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FNC takes news satire out for spin

By **MICHAEL LEARMONTH**
NEW YORK

Fox News Channel is airing two pilots of Joel Surnow's "The ½ Hour News Hour" to test the market for a right-leaning satire show.

FNC is testing the concept on Sunday nights. The first episode will air at 10 p.m. Sunday and repeat the following Sunday. The second episode will air at the same time

March 4.



Surnow

The show, which stars comedians Kurt Long and Jenn Robertson, owes quite a bit to "Saturday Night Live" segment "Weekend Update" in both

format and spirit. The "newscasters" will take a story of the day and then spin it to a comedic extreme.

"We're calling it news with a sense of humor," said Surnow, producer of Fox's "24." "It's a show that satirizes the targets that have been missed by the mainstream satirists on TV."

One seg discusses the timeless popularity on campus of T-shirts bearing the iconic image of Che Guevara. "We spin it into a campus T-shirt salesman who also sells T-shirts of Mao and Hitler," said co-producer Manny Coto.

FNC will promote the show over the next few weeks and see what kind of ratings it produces in a typically sleepy timeslot for cable news. Ratings will determine whether the show is picked up. *Turn to page 25*

'24' producer spins on FNC

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Surnow, a personal friend of Rush Limbaugh, said he hopes to get some promotion for the skein on conservative talkradio over the next few weeks.

Surnow initially pitched the concept as a latenight skein for the Fox television network, which passed. He took it to FNC topper Roger Ailes, who liked the idea and committed late last year to a trial on Fox News Channel.

"You can turn on any show and see Bush being bashed," Surnow said. "There really is nothing out there for those who want satire that tilts right."

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