

# COMPRESSION PHOTO FINISH: GI, AT&T

*HBO, Viacom, TCI expected to follow PBS adoption of joint algorithm*

By Peter Lambert

**G**eneral Instrument Corp. and AT&T have agreed to co-develop a compression algorithm and a common set of integrated circuit chips for compressed digital satellite transmission by PBS and, possibly, for inclusion in the Motion Picture Export Group's worldwide MPEG 2 multimedia hierarchy of digital transmission standards.

One at a time, beginning as early as this week, HBO, Viacom Networks and Tele-Communications Inc. are expected to announce adoption of the same combined GI/AT&T algorithm, with the possible added participation of Scientific-Atlanta.

"Hopefully, we are moving toward a de facto standard, if not a published industry standard," said Howard Miller, PBS senior vice president, broadcast operations, engineering and computer services.

The GI/AT&T agreement to co-create an "MPEG-friendly" algorithm constitutes a victory for the Cable Television Laboratories/Viacom/TCI/PBS group that issued a request for compression proposals a year ago. That group has insisted it will foster a multiple-vendor compression market by requiring cross-licensing in any purchase agreements the parties reach. Conducting its own search for a compression system, HBO has echoed the same priority.

"We were trying to get three [proponents] to come together" on a joint

compression approach, said Miller. "We haven't entirely given up" on including Scientific-Atlanta (BROADCASTING, July 20), he added, "but two out of three is not bad."

Celebrating the manufacturers' "willingness to share and license ideas," CableLabs President Richard Green suggested that purchases of equipment may encourage MPEG to include the algorithm in its common core chip and/or surrounding "tool kit" standards, thereby assuring high-volume, lower-cost chip manufacturing across industries. "It's certainly a positive sign that there are real users ready to put down real money, because there is a real application,"

Green said.

In 1993, PBS and its education satellite partners will buy thousands of DigiCipher integrated receiver-decoders (IRD's) and 20 or more encoders. GI offered the first hardware able to deliver multiple signals to one transponder from multiple, as well as single, uplinks. The GI hardware will be upgradeable to incorporate the GI/AT&T algorithm. Higher volumes of units will then follow. The equipment will offer 2-, 4-, 8- and 10-channel modes and will be optimized to deliver full broadcast-quality signals to 2 meter Ku-band antennas. It will also incorporate removable security modules. ■

## FCC MOVES ON CABLE ACT

*Duggan promises strict adherence to law; commission says retrans regulations are severable from must carry*

By Joe Flint

**T**he FCC pressed on with implementing the Cable Act while the act itself continued to be bombarded with lawsuits (see page 18).

The commission—absent Chairman Alfred Sikes, who is recovering from surgery—called for comments on the implementation of must carry/retransmission consent, indecent programming and home wiring (see "In Brief").

Commissioner Ervin Duggan also used the meeting to serve notice to the cable industry that the commission would not be swayed by intense lobbying efforts. "I would simply like to say that in spite of all the controversy and different opinions about merits of the law, we will counsel full compliance with the law, and this agency will, in good faith, implement the law impartially with good will and absolute fidelity to the mandate of the Congress." Duggan added that he is also delivering that message in private to visitors from the cable industry.

With court challenges in mind, the commission said its pending retransmission-consent regulations are severable from must carry should the latter be struck down.

As expected, the FCC's questions on must carry and retransmission consent are broad. However, one specific question in the retransmission-consent notice that will no doubt be contested by programmers is whether it is correct for the FCC to interpret the provision as enabling broadcasters, in the absence of any express contractual arrangement, to negotiate retransmission consent without the

**BROADCASTING HAS NAMED A NEW PUBLISHER,** the fifth in the magazine's 61-year history. She is Peggy Conlon, 41, most recently group publisher of CMP Publications' *Electronic Buyers News*, *Electronic World News* and *Electronic Engineering Times*. Conlon brings a strong sales and publishing history to her new post; the two weekly magazines and one biweekly under her command (250,000 circulation worldwide) all held leadership positions in their industries.

A California native, Conlon has a BA in communications from the University of California, Fullerton (1973) and an MA with honors from the University of Southern California (1980). She will headquarter in New York.

