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# NBC irritates Eye with music pic

It's only rock 'n' roll, but suddenly NBC really likes it — and that has execs at CBS doing a slow burn.

The Peacock has just greenlit "The Big Beat Heat," a two-hour telepic from von Zerneck-Sertner Prods. about legendary rock deejay Alan Fried and the payola scandals of the 1950s. NBC says there's no airdate yet for the music-filled movie, but industry insiders say the web is shooting for a late October/early November broadcast.

Coincidentally — or perhaps not — CBS several months ago announced the start of production on "Shake, Rattle & Roll," a four-hour mini about the early days of rock now skedded to air on Nov. 7 and 10. CBS insiders believe NBC wants to rush "Big Beat"

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on the air before "Shake," stealing some of the Eye's thunder and possibly diluting the promo impact of the CBS mini.

Fueling the Eye's suspicion is NBC's recent decision to rush-job the two-hour Bible pic "Jesus & Mary" for the upcoming November sweeps, not long after CBS had announced plans for the four-hour mini "Jesus."

"Maybe we'll have to announce a concept for a bogus mini and see if (NBC execs) copy that, too," one CBS insider said.

An NBC spokeswoman brushed aside Eye complaints over "Big Beat," noting the Peacock started the recent trend in music-based movies and minis with its boffo-rated minis "The '60s" and "The Temptations."

"NBC has set the standard on music (in telepics)," she said. "We don't buy (pic concepts) based on what the other guys are doing. We buy it if it's a good story, and that's what we felt (the 'Big Beat' pic was)."

An Eye spokesman countered, "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, so we're all feeling pretty flattered around here."

— **Josef Adalian**