



Ion Plans Telemovie Drive

By Staff--March 26, 2009

US broadcaster Ion Television has confirmed plans to commission a slew of original telefilms, after "a 30% ratings increase among adults 25-54 in primetime," it said, due to last autumn's rebrand.

Underscoring what it called "a commitment to build its primetime programming schedule," Ion plans to develop and produce 12 original films a year, with the first film set to premiere in the fourth quarter of 2009.

Genres being explored for the films include drama, romance, thriller, action and holiday, and they will sit alongside acquired films and series. For this fall, Ion has acquired Ghost Whisperer and Criminal Minds, plus Canadian imports Durham County, The Guard and The Border.

"Ion is committed to a programming strategy that operates simultaneously on two tracks," said Leslie Chesloff, exec VP of programming at Ion Media Networks. "First, we are fast-tracking the production of our own original content. Second, as our success with Boston Legal and NCIS proves, there is an audience for top-rated off-network series.

"We are in the market for hit comedies and dramas, and we will continue to add to our schedule as they become available. The announcement of these 12 movies is only the first step as we continue to expand our original production schedule."

The beefing up of Ion's schedule with original telefilms comes after the net saw a 30% ratings increase among adults 25-54 in primetime this season, compared to last, according to Ion numbers. It also said primetime household viewership for the same period was up 16%.

"With new, originally produced movies, new first-run series and new off-network series set to join the Ion line-up later this year, we are well poised for continued growth across the desirable adults 25-54 demo that we are steadily attracting in primetime," said Stephen Appel, president of sales and marketing.