

# IT'S OFFICIAL: COX TO BUY RYSHER

*Keith Samples has six-year contract to remain at helm of company*

By Mike Freeman

Confirming previous speculation, Cox Broadcasting has reached a preliminary agreement to acquire two-year-old startup independent Rysher Entertainment. According to the principals, Rysher Entertainment's founder and president, Keith Samples, will continue in that post, overseeing syndication operations of the Los Angeles distributor.

Cox Broadcasting President Nick Trigony confirmed that Samples had signed a six-year contract to stay in that capacity, but he declined to specify the amount of money Cox is putting up to acquire Rysher. Trigony said he expects that the Cox board will approve the deal within 60 days.

The preliminary push behind the merger, says Trigony, sprang out of TPE's past handling of national barter advertising sales for Rysher's weekly *Highlander* series.

"I had the chance to work with Keith [Samples] over the last two years, and we had talked a number of times about how we could take our association one step further," Trigony said. "It's a natural fit. We think Rysher will give us a stronger presence in the programming business. With TPE's similarly established background in programming and advertising sales and Cox's background in broadcasting, there is a lot of expertise we're all bringing to the table, under one umbrella."

Also, Trigony emphasized that Rysher and TPE would remain separate operating subsidiaries, but elaborated that Cox will be "examining" the option of altering the corporate infrastructure after 1993.

In characterizing the move as the "next step" to "competing with the big guys," Samples also stressed that Cox could "facilitate the process of obtaining financing" for series projects Rysher would otherwise likely obtain through outside sources.

Meanwhile, Al Masini, president and CEO of TPE, sought to downplay speculation that he was going to retire to turn over the syndication arm to Samples. "I will continue to produce shows as long as I am physically able



(l-r) Al Masini, Keith Samples and Nick Trigony are all smiles

to," Masini emphasized. "At some point I may want to reduce my daily responsibilities [with TPE], but I'm

still having too much fun to know when that will be."

However, one source with close ties



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