

# Dutch Parliament Passes Tape Levy An Exact Amount Has Not Yet Been Set

BY WILLEM HOOS

AMSTERDAM The Dutch Parliament has unanimously approved a government bill to impose a levy on blank audiotape and videotape. In the same three-hour session the Lower House in The Hague also assented to the ratification of the Rome and Geneva Conventions.

The measure marks a triumph for the NVPI, the Dutch branch of the IFPI, which has been campaigning for a levy for 13 years, supported by other organizations.

"We're glad that a decision has been taken after so many years," says Leo Boudewijns, NVPI general secretary. "It shows we have waged a well-justified battle."

Boudewijns emphasizes that the levy will apply to all audio- and videotapes. It will also cover blank DAT when it comes and other software of the future, such as the erasable CD and the write-once CD.

Rob Edwards, NVPI managing director, expresses regret that the Dutch Parliament did not agree to the imposition of a levy on audio and video hardware.

The exact amount of the levy has not yet been specified. Edwards says this will be a matter for negotiation with the manufacturers of blank audio and videotape. He believes at least 10% of the purchase price would be fair.

FIAR, the umbrella organization of the audio and videotape industry, has consistently opposed a levy on software. Edwards thinks a compromise is possible, but adds that the NVPI is prepared to take the matter to court if this proves impossible.

The parliamentary decision offers some recompense for copyright holders in Holland. This country is a hotbed of home taping, with an estimated 56 million hours of music being copied every year, the equivalent of 85 million LPs.

This research from the BUMA rights association also alleges that each LP and CD sold in the Netherlands is being home taped at least five times, on average.

An unnamed source at the Ministry of Justice in The Hague suggests the levy will be in the region of 1 guilder, or 44 cents, taking an exchange rate of 2.25 Dutch guilders to the U.S. dollar.

Philips, the Dutch multinational conglomerate, reckons from its research that 20 million blank audiotapes and 9 million videotapes were sold in Holland during 1988 with a consumer value of \$115 million.

This would produce a levy of about \$7 million according to the predicted but unconfirmed rate to be imposed. Some 15% of this would go into a special fund to stimulate audio/visual productions of Dutch origin, following a joint proposal from the Dutch ministries of culture and justice.

# Bee Gees' Comeback Concerts Sell Out Venues In W. Germany

HAMBURG, West Germany After a gap of 20 years, the Bee Gees have returned to Germany for a 16-date tour, which started in Berlin June 3 and ends in Hanover July 1. Ossy Hoppe, head of Shooter Promotions, says: "We sold out all the indoor concerts weeks in advance and had to add four open-air dates to cope with really fantastic public demand." The veteran band is traveling Germany with an entourage of five giant trailers for their equipment.

WOLFGANG SPAHR

# Alpine To Bow Voice-Control Audio Unit

TOKYO In July, Alpine will place on sale here a voice remote-control device for an in-car audio unit. The user inputs various movements into the control, placed by the side of the driver, and his voice then controls the unit. The control won't react to an unfamiliar voice. The Alpine unit, some 6-by-3 inches, is the first of its kind developed in Japan and will sell for just less than \$110.

SHIG FUJITA

# Novello Buys Arnold Publisher Paterson's

LONDON Music publishing house Novello has acquired Paterson's, a small music publisher here whose catalog includes the bulk of Malcolm Arnold's works from 1952-64 for \$350,000. Novello is now a wholly owned subsidiary of Filmtrax. Mike Smith, Novello managing director, says: "Arnold signed earlier this year to Filmtrax for his later work. We also handle such major contemporary composers as Richard Rodney Bennett, Judith Weir, Thea Musgrave, John McCabe, and David Blake."

PETER JONES

# Irish Harmonica Master Releases Album

DUBLIN, Ireland Music industry accountant Barry Gaster's Gasworks label has released blues harp star Don Baker's debut album, "Almost Illegal," through Record Services here. Baker, dubbed "the world's greatest harp man" by U2's Bono, authored "Learn To Play The Harmonica," which has sold 25,000 copies in Ireland and is published in the U.S., Australia, Japan, North Africa, and Taiwan. In October he guests at the World Harmonica Championships in West Germany, by which time his album will be released worldwide.

KEN STEWART

# Nits Clinch 1989 Dutch BV Pop Award

AMSTERDAM Dutch pop band the Nits have won the 1989 BV Pop Award, worth approximately \$3,500. The trophy is an initiative of BV Pop, which now operates within the framework of FNV, the Dutch musicians' union. Awards have been made since 1985 but this year are sponsored for the first time by tobacco company Peter Stuyvesant.

WILLEM HOOS

# Brit TV Series Examines Music Greats

LONDON Yorkshire Television here is networking a series of seven one-hour documentaries titled "Let's Face The Music . . ." The first, set for June 11, is "Let's Face The Music Of George Gershwin," with pianist Howard Shelley and opera singer Willard White guesting. Written by Benny Green, subsequent shows, available for syndication, will spotlight Frederick Loewe, Richard Rodgers, Lennon & McCartney, Jerome Kern, Noel Coward, and Harry Warren.

NIGEL HUNTER

# Netherlands Survey: Muzak An Appetizer

AMSTERDAM According to a new research survey published here, background music, or Muzak, does stimulate consumption of food and drink in bars and restaurants. Preferred sounds are "lightly swinging" music or light classics, but not romantic music or product with a heavy beat. However, visitors to Chinese or Indonesian venues don't want any kind of music.

WILLEM HOOS

# Pioneer Bows Low-Price Combi-Player

TOKYO Pioneer is the first company here to go below the 80,000-yen retail-price mark on a fully compatible videodisk player. The CLD-100 unit, which plays videodisks, CDs, and CD videos, sells for \$570 (at 140 yen to the U.S. dollar) and will be marketed at \$600 in the U.S. The Pioneer top-range compatible player costs \$1,050 here; the firm hopes the line will encourage teenagers to buy. The firm aims to ship 20,000 units monthly in Japan and 10,000 a month into the U.S.

SHIG FUJITA

# Int'l Audio & Video Fair Set In Berlin

BERLIN This year's International Audio & Video Fair, to be held at the Berlin Exhibition Grounds Aug. 25-Sept. 2, is set to consolidate its status as one of the world's leading consumer electronics trade fairs, with about 400,000 visitors expected, along with 350 exhibitors and 400 other participating companies from the U.S., Europe, and Asia.

WOLFGANG SPAHR

# Wide Range Of Channels Include Sports, Music, Movies Cable TV Has Taken Hold In Argentina

BY PAUL KLEINMAN

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina Cable television has now become a hot sector of the home entertainment industry here. From an uneasy start a few years ago in La Lucila, a small northern suburb of this city, cable has now reached out nationwide.

Today there are successful operators in virtually all big Argentinian

towns, covering a wide variety of national and foreign programming.

The two key companies based in Buenos Aires are CV (CableVision) and VCC (Video Cable Comunicacion) and they have virtually cornered the market here.

VCC is running six channels: CableSport (soccer, rugby, polo, etc.), Premier (special features), CableShow (shows and movies), Cablin (for kids), CablePlatea (cultural ser-

vices), and, just started this month, a music video channel called Cable-Clip.

Its rival CV has virtually the same kind of programming: CVN (news and cultural services), CVFilms (movies), CableMagico (children's material), Cinevision (one-movie-a-day channel, offering a cinema-in-the-home service), and CVmusic, which became the first music channel in Argentina when it opened up eight months ago. CVmusic also puts out a local broadcast in the Korean language, increasingly important in the Argentine-Korean community here.

Foreign import material is also increasingly important. CV has two foreign channels on an exclusive deal, Ted Turner's CNN and Brazil's Manchete Network, while VCC has exclusive use of the U.S. ESPN product and the Brazilian Bandelcantes Network. Both companies also transmit material from Italy's RAI, Spain's SVE, and Chile's TVN, and promise further additions soon.

But cable companies outside Buenos Aires also provide material from satellite, notably ATC (a public cultural and entertainment channel) and TV Libertad, which is privately owned and the most successful TV channel.

Commercials are permitted in some cases but only between two separate programs, not in the middle of a feature, except when foreign shows are put out live with their own commercials.

Although VCC and CV "imports" are on satellite and can be received perfectly through the whole of South America, they are as yet taken only for Argentina.

There are no legal regulations for cable television yet. Observers note the only limits imposed on the fast-moving industry here are those of creativity—and of the cash required to keep operating in an increasingly competitive business.

# Sky TV Tries Promo Pitch And U.K. Rival Hits A Glitch

BY NIGEL HUNTER

LONDON In a further move to boost its flagging fortunes, Sky Television is to give away free decoders to anybody who subscribes to its Sky Movies channel.

Announcing the offer, Sky Television chairman Andrew Neil explains that anyone purchasing a Sky dish and receiver will get a decoder for no further charge if they subscribe to the Sky Movies channel.

The decoders become available this month, manufactured by Thomson and Philips, enabling Sky to encrypt its movie channel in the fall.

"We have yet to determine the exact date that Sky Movies will be scrambled," says Neil, "but it is now certain that Sky's pay-TV service will be fully operational before British Satellite Broadcasting is even launched, if it ever is."

This allusion was prompted by BSB's announcement that it will probably have to postpone its proposed September launch as a rival to Sky's services.

The main reason for the delay is the need to find a new manufacturer for BSB's "squarial" necessary to pick up its programs and incom-

patible with the Sky dish and receivers.

BSB's agreement with Fortel, the squarial inventor, is reported to have broken down, and talks with GEC-Marconi, one of its manufacturers, are also understood to have been terminated.

BSB has admitted it faces a problem with an essential microchip used in the receiver that has put the fall launch in jeopardy.

Anthony Simonds-Gooding, BSB chief executive, has stated the company would rather delay the launch than begin transmitting with hardly any equipment available for sale as Sky did.

Some manufacturers believe that, even if BSB comes up with a feasible redesign of the squarial, it will take up to six months to get the equipment into the stores.

Meanwhile, the embattled Sky Television has suffered another setback with the reported withdrawal of the Walt Disney Organization from the Disney Channel, which Sky was planning to inaugurate this summer. Sky has filed a multi-billion-dollar lawsuit against Disney in connection with the matter.