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JUNE 1995

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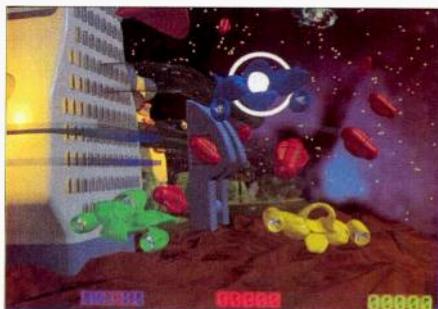
Banff has mountains and Pat Ferns' Market Simulation: Cannes has the Croisette and, well, Pat Ferns' Market Simulation. And so does Natpe. The disease is spreading, not least because half the projects pitched at the event make it into real live tv shows.

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A still from NRK TV's recent production of Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*.

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Move Over Big Boy

I travelled to Helsinki last month to do a series of interviews for our cover story on broadcasting in the Nordic countries. The last thing on my mind was another section planned for this issue, our annual special report on interactive tv. I'm a bit embarrassed to mention it now, since it was just plain bias on my part. Interactive tv stories feature MCI and Silicon Graphics and Rupert Murdoch, not a commercial broadcaster in a small northern European country. I was wrong.

Finnish commercial broadcaster MTV3 started offering classifieds on its teletext system a little more than a year ago. The service turned a profit on its first day and now sells 100 ads a day. More than anything else, it is a smart combination of the technologies of the here and now. If you want to advertise, you call a premium-rate phone number – that's how the ads are paid for, so no messy invoicing – and are instructed by the system to set your tv to a certain teletext page. You then use your telephone to key in the ad, which you watch spelling itself out on the television. When you're used to the passive nature of teletext – pages and pages of text you can't do anything to – it's eerie at first to see the television reacting to buttons pressed on the telephone.

Classifieds are only the beginning. A new service MTV3 has just added demonstrates the possibilities for interactive teletext. A travel agent's teletext page provides a phone number that once dialed, instructs you to go to your own page on the system. Here you can call up all manner of information on different holiday destinations and vacation packages and, then, order your vacation. Once directed by the phone service to the page you'll be using, all the information you could want – on any subject, really – can be called up using the phone. In other words, the phone and a teletext tv, with this technology, can become a system that will deliver huge amounts of information to the tv screen, as specifically requested by individual callers. "We don't have the information superhighway, but we have the path and you can go up and down it," said Juha-Pekka Louhelainen, senior vice president at MTV. Louhelainen is being a bit modest. Last month, with some fanfare, Mr. Murdoch's BSKyB announced a "new" interactive teletext system, Intertext. That's right, it's pretty much the same service they've been offering way up there in Finland for more than a year now. Had I not stumbled across MTV3's service on my trip, I might have gotten pretty excited.

The lesson I learned on my visit to Finland was driven home as I read our feature on the slew of interactive gameshows now on the market. The formats for two shows being sold by U.S. distributors weren't developed in the U.S.: one came from Turkey, the other from Israel. Perhaps, in this revolution, technology will have its oft-promised levelling effect. Interactive tv will allow the Finlands, the Israels and the Turkeys to develop programs and services that can compete with those of the traditional tv powers. Of course, that means I'll have to dump some silly assumptions of my own.



The Editor

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I've always loved the comedies of the silent film era and regretted that the talkies made them a lost art form. They nurtured a rare kind of performing artist – Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton, at the top of the line – whose bread vanished when motion picture technology was advanced by sound.

So I found it heartening, while chairing the press jury of the Golden Rose of Montreux festival this spring, that three of the strong contenders in the competition were comedies without dialog. All employed the universal sight language of clowns.

Seeing these entries reminded me that several entries at last year's Prix Jeunesse festival of Children's TV in Munich also told their stories without words. I remembered a charming one from Poland about a city boy who adopts a wayward cow, and another from ZDF, Mainz, about three loveable water rats sailing the gutter in a paper boat. This one combined animation and live action and was a prize-winner.

In all, between the two festivals, there were nearly a dozen shows that vaulted the language barrier. Lo, a global trend in the making!

Two of the wordless programs at Montreux, *The Street* from Bulgaria and *Choof!* from Spain's TVE, were appealingly whimsical most of the way, but both eventually lapsed into heavy-handed slapstick. So no award.

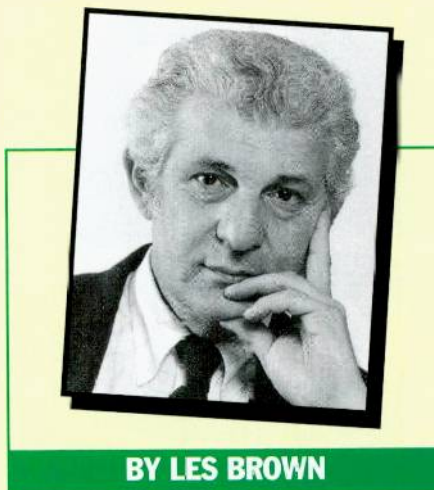
I confess to having been pleasantly surprised by the Bulgarian entry. Never having been to that country, I imagined it as dour and humorless. *The Street* was a pastiche of crazy light-hearted sketches, one of them a delicious bit of comedy involving a pet automobile.

The press jury, which conferred its Golden Rose on a Netherlands program with plenty of words called *Taxi*, gave a special citation to the third silent entry, *Bud Bindi*, which was from the Slovak Republic of all places.

Featuring two brilliant sketch comedians of the silent film traditions plus some clever material, this is the show that could play just about anywhere in the world – which of course is the point of producing wordless programs today.

Thanks to the thriving international

Reviving The Lost Art Of The Silents



BY LES BROWN

program market, the lost art of the silents has been revived, albeit with environmental sound and background music.

And it is interesting to note where many of these programs come from: eastern European countries emerging from the fallen Iron Curtain whose native languages might limit them in world television commerce – Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria.

Not in competition at Montreux, but examined in the newly-initiated Golden Rose program clinic, was an excellent film from China, *Flavours of a Shanghai Brick Building*, that sustained a 50-minute dramatic narrative without a line of dialog.

The producer of the film had previously only made music videos. And when you think about it, what are music videos but silent films with an overlay of rock?

It's somehow fitting that a genre from the past returns in the midst of a mass obsession with the future.

But seemingly everything new has antecedents. Does anyone remember Scopitone? Great technology, many of us thought back in the late 60s, the best form of video jukebox yet. Scopitone was developed in France, if memory serves and featured in some of the mosty chic bars in New York.

Scopitone went down swiftly. Apparently, people preferred just listening to music rather than having it attended by some kind of visual interpretation. That was just a decade before MTV.

There's also irony in the growing excitement today over everyone's ability to communicate with strangers on the bulletin boards of the Internet and computer online services.

If connecting with strangers is such a powerful human drive, why weren't we similarly excited about ham radio in the 40s and 50s, or CB radio in the 70s, both of which allowed us actually to *talk* to the faceless people met by chance?

Failures of the past have a way of re-emerging. Among the new media introduced in the 80s, the interactive forms of tv flopped hardest in the U.S. Today they're the big buzz everywhere, and every media company wants in.

Videotex was a notable failure in America. A decade later, in the form of computer, online services, it's one of the fastest-growing branches of media.

What succeeds and what doesn't are often matters of timing in a consumer economy that changes by the decade. Expanding global markets for tv programming prompt the wordless film to be reinvented. Meanwhile, spurred by fashion and ease of use, the spirit of ham radio lives on in a digital guise.

As the past collaborates with the future, there's a chance of another Chaplin. And there may yet be hope for Phonevision, holography and 3-D movies. [E]

Failures of the past have a way of re-emerging. Among the new media introduced in the 80s, interactive tv flopped hardest in the U.S.

STARS ON TELEVISION.

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MONITOR

FRANCE

No Room For Tessier At Helm Of Canal Plus

Lescure under pressure as another founding father quits the group

As it puts the finishing touches to its plans to launch the next generation of digital tv channels, the last thing Canal Plus wanted was trouble at the top.

However on May 27 Marc Tessier, one of the founders of the French pay-tv group and the man responsible for developing its digital plans, announced his resignation. In the days afterwards, the French press reported that Pierre Dauzier, president of Havas, the most important shareholder in Canal Plus, was trying to oust Pierre Lescure, president of the pay-tv group.

The two stories were not linked. The departure of Tessier had been on the cards since the sudden resignation of André Rousselet in February 1994. Having been instrumental in the most impressive successes of the group – its international development, its European lead in pay-tv technology and digital broadcasting, and its pact with Bertelsmann – Tessier expected to be appointed general manager.

But Tessier was not even one of the three deputy general managers Pierre Lescure chose a few weeks after replacing Rousselet. Tessier was not only sore. He really believed the group needed to be organized and that Lescure had to delegate responsibilities to one or several of his man-

agers. Tessier decided to resign, making a point of stating his deep affection for Lescure and an ongoing fidelity to the group.

This departure took place at a time of uncertainty for Canal Plus. Lescure has not yet defined precisely how and with whom he intends to run Canal Plus. The days of ever-increasing profits are over, although subscriptions to Canal Plus channels are still increasing. But to maintain its international competitiveness the group will have to make large investments in technology and programs.

Last, but not least, the president of Canal Plus must live with a pact between the two main shareholders, Havas and Générale des Eaux (plus the bank, Société Générale) that was the reason for André Rousselet's sudden decision to resign.

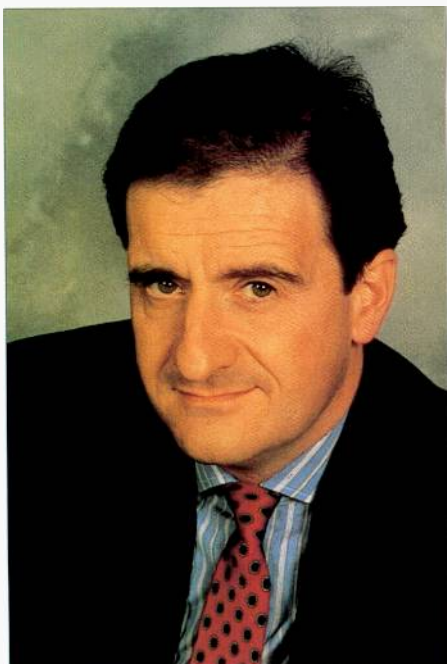
Up to now, this pact let things be. Lescure appeared to be a charismatic president, with a strategy no shareholder had any reason to oppose. But Havas being also a major shareholder of CLT and having recently strengthened its ties with its controlling shareholder, Albert Frère, pushed for a partnership between Canal Plus and CLT.

Pierre Dauzier expressed publicly the idea that it would be a pity for the two "cousins" to compete head on in the same market instead of building a partnership that would create one of the biggest forces in Europe. So in the spring the two groups started to negotiate a deal by which CLT would be licensed to use the Canal Plus technology for its own digital satellite bouquet. But Dauzier believed they should go further and have complementary program and channel policies, an idea Lescure doesn't believe realistic.

Hence the rumors – not denied at Canal Plus – that Dauzier wanted Lescure out. The threat was taken seriously enough by Jean-Marie Messier, the boss of Générale des Eaux, who publicly affirmed his complete support of Lescure.

An imminent change of president seems unlikely. An ouster would be difficult to implement without the support of La Générale (which is also a shareholder of Havas), which does not seem to be in favor of closer ties between Canal Plus and CLT. As long as it remains so, Lescure could be said to be as powerful as his predecessor, Rousselet.

by Serge Siritzky – PARIS



Pierre Lescure: the man in charge

EUROPE

MTV Paves Way For Viacom Nets

Encryption is stage one of plan to pioneer digital tv in Europe

MTV Europe, one of the most successful exponents of pan-European tv, is due to encrypt its signal from July 1 in a move which will prepare the way for the launch of digital versions of the music network and other Viacom stations later in the year.

The long-heralded switch to pay-tv marks something of a watershed in pan-European television. So far stations like MTV have kept their signal in the clear to encourage the growth of a direct-to-home market.

The music network said it would lose only 10-15% of its audience by encrypting, with major markets like the UK and Germany mostly unaffected, for different reasons. In the UK, the majority of DTH viewers already pay a fee to receive the Sky Multichannel package of which MTV will now become part, while in Germany most viewers receive the channel via cable.

MTV will still be under pressure to reduce its rates. One ad agency manager estimated that MTV Europe would take \$90-100 million from ad sales and licensing agreements this year, but said that advertisers would expect to pay less if their ads were reaching fewer people. The new revenue stream from subscriptions – notably from Sky Multichannels in the UK – should make up the shortfall, however.

Digital transmissions of six channels are expected to be introduced via a Eutelsat Hot Bird 1 transponder around September. Peter Einstein, president, business director of MTV Europe, said they would include MTV Europe; the version of the network which includes ads aimed at Germany; the German versions of VH-1 (launched in analog form on the satellite on May 4) and Nickelodeon; and a specialized service operated by financial newswire service Bloomberg, the only non-Viacom operation. Options for the remaining berth include a shopping channel, films, interactive games and pay-per-view, said Einstein.

By compressing the signal of its networks, Viacom is hoping to secure its future as a significant player in the European multichannel market, as well as preparing the way for the launch of future services drawing on the massive libraries of its parent company.

Initially, the digital channels will be aimed at the German market, which with 14.5 million cable homes is MTV Europe's largest market.

Cable operators will be supplied with Philips-made digital decoders, reportedly in lieu of carriage fees.

"The cable heads that represent the majority of German cable subscribers will have compression equipment installed by year end," said Einstein. "After that we'll be rounding out the rest of what's left there and after that start to roll out to other countries."

As well as offering capacity-strapped cable operators an incentive for carrying all of the Viacom services, compression will eventually enable the U.S. company to offer advertisers the possibility of targeting specific national markets. In addition, said Einstein, transmission from the two major satellite systems will "give (Viacom services) the ability to package with anyone we like in any market we like."

The launch of new Astra and Eutelsat systems means there will be well over 100 transponders available for tv distribution by the end of 1997, which with digital compression could open the way for 1,000 new tv channels. Amazingly, the operators of both satellite systems report that most of that capacity is already spoken for.

Einstein commented: "The launching of analog services is coming very fast to an end, and from next year... it's all going to be digital."

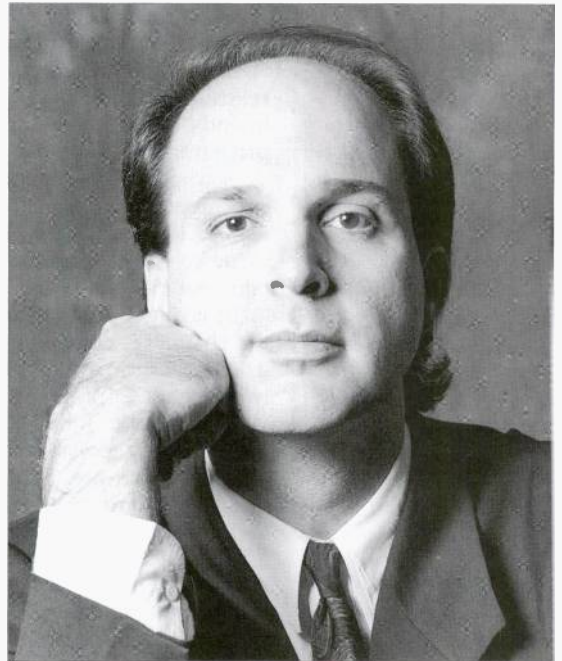
by Tim Westcott – LONDON

THAILAND

Sixth Channel Plans To Focus On Fact

New private network will take its license obligation seriously

The Thai government has issued a license to operate a nationwide commercial tv station to Siam Infotainment Co., backed by a consortium of media and financial groups. Siam TV, which is



Peter Einstein: the man charging

JUNE QUESTIONS

Question: Which one of the following three questions, due to be put to Italians in the June 11 referendum, was proposed by a political ally of Fininvest? Question one: Should a single individual or entity be limited to owning one rather than three national tv networks? Two: Should commercial breaks in tv broadcasts of feature films be reduced? Three: Should a single advertising sales house be limited to two rather than three national tv channels? Four: Should state broadcaster Rai be privatized? No prizes for guessing that the last question was proposed by Silvio Berlusconi ally Marco Pannella, while the first three were proposed by left-wing parties.

set to launch in mid-1997, will be the first network to be delivered via UHF.

In order to differentiate itself from the five terrestrial stations already on the air, Siam TV intends to air a schedule dominated by factual programming, with documentaries in primetime slots where most Thai broadcasters show locally-produced and imported drama. The channel intends to broadcast a 24-hour schedule made up of news (30%), documentaries (40%) and entertainment (30%).

In laying a heavy emphasis on documentaries, the channel is complying with the commitment in its 30-year license to show educational and socially enlightening programming.

"Thai people still like to see drama, talk shows and variety shows," said Natavoot Chitasombat, executive vice president of shareholder Siam TV and Communication. "We have to make news and documentary programming that is more interesting and useful. Our new programming will be produced using our own facilities and SNG trucks, in addition to feeds from other worldwide news organizations."

Currently Siam is building 36 transmission stations and four studios with the help of the BBC's technical department. The new station will be run by a consortium of 12 shareholders including Siam TV and Communication Co Ltd, a media and communications house owned by the Siam Commercial Bank and the Crown Property Bureau's United Cinema Co; production houses Kantana and Born Operation; and newspaper groups Sang Enterprise Corporation and TH Vatanakij Holding Public Company.

With an initial capital investment of about \$162 million and plans to go public within four years, Siam is aiming for 97% coverage of Thailand's 13 million tv homes within two years of start-up. The UHF transmission means, however, that viewers will have to install new aerials to receive the service.

Although it is questionable whether Thailand, with five existing terrestrial stations – Channels 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11, two cable operators and another possible 20 on the way, in addition to another potential UHF licensee – needs another station, Siam is confident it will break even after one year of operation. Gross television advertising expenditure in Thailand in the year to April 1995 was \$280 million.

It is expected that, due to the bizarre nature of Thai primetime advertising pricing, the broadcaster won't have too much trouble filling up its ten minutes of advertising an hour. Currently the cost of a one-minute spot during the primetime news and dramas on leading terrestrial broadcaster Channel 7, is between \$7,000 and \$10,000 with the other stations only 10-15% lower.

This, said a source at Thai ratings agency Demaar, is priced low in order to keep demand high. As a result, ad agencies are desperate for additional choices.

by Sarah Walker – BANGKOK

SPAIN

Telecinco Rejects Offer From TF1

Costs are falling, but so are offers for control of the channel

Spain's Telecinco is still on sale, but not at the prices that are being offered for it. Last month, the Fininvest and Kirch groups rejected an offer of \$360 million from French private network TF1 for their controlling interest in the channel. An offer of \$420 million from Mexico's Televisa was turned down last year.

"It's unthinkable that we could consider an offer lower than that of the Mexicans after the success of the cost-cutting measures," said Telecinco director-general, Maurizio Carlotti.

TF1's offer included the resale of a substantial slice of the shares to the Spanish regional newspaper group, Correo.

Carlotti puts the value of Telecinco at \$480 million, and has claimed to have cut costs by \$24 million in the first two months of the year. A spokesman for Telecinco said it was now running at breakeven, and forecast a small profit for the year. But its audience rating has stuck at 18%.

If the referendum in Italy on June 11 does not force a change of tactics, Berlusconi's plan for Telecinco is to conclude a recapitalization plan, doubling the present capital to \$160 million. But this will not provide new liquidity, because it will effectively be a way of paying off its debts with suppliers and shareholders receiving shares for debt. Debts for purchase of rights currently stand at \$218 million. Under the plan, these will be paid off throughout the year, as and when the films and programs in stock are broadcast.

The long-term aim of Kirch and Berlusconi is reported to be to find a Spanish investor willing to take a 25% stake, once the finances have been restructured. Felipe Gonzalez, the Spanish prime minister, publicly voiced his concern that there were no Spanish bidders for the station last year when it was first put on the market.

Among the identified shareholders (Kirch and Fininvest with 25% each, a Luxembourg bank with 19%, Jacques Hachuel with 10% and la Once with 6.25%) have recently appeared two businessmen involved in construction, reported to be close to Once and by implication, Fininvest. They are Angel Medrano and Alvarez Buiza, who hold the remaining 14.75%.

Contact has been established with Time Warner, Sony and Televisa, over the sale of smaller stakes.

Carlotti stated that the referendum in Italy on

June 11 which may force Berlusconi to restructure his television holdings will have no effect on Telecinco. But Spanish observers expect potential buyers to wait and see if Rupert Murdoch's offer to buy the majority of Fininvest's tv interests is taken up, as it may determine whom they are negotiating with.

by Justin Webster – BARCELONA

ITALY

Rai Back In Profit And Ambitious

Observers sceptical about balance sheets and aid-free future

A triumphant Letizia Moratti, president of Italy's Rai, announced in London at the beginning of May that the public broadcaster "saved itself" and will no longer need any emergency aid from the state.

After several years of financial losses, she said Rai posted a net profit of IL19 billion (\$11.6 million) in 1994 and managed to reduce its overall debt by 25% to \$670 million.

Moratti, a personal friend of tv tycoon Silvio Berlusconi, who appointed her at the top of the network when he was Italy's premier, also said that Rai is expected to make further improvements in the next few years, with profits of \$17 million in 1995 and \$79 million in 1996. In 1993 it registered a loss of \$292 million.

Rai's president, dubbed "Lady Marshall" by her opponents in reference to her management style, claimed she achieved these "particularly satisfying" results with a 7% increase in turnover to \$2.3 billion, while she cut costs by 16% and jobs by 7% to 11,809.

Moreover, she announced that Rai has earmarked \$730 million for production, co-production and purchasing tv product.

Rai will pay particular attention to domestic and European production, aiming to create "a better balance

between in-house and external production which will reduce the share of programming covered by acquisitions from 69% to 60% and increase in-house production from 31% to 40%."

Many Italian observers, however, criticized Moratti's decision to announce Rai's results in London and her "blustering optimism." While she claimed that London was the right place to stress Rai's "leading role in the global media environment," Italy's press accused her of choosing to address a foreign audience unfamiliar with Rai's problems and financial accounts.

In fact, Rai's recovery was mainly due to new accounting methods, including a revaluation of its real estate assets, many analysts said. This cosmetic exercise worked for 1994 but will not guarantee further improvements in the following year's balance sheets, they said.

A truce in Rai's traditional hostilities with Berlusconi's Fininvest networks also helped to cut expenses and helped both parties benefit in the acquisition of international programming.

Strong criticism came also from Gianni Locatelli, former Rai general director, who was abruptly replaced by Berlusconi last year. Locatelli said that while Moratti took all the credit for Rai's success, this was mainly achieved by the "old board," ousted last August. More importantly, he warned Moratti that being too optimistic and excluding any future need of state financial aid was dangerous and probably unrealistic.

by Cecilia Zecchinelli – MILAN

GERMANY

ARD And ZDF In Sports Pact

In league with RTL, pubcasters aim to wrest league soccer from ISPR

As the costs for sports rights escalate, German broadcasters are forming strategic alliances aimed at increasing financial clout. The rights to the nation's most popular sport in the first and second division soccer leagues have become so expensive they are virtually beyond the reach of any one network.

In a plan to pool financial resources, ARD chairman Albert Scharf and ZDF chief Dieter Stolte put their heads together and came up with an agency for sports rights and marketing. Rivals in entertainment programming, the public networks will join forces in the scramble for sports rights. And RTL, the private channel which has made the biggest inroads into their ratings, will now team up with them.

CROSS-OVER POTENTIAL

New UK cross-ownership regulations will permit national newspaper owners to own tv companies, while tv companies will be allowed to own national newspapers, for the first time. Cross-media groups will, however, be limited to a 10% share of the overall media market in a system still to be defined based either on revenue or audience share and circulation. News International, Rupert Murdoch's UK arm, which controls 36% of national newspaper sales, attacked the rules as "the proposals of the old vested and often unsuccessful interests – Associated Newspapers, Pearson and Carlton Communications." The proposals, announced by National Heritage Secretary Stephen Dorrell last month, will take effect in January 1997, subject to approval by Parliament.



Moratti: Boost for Rai

SBS NAMES LAUNCH DAY

Scandinavian Broadcasting System (SBS) has set August 28 as the launch date for its latest tv channel venture, SBS6, in the Netherlands. SBS6 president Fons van Westerloo said the station would aim for a viewing share of 5% with a combination of information and high-quality entertainment. Van Westerloo, formerly program director of RTL5, said he would aim at 40-50% Dutch program content. Veronica, the public broadcaster, plans to leave the public system on September 1 and launch its own channel, in partnership with RTL4 and Endemol, on September 1. The new SBS channel will bring to seven the number of privately-owned tv channels in the country, four of them launched this year. TV10 and The Music Factory, both owned by Arcade Media Group, launched in May.

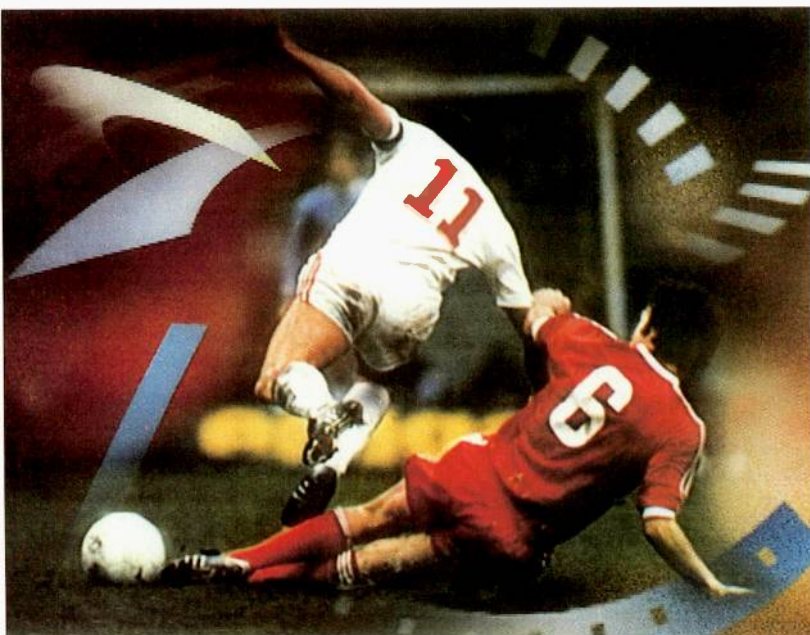
The joint venture, announced May 10 at the ARD directors meeting in Baden-Baden, must be approved by the broadcasting councils of both networks. Scheduled for a fall launch, the Munich based Sportrechte und Marketing GmbH, described by Scharf as a "full service agency," will buy and sell sports rights for national and international events. "Through the sports rights company, we can tighten previous work procedures and adapt to the changing market situation," Scharf said in making the announcement. Under a management to be appointed soon, the company will do its own marketing.

The agency will compete against Germany's leading sports rights acquisition companies, Bertelsmann's subsidiary Ufa film and Television and the ISPR International Sports Rights Agency, owned jointly by the Axel Springer Verlag and the Kirch Group.

The trio of the ARD, ZDF and RTL is determined to wrest the soccer rights away from ISPR, which in 1992 paid the DFB (German Soccer Association) a whopping \$432 million for the rights to the leagues through the 1996/97 season. The broadcasting rights then went to Sat 1, whose main shareholders are Springer and Kirch. The alliance reportedly is prepared to pay \$107 million annually for the rights up to the year 2000.

Since Sat 1 can hardly recoup its outlay for the soccer rights out of advertising revenue, its popular sports show *ran* is regarded more as an image-booster than a profit-generator.

If the DSF's league committee awards them the rights in a decision expected this summer, ZDF and ARD will cover highlights of the matches in Friday and Saturday pre-primetime sport shows when they are allowed to air spots, and RTL on Sundays when regulations prohibit public network advertising.



Sat 1's soccer programs, including *ran*, are high profile but unprofitable

The cost of soccer rights began to soar in 1988 when Ufa outbid the ARD and ZDF, which had paid only \$10 million to the DFB for their last season in 1987/88. Ufa forked out \$100 million for four years rights beginning with the 1988/89 season. It came as no surprise when RTL, in which Ufa has a major stake, picked up the broadcasting rights.

by Jack Kindred - MUNICH

INDIA

Gandhi Remark Fails To Amuse

Off-the-cuff insult on Star TV show puts politicians in angry mood

Remarks by a guest on a Star TV chat show have plunged the pan-Asian station into the sort of public relations crisis tv executives probably have nightmares about. Despite issuing an apology to the nation about a reference to Mahatma Gandhi on the English-language Star TV's *Nikki Tonight* and taking the offending primetime show off the air, Star TV still faces the threat of a lawsuit from the Gandhi family.

The dispute has even led to calls from Indian MPs to block offending foreign networks from broadcasting to India.

Nikki Tonight, presented by Nikki Bedi, was designed to be light, funny and even irreverent. Bedi carried most of this off, and her often embarrassingly direct questions in earlier episodes had not attracted complaints.

That was before Ashok Row Kavi, a gay rights activist, came on the show on May 11. Known for his ability to shock, it was not really a surprise that he would court controversy. Kavi told an anecdote about how, when he started a career as a journalist, he lost his first job in a newspaper for writing a letter to the editor of a weekly magazine, in which he used derogatory language against Mahatma Gandhi, who led India to independence and is known as "the father of the nation." In telling the story, Kavi repeated the word he had used to describe Gandhi, which cast aspersions on Gandhi's parentage.

Star TV's response to the storm of public criticism was to take the show off the air - only four weeks after it launched - and issue a statement signed by Gene Swinstead, managing director of Star TV in India. He said: "We fully appreciate that Mr Ashok Row Kavi's comments caused deep offence, and while Mr Kavi's comments and views are his own and do not in any way reflect

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TAKEN TO COURT TV

Two members of the Israeli Knesset, Tzakhi Hanegi (Likud) and Raanan Cohen (Labour coalition), have introduced legislation intended to stop Hebrew-language advertising over the Russian network Ostankino. By law only one Israeli network, the Second Channel, is permitted commercials but the Israel Cable Television Association has skirted the regulations by broadcasting the Hebrew ads to almost a million Russian speakers hooked to cable. According to a recent survey, on any given night 65.7% of the Russians in Israel tune into the channel at some point and 60% for more than two hours. Over 50 Israeli companies now advertise on Ostankino at rates which are less than a tenth the cost of Israel's commercial channel. This is the main objection of the two MKs, who claim that both the Second Channel and Russian newspapers are being deprived of revenue. They want to impose heavy fines on Israeli companies advertising on Ostankino and are bringing a local furniture manufacturer to court as a test case.

those of Star TV, Nikki Bedi or (the show's producers) TV 18, we at Star TV have a duty of care to hold the tastes and sensitivities of our viewers paramount."

Regardless of Star TV's action, Mahatma's grandson, Tushar Gandhi, said he would sue Star TV and Television 18. "Apologizing means nothing these days," he said. "The damage has been done by their irresponsible action of airing such a program."

Kavi himself was unrepentant. "I can't see what all the fuss is about," he told the India Abroad news service. He said the producers could have deleted the reference and had made several other cuts.

"Star TV should be asked to pack up and leave," said Sikandar Bhakt, leader of the BJP in the upper house (Rajya Sabha).

His party colleague KR Malkani described the remarks against Gandhi as "cultural terrorism" and said the producers of the show were trying to shock and scandalize viewers to grab attention.

The mood in government circles is now one of confrontation. Officials in the information and broadcasting ministry say that the government could ban errant broadcast networks. Cable operators who relay satellite programs could be asked to abide by diktats under the provisions of the Cable Act. Other than that the government could also pressure advertisers to avoid sponsoring or buying commercials in such programs.

Star TV, which can be received by over 10 million homes in urban India, is uplinked from a foreign jurisdiction in Hong Kong. Other satellite networks targeting India are transmitting from Singapore and Nepal. Regulators may just have to depend on the sensitivity of foreign broadcasters.

by Asoka Raina - NEW DELHI

PHILIPPINES

Friendly Islands For Cable Players

Programmers and system operators are making themselves at home

The Philippines, long an important market for U.S. distributors, are now attracting the interest of U.S. and Asian cable programmers and international cable operators.

Cable television in the south-east Asian territory began in the late 60s but its development was stunted during the 20-year Marcos dictatorship. Since 1988 the industry has started to grow and now stands at about 300,000 subscribers, with



almost 49% of the country's 11 million tv households passed and some 250 cable operators registered. Subscriber projections for the year 2000 are over one million.

Although subscription fees and therefore revenues are low (between \$4 and \$17 depending on the location and its demographics), most of the major U.S.-owned satellite networks, including ESPN, TNT/Cartoon Network and The Discovery Channel, in addition to the Star TV channels, have carriage.

Although the per capita income of the Philippines isn't as high as other Asian countries, English is widely spoken and there are wealthy sub-groups of other nationalities.

Sky Cable, the country's largest operator, has just launched a premium tier of programming in the capital city, Manila, aimed at the niche but wealthy Chinese residents. Programming has come from Hong Kong's TVBI and the channel is negotiating with Chinese Television Network (CTN), MTV Mandarin and NHK among others. At the moment Sky carries about 33 channels in a basic tier, including three channels of its own: The I Channel, which broadcasts children's fare during the day and adult programs at night, Sky Movies, and a Filipino entertainment channel. The tier also includes most of the terrestrial broadcasters which use cable as an additional means of distribution to the country's 13,000 islands.

HBO Asia recently rejoined the Sky package after a short hiatus due to a spat over the quality of the channel and its price. HBO was reputedly charging \$2 per subscriber but has now modified this to \$1.60.

While the Filipino cable market has been attractive to U.S. programmers, it is also attracting its fair share of U.S. investment interest. At the moment foreign ownership is banned in cable television. However the consensus is that the law will be changed to perhaps a 40% ceiling, bringing it in line with the telecoms industry.

In the meantime a number of U.S. cable companies including Time Warner, TCI, UIH and Falcon are either looking to or have already formed strategic partnerships in preparation for a change in the law. Falcon Cable, in a high-profile venture, has already helped Cavite Cable install a fiber-optic system. Clive Flessig, Falcon's international vice president, said the Falcon deal adheres to the ban on foreign ownership and an equity stake hasn't been taken in the system. Despite this, one U.S. cable operator conceded that those overseas companies which hadn't already set up strategic alliances with local cable operators were "half-way to missing the boat." Most are already spoken for.

by Sarah Walker - BACOLOD CITY

BROADCASTING

Murdoch Looks To Spend MCI's \$2bn

News Corporation is on the acquisition trail following the investment of \$2 billion in the operator by U.S. long-distance telephone company, MCI. The deal will cement a long-term strategic relationship between News Corp and MCI which will include investment in production, and program distribution ventures around the world. Soon after the announcement of the deal on May 10, News Corp revealed it had made an offer for the three Italian tv networks owned by Silvio Berlusconi's Fininvest group. Although Fininvest is attempting to sell up to 35% of its tv interests, it is thought unlikely it would agree to sell all its core tv broadcast interests wholesale. A rumored visit by Rupert Murdoch to Paris last month suggests News Corp may be on the lookout for acquisitions in France.

ITV Calls For Priority On Digital

Britain's ITV companies have called on the UK government to give first refusal on the use of digital terrestrial tv frequencies to established broadcasters, rather than opening them up to new entrants. They said frequencies could be handed over to "other operators" if they had not been used within a specified number of years. Legislation should be introduced to Parliament in the 1995/6 session, starting this Fall, to enable broadcasters and manufacturers to prepare for the launch of services in 1997, said the ITV companies.

Cost Of Euro TV Ads On A Downer

The cost of tv advertising in Europe has fallen over the last two years, according to a study by Young & Rubicam Media in Europe, a London-based unit of the ad agency network. Compared to 1993, when strong growth in tv advertising was recorded in many countries, leading to higher rates, Y&R noted that costs have fallen due to static ad budgets and increased competition. Countries with the highest tv cost-per-thousand were Austria, Belgium and Norway, with Poland and the Czech Republic the cheapest. The study is titled European Media Cost Comparisons 1995.

Dutch Pubcasters Sign Up With FilmNet

Dutch public broadcasters, due to face competition from seven privately owned tv channels by the end of the year, are to be allowed to enter the field of pay-tv. Aad Nuis, the new minister of culture, is currently preparing major changes in the law allowing public broadcasters to enter into subscription-

based television. The public service companies, which jointly program three terrestrial channels, have signed letters of intent with pay-tv network FilmNet to develop a bouquet of channels in the Netherlands covering sports, cultural and children's programming.

Brill Questions E! Coverage Of OJ Trial

Steven Brill, the founder and CEO of Court TV, has questioned the "appropriateness" of E! Entertainment Television's decision to televise the OJ Simpson trial. Speaking to a Californian civil liberties union last month Brill acknowledged that E! had a right to share the Court TV feed from the courtroom, but he questioned whether "a channel that calls itself an entertainment network" should cover "a double murder trial gavel to gavel, anchored by a diet food pitch woman, and complete with gossip reports and commentary from a hair stylist and a dog psychologist." In the same speech, Brill called for broadcast organizations to agree a code of conduct on the coverage of legal cases.

Losing Its Identity

Identity Television, the UK affiliate of U.S. network Black Entertainment Television, has changed its name to BET International (BETI) to reflect its association with its parent group. The name change also coincides with the second anniversary of IDTV, which is currently available to an audience of over 800,000 people via the London Interconnect cable systems and is also distributed in Poland.

CHANNELS

Music And Weather Channels Licensed in Germany

German media authorities have licensed two more channels for distribution on the country's cable systems: COM-TV (Centre of Music Television) and a so-far-unnamed weather and travel channel. COM-TV, licensed by the media authority of Rheinland-Pfalz, is backed by a group of British-based investors. Programming will be made up of jazz and country music mixed with international and German contemporary hits, targeted at the 30-55 year old age bracket. Northrhine Westphalia greenlighted a weather and travel channel backed by Austrian and German interests and U.S. company Landmark Communications.

Sci-Fi Sets The Date For Euro Launch

The Sci-Fi Channel has set October 5 as the launch date for its European version. Transmitting via the Eutelsat Hot Bird 1 satellite, Sci-Fi will be debut on cable systems in the UK, Benelux and Scandinavia. Sci-Fi, which is backed by USA Net-

BITV LAUNCH SLIPS

Business India Television (BITV), the satellite operation which is aiming to challenge Zee TV, has run into a further snag in trying to get off the ground. Originally slated for a debut last year, BITV missed its latest launch window when the satellite it earmarked for temporary transmission developed problems. Rumors that BITV's partners, Jardine Fleming, had pulled out were quashed, however, when the finance house said it was still on board. Nicholas Butt, head of investment banking, was quoted in the Indian press as saying: "We would much rather wait a little longer so that BITV can launch a quality product rather than a half-baked one." BITV, which has continued to commission programs from independent producers, said it was planning to start test transmissions last month.



EUROPE STRIKES BACK

French broadcasters are seeking an entrée to U.S. cable systems. Pay-tv operator Canal Plus hopes to launch a channel called Voilà, dedicated to the "European art of life," on TCI cable systems at the beginning of 1996. As well as programs on food, fashion, music and travel, Voilà will show European drama series and films. The pay-tv group is seeking partners for the channel, which would subsequently be rolled out worldwide. Meanwhile Francophone public service channel TV5, in partnership with TV Québec-Canada, has signed a deal with TCI subsidiary ICCP to launch a channel called TV5 USA aimed at the 10 million French-speakers in the country. Its backers are aiming to secure cable and DTH distribution and launch around the same time as Voilà. The BBC is still seeking a debut for its BBC World news channel while Rai and TVE have also set launching U.S. services as an objective.

works, itself a joint venture between Paramount and MCA, will initially air in the English-language subtitles available in Scandinavian languages, with Dutch "a strong possibility." Sci-Fi will be a 24-hour service featuring four programming genres: sci-fi, fantasy, fact and classic horror. The signal will be encrypted.

MuchMusic Cranks It Up In Mexico

Canadian-owned network Much Music will launch June 1 on Mexican cable systems owned by Cablevision SA. MuchMusic signed a licensing deal with the Televisa-owned company last month. The channel will initially be available to 250,000 homes. Muchmusic, a 24-hour music channel owned by Chum Ltd of Toronto, is already available to three million homes in the U.S. and two million homes in Argentina.

BUSINESS

CLT Profits Up 10% In 1994

Compagnie Luxembourgeoise de Télévision (CLT) reported a 10% increase in earnings to LFr3.3 billion (\$111 million) in 1994. Consolidated turnover, which included the multi-media group's stake in France's M6 for the first time, was up 9.4% at \$2.8 billion. Television revenues represented \$2.3 billion (81%) of overall revenues, with Germany accounting for 57%, France 25% and the Benelux and other countries 18%.

TV Shoppers On International Spree

Two U.S.-backed home shopping companies reported strong sales growth in the first part of the year. The UK version of home shopping network QVC said it made net sales of £7.05 million (\$11.3 million) in the first quarter of the year, up from \$2.8 million in the same period of 1994. Quantum International, the operating arm of National Media Corporation, announced revenues for the year ending March 31 of \$80 million, a rise of 75% on the year before. QVC, a joint venture between the U.S. company of the same name and BSKyB, was criticized last year by ex-chief exec Barry Diller. According to the company, it has now "received a strong vote of confidence" from its U.S. parent.

PEOPLE

Jones Cable Promotes Programming Pair

Jones Entertainment Group (JEG), the programming arm of U.S. cable operator Jones International has expanded the responsibilities of its two executive vps in a move which signals a more aggressive approach to development and acquisition. Phil Fehrle will now be responsible for worldwide production and acquisition while Ted

Henderson will supervise finance and business affairs. Since its launch in 1989, JEG has produced four tv movies, two theatrical films and a four-hour documentary for U.S. networks including HBO and Showtime.

Harman Quits TVNZ For Flextech Job

Brent Harman, group chief executive of TVNZ, has been appointed managing director of the London-based tv group Flextech. Harman will oversee all of the fast-growing company's activities and investments in cable and satellite and broadcast tv, which include interests in 13 satellite channels and a 20% stake in ITV company HTV. Flextech is 51% owned by Tele Communications Inc and quoted on the London stock market. Last month, US West and Hallmark Entertainment each acquired 10% of the company's stock in a deal valued at £92 million (\$147 million), and Flextech and BSKyB unveiled a partnership with Playboy Enterprises Inc. to launch a European Playboy Channel. Harman has been group chief executive of TVNZ since 1991, presiding over a period of increased profits and expansion. Harman will leave at the end of July.



Harman: Oversaw TVNZ expansion

CTIT Strengthens Channel Management

Columbia Tristar International Television (CTIT) has appointed a second senior executive to oversee the development of broadcasting ventures worldwide. George W Leitner, named as senior vp, international networks, will handle operations, planning and management for CTIT nets in Latin America and Australia as well as its stake in HBO Asia.

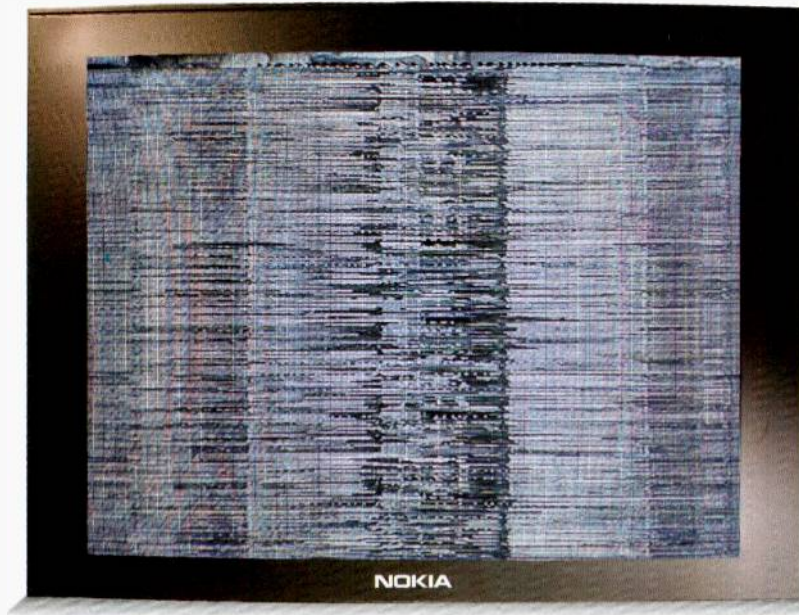
CABLE

Cable Breaks Out In Northern Ireland

Cable Tel (UK) has been awarded the license to build and operate a broadband cable tv network in Northern Ireland. Cable Tel bid \$23 million for the license, the highest of four offers for the 428,000-home franchise. Cable Tel said it would be in a position to bring cable tv and telephony services to all of the homes in the area by 2003. Northern Ireland was one of the first batch of broadband franchises to be issued in the UK in 1983, but was never built.

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How much public broadcasting does a country like Germany need? If anything, you would think, less than a decade ago, when private broadcasters were almost unknown and the public broadcasters had the field to themselves. Not surprisingly, public broadcasters tend to answer that simple question not so much from a commonsense point of view but from that of their own common wealth. If anything, they argue, the sky is the limit to the public's need of public broadcasting.

In Germany, there are two national public tv channels, Das Erste (ARD) and Das Zweite (ZDF). In addition, there are eight channels, originally conceived as regional institutions, which have long since aired throughout Europe on the Astra satellite to become, effectively, general entertainment channels.

The public service sector is completed by 51 radio stations. More are being planned. All in all, the public sector employs 29,000 employees on an income of \$6.5 billion a year.

The public service chiefs are now saying: all of this is not enough.

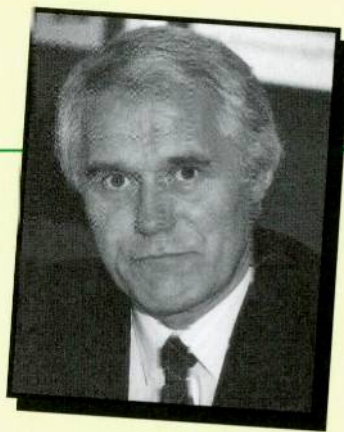
Specifically, ARD says it needs an additional \$6.5 billion for the period from 1997 through 2000 for it alone; ZDF needs an additional \$2.6 billion; public tv must expand into pay tv and other new services, lest it fade into insignificance in the digital age.

This posture is accompanied by a set of curious contradictions: Obviously, an organization in need of so much money must be poor, to say the least. And that's exactly what they have been claiming all the time.

It is true that commercial competition has diminished the advertising income of ARD and ZDF, from 20% and 40% of their respective budgets to 3% and 18%. But this has not hindered either from dramatically expanding their activities in both television and radio.

Public broadcasting is legally obliged to serve the fee-paying public with what is called *Grundversorgung*. This can be translated as "basic service" but has never really been clearly defined. The idea stems from the scarcity of transmission frequencies in public monopoly times. Now that there is satellite and

Asking Pubcasters The \$6bn Question



BY WILFRIED AHRENS

cable television and an overflow of digital capacity to come, the heads of ARD and ZDF have happily translated the term as meaning boundless expansion.

There is another element of contradiction in ARD and ZDF's arguments. Since their cash-devouring bureaucracies have been under attack, both systems have vowed to save roughly \$6 billion through the year 2000.

Curiously, nobody has asked the obvious question: Why do they need an additional \$9.1 billion when they apparently have enough reserves to save two-thirds of that amount in the first place?

The whole situation defies logic to the extent the problem is a factor of politics. It is a cherished fiction of a specially ludicrous kind that public broadcasting is autonomous, free from political influence, still modeled after the BBC ideal of Hugh Carleton Greene, the architect of

post-war broadcasting in Germany 50 years ago.

In reality, public broadcasting has long been in the firm grip of the political parties. Management and journalistic staff have been installed by and held responsible to either the conservative CDU/CSU or the socialist SPD. Since most of the 16 states are governed by SPD-led administrations and more than 90% of the journalists are professedly left-leaning anyway, the SPD has supported the expansionist course of both ARD and ZDF.


On the other hand, the only two conservative state prime ministers, Edmund Stoiber (CSU) of Bavaria, and Kurt Biedenkopf (CDU) of Saxony, have criticized SPD-supporting ARD stations like Westdeutscher Rundfunk and asked for radical reforms, but have seen no reason to scrutinize their ARD affiliates, Bayerischer Rundfunk and Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk, where they play the dominant political role.

The result is a mixture of hypocrisy and hype about public broadcasting safeguarding culture against the commercial barbarians.

The sheer enormity of their demands has provoked public criticism even in the ranks of the SPD. SPD media expert Dr Peter Glotz, one of the few knowledgeable politicians in this field, said in an interview: "Public broadcasting will have no future, unless those responsible drop their arrogance, economize their bureaucracies and switch to lean management."

How much public broadcasting does the country need? Nobody has thought of asking the general public that question, although it's these very people who have to pay for it.

There is one poll that is carried out on a daily basis which supplies at least part of the answer: the measurement of tv viewing.

Since 1984, the combined market shares of ARD and ZDF have shrunk from 100% to 30%. 

Public broadcasting in Germany has long been in the firm grip of the political parties. The result is a mixture of hypocrisy and hype

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Warm-up man: Execs about to start throwing money at pitcher Hart Pomerantz last year

Each year producers get to pitch real projects to delegates at the Banff film and television festival. Half of those projects make it onto the screen. Now Banff's market simulation, devised by tv producer Pat Ferns, has spread to other markets. Karen Murray looks at its brief but busy history

Take a bunch of international tv executives, producers, distributors, government agency reps and industry neophytes and transplant them to the picturesque rocky mountains. Then picture a laid-back environment where deals are more likely to happen on the golf course or nature trail than a boardroom, and you'll have a fairly accurate description of the Banff Television Festival.

The event has evolved as a favourite on the global tv fest circuit because of the intimacy that stems from the isolation of the small community. And the annual

market simulation – a public forum for making deals on potential projects – has become the fest's signature event that other international festivals have since been eager to replicate.

Toronto-based producer Pat Ferns has been spearheading the event since he conceived it 11 festivals ago after reading about a similar seminar that looked at how production deals were put together, but did not use actual projects. "I had a naïve thought: 'why not try it with real people and real projects?'" he recalled.

The first year the market simulation was titled "Wendy Wacko Goes To Mar-

ket: Can She Make It Internationally?" Wacko (an Alberta producer) decided to pitch a different project to the one that had originally been selected, which meant that Ferns had to make things up as he went along. "I had to throw my plans out the window and begin improvising, and I've been improvising ever since."

Wacko was trying to get a series off the ground based on her feature film, *Striker's Mountain*. Ferns said that while the series never made it to the production stage, Wacko's exposure at the market seminar led to the production of another project.

Ferns estimated that almost half of the projects that are pitched go on to become actual productions. That encompasses projects that came together at Banff, ones that got funding as a result of the exposure during the pitching session or led to development of other productions.

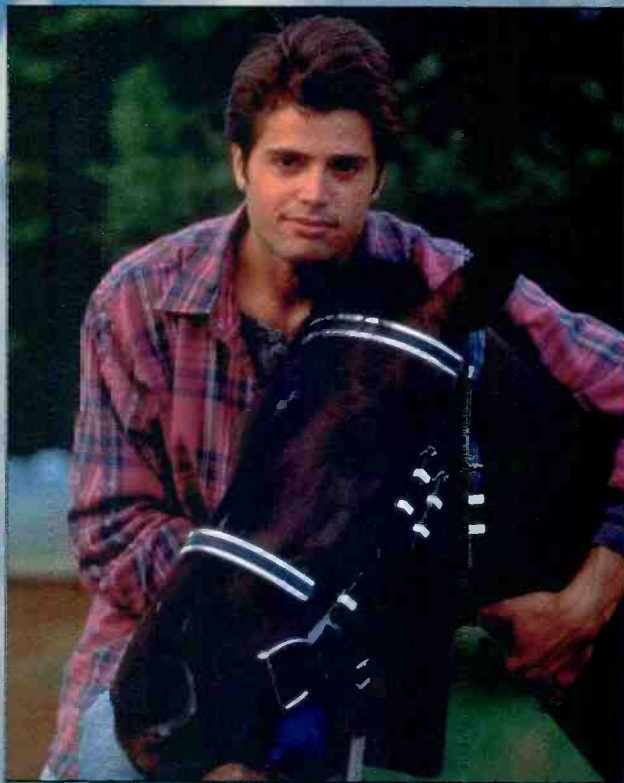
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He cited last year's pitch by Hart Pomerantz as an example of the exposure leading to other projects. Ferns said he was able to coax Pomerantz — whose career credits include writing on tv series *Laugh In* and a partnership with *Saturday Night Live* creator Lorne Michaels — out of retirement.

Pomerantz pitched *Standup Lawyer*, a series about a comic who goes to law school and is able to sue many of the same techniques in the courtroom that he used onstage as a comedian. The presentation became a stand-up routine, and a number of the audience participants wanted to "throw money at it." That project hasn't got off the ground, but the pitch led to Pomerantz being enlisted to do *Hartline*, a talk show pilot for the CBC.

"It's been quite heartening the numbers (of pitches) that do find a key piece of development money at Banff. If I'd been able to run my own companies with that kind of ratio, I'd have earned a fortune."

For the last few years, the market simulation has been attracting about 800 delegates, compared to about 100 who turned up for the first session in 1985. Ferns now enlists about 100 informal participants to provide feedback that ranges from analyzing the reasons why a project won't fly, to enthusiastically bidding to develop the project.

The combination of participants with their various competitive interests generally leads to some amusing exchanges. Co-hosts Patrick Dromgoole and Norman Horowitz have regularly served as comic relief during the market simulation. Ferns said that the pair rarely agree on anything and likened them to Siskel and Ebert.

But festival president Jerry Ezekiel credits Ferns with the success of the market seminar. "It's the animateur that makes it interesting, plus the careful selection of projects to be pitched."

Ferns asks for projects from provincial agencies and federal funder Telefilm Canada. Four are selected from a total of about 100 submissions. He said he tries to put together a good cross-section of productions from various regions.

But the format for the deal-making session has remained relatively consistent since its inception. Each person who makes a pitch either gives a presentation, shows a clip or is interviewed by Ferns about their project.

He then asks for reaction from his audience participants. The project is evaluated for its co-production potential — a discussion that often reveals much

about the difficulties inherent in co-production. Broadcasters discuss actual dollar figures for license fees. Everything that takes place during the forum is declared to be "without prejudice."

One of the most notable pitches was a documentary project by Toronto producers Peter Williamson and Ira Levy, *The Riot at Christie Pitts*, which sparked a rash of on-the-spot bids when it was presented during the 1992 fest. The documentary examined anti-semitic violence that unfurled in Toronto in 1933, resulting in Canada's largest ever race-riot.

Following the brief presentation of a short video, Michael Spivak — then head of programming at CanWest Global Television — grabbed the mike from Ferns and offered to produce and broadcast the program.

Spivak then settled in onstage, while other broadcasters made bids for the project. The pitching session soon resembled an auction house where a "hot" item draws interest from several potential buyers. Ferns and panelist Patrick Dromgoole both lobbied for the executive producer role, while Norman Horowitz tried to negotiate a distribution deal for the producers.

That spur-of-the-moment proposal from Spivak proved to be the launching-pad for the two-hour feature docu. It is currently being shot in Toronto and slated for broadcast on Global during the 1995/96 television season.

The most memorable pitch for Ezekiel was a project by Montreal producer Francois Floquet. *Les explorateurs de la mort/Return From Death* was a documentary that looked at near-death experiences.

Ezekiel said he was very skeptical about the concept, even after Floquet made a convincing pitch. Dromgoole then leapt up and started bidding for European rights, Global wanted English-Canada rights and so it went. The project has since been produced and has aired in several markets, including France 2 and Quebec's Quatre Saisons. It also returned to Banff in competition for the fest's Rockie Awards.

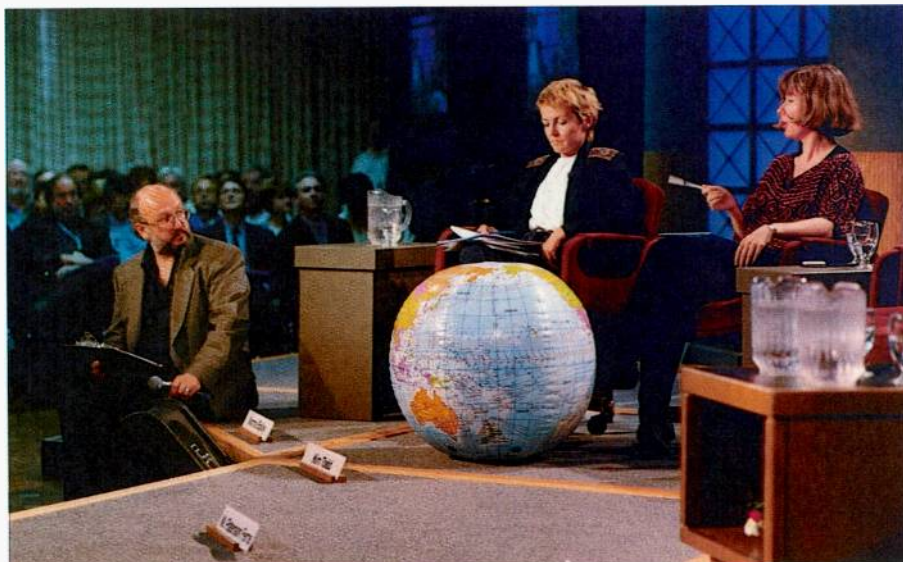
The market simulation serves as an educational event. "The audience gets involved, and you find yourself either filled with optimism or else learning a whole lot about why a project is not going forward," Ezekiel said.

Development is not an exact science. Ferns said he's often surprised that the hottest pitches aren't always the ones that fuel excitement among audience participants.

Ferns was asked to duplicate the event at Natpe in 1993, at Mip TV in 1994 and MipCom in 1995, as well as at Scotland's co-production conference, Sharing Stories. In addition, Ferns will be center stage as the market simulator at the EuroAim Co-production Rendezvous in Berlin this Fall. "The disease is spreading," he quipped.

But he has discovered that it's difficult to try and duplicate the Banff atmosphere at some of the larger markets. "Part of the magic of Banff as a festival is the sort of intimacy of the event, and this format works best when you can move around with the audience," said Ferns.

The downside? "Each year it gets bigger and the pressure is on me to make it better, so we have to find different ways to pull the rabbit out of the hat." ■



Ferns (left) selects four projects from a total of around 100 for each year's simulation

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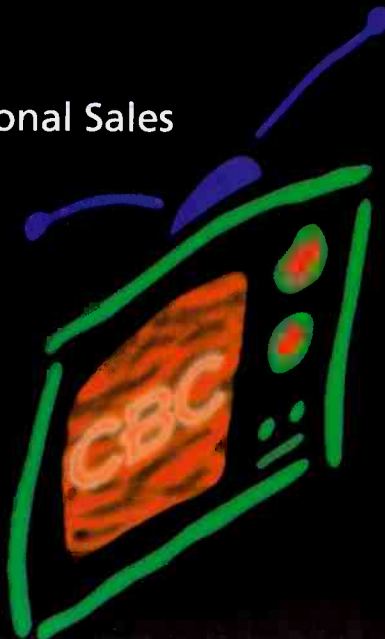
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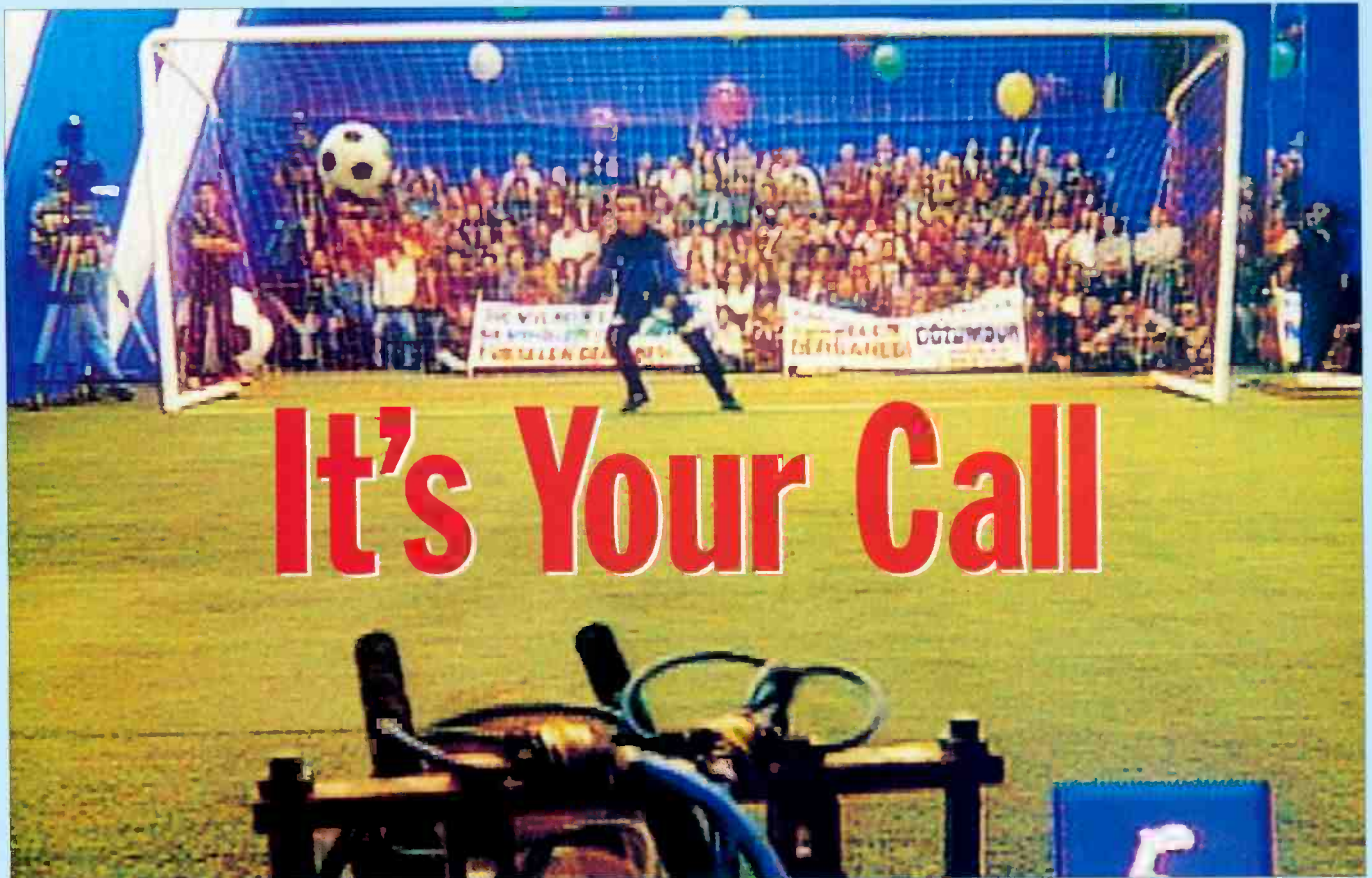


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It's Your Call

The Goal Show: callers shoot at a real target in this Turkish hit

Interactive tv gameshows are already a thing of the present, based on nothing more advanced than a telephone line. Marie Beardmore examines some of the hottest interactive shows on the international market

Despite the increasing sophistication of computer software, most interactive games currently on air around the world essentially rely on tried-and-tested – as well as cheap and widely-available – technology. The development of interactive services, with viewers able to send instant signals back to the studio via handset and set-top box, promises to take the new format into a new dimension.

As well as computer games companies like Sega, tv producers are already preparing the way for full-scale interactive game networks. Infogrames Entertainment is part way there with a system called ATVS (Automated TV Station).

► Hugo

Interactive Television
Entertainment
Copenhagen, Denmark

A troll called Hugo was one of the pioneers of interactive tv shows. Developed by a computer hardware company, Interactive Television Enter-

tainment (ITE), Hugo first launched on Danish commercial station TV2 five years ago.

The interactive roll-out has brought Hugo to tv screens in 16 countries from Turkey to Taiwan at the last count, with Chilean National Television the latest to sign up. It has pulled in audiences in what-

It can be programmed to play out any number of games, does away with the need for a presenter and, through an Audiotext voice service, even selects the players automatically.

That, and many other intriguing but untried technologies, is all in the future, however. In the here-and-now, broadcasters are already scheduling shows which are billed as "interactive." Some, like Hugo, are based on computer animation, some are live action, some a mixture of both. And many of the shows come from markets like Turkey, Israel and Denmark; markets not normally in the fore when it comes to developing international hits.

ever timeslot it is aired in: some countries pitch Hugo at a children's audience, others at families. "Hugo is a nice way of getting interactivity started for a tv station. They have the first couple of blocks of their interactive system," said ITE's international sales manager Henrik Bang.

To generate the arcade-

style game, which is played by up to two viewers at home via their telephone keypad, ITE installs a complete broadcast computer system which is simple to operate and can be up and running in one week, according to Bang. As well as the cost of the system, ITE gets a license fee for each show made.



Hugo: An animated pioneer, featured here on Kabel 1's show

The choice of presentation as well as timeslot is down to the station. "It has to have the thumbprint of each country's creative producers instead of being dictated by us, which gives it a much better impact," said Bang.

Stations have adopted different approaches. On U.S. Hispanic network Telemundo, Hugo (renamed Tino) has a daily six-minute show, while Germany's Kabel 1 is planning to extend its Hugo show to an hour. Many stations adopt the approach of the ITV network, which aired Hugo as part of the children's block *What's Up Doc*. In Finland, Hugo has two shows, a kid's version and an adult version.

ITE has put a fresh face on Hugo with their Animation Mask System (AMS). Using a principle similar to virtual actor technology but which only covers the head, not the body, AMS allows an animated commentator to mirror the facial movements and lip synch of a real person. Viewers and contestants can even

hold conversations with the on-screen character.

ITE's latest offering, a two-player game called Crazy Cartoon Soccer, debuted on TV2 earlier this year.

The game is likely to score better with adults than Hugo as the characters have a definite grown-up appeal.

The main drawback of both games is the limited number of players. It must hold the interest of the passive audience of viewers who are not playing. And if the game is too easy, or too difficult, viewers switch off.

Although Hugo, despite its relative age, is new technology, ITE's priority, until interactive broadcasting and the capacities of digital cable networks have developed much further, is selling tv shows to mass-market tv stations, stressed Bang.

"Our aim today is to let as many people as possible participate in an interactive show. Our major concern is to make good television. Playing a game will always be better on a PC at home."

▶ The Goal Show

SPI International
New York, U.S.

Not all interactive shows involve computer-generated imaging. *The Goal Show*, first developed on Turkish commercial station Kanal 6 and distributed internationally by SPI, marries the excitement of a game of soccer with interactive technology.

The studio set, a mini-stadium equipped with a full-size goal and an audience full of cheering fans all give an air of reality and the glamorous cheerleaders are pure showbiz. Contestants use their telephone key pad to move the Goal Machine, a remote-controlled cannon, to shoot at the goal keeper, often a well known celebrity player.

The show, which appeals to all ages, has reached cult status in Turkey since it launched in late 1993. "We have a success on our hands, not because it is interactive; not because it is football, but because it embodies a dream.

"Anyone can score that winning goal in the big match, and this is what has captured the imagination," said Jeff Levine, SPI's vice president of sales.

The format is also relatively easy to pitch internationally because broadcasters can use a goalkeeper well-known in their own country.

Keen to push on with arm-chair sports, SPI is currently testing the possibilities of interactive games each based on one sport, such as ice hockey, baseball, American football, golf and tennis, or a single game featuring several sports.

Interactive for SPI does not end with sports. Three other projects are currently in development. One would be a murder/mystery show where callers from home direct studio contestants around a stage set, the object being to find clues. *Photo Sight* would be a visual quiz show in which viewers call in

to guess the titles of pictures, and the provisionally-titled *Off and Running* is a race using colored balls instead of horses.

▶ Planet Galixia

Lumiere
Paris, France

For reasons of simplicity and content, most interactive games involve a limited number of players – one or two being the norm.

Increasingly though manufacturers are using collective action as a way of turning viewers from passive to active.

Lumiere's *Planet Galixia*, which debuted on France 2 last September, can be played by some 256 players, split into four teams of 64, in its first round. Set in the year 2500, the objective of the game is to clean up the Planet Galixia, something of a planetary dustbin, by zapping space flotsam from a spaceship.

The ship is piloted collectively, meaning that its movements are the mathematical result of the instructions given by the members of the team controlling it. When the spaceship's sight is aligned with a target it sends a burst of automatic gunfire, so building up the team's score.

Martine Desroches, Lumiere's head of animation sales, said that the game has been very successful, attracting some 20,000 potential callers per month.

The French pubcaster is airing the game as a 10-minute show in a prime kid's slot at 8.45 am on Saturday mornings.

Desroches already has a handful of deals tied up in the wake of this year's Mip. "In the U.S. we have sold the show to U.S. distributor Porchlight Entertainment and are negotiating with the BBC in the UK as well as broadcasters in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Italy and Germany," she said.

► Chaos Control

Infogrames Entertainment
Paris, France

Another animation game, *Chaos Control*, is even more ambitious. Originally manufactured by French outfit Infogrames Entertainment for a CD-i platform, it can involve up to a staggering 10,000 people.

The objective of this game is to wipe out an extra-terrestrial armada and save the threatened solar system, but this time the collective action brings up various obstacles on the screen. The more viewers that call in, the more severe the obstacles that have to be negotiated by the two teams playing in the studio.

Jean Pierre Douzan, managing director of the Infogrames interactive division, said that there has been a lot of interest in the game but its application is limited because of the high cost. "*Chaos Control* uses real-time animation with (the computer graphics system made by) Silicon Graphics, hence the price-tag of \$30,000 for 26 minutes," he said. Infogrames sells it in a package of a minimum 50 transmissions.

For that reason, Douzan is pitching the show at big-name broadcasters, but even this is problematic as many

see the genre as an unknown quantity. "TF1 was very interested in *Chaos Control* but don't see where they can place it, because it is new to them," he said.

► The Marster

Future Reality
London, UK

At Mip, London-based independent Future Reality launched *The Marster*, a half hour game show which will debut as a finished product at Mipcom. Set on the planet Mars, the game is sponsored by the confectionery company of the same name. Its UK arm put up \$64,000, to pay for half of the production costs, according to Martin Cox, managing director, adding that the game's name was not created with Mars in mind. "The details of the deal are currently being thrashed out between ourselves, Mars UK, and an ITV company," said Cox, although it is most likely to involve a combination of sponsor's credits and possibly barter.

Mars were attracted to the product by the quality of the graphics package combined with the content of the game. *The Marster* uses a sophisticated Silicon Graphics package which generates high-end 3D images and enables the

Marster character to morph (change shape) in order to overcome set obstacles.

Cox said that Future Reality was following up a number of leads generated at Mip and that the show had attracted interest from Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

► YoYo

Rigel Independent
Distribution & Entertainment
Santa Monica, CA

YoYo is the creation of Israeli independent producers Dream Entertainment. The gameshow is being distributed by Rigel.

A mix of live action and computer generated imagery, *YoYo* is played by viewers at home, but the obstacles they have to overcome are partly generated as computer graphics in the studio. In one phase of the game, a member of the studio audience throws polystyrene rocks on to a set, which in turn are transmitted on to the computer screen.

YoYo has made its debut in Israel, on the 200,000-home Tevel cable system. Sweden's Trash TV, which specialises in real-time animation, has bought the rights in Scandinavia and plans a show in October.

The game, which is sold as a half-hour format, costs the



The Marster: Action confection

broadcaster \$72,000 for the computer equipment, full studio set up and maintenance, and then is sold per episode at \$1,384 if 52 episodes are ordered, or \$553 if 130 episodes are ordered.

"We think about the show; we are not a technology company, what we do is about content," said Ehud Bleiberg, chairman and CEO of Dream Entertainment Inc. [E]

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