

## Chace Stereo System Aims For Nontheatrical Market

By TOM BIERBAUM

Chace Surround Stereo, a service offered by Hollywood's Chace Prods. Inc. that creates true directional stereo for vid, theatrical and tv showings of films produced in monaural, is now being pitched to tv producers for possible use in nonfeature product, including series programs.

The process was created for videocassettes and has, to date, been applied to about 60-70 titles. CBS/Fox Video has begun placing the Chace Surround Stereo logo on its packaging, and is responsible for the "Surround" element of that monicker.

The vid company figured it was a key word to catch the eye of high-tech-minded consumers and requested Chace include it on its logo.

### Sophisticated Consumers

Chace prez-Rick Chace is hoping the surround-stereo logo will be added to lots more packaging in the future, because he thinks consumers are gaining increasing sophistication about the technical quality of their entertainment and are coming to expect top-quality stereo sound whenever possible.

Stereo and surround capacities are currently the driving force in the purchase of homevid hardware and will become the driving force in the purchase of tapes as the high-tech hardware base builds, Chace believes.

Vidcassette suppliers who've used the system so far include CBS/Fox, MGM/UA Home Video, Warner Home Video, Paramount Video, Nelson Entertainment and ITC.

Paramount Television, Turner Entertainment Co. and 20th Century-Fox have used the patented Chace system for packages of films being peddled on the syndication market.

Chace Surround Stereo creates stereo sound that reflects the positioning of characters, objects and events on the screen, and, for view-

ers with "surround decoders," re-creates the kind of directional sound around the room that was formerly limited to theater sound systems.

And Chace thinks his company's work on theatrical releases is breaking down old rules in that business that said the easy ways to do sound were the proper ways. For example, dialog is almost always heard from the middle of a stereo system, even when characters are on the right or the left.

According to Chace, the ability of his technology to inexpensively shift the dialog to the appropriate position is breaking down that old rule.

Cost of the Chace Surround Stereo system tends to fall in the \$6-15,000 range per film. Chace is shooting to cut that cost to \$1500 for half-hour episodes of tv series.

Cost depends on how much work is needed to clean up the monaural soundtrack. And complicated soundtracks, especially featuring lengthy action sequences, take extra time and increase the cost, said Chace.

CBS/Fox v.p. of operations and administration Dave Goldstein said it's impossible to say what kind of added sales the use of the Chace system might bring that company's titles, but he said it's one of the enhancements that CBS/Fox feels "contributes substantially to the product and our sales."

For laserdisk customers, the kind of enhancement Chace brings to CBS/Fox films is becoming almost expected by that demanding audience, and VCR owners are increasingly looking themselves for such quality extras when they purchase product, Goldstein said.

Chase is hoping tv shows will make use of the system to provide viewers with impressive stereo broadcasts. Some shows that now bill themselves as being aired in stereo only transmit the soundtrack music in stereo, he noted.

## Cinepix Boosts Prod'n Thanks To Tax Breaks

By AMY DAWES

Tax incentives provided by the provincial government of Quebec have created a favorable production climate for Montreal-based indie Cinepix, currently enjoying its busiest year since 1974, according to chairman John Dunning.

Company is producing three low-budget entries this year and readying a fourth, "Meatballs IV," for production next year.

Just wrapped is a \$2.5 million action picture, "The Drugbusters," starring Lorenzo Lamas. L.A.-based Image Org has foreign rights, no U.S. distrib is in place yet.

Skedded for Fall lensing is "Whispers," a \$3.5 million thriller based on the book by Dean Koontz, with ITC to oversee worldwide distribution.

Shooting next month is "Princes In Exile," about a teenage boy coming of age in a cancer camp, coproduced by the National Film Board of Canada and the CBC, scripted by Joe Weisenfeld. Pic, budgeted at about \$3 million, may get limited theatrical play but is aimed at Canadian broadcast, says Dunning.

Cinepix, which made its biggest splash with the original "Meatballs" starring Bill Murray (pic grossed more than \$50 million in a Paramount release) holds the copy-right to the series and will produce a third sequel next Summer. There is no casting yet. ITC will handle U.S. distribution.

Company also has a sequel to "My Bloody Valentine" in the works.

Currently, a combination of Quebec provincial and Canadian federal tax breaks are making Quebec film projects very attractive to private investors there, said Dunning.

"We normally do about one picture a year," he said. "We haven't been this busy since 1974."

Together with his partner, Cinepix president Andre Link, Dunning has produced more than 32 pix, some of them French language.

## AFMA Adds Mittweg, Colombo To Board

The board of directors of the American Film Marketing Association has elected Marco Colombo and Rolf Mittweg to fill two board seats recently vacated.

Colombo, president of Filmtrust Motion Picture Licensing, and Mittweg, president of New Line International Releasing, will fill the remainder of the terms of Liz Mackiewicz, who resigned when she exited Cannon International (now Pathe), and Warren Braverman of Carolco.

## MCA Canada Elevates Pertsch To HV Prexy

Eric Pertsch has been elevated from exec v.p.-g.m. of MCA Home Video, Canada, to president of that operation.

Pertsch is also director and v.p. of finance and administration for MCA Canada Ltd. and exec v.p.-g.m. of Universal Pay Television Canada.

He's worked at MCA since 1970 and was instrumental in MCA's 1981 entry into the Canadian homevid market.

## Povich Signs For Two More Years As Host Of 'Affair'

By JOHN DEMPSEY

NEW YORK — Despite all the rumors swirling around that he would sign with King World of Paramount or one of the three networks, Maury Povich will continue as host of the hit syndicated strip "A Current Affair" for at least the next two years.

Under the terms of his new two-year deal with Fox Television, the producer and distributor of "Affair," "I'll be able to do a talkshow within or outside Fox and a number of specials within or outside Fox," said Povich at press conference at WNYW-TV, New York, the Fox flagship where "Affair" originates.

Although Povich refused to discuss money, industry sources say the contract is worth about \$1.8 million a year, a hike of more than 100%.

Sources say "Current Affair" will gross a strapping \$40 million for the 1989-90 season, making it one of the five most profitable strips in first-run syndication. (The other four are "Wheel Of Fortune," "Jeopardy," "Oprah" and "Entertainment Tonight.")

These sources say it's extremely unusual for a company to permit a major talent like Povich to do work for other production and distribution companies while he's under contract.

In an interview after the press briefing, Povich said some of the

ideas for primetime specials he's exploring include one-on-one celebrity interviews (like the ABC Barbara Walters specials), filmed documentaries of the quality of "The Thin Blue Line" and 60-minute muckraking investigations.

"These specials," Povich continues, "would be perfect for the 150 stations that run 'Current Affair,' particularly for affiliates during periods when their networks are playing reruns in primetime."

But Povich makes it clear that Fox has no right of first refusal on the production or distribution of these specials or of a talkshow strip.

If another company offered more money or a longer-term commitment, he'd be free to move off the Fox reservation on these projects, which his own production company would have a hand in producing.

Povich says, "I'd be ecstatic if Fox got into a network newscast and I'd expect to be considered" as the anchor, although he acknowledges that there are no clauses in his new contract that give him any iron-clad guarantees.

One insider says Fox has relegated plans for a weeknight half-hour network newscast to the back burner because the company's focus is on the primetime series schedule.

Also, Rupert Murdoch, the owner of Fox, is setting up a tv-news operation in England, which, once

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## AT BPME MEET

### CPT Unwraps Off-Net 'Boss' Push

DETROIT — Columbia Pictures Television has unveiled an elaborate, multimillion-dollar ad campaign to support the off-net launch of "Who's The Boss?," skedded to debut Sept. 11 — a month earlier than the customary start date for syndie fare.

In a presentation to promotion exes representing stations that bought the sitcom at the Broadcast Promotion & Marketing Ex convention here, Parry Thurston, president of syndication for CPT, said the early start-up benefits network affiliates and independent stations: network affils can use "Boss" to lead into the new web lineups, he reasoned, and indies can use the show to undermine same. Sources estimate the overall pricetag at upwards of \$3 million.

Steve Sohmer, president of Steve Sohmer, Inc., and architect of the "Boss" campaign, presided over a multimedia demonstration of the vast array of spots, teasers, episodics, liners and personalized promos designed for the launch.

Sohmer has produced 30, 15 and 10-second promos for each phase of the campaign — beginning with the slogan "Show Them Who's The Boss?" and corresponding, separately produced vignettes — as well as spots of those varying lengths for each of "Boss'" more than 100 episodes.

Sohmer pointed out that the only way for stations to make a large investment in a show such as "Boss" is to use the program to "supercharge" a daypart, to create a halo effect that enhances any given lineup of programming.

The primary difference between the "Boss" campaign and the campaign for last year's big off-net

launch, "The Cosby Show," Sohmer said (after describing the "Cosby" spots as "impeccable"), is that "Boss" commercials will go to great lengths to interact with local station programming.

Many "Boss" spots, for both tv and radio, include gaps for insertion of local program info, or "donuts," and specialized lead-ins appropriate for promoting news, comedies, films — whatever type of program local stations plan to run after the sitcom, such as Warner Bros. TV is doing in its campaign for "Growing Pains" (Daily Variety, June 20).

One type of spot that elicited a particularly strong reaction from the promotion exes was the news lead-in that allows "Boss" cast members to interact directly with members of local news teams via video inserts.

Sohmer outlined a complex on-air strategy calling for stations to begin the "Boss" campaign nine weeks, broken into three three-week cels (each with specific materials) before the debut date.

In addition, Sohmer has assembled a large package of outdoor, print, radio and public relations materials, as well as public-service announcements featuring "Boss" cast members.

CPT has also committed to open its wallet, to an unspecified extent, for co-op payments for all aspects of the campaign.

CPT prexy Thurston said that he expected the "Boss" campaign to raise the level of competition for future off-net launches.

"Our competition is going to have to face the fact that stations are going to be more demanding than before," he said.

## SHORT TAKES

**David Hale** has been promoted to controller for the Theatrical Exhibition Group of Paramount Pictures from his position as controller for Paramount Pictures International in Amsterdam. Hale will be responsible for producing the group's financial statements and attendant management reports and will continue to be responsible for international accounting offices in Amsterdam and Paris.

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**Edward Horwitz** has been named v.p. of production at Cosgrove/Meurer Prods., producer of NBC's "Unsolved Mysteries." Horwitz continues as supervising producer on that series and was formerly producer of Showtime's "The Rich Hall Show."

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Manhattan-based **Peter Levinson Communications** is expanding its operation to include an office in BevHills, to which firm's prexy Peter Levinson will relocate. The now-bicoastal 17-year-old public relations firm will continue to specialize in music, tv, film and books.

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**Los Angeles Theater Center** has been awarded a \$10,000 grant from American Express to fund its Young playwright's lab for the coming year. Grant will allow the lab to continue programs geared toward improving skills of aspiring young playwrights.

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**Lorraine Johnson** has joined Imagine Films Entertainment Inc. as general counsel and secretary, where she will be responsible for all corporate legal matters. For the past five years, Johnson was v.p. of corporate legal affairs at Lorimar Telepictures Corp.

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**Warner Bros. recording artist Van Dyke Parks** will have an acting role in "The Two Jakes," a Paramount Pictures release now shooting in Southern California under the direction of Jack Nicholson.

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CineCity Pictures Inc. has acquired exclusive rights to the life stories of **Jean and Joe Gump**, currently serving sentences for civil disobedience at nuclear missile silos. Emmy nominee Alan Ginsberg wrote the treatment for CineCity.