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EUROTRACK

by STEVEN GAYDOS



Posted: Tue., Jun. 19, 2001, 12:59pm PT

Indie b'casters: Big world, backyard aud

LONDON -- Just as nature abhors a vacuum, show business abhors a niche without a market.

Swiss broadcast exec Costa Haralambis is counting on this fundamental principle as he launches MITIL (Marche Intl. des Televisions & Radios Independentes et Locales) June 20-23 in Vevey. He's touting MITIL as the first international market for local and independent broadcasters.

You may think you know local broadcasters: You've seen their news and weather reports, educational shows, cooking programs, fishing expeditions to the nearest watering holes, entertainment and sports guides, etc.

What you might have missed is that if someone were able to bring all of these outlets together, they'd cumulatively represent millions of viewers with uncommonly close links to each of these stations.

Bringing it home

And if you're fortunate enough to live in one of the prosperous, peaceful regions of the planet, you might have also missed the bravery and ingenuity that many of these broadcasters exhibit in delivering the local updates when the unpleasant realities of war and disaster strike.

Such challenges have resulted in powerful, award-winning programs seldom seen outside their local markets.

The task of bringing together a maiden market for these thousands of local and independent broadcasters (including Webcasters) across Europe doesn't seem to have soured Haralambis' cheery disposition, which is perhaps the result of another fact of nature: It's hard to be cranky when your office has a view of Lake Geneva.

Prior to launching MITIL, Haralambis founded ICI-TV, the first local

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4	The Lake House	\$13.6
5	The Break-Up	\$9.8
6	X-Men: The Last Stand	\$7.8
7	Garfield: A Tail of Two Kitties	\$7.3
8	The Omen	\$5.6
9	The Da Vinci Code	\$5.3
10	Over the Hedge	\$4.3

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cable broadcaster for the Swiss Riviera, so he sees himself as "typical of the clientele we're serving at MITIL."

Tech ties

Among the highlights of the upcoming market and festival, Haralambis notes the outfitting of the SwissMedia Center with what he describes as a "digitized video kiosk with 20 networked stations playing 150 programs."

Sounding to my ears like something out of a sci-fi film, this innovative delivery setup, he explains, enables buyers, journalists and local broadcasters to "instantly scan the selections for length, subject matter, language -- in essence all data needed -- while they're viewing the content."

Haralambis' MITIL team has also lined up 25 sessions with dozens of speakers. There are co-production panels, talks on sporting-event rights, hardware rap sessions running the gamut of subjects from archives to handhelds, and a specialized focus session on the Italian indie broadcasting scene, which, incredibly, has 1,700 local TV and radio outlets.

Lauding the best

In addition, the MITIL team has put together a jury of broadcasters and artists who'll present out awards for the top programs.

In this regard, MITIL is following the lead of the Kosice Intl. Festival of Local TV Broadcasters, now in its seventh year. That the chief of that event, Eva Dekanovska, is head of the MITIL jury speaks volumes and goes to the heart of Haralambis' missionary zeal.

"The main advantage of MITIL is that it's a way to cut the isolation," says Haralambis. "All small broadcasters are isolated because they're local, but that's their strength. They are strongly connected to their local audiences. Aside from the panels, the programs and the technical talks, the main topic at MITIL is, 'How can we work together?'"

"The commercial networks were created a long time ago," Haralambis observes. "This is a young community. This is the first gathering. We have a chance to create a real global network."



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