

MGM/UA Marketing Team Expanded For New Titles

RISEING LION: The re-emergence of MGM/UA Entertainment has prompted the video division to begin strengthening its marketing department to handle the increased slate of movies.

Newly arrived at MGM/UA Home Video is former Video Products Distributors executive **Robert Wittenberg**, who will work closely with the Warner Home Video sales force to increase MGM/UA's retail presence (Billboard, Dec. 17).

In addition to Wittenberg, MGM/UA will bring on board a yet-to-be-named senior VP of marketing and two field marketing representatives, says president **Richard Cohen**.

"We think the burden of improving marketing is on MGM, not on Warner," says Cohen. "We have more product coming out next year, and it's our job to market it better."

Warner has handled MGM/UA product since late 1990, when parent Time Warner bought rights from Pathe Communications. Following the transaction, 110 home video employees were laid off (Billboard, Nov. 24, 1990). Since 1992, the division has been rebuilding with the appointments of Cohen, who helped establish Buena Vista Home Video, and **David Bishop**, previously president of LIVE Home Video.

Cohen dispels industry rumblings that MGM isn't satisfied with Warner's sales performance, citing a 40% increase in gross revenue from 1993 to 1994. He predicts an 80% gain next year.

"We are in no way moving away from or severing our relationship with Warner," Cohen says. "The relationship is excellent."

Cohen adds that he plans to collaborate with Warner on a number of catalog cross-promotions. The two suppliers used the strategy for a fall rental promotion of "Blown Away" from MGM/UA and Warner's "Wyatt Earp," "Maverick," and "The Client."

MGM/UA's current executive marketing staff comprises sales VP **Mindy Phillips** and marketing VP **Kim Wertz**. The video staff now totals 35-40. "We think very highly of Mindy and Kim, but the job is getting to be too much for two people," says Cohen.

The division's 1995 release schedule will nearly double the 1994 list. Titles for next year include the upcoming romantic comedy "Speechless," as well as "Wild Bill," "Rob Roy," "Speechless," "Tank Girl," "Fluke," "Lord of Illusion," and the animated feature "The Pebble And The Penguin."

Meanwhile, **Marty Jorgensen**, who joins Video Products Distributors as senior VP of marketing and purchasing, replacing Wittenberg, will concentrate on increasing the distributor's presence with East Coast accounts, says VPD CEO **Tim Shan-**

nahan.

"Marketing had been a big area for us, but we've done less in the last 12 months," says Shannahan, who first hired Jorgensen back in 1982 to join him at Commtron.

The distributor has done less marketing because it has been preoccupied with expansion, taking over Artec's Burlington, Vt., offices, as well as opening another in the New York metro area over the past year.

Ingram president **David Ingram** says the company is undecided about replacing Jorgensen. His duties will

be split between VP of marketing and advertising **Carol Weil** and assistant VP of marketing **Beth de Voe**.

SHELF TALK

by Eileen Fitzpatrick



CHOICE

Moves: Choices Entertainment Corp. has signed letters of intent to acquire nine chains encompassing 154 stores. If the deals go through, the Morrisville, Pa.-based chain will operate 165 outlets in about a dozen states.

The purchase comes on the heels of Choices' merger with Los Angeles-based JD Store Equipment last month (Billboard, Nov. 26).

JD Store senior VP **Donald Ross** says the company isn't putting a cap on the number of stores it wants. "We're talking to other chains, and our goal is to become one of the largest retailers, second only to Blockbuster," he says.

The chains about to fall under the Choices umbrella include 20/20 Video, one of the few surviving independents in Southern California. Over the past two years, the 13-store venture had been hurt by the L.A. riots and the Northridge earthquake.

Other retailers include Video Junction, a five-store chain based in Rhode Island; Video Outlet, five stores headquartered in Illinois; Video Vault, 14 stores, based in Kentucky; Movies To Go, 18 stores, headquartered in Iowa; Super Video, with 12 stores in New Jersey; Video Land, operating 27 stores in Oregon and Washington; Box Office Video, operating 27 stores in Indiana; and First Row Video/Video Game Trader, with 33 stores in Ohio and western Pennsylvania.

Ross says the acquisitions will continue to operate under their own names until Choices determines a corporate identity program.

TRAILSIDE ADVENTURE: ABC Video has pulled in seven corporate sponsors to promote its 13-tape outdoor sports series, "Trailside."

The focus of the promotion is a sweepstakes that will award consumers more than \$60,000 in prizes, including a Chevy Blazer truck, two trips to New Zealand, mountain bike packages, kayaks, hiking boots, and, of course, "Trailside" videos.

Backpacker magazine will advertise the sweepstakes. Entrants have

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Top Video Sales

COMPILED FROM A NATIONAL SAMPLE OF RETAIL STORE SALES REPORTS.

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WKS. ON CHART	TITLE	Copyright Owner Manufacturer, Catalog Number	Principal Performers	Year of Release	Rating	Suggested List Price
				★★★ No. 1 ★★★				
1	2	4	SPEED	Twentieth Century Fox FoxVideo 8638	Keanu Reeves Dennis Hopper	1994	R	19.98
2	1	7	SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS	Walt Disney Pictures Walt Disney Home Video 1524	Animated	1937	G	26.99
3	3	10	JURASSIC PARK ◊	AmbIn Entertainment MCA/Universal Home Video 82061	Sam Neill Laura Dern	1993	PG-13	24.98
4	5	11	THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS	Touchstone Pictures Touchstone Home Video 3603	Animated	1993	PG	19.99
5	4	5	THE FLINTSTONES	AmbIn Entertainment MCA/Universal Home Video 42150	John Goodman Rick Moranis	1994	PG	19.98
6	6	4	NIRVANA: LIVE! TONIGHT! SOLD OUT!!	Geffen Home Video 39541	Nirvana	1994	NR	24.98
7	7	4	TOMBSTONE	Hollywood Pictures Hollywood Home Video 2544	Kurt Russell Val Kilmer	1993	R	19.99
8	24	38	HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS!	Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer MGM/UA Home Video M201011	Animated	1966	NR	14.95
9	8	14	THE 3 TENORS IN CONCERT 1994 ▲	Atlantic Records Inc. A*Vision Entertainment 50822-3	Carreras, Domingo, Pavarotti (Mehta)	1994	NR	29.98
10	10	3	PLAYBOY: 1995 VIDEO PLAYMATE CALENDAR	Playboy Home Video Uni Dist. Corp. PBV0767	Various Artists	1994	NR	19.95
11	12	3	PLAYBOY: GIRLS OF HOOTERS	Playboy Home Video Uni Dist. Corp. PBV0768	Various Artists	1994	NR	19.95
12	9	5	BLACK BEAUTY	Warner Bros. Inc. Warner Home Video 14400	Sean Bean Andrew Knott	1994	G	24.96
13	21	2	WOODSTOCK '94	PolyGram Diversified Ent. PolyGram Video 8006333673	Various Artists	1994	NR	24.95
14	11	13	SLEEPLESS IN SEATTLE	TriStar Pictures Columbia TriStar Home Video 52413	Tom Hanks Meg Ryan	1993	PG	19.95
15	17	39	YANNI: LIVE AT THE ACROPOLIS ▲	Private Music BMG Video 82163	Yanni	1994	NR	19.98
16	22	2	EAGLES: HELL FREEZES OVER	Geffen Home Video 39548	Eagles	1994	NR	24.98
17	33	7	A CHRISTMAS STORY	Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer MGM/UA Home Video 104599	Darren McGavin Peter Billingsley	1984	PG	14.95
18	RE-ENTRY		RUDOLPH THE RED NOSED REINDEER	Family Home Entertainment 27309	Animated	1989	NR	12.98
19	27	6	GEORGE BALANCHINE'S THE NUTCRACKER	Warner Bros. Inc. Warner Home Video 13000	Macaulay Culkin Jessica Lynn Cohen	1994	G	19.99
20	18	6	DEAD CAN DANCE: TOWARD THE WITHIN	Warner Reprise Video 3-38405	Dead Can Dance	1994	NR	19.98
21	14	35	AN AFFAIR TO REMEMBER	Twentieth Century Fox FoxVideo 1240	Cary Grant Deborah Kerr	1957	NR	9.98
22	RE-ENTRY		A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS	Paramount Pictures Paramount Home Video 15265	Animated	1990	NR	16.95
23	29	3	PLAYBOY: SECRETS OF MAKING LOVE, VOL. II	Playboy Home Video Uni Dist. Corp. PBV0477	Various Artists	1994	NR	19.95
24	20	10	BARBRA STREISAND: BARBRA-IN CONCERT ▲	Columbia Music Video SMV Enterprises 24V50115	Barbra Streisand	1994	NR	24.98
25	RE-ENTRY		MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET	Twentieth Century Fox FoxVideo 1072	Maureen O'Hara John Payne	1947	NR	9.98
26	16	37	MY FAIR LADY: 30TH ANNIVERSARY ◊	FoxVideo (CBS Video) 8166-30	Rex Harrison Audrey Hepburn	1964	G	24.98
27	19	17	BEETHOVEN'S 2ND ◊	Universal City Studios MCA/Universal Home Video 42029	Charles Grodin Bonnie Hunt	1993	PG	24.98
28	37	2	SADE: LIVE CONCERT HOME VIDEO	Epic Music Video SMV Enterprises 19V50114	Sade	1994	NR	19.98
29	38	2	WINNIE THE POOH AND CHRISTMAS TOO	Walt Disney Home Video	Animated	1994	NR	14.99
30	RE-ENTRY		GRUMPY OLD MEN	Warner Bros. Inc. Warner Home Video 13050	Jack Lemmon Walter Matthau	1993	PG-13	19.98
31	28	10	THE CASE OF THE LOGICAL I RANCH ▲	Dualstar Video BMG Kidz 30051-3	Mary-Kate & Ashley Olsen	1994	NR	12.98
32	30	15	RESEVOIR DOGS	Live Home Video 68993	Harvey Keitel Tim Roth	1992	R	14.98
33	RE-ENTRY		FROSTY THE SNOWMAN	Family Home Entertainment 27311	Animated	1989	NR	12.98
34	RE-ENTRY		IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE: 45TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION	Republic Pictures Home Video 20623	James Stewart Donna Reed	1946	NR	19.98
35	32	4	THE GATE TO THE MIND'S EYE	Miramir Images Inc. BMG Home Video 80101-3	Thomas Dolby	1994	NR	19.98
36	26	3	JANET JACKSON: JANET	Virgin Music Video 77796	Janet Jackson	1994	NR	19.98
37	35	17	PLAYBOY: WET & WILD-THE LOCKER ROOM	Playboy Home Video Uni Dist. Corp. PBV0757	Various Artists	1994	NR	19.95
38	25	11	BEASTIE BOYS: SABOTAGE	Capitol Video 77787	Beastie Boys	1994	NR	16.98
39	23	6	THE FIRM	Paramount Pictures Paramount Home Video 32523	Tom Cruise	1993	R	19.95
40	40	9	PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE	Rhino Video A*Vision Entertainment 2173	Bela Lugosi Tor Johnson	1959	NR	9.95

● RIAA gold cert. for sales of 50,000 units or \$1 million in sales at suggested retail. ▲ RIAA platinum cert. for sales of 100,000 units or \$2 million in sales at suggested retail. ◊ ITA gold certification for a minimum of 125,000 units or a dollar volume of \$9 million at retail for theatrically released programs, or of at least 25,000 units and \$1 million at suggested retail for nontheatrical titles. ◊ ITA platinum certification for a minimum sale of 250,000 units or a dollar volume of \$18 million at retail for theatrically released programs, and of at least, 50,000 units and \$2 million at suggested retail for nontheatrical titles. © 1994, Billboard/BPI Communications.