

Microsoft injunction could slow video online

By Richard Tedesco

Last week's federal court ruling against Microsoft's forced inclusion of Internet Explorer in its operating system could leave multimedia as well as the browser out of the forthcoming Windows 98.

"The real problem is the launch of Windows 98. This could really push things down in Windows 98 and dissuade anybody who was wanting to build in video applications in Windows 98," says Peter Krasilovsky, VP and analyst at Arlen Communications.

U.S. District Court Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson's preliminary injunction against Microsoft, combined with

the Justice Department's ongoing inquiry into the Redmond, Wash., giant's streaming technology investments, could discourage Microsoft from incorporating its video streamer NetShow into Windows.

Observers figure the development will encourage original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) to bundle both Netscape Communications' Navigator browser and Explorer, giving consumers the choice that DOJ wants in the marketplace. Judge Jackson agreed last week, reasoning that the risk of Microsoft establishing "yet another monopoly in the Internet browser market" was "simply too great" to let it continue unchecked.

DOJ's success could also set a prece-

dent for going after other Microsoft marketing and licensing practices, according to Donald DePalma, senior analyst in Internet technology strategies for Forrester Research. DePalma also suggests that it could prompt Microsoft to reconsider its strategy to include NetShow in Windows NT and to offer the video streamer as an option for future Windows iterations.

For its part, Microsoft emphasized the preliminary nature of the federal court ruling. The company praised the part of the ruling that declined to declare the software maker in violation of a 1995 consent decree against antitrust practices.

The court appointed Harvard University law professor Lawrence Lessig to examine the consent decree issue. It also chose not to impose the \$1 million-a-day fine that DOJ had requested. Justice had wanted the fine levied against Microsoft until the company stopped requiring OEMs to bundle its browser.

Some observers doubt that there will be any lasting fallout. "Longer term, they'll successfully lobby for integration," says Gregory Wester, director of Internet market strategies for The Yankee Group. ■

CTTD gives Lee 'V.I.P.' treatment



Pamela Lee offers protection on 'V.I.P.'

Football, apple pie and Pamela Lee.

That is what the 22 Fox O&Os are planning for next season. Columbia TriStar Television Distribution has cleared Lee's new weekend action hour *V.I.P.* on the football-heavy Fox stations.

In CTTD's largest group deal, *V.I.P.* comes out of the blocks with 40% of the nation covered. Buyers include WNYW(TV) New York, KTTV(TV) Los Angeles and WFLD(TV) Chicago. The show marks CTTD's entrance into the action-hour genre.

"This is the first time we went with action, and when we went out looking to place the show, we wanted to ensure the promotion and backing for the show would be there," says CTTD President Barry Thurston. "We've worked with the Fox stations before, and they have shown us a commitment to really back up a product. You need that in today's marketplace."

The show likely will run on weekend afternoons, wrapped around many of the Fox Network's sports broadcasts, CTTD officials say. Fox is negotiating to bring the NFL back after the 1997-98 season. The network already has Major League Baseball and National Hockey League games slated for next season.

"The show really mirrors the demographics that the Fox stations attract, which is a young, hip and affluent viewer," says CTTD's Steve Mosko, senior vice president of syndication.

V.I.P.'s executive producer is J.F. Lawton, who wrote the screenplays for "Pretty Woman" and "Under Siege." Lee stars as Val, head of Valerie Irons Protection, an agency that provides security to the rich and famous.

The show is Lee's first TV series since she starred on All American's *Baywatch* during the early 1990s. In her first action role, she starred in the feature film "Barb Wire" in 1996.

"Pamela is coming from a show that is the biggest success in syndication history, both domestically and internationally," Thurston says, referring to *Baywatch*. "I suspect [*V.I.P.*] will do well not only here in the U.S. but internationally as well."

—Joe Schlosser

Sinclair gets OK for WB move

To no one's surprise, a Maryland judge last week ruled that UPN was given plenty of notice of Sinclair's pending five-station affiliation switch to The WB on Jan. 15. The dispute found its way to Baltimore after Sinclair Communications—reacting to a lawsuit first filed by UPN—issued a counter of its own.

Soon after the nation's 15th largest station group announced it would move the key affiliates to The WB last summer, UPN attempted to block the move in Los Angeles Superior Court by alleging it wasn't promptly notified of the \$84 million deal. That suit will stay in limbo until UPN decides whether to appeal the Baltimore ruling. "We're weighing our options," said a UPN spokeswoman.

Meanwhile, the coast is clear for the five stations—WPTT-TV Pittsburgh, WNUV-TV Baltimore, WSTR-TV Cincinnati, KRRT(TV) San Antonio and KOCB(TV) Oklahoma City—to switch to The WB. —Lynette Rice