International Repertoire Explosion Keys Upturn In Japanese Market

By SHIG FUJITA

TOKYO—In recent years in Japan, sales of 100,000 units of an international repertoire album have been considered very good. But at this stage of the new year, following a big improvement in sales, the already surprisingly high number of titles are easily topping that mark.

The Phantom's soundtrack package is the front-runner. It is still selling a steady 10,000 units a week, six months after its release. A total of 900,000 sales and 500,000 cassettes have reportedly been sold.

The need to compensate the promotion chief of Akumu Natsu, however, is bound to reach the million mark. And the French classic Guns N' Roses' single also remains a steady seller, with total national sales in excess of 700,000.

Michael Jackson's "Thriller" is, predictably, another huge Japanese sellout. The album, released in December, is still chalking up sales of a reported 10,000 units a week following the Christmas Eve telecast of the "Thriller" video. The album looks like another million seller, which would make it the Cartman's first multi-platinum record, with sales thus far around the 700,000 mark. The biggest Epic/Sony artist currently emerging from regulations governing the European Economic Community.

The MPA statement says: "This move will give MCA greater credibility abroad. It's also our belief that a unified mechanical rights society in Europe will be an ideal to some extent. This is currently emerging from regulations governing the European Economic Community."

Soviet Label Chief Pledges Improvements In Pressing

By YADIM YURCHENKOV

MOSCOW—Technical problems which last year forced the suspension of production at Melodya's main pressing facility in Aprakshevskaya may have been due to factors outside its control, according to the state-owned record company's director general, Valeri Sukhoroko.

Speaking at the company's annual "Day Of Melodya" promotional gathering here, Sukhoroko said that facilities at the plant have been considerably modernized since the state Committee For Standards enforced the temporary suspension due to the low quality of product pressed there.

And although he didn't make any direct criticism of the state Committee For Standards, the capacity of Aprakshevskaya pressings was, to a large extent, dependent on the quality of the vinyl supplied by the ministry of chemical industry's plants.

Sukhoroko also revealed that no more flexi-singles will be produced by Melodya except for demonstration purposes, following poor sales returns over recent years. At one time Melodya was producing 60 mil- lion two-track flexis a year, and it's still uncertain how much production will continue even though there is a project under way to produce similar but thicker disks for foreign use.

Customer complaints over delays in releasing popular songs were acknowledged, and the director general blamed the shortage of pressing ca-

German C'right Change Proposed

By WOLFGANG SPARH

HAMBURG—A blank tape royalty of 10 per cent (about 18.5 U.S. cents) per hour for audio cassettes is proposed in new draft legislation to revise the Audio Tape Protection Act.

For blank videotape, the suggested royalty rate is 30 pfennigs (roughly 6 U.S. cents) per hour, a proposal expected to remain in the present 5 per cent of the manufacturer's price to a token two marks (72 cents) per unit for audio tape players and 15 marks ($5.40) per unit for VCRs.

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