

Billboard CONTENTS

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A CALL FOR MORE BACK-ANNOUNCING

In this week's Commentary, Don Ienner, Arista's senior VP of marketing and promotion, urges radio programmers and DJs to step up the practice of back-announcing. Not telling listeners whom or what they've just heard is not only frustrating for audiences, says Ienner, it ultimately hurts station ratings and record sales. **Page 9**

Meyer Makes Airwaves For MCA

In the first installment of an occasional series of record-promotion profiles, MCA promo chief Steve Meyer reveals the solid commitment to radio that has consistently rocketed MCA artists onto the Hot 100 Singles chart. Radio editor Kim Freeman reports. **Page 18**

TAKEOVER DEALS: THE ARTISTS' STAKE

The furor surrounding Sony's takeover of CBS Records seems to be settling down and optimism setting in, but new questions arise concerning the financial status of artists signed to the newly managed label. Guest columnist Michael Sukin of the New York law firm Berger & Steingut explores possible changes in the offing for CBS signees. **Page 71**

BMI Fetes 'Million-Airs'

In a series of luncheons in New York, Nashville, and Los Angeles, BMI is presenting special awards to the writers and publishers of songs that have reached or surpassed the 1-million-performance landmark. Billboard gives you the complete list of honorees. **Page 79**

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RCA/Columbia Is Home For Tri-Star Move Seen As Big Boost For Vid Unit

BY AL STEWART

NEW YORK In a move seen as greatly bolstering the fortunes of RCA/Columbia Pictures Home Video, Columbia Pictures Entertainment has announced that features made by its Tri-Star Pictures division will be released on home video by RCA/Columbia.

The decision calls into question

the future of Tri-Star's fledgling home video division, which was formed more than a year ago with former MGM/UA Home Video executive Saul Melnick at the helm.

Now that CPE—Tri-Star's parent company and a partner in the RCA/Columbia Home Video venture—has decided to release product through the more established RCA/Columbia video arm, Tri-Star's vid-

eo role seems unclear.

Officials at RCA/Columbia were elated by the decision, which will furnish them with a number of hit titles and presumably add to their marketing clout. The first three Tri-Star titles to be released under the distribution deal are "The Principal," "Suspect," and "Like Father Like Son."

"In my opinion, when you look at RCA/Columbia Home Video 12 or 18 months down the road, you will see the No. 1 home video company," says Rob Blattner, president of RCA/Columbia. "The steady flow of product from Tri-Star and all our other acquisitions will give us a tremendous advantage."

In addition to serving as president of Tri-Star Home Video, Melnick will now serve on the eight-person RCA/Columbia board of directors representing CPE's interest in the venture.

Melnick had moved from the East Coast to Los Angeles to head Tri-Star only to move back East late last year when Tri-Star was acquired by the parent company of Columbia Pictures, Coca-Cola. After the acquisition, Coke formed CPE as an umbrella company for its entertainment interests.

Melnick says he was "surprised" by the decision to release Tri-Star feature films through RCA/Columbia. "Not that it wasn't a consideration as we evaluated the future," he says. "The deal will obviously be (Continued on page 78)

'E.T.' Coming Home, But He's Still A Mystery

BY JIM McCULLAUGH

LOS ANGELES What price "E.T."?

This is the primary unanswered question following confirmation by MCA Home Video that a home video version of the blockbuster "E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial" will be marketed in the third quarter of this year.

The company's announcement contains no information about price, promotional plans, sponsorship tie-ins, or other possible aspects of the campaign surrounding the highest-grossing film of all time.

Gene Giaquinto, president of the MCA Home Entertainment

Group, acknowledges that official disclosure was partly triggered by a recent New York Times article that suggested MCA would release the film this year. The agreement between the film's producer/director, Steven Spielberg, and MCA Home Video was only recently consummated, and the "worldwide marketing plan is in its very earliest stages," says Giaquinto. While he says he favored a more formal campaign announcement in future months, he admits word of its release is "not the type of news you can easily keep the lid on."

Giaquinto now confirms that the cassette will be available world- (Continued on page 78)

U.S. Indies Make Modest Export, Licensing Deals In Cannes Labels, Trade Groups Say Fair Was 'Fair'

CANNES U.S. indie labels experienced only moderate success at MIDEM this year, and much of that was due to export deals spurred by the weak U.S. dollar. Most U.S. participants, however, expressed satisfaction with the results of their week at the Jan. 24-29 international music fair here.



Veteran MIDEM-goer Bruce Kaplan of Flying Fish, one of 40 Chicago labels represented in that city's first-ever stand here, says he set up a few licensing deals for single titles. Despite the dollar's decline, he didn't find advances significantly up; he speaks in more glowing terms about the offers he received from importers in the Benelux territories and France. With 400 folk, blues, and jazz titles in his catalog, Kaplan sees even more room for growth of exports to Europe.

"There was more interest in imports this year," he points out, "because you can bring in imported finished goods for the same price as domestic product, so why license it?"

European distributors who import U.S. product don't have to worry about recouping advances, adds Kaplan, since they just order what they need. In the case of fast-breaking street music, however, he feels Europeans may still prefer to license so they can control local marketing.

Peter Bruhning, product manager for Teldec, a major German label and distributor, confirms this view. Al-

though Teldec has an import arm, Bruhning says, "Initially, we like to license from abroad. If you import, you can't do marketing and promotion and break the act in Germany."

For U.S. catalog labels, though, export seemed the way to go this year. For example, compact-disk-only label Rykodisc made export deals for about one-third of its 60-title catalog with Holland-based Bertus, which

distributes across Western Europe, and with Survival Records, an Australian exporter and indie label that is entering the import market for the first time with Rykodisc's product. While both Bertus and Survival will be exclusive distributors in their territories, Rykodisc retains the right to export titles to other companies on a one-off basis.

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RIAA Backs Adherence To Pending Berne Bill

BY BILL HOLLAND

WASHINGTON As expected, the Recording Industry Assn. of America has given its support to U.S. adherence to the Berne Convention, the paramount international copyright treaty. In a parallel development, the performing rights societies, at a Feb. 8 House subcommittee hearing, gave a begrudging nod to fallback jukebox-licensing arrangements that are connected with the Berne adherence bills pending in Congress.

The RIAA announcement, which follows a decision of basic agreement before the Christmas holidays (Billboard, Dec. 28), claims Berne membership would strengthen the U.S. bargaining

position in combating worldwide record piracy. While the statement questions whether Berne adherence will offer the U.S. recording industry any "immediate benefit in terms of substantive legal protection," it says it recognizes that U.S. membership would serve "the long-term interests of the music industry and the entire copyright community."

Adherence to the convention, the statement notes, also would eliminate the necessity for securing Berne protection by simultaneous publication in a Berne-member country—so-called backdoor protection that has diminished this nation's reputation in the international copyright com-

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