

SATELLITE WARS

Golden world of the cartoon kings



UNIVERSAL APPEAL: Hanna and Barbera beat all the language barriers

HE HAS seven grandchildren but that isn't a chore for William Hanna. Before they were born, he had already established himself as one of the world's busiest and best baby-sitters.

On Saturday mornings, rightly or wrongly, nearly every American parks the children in front of the television to watch a cavalcade of cartoons.

For more than half a century, Hanna and his partner Joe Barbera have been responsible for 70 per cent of the animated action. And not just ordinary "Toons", but the superstars like Yogi, Huckleberry Hound and Fred Flintstone.

Hanna and Barbera worked as the creators of the madcap Tom and Jerry for two decades before MGM made them redundant.

The partners left the company and "That's all folks" in 1957 and "in sheer terror" began their own studio which is now worth around \$500 million.

Hanna, still quick and alert at 82, goes to work five days a week at the company's offices which cover two-and-a-half acres of prime film-land in Burbank across the hill from the major studios.

He's the technical wizard and with his ideas man Barbera has, he estimates, produced thousands of hours of cartoon television as well as 250 TV series and specials which have been dubbed into 20 languages.

They are the biggest cartoon company in the world.

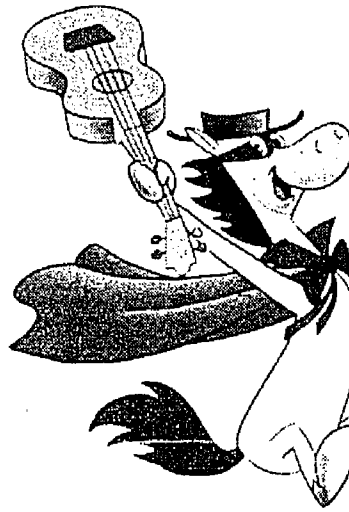
On September 17, their work will also dominate the cable Cartoon Network when it begins broadcasting in Britain and the rest of Europe.

Atlanta-based Ted Turner, who invented Cable News Network (CNN) in 1980, has continued to plunder the satellite goldmine in the sky. In a clever marketing package, he has combined the Cartoon Network with his Turner Network Television (TNT) which has a classic library of movies from Bogart to Elvis and Westerns to musicals.

FOR all those who argue that we live in a Mickey Mouse world, it is the perfect combination. You can watch Yogi Bear, Huckleberry Finn and Fred Flintstone for 14 hours a day and then, just when you're yabba-dabbadone, move on to 10 hours of the likes of Bogart and Bacall.

Clever? Very. For the bottom line, as always, is the dollar — billions of them. Turner, who views himself as a philosopher and player in world events as much as a media entrepreneur, is involved in a high-stakes game.

He owns that great classic, *Gone With the Wind*, as well as the MGM film library for which he paid \$1.4 billion in 1986. This month, he put up \$667 million in cash and stocks for two highly successful independent Hollywood film production companies responsible for *The Nightmare On Elm Street* series and movies such as



Yogi & Co branch out with a new TV network

From DOUGLAS THOMPSON in Hollywood

When Harry Met Sally and the Tom Cruise/Jack Nicholson/Demi Moore success, *A Few Good Men*.

In this billion-dollar world of more than 700 TV channels desperate for viewer-attractive programming, Turner needs to make the films which will feed his international cable networks and supply the satellites in the sky with options for the future.

But that's not just his own economics — mogul Rupert Murdoch is chasing him in the sky like something from *Star Wars*.

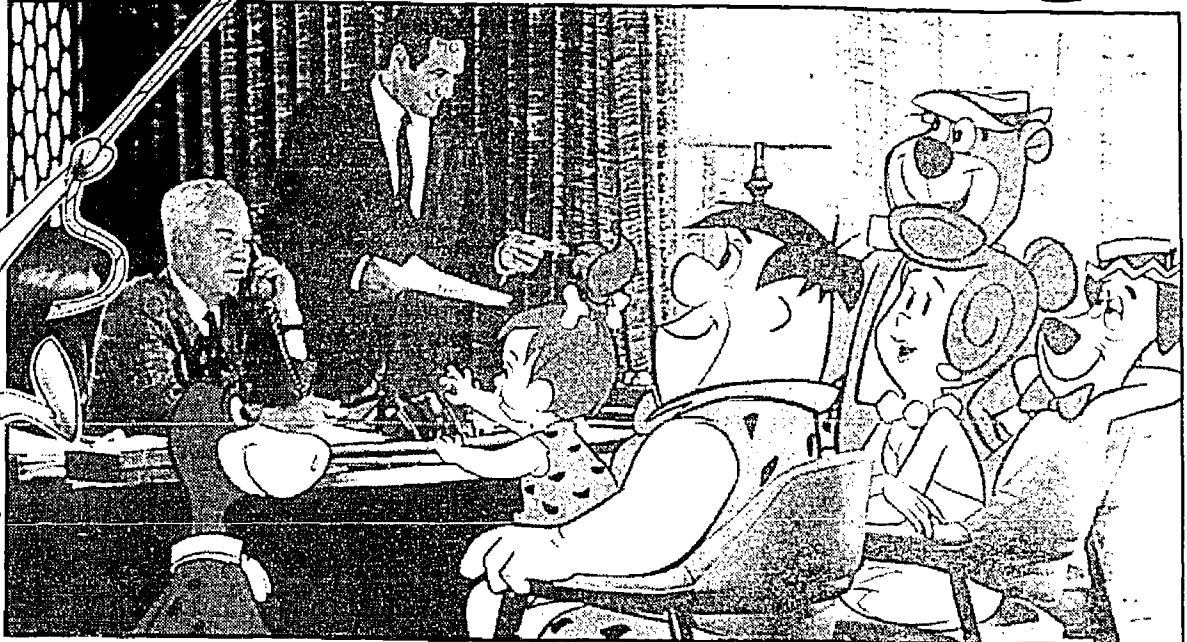
Murdoch owns America's Fox Television and with it has created a "fourth network". He also owns 50 per cent of Britain's BSkyB as well as becoming a hi-tech TV presence in the Far East.

It's high noon in the cable TV business. And interestingly, the product — quality and quantity — is proving as important as the new technology.

Which crazily makes the cartoon network a serious aspect of Turner's international operations. The channel will open in Europe with about a third of the programming dubbed into French and Scandinavian languages.

Hanna, very much a Hollywood man of the golden days, ponders his place in 1993 television history.

He can only shrug and smile when you suggest that he might be



CASTING AROUND: Hanna and Barbera's stars are spreading their talents across the globe

responsible for Turner rather than Murdoch winning the stellar airwaves war.

"It really is another world for me. I still think of this as a small family business. We all work together and eat lunch together.

"I come here every day to work on some story lines and keep in touch with what's going on. We've just, for some reason, maintained our popularity with our characters for a long long time. I don't see any point in stopping work now."

NEITHER does his audience. Tom And Jerry — The Movie is a major summer box-office success here. And the live action movie, *The Flintstones*, is greatly anticipated.

Starring John Goodman — Central Casting on form again — as Fred, Rick Moranis as Barney, Elizabeth Perkins as Wilma and Madonna's pal Rosie O'Donnell as Betty, there's also a special appearance by Elizabeth Taylor.

"That's fun — she was at MGM when we were there," says Hanna, who teamed up with Barbera in 1937 when Ted Turner and Rupert Murdoch weren't even aware of cartoons.

When he first met Barbera, Hanna was immediately impressed.

"He was and is one of the greatest cartoon artists I have ever met," says Hanna.

"I was able to do the timing and Joe, with his draughtsmanship, could make the story-boards. There were things I could do that he couldn't do and vice versa."

Twenty years and seven Oscars later, their cartoon production operation at MGM was closed down. The film company realised they could make 90 per cent of the same money just by re-releasing old cartoons.

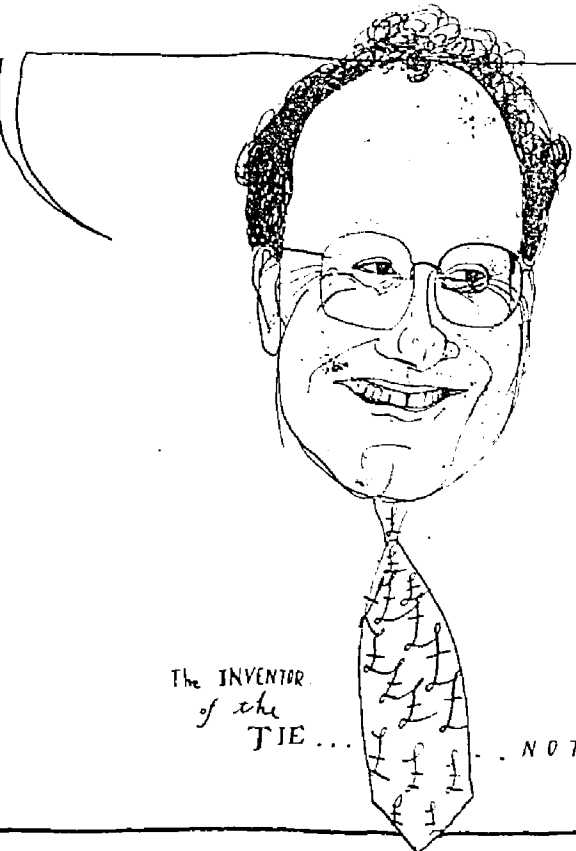
Hanna and Barbera broke out on their own. The budget for their MGM cartoons had been \$45,000 for five minutes. Suddenly it was \$2,700 for five minutes.

"It was a shock but it made us learn how to trim and cut — and how we trimmed. Instead of 26,000 drawings, we were able to do it with 1,200," says Hanna.

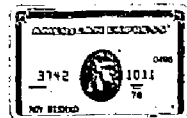
"We did it out of desperation but it looked sharp because the action was so explosive."

Today their contribution to the cartoon network is a hand grenade in the ongoing satellite wars in the sky.

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How to 'Toon' in

HOW can fans of Fred Flintstone and the other characters pick up the Cartoon Network and TNT, the other new channel launched by American media tycoon Ted Turner?

Cable subscribers and owners of a satellite dish will be able to receive both services free from September 17.

But viewers who want to watch the six new satellite channels launched this Wednesday must be subscribers to a BSkyB channel.

