference history.

Raycom's hour special *Elvis Presley, Touch the Dream, A New Generation* has been cleared in 87% of the country for an August 5-20 window.



Nicolas Hulot's adventures include a hunt with Kazakhstan hunters and their eagles.

Raycom buys U.S. rights to French daredevil's show

By WAYNE WALLEY
New York bureau chief

For years, French TV audiences have watched raptly as adventurer Nicolas Hulot went hang gliding with vultures in Spain, scaled the Eiffel Tower, hunted with Kazakhstan hunters and their eagles, swam with the world's largest whale shark, and trained with astronauts in zero gravity.

Now, Mr. Hulot, described as a cross between Indiana Jones, James Bond and Jacques Cousteau, is headed for U.S. television.

Unapix Entertainment, which co-produced English-language bookend segments with French producers Protecrea and broadcaster-distributor TF1, has sold U.S. market rights for 22 one-hour episodes of "Ushuaia: Adventures of Nicolas Hulot" to Raycom for \$1.65 million.

Raycom's plan is to strike a deal with a broadcast network, buying time for either a series of specials and/or a weekly series, to be seen in weekend afternoon slots as early as this winter but most likely starting in September 1996.

"We were attracted to it because it can be a vehicle for us to cross over into sports/entertainment. It's spectacular footage and very different," said Rick Ray, Raycom's chief executive officer.

He said the company could also put the series into syndication and/or license the series to a cable network by creating different windows.

Lise Romanoff, senior vice president of

development and international co-production for Unapix, said Mr. Hulot and the show's French producers have been very particular about how the show is presented in other parts of the world.

"Other people have approached them to go outside France but they [distributors] wanted to totally change the context and call it their own. They [Mr. Hulot and the producers] wouldn't allow anyone to do that," she said.

Unapix will work directly with the producers to reformat the show for the U.S. market and will likely bring on a U.S. host to introduce Mr. Hulot, who speaks English and will tape the new English-language wraparounds.

"We've taken a lot of time and tender loving care to maximize and appreciate what they do," Ms. Romanoff said.

During the show's eight-year run on French television, Mr. Hulot and the crew have used everything from custom hot air balloons, hang gliders, parasails, ultralights, hydroplanes, land rovers and submarines rigged with special cameras to capture Mr. Hulot's bizarre experiences.

"He experiences the adventure firsthand. It's different," Ms. Romanoff said.

Since Unapix does not have its own domestic syndication arm, the company looked for a partner to launch the show in the United States and found Raycom.

While the initial deal is for 22 one-hour episodes, there are more than 200 hours of raw footage and Unapix has rights to create another 150 episodes. #

Broadcasting
and Cable

8-14-95

Electronic Media

