

## Hearst on track with Locomotion in Latin America



'Phantom 2040' swings into Latin America.

U.S. producer/distributor Hearst Corp. and Venezuelan media group Cisneros are launching Locomotion, a 24-hour animation channel. The 50/50 joint venture will debut this fall on Galaxy Latin America's DIRECTV package and will be available in 23 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. But Hearst is not stopping there; officials say the channel could eventually launch in the U.S.

Locomotion will feature mainly Hearst programming—Hearst has 600 episodes of animation in its library—which will be broadcast in Spanish, Portuguese and English. Hearst's collection includes *Pop-eye*, *Phantom 2040*, *The Legend of Prince Valiant* and *Quasimodo*, a new series

based on Victor Hugo's classic "Hunchback of Notre Dame," which was also the subject of Disney's latest film. Hearst intends to acquire rights to additional animation series as well as produce its own.

The kids DTH market is quickly becoming crowded. Turner's Cartoon Network bowed in October 1992 and is available in 6.1 million TV homes in Latin America. WBTV—The Warner Channel and Fox Kids Network also offer kids fare, and Nickelodeon wants to launch there too. But the audience is increasing, with the number of multichannel homes projected to grow by 96% between 1995 and 2005, according to a survey by TAP Latin America, a consortium of international cable networks, agencies and publishers. —SM

# SEG animated over kids PPV

*Ultimate Fight(ers) switch gears to test family fare*

By Michael Katz

**T**he company that brought Ultimate Fighting to the masses is bringing what it believes to be the first family animation event to pay per view.

Britt Allcroft's *Magic Adventures of Mumfie*, featuring an elephant and his animal friends, will be available from Semaphore Entertainment Group (SEG) on PPV beginning Sept. 8 on both Request and Viewer's Choice at a suggested retail price of \$4.95.

"Pay per view has become a combat sport, movie and an adult medium," says SEG President Bob Meyrowitz, whose company has been criticized for its Ultimate Fighting Championship. "We think that it can be a family medium."

*Mumfie* will run throughout the month before it is released on video. SEG also will be offering a deal that allows the movie to be watched multiple times throughout one week for a single purchase price.

Despite the recent attention on children's and family programming, the event is a business decision—not a political statement, Meyrowitz says.

"If it does great we would look to do many more of these projects," he says.

"We have always been looking for new ways to stimulate new growth of pay-per-view subscribers."

Meyrowitz also says that if *Mumfie* is a success, children's and family entertainment could be a new PPV category. "To me, pay per view is a movie theater with 25 million seats," he says. "For parents with young children, going out to the movies can be an expensive and problematic experience."

Playboy TV President Jim English, a long-time pay-per-view executive whose company produces adult PPV programming, sees it differently. "It won't work," says English, who has four children between the ages of 3 and 12. "It's a waste of their time, but it's a good effort."

Now that President Clinton has mandated three hours a week of educational children's programming, English says, there will be a slew of kids shows on free TV. He also says there is already plenty of similar programming on cable. "There's a very big leap of faith that you're going to get an adult to buy a child a pay-per-view special when there's so much children's programming on basic."

PPV may be less expensive and less



'Mumfie' will make his PPV debut on Sept. 8.

of a hassle for the parent, English says, but it is for those and similar reasons that a PPV event won't fly with children.

"The theater is a much richer experience," he says. "Planning to go, revving up toward the show, getting your seats in time and buying candy and popcorn is what makes it special for [kids]. You don't get that when you plop down in front of the TV set. There's no sense of adventure" for children.

Michael Klein, vice president of programming for Viewer's Choice, counters that with various promotional tie-ins, such as a coloring contest for kids, and because it is a world premiere, *Mumfie* will be more than just plain TV.

"We're hopeful that it will work and that there will be other programming of the same nature that we can offer," says Klein, adding that *Mumfie* is an opportunity to boost pay per view's image. "Everybody thinks pay per view is nothing but boxing and wrestling, but this [and other non-sporting events] show a diversity of programs to offer the consumer." ■