

Billboard CONTENTS

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VSDA ROUNDUP

Billboard offers comprehensive coverage of the Video Software Dealers Assn. convention in Las Vegas, held Aug. 16-20. Stories addressing VSDA issues can be found on pages 1, 3, 4, 47, 51, and 92.

Music Video Firms Bullish On Future

Although the original high expectations for music video software were unrealistic, manufacturers are now better prepared to take advantage of the genre's potential, particularly through cross-promotions. Jim Bessman tells the story in the first of a two-part series. **Page 57**

AD CAMPAIGN HITS CHAPPELL BUY

A U.K. pressure group set up by SBK Songs has begun an advertising campaign opposing the planned takeover of Chappell & Co. by Warner Communications. **Page 77**

Convention Flap Over 'Platoon'

Retailers at the VSDA confab heard Vestron Video and HBO "Video trade" charges over the rights to the Hemdale Films video release of 'Platoon.' Billboard's Ken Schlager and Al Stewart report. **Page 92**

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Valenti Now A Home Vid Convert Seeks Ratings, More Sell-Through

BY JIM McCULLAUGH

LAS VEGAS Once a bitter foe of home video, Motion Picture Assn. of America chairman and president Jack Valenti made peace with the Video Software Dealers Assn. here in a convention keynote speech Aug. 17.



"We are allies for the simplest and grandest of reasons," he said. "As your business grows, so does ours."

Valenti, who led Hollywood's fight against the first-sale doctrine and at one time predicted that home video would turn the film community into a ghost town, conceded that he was willing to "pay credit to those who kick ass. And that's what you did in Washington."

Rather than dwell on the past, however, Valenti urged video dealers to move forward with sell-through, support MPAA antipiracy measures, and actively enforce the MPAA's film-rating system.

Ratings, he said, is a sensitive consumer issue, but "parents are growing uneasy about young people seeing movies on cassettes whose general creative content is not really known. If ever I learned a lesson in politics it is this: When there is unrest in the community for real or perceived cause, always move quickly to heal whatever ails the public."

State legislatures, he said, are "looking over our shoulder. Don't dally about this on the mistaken premise it is censorship. It is not. Voluntary self-regulation, which is what movie rating is all about, is light years ahead of rules written by legislators who don't know your business. It is both enlightened and prudent to sense public discomfort in advance and then press ahead to do something about it."

Valenti saluted the VSDA for joining MPAA's stepped-up, world-

wide war on piracy.

"There is no longer any doubt," he said, "that the legitimate, honest video dealer is wounded by those few who duplicate illegally. I think it's fair to say that VSDA and MPAA are bound and determined to wipe out every pirate enclave in this country. Under the new and tightened copyright laws, the first offenders are liable to go to the slammer. We aim to put them there."

As an example of piracy's "stun-

(Continued on page 93)

NARM, Import Group Offer Plan To Allow Parallels

BY LINDA MOLESKI

NEW YORK The National Assn. of Recording Merchandisers, in conjunction with the newly formed import trade group Recordings International Trade Committee, has submitted a proposal to the Recording Industry Assn. of America calling for it to authorize certain parallel imports with a stamping system. The RIAA response by its president, Jay Ber- man, has so far been lukewarm.

The proposal comes in the wake of a series of recent court actions designed to put a stop to the ille-

gal importation of European recordings whose copyrights are owned by U.S. companies.

"We're trying to establish a workable theme that will allow the American consumer to have the widest possible range of repertoire available," says Ed Grossi, vice president of Jem Records and a founding member of RITC. "Russ Solomon [president of Tower Records and NARM] asked us to help formulate a system similar to that in the U.K., whereby importers purchase a stamp, enabling companies to monitor

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CONVENTION CAPSULES

MOROWITZ RE-ELECTED: Arthur Morowitz was elected to serve a second one-year term as president of the Video Software Dealers Assn. Other officers elected at a board meeting held Aug. 19 at the VSDA convention are Jack Messer, vice president; Brad Burnside, treasurer; and Joan Weisenberg, who was re-elected secretary.

WHAT PRICE SELL-THROUGH: A cab driver making the run from Las Vegas' McCarran Airport to VSDA hotels has been building his own home video library for a decade—by duping at home. Asked what list price for classic films would encourage him to become a sell-through customer, he replied, "Six dollars. I spend \$4 for the blank tape, and I figure the convenience is worth \$2."

THE BLACK CONSUMER: William Dorsey, publisher of Black Video Guide, and Oakland retailer Eugene Lemon of Video Network worked the show from an interesting angle—stimulating the black consumer market. After publishing a 200-page guide, Dorsey is now marketing prerecorded video while claiming the guide itself is a hit. Lemon is sold on the potential of reaching the black video renter/buyer. He said he has sold 80 regular-price copies of "The Color Purple" in his single store.

GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY: Gold-

en Book Video, the spin-off of Western Publishing that up to now catered mostly to toy and mass-market outlets, is about to woo home video distributors and retailers with a batch of kidvids ranging in price from \$8.95 to \$29.95, including a DIC line of 30-minute and long-form product based on the company's animated characters. Also, Golden has a lineup of VCR games that will retail for under \$20. Golden says it is also making new sales policies that will be attractive to the video specialty trade.



A STRATEGIC RETREAT: Asked about a reorganization of Elliot Kastner's Cinema Group when it evolved into a home video entity in partnership with Andre Blay, Blay noted that cutbacks were analogous to Gen. Douglas MacArthur's retreat from the Philippines to Australia in World War II. "He had to go back to Australia before returning to Bataan." The Cinema Group's press conference Aug. 17 also featured what may well have been an industry first. Attendees were politely told to choose sides—one side of the room for smokers, the other for nonsmokers.

GLOOM IN BOOM? Viewers of the "Today" show Monday morning were told to stay tuned for a view of

the home video industry that suggested that consumers were getting bored with their VCRs and that industry profits were down. Only two industryites were interviewed, Vestron president Jon Peisinger and the firm's senior vice president of sales, marketing, and distribution, Al Reuben. The execs of the financially beleaguered company said that diversity of product lines is an answer to the industry's purported ills.

TWENTY SECONDS OF FAME: Celebrity gave VSDA attendees a chance to spend 20 seconds recording a video with wrestler Sgt. Slaughter, a character on Celebrity's G.I. Joe series. On the first day alone, some 500 had their moment of glory documented... HBO Video plans to donate \$100,000 to families of Vietnam veterans in the wake of its "Platoon" program. Film director Oliver Stone will designate the specific charities... "Ishtar," Columbia's summer box-office disappointment, will ship Nov. 17 from RCA/Columbia. Supporting the release will be a Road To Riches Sweepstakes, which features two top prizes of eight-day vacations in Morocco.

QUOTA UNQUOTA: Reports have Paramount revenues dropping \$1.5 million because of a shift of 3% in wholesale price to equalize distributor and rackjobber pricing on "Crocodile Dundee." "They have to get (Continued on page 93)

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