

The Executive Suites

Betty Cohen and Susanne Daniels

Cohen, president-CEO of Lifetime Entertainment Services; Daniels, president of entertainment

After a year on the job, Cohen and Daniels have steadily changed the Lifetime channel's old image as the "women-in-peril TV movie" network.

Cohen, who founded Turner's Cartoon Network, has spent the last several months working on Lifetime's new look and tag, ixnaying "Television for Women" and greenlighting "My Story," a mark of the channel's expansion into a variety of storytelling that includes comedy, reality and light drama.

Daniels wasted no time clearing house, both on the executive and programming sides. She axed remaining dramas "Strong Medicine" and "Missing" from the schedule, and recruited execs with expertise in delivering younger audiences. Among her hires were the WB's Maria Grasso, who was tapped to run development, and MTV's Jessica Samet, who was brought in to head up reality programming.

"We can be fun, smart and sexy," says Daniels.

Cohen and Daniels have already suffered their share



COHEN



DANIELS

of speed bumps, including the short-lived "Cheerleader Nation" and having Lifetime temporarily yanked off EchoStar's Dish lineup. But both execs say it's smoother sailing these days.

Daniels adds she sees potential in the Christopher Guest-style mockumentary series "Lovespring International" and hopes her first original drama, the crime procedural "Angela's Eyes," helps cast the channel as a rival to cable kingpins TNT and USA.

Later this year, Lifetime will debut a biopic about the journey of "American Idol" winner Fantasia Barrino, starring the singer herself. The movie is an uplifting tearjerker, but Daniels says that's not all the channel is about anymore. "Not all Lifetime movies are exactly the same or require a box of tissues," she says.

— Denise Martin

Career mantra: "Don't be afraid to try new things with new approaches and new perspectives," says Daniels.

Role model: Says Daniels: Sarah Brown, director of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy and mother to three accomplished children.

What's next: A slew of genres new to Lifetime including primetime soap "Bianca," based on a popular German telenovela, and the political reality series "Election," in which Mary Matalin and James Carville will serve as candidate campaign managers for a high school student body presidential race.

