

# screen digest

Monthly news, summaries and intelligence



Film



Television



Video



Cable



Satellite



Other media



General

## GENERAL

### HDTV studio activity stepped up in US

High definition television production facilities are continuing to open in US, following recent opening of NHK's 10,000 sq.ft New York operation (see 1990/209b1). Veteran HDTV producer David Niles has spent over \$5m equipping former Broadway music hall The Sullivan Theater as an HDTV production/testing centre.

Another leading US proponent Barry Rebo (530 West 25th Street, New York, NY 10001, USA; +1/212/989-9466) is due to open an HDTV facility at Hollywood Center Studios this month – claimed to be first such facility on US West Coast, although Sony is already operating an HDTV telecine operation at Columbia Pictures (Columbia Plaza, Burbank, California 91505, USA; +1/818/954-6000).

### Levy for cinemas in East Germany

Cinemas and video stores in East Germany will pay levy to Federal Film Board (Filmförderungsanstalt, Budapest Strasse 41, PO Box 30 18 08, 1000 Berlin 30, German Fed Rep; +49/30/261-6006) on number of tickets sold from start of 1991. Payment will be calculated according to annual turnover, with cinemas paying up to 2.5 per cent of monthly income and video stores up to two per cent. Those taking in less than DM80,000 (\$54,000) a year will be exempt from charge.

In survey of Munich cinemagoers by MediaRes and Forsa, over 70 per cent stated that reduced ticket prices would improve frequency of visits. General desire for more socially oriented theatres, including cafés and restaurants, was shown by all age-groups.

### Motorola to make chips in Japan

Largest factory investment in Japan ever by a foreign company is to be made by US semiconductor manufacturer Motorola (1216 Remington Road, Schaumburg, Illinois 60173, USA; +1/312/576-0554). It plans to spend \$600m on a state-of-the-art chip factory in Sendai to be built 1993 and opened 1994. Using ultra-fine processing technology, the factory will make 16 Mb dynamic random access memory chips to be sold in Japan and exported to Europe and US.

### Portugal prepares for commercial TV

Franchise bids for Portugal's first two commercial channels will be settled by March 1991, according to reviewed timetable issued by government. Decision to allow commercial broadcasting was taken in July 1990 but was followed by delays and complaints by bidders that establishment conditions were too restrictive. New channels will compete with state-run RTP1 and RTP2.

### Reduction of UK teletext services

Half the space given to Oracle teletext information service provided by ITV companies will be given over to private commercial use following next allocation of UK broadcasting franchises. This will be required by Broadcasting Bill and will in turn put pressure on BBC to increase commercial use of its own Ceefax teletext service.

Teletext is now available on about 7.5m sets in UK and is used daily by over 6m people. Possible solution to cutting service is improvement of in-set memory and decoding equipment to allow more information to be transmitted on fewer picture lines.

### EC directive threatens video industry

European Commission has published a draft directive on copyright issues relating to rental and lending rights which threatens to undermine fundamental aspects of the video business. It gives non-waivable rights to royalties from video rental to 'authors' (which could include writers and directors) and 'performing artists' (which could include all actors and sound-track musicians) as well producers. Moreover, this 'right to an adequate part of the remuneration' would only be handled by a collecting society – not a distributor. It implies a compulsory collection system from video dealers carried out by collecting societies.

In the directive, there is a danger producers become simply one of a string of holders of so-called 'neighbouring rights' – this could mean film producers ceased to have rights outside the European Community where the neighbouring right concept is not recognised. Another part of the directive prohibits limitation of sell-through distribution contracts by territory, meaning distributors will be forced to buy language or pan-European rights.

The directive applies to existing as well as future video programmes, implying all contracts which do not explicitly refer to rental and lending rights would need to be renegotiated. EC (200 rue de la Loi, 1049 Brussels, Belgium; +32/2/236-0757) wants member states to adopt the legislation by 1 January 1993. Meanwhile, video industry will lobby for amendments to be introduced by European Council of Ministers.

### Stakes in French TV could be raised

Law in France which prohibits any single shareholder from owning more than 25 per cent of a French television network may shortly be lifted by regulatory body Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel (CSA). Pressure has been put on CSA by construction group Bouygues, which holds 25 per cent of leading channel TF1 and wants to raise stake to 33 per cent. Loudest opposition has been voiced by Le Cinq and Canal Plus, with CSA reportedly working on package to encourage both dissenters, including allowance of more commercial breaks and more peak-time showing of features.