

MRS, MCPS TO LINK

U.K. Rights Merger Near

LONDON—This year should see the merger of the Mechanical Rights Society (MRS) and the Mechanical Copyright Protection Society (MCPS), following lengthy meetings between executives of Britain's two mechanical rights organizations.

That prospect is revealed in a statement from the Music Publishers' Assn. (MPA), which controls MCPS. Publishers feel that one body would be "in the interests of all copyright owners, would increase efficiency and also dispel much of the confusion that exists over the roles of the two bodies as separate organizations," the statement says.

MRS is a negotiating body that represents rights owners in negotiations over mechanical matters with British Phonographic Industry (BPI), the U.K. national IFPI branch, and also represents them on topics such as the imposition of a blank tape levy.

MCPS is a collection society and, thus far, the only one in Europe that does not have writers and composers on its board. Now, however, there has been an amendment of society articles to permit a larger board of directors, which will include three writers who are members of Performing Right Society.

The MPA statement says: "This move will give MCPS greater credibility abroad. It's also our belief that a unified mechanical rights society in the U.K. will greatly help in solving some of the copyright problems currently emerging from regulations governing the European Economic Community."

Soviet Label Chief Pledges Improvements In Pressing

By VADIM YURCHENKOV

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

Speaking at the company's annual "Day Of Melodiya" promotional gathering here, Sukhorado 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, he noted that the quality of Aprelevsky pressings was, to a large extent, dependent on the quality of the vinyl supplied by the ministry of chemical industry's plants.

Sukhorado also revealed that no more flexi-singles will be produced by Melodiya except for demonstration purposes, following poor sales returns over recent years. At one time Melodiya was producing 60 million two-track flexis a year, and it's still unclear what will replace them, though there is a project under way to produce similar but thicker disks for foreign language study material.

Customer complaints over delays in releasing popular songs were acknowledged by the Melodiya chief, who blamed shortage of pressing ca-

capacity, despite the fact that the company's Riga plant alone can manufacture 25,000 albums, 14,000 EPs and 5,800 cassettes daily. When modernization is completed, some years hence, the plant's capacity will rise to over 60,000 albums and 20,000 cassettes a day.

On the subject of repertoire, Sukhorado said public demand had led to some releases not originally provided for in Melodiya's plans. A general mood of "retro," or interest in nostalgic music, for instance, had prompted the release of collections like "Dance Music Of The '30s & '40s" and albums by pre-war singers Isabella Yurieva and Gheorgi Vinogradov.

This year sees the completion of the company's largest classical project to date, the 175-album subscription series "From The Treasures Of The World's Performing Arts." Some 18,000 sets will be manufactured.

Most recent classical release from Melodiya is a performance of Rachmaninov's "Third Piano Concerto" by Peter Donohue, the British pianist who has achieved superstar status in the USSR. Latest pop product is a three-LP set featuring jazz bandleader/singer Leonid Utiosov, who was popular during the pre-war years. Overall, Melodiya is now releasing up to 1,200 titles each year.

German C'right Change Proposed IFPI's Zombik Attacks 'Absurdly Low' Compensation

By WOLFGANG SPAHR

HAMBURG—A blank tape royalty of 10 pfennings (about 3.6 U.S. cents) per hour for audio cassettes is proposed in new draft legislation to revise the West German copyright law. For blank videotape, the suggested royalty rate is 30 pfennings (roughly 10.8 U.S. cents) per hour.

The draft bill also provides for a reduction in the levy on tape hardware, first introduced in 1965, from the present 5% 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.

Photocopying of copyrighted material will involve a royalty of four pfennings (1.4 cents) per copy, but there will be a reduced rate of two pfennings (0.7 cents) and, in some

cases, exemptions for schools, universities and non-industrial research establishments.

Commenting on the draft bill, Peter Zombik, director of the German IFPI group, says: "It's highly unsatisfactory because it fails to fulfill its basic purpose, which is to provide adequate compensation to copyright owners for the private copying of their works. The compensation proposed is absurdly low."

"If you put the software and hardware levies together, it comes to about 3% of the rights which would normally be payable for the equivalent amount of copyright material on a commercial recording."

Zombik points out that blank tape has now become the most important sound carrier. "There is more music copied on to blank cassettes than is

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-spending holiday season, a surprisingly high number of titles are easily topping that mark.

The "Flashdance" soundtrack package is the front-runner. It is still selling a steady 10,000 units a week, six months after it was released here. A total of 900,000 sales and 500,000 cassettes have reportedly been sold.

Sales of the album, says Polystar promotion chief Akemu Natsume, are bound to reach the million mark. And the Irene Cara "Flashdance" single also remains a steady seller, with total national sales in excess of 700,000.

Michael Jackson's "Thriller" is, predictably, another huge Japanese seller. The album, first released in December, 1982, 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 in Japan, says Shigeaki Yoshikawa of Epic/Sony's international repertoire division, with sales thus far around the 700,000 mark.

The biggest Epic/Sony artist

through the past year, however, has been Julio Iglesias, with total sales of all his albums and cassettes topping the 1.15 million mark. His two-record package "Julio Iglesias Live" quickly exceeded the 100,000 mark.

British band Wham!, also on Epic/Sony, has crashed the 100,000-unit barrier, with sales of 140,000 reported on the "Fantastic" album. Men At Work's "Cargo" has also soared high on the sales chart, with 300,000-plus units.

Toshiba-EMI has scored heavily with David Bowie, Sheena Easton, Paul McCartney and the Rolling Stones' "Undercover" album. Bowie's "Let's Dance," released last April, was boosted by the movie "Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence" and the Japanese leg of the singer's world tour. The label reports that the album topped the 200,000-unit mark but the single just passed 100,000. This underlines the fact that, in Japan, international albums usually sell better than the singles taken from them.

Sheena Easton's "Best Kept Secret" was also boosted by a concert here, and the LP has sold 200,000 units here. Paul McCartney's "Pipes Of Peace" sold 200,000 in less than a month, but the single "Say, Say, Say," with Michael Jackson, sold only half that total.

Duran Duran's "Seven And The Ragged Tiger," released in mid-December, topped the 150,000 mark in less than a fortnight and is still selling massively, according to Toshiba-EMI. Other label sales leaders are Kajagoogoo, Michael Schenker, Pat Benatar, Spandau Ballet, Huey Lewis and Olivia Newton-John.

Nippon Phonogram cites Air Supply, ABC, John Cougar Mellencamp, Barry Manilow and Def Leppard as major sellers. Figures aren't yet available, but Air Supply's "Greatest Hits," released on Sept. 5 at a special low price of \$8.50, is said to have topped the 200,000 mark.

Warner-Pioneer reports that Yes's "90125" is expected to sell more than 100,000 LPs and cassettes.

Billy Joel's "An Innocent Man," released here last August, has sold 400,000 units, according to CBS/Sony's Toshikazu Kikuno, who predicts a final tally of 600,000. Earth, Wind & Fire's "Electric Universe," released in early December, is over the 100,000 mark.



BY NEW SOFTWARE ASSOCIATION

U.K. Computer Piracy Targeted

By PETER JONES

LONDON—Computer software piracy, including losses attributable to in-home copying, could be robbing the legitimate industry of up to 10 times its actual turnover in Britain, according to Nick Alexander, chairman of the newly established Guild of Software Houses.

Taking the worst possible assessment of the level at which lost revenue is annually running, it would be roughly \$1.4 billion, says Alexander, who is also managing director of Virgin Games.

The software association has estimated that for every legitimate computer game sold in Britain, at least one other, and possibly as many as 10 others, are illegally circulated. "Unless we stamp heavily on this problem, many of our 300 software houses, most of them highly vulnerable to pirate opposition, could be

forced out of business," Alexander says.

Professional counterfeiters, says Alexander, are a major problem for the industry. But even worse is the computer business equivalent of the audio world's home tapper. "The ordinary software buyer runs off a few copies of his latest game for friends without even thinking about it as an illicit action, or about how it can affect the whole future of the business," he says.

"The home copying area is the hardest to fight," Alexander continues. "Legislation is a waste of time. You can't have the police or watchdogs banging on doors to find out whether people inside are making computer cassette copies for their mates."

"As in the audio field, we've got to try to change the attitude of the consumer. We've got to encourage them

to buy legitimate software, to realize what's fair and unfair."

Alexander says the guild acknowledges that counterfeiting at the professional level is a rapidly growing business in Britain. A push for heavier penalties for those passing off illegal product as legitimate will be made, following similar moves (and successes) in the videocassette field. It will be stressed that computer software is covered by the 1956 Copyright Act.

"As for large-scale pirate activity abroad, it has to be tackled legally through the EEC and so on. But we have to accept there's a general greyiness of legislation where computer software is concerned," Alexander says.

"We're being hit on three separate fronts. We have to be organized and efficient in slamming all kinds of piracy."

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