

After reading Gomery's article, though, it did seem to be the ideal means of building an audience for HD software. The concept, I rationalized, would be to organize a network in this fashion.

1. Form a consortium of those directly involved in the production, acquisition and marketing of HD program software.

2. Organize a network of theatres which are small enough in size to maximize the HD effect but large enough to be profitable. (The Cineplex concept is a prime example of this type of theatre.)

3. Develop a satellite delivery network that would spread the costs of data delivery (software) to all members of the consortium, thereby reducing per unit cost to allow for low ticket prices, maximize profits and stimulate the growth of HD.

(N.B. An additional cost that would be incurred in the future would be data encryption. If HD gains wide distribution, and consumers begin to buy sets, data encryption would be necessary to protect the integrity of the product by preventing pirating.)

4. Use some of profits to reduce the debt incurred during set up to ensure long term viability of the venture while at the same time using some of the profits to further increase the widespread viewing of HD through special type events such as boxing, wrestling, music and other arts programming. The theory being that once people see the images they will want to see more.

5. Work with manufacturers to develop a system that is universally transcodable, perhaps a data stream of some sort that isn't reliant on the vagaries of national self-interest. This would eliminate the need for the acceptance of a worldwide standard for HD.

HDTV Now Is Stalled

My reasoning for this is simple. The quest for a single standard for HD has run into a brick wall.

The national self-interest of a number of countries competing to develop the de facto standard for HD has already led to the same type of situation that exists with the current competing broadcasting systems — NTSC, PAL, PAL-M and SECAM.

In the long run it would be better to adopt a system that is not dependent

on frequency or bandwidth limits.

As mentioned earlier, these criteria became obvious to me in the course of my research into the HD medium. Little did I expect that someone would realize the theatre concept for HD so soon. David Niles, whose name has appeared in this column before, related some interesting information.

In the September 90 issue of *BT*, (in Daphne Lavers' report on HDTV 90, the HDTV Colloquium held in Ottawa) Niles announced he had reopened the Ed Sullivan Studio Theatre in New York. It was to be the first in a chain of theatres that would be linked together to display HD software — HD programs, interactive children's programming, musical concerts, Broadway and off-Broadway productions.

Niles, of 1125 Productions and Captain of America, also was quoted as saying that he didn't see HD as a broadcast medium for the simple reason that broadcasters didn't want it.

He also re-iterated that HD would be software driven; programs and content, not the technology, will be the engine that drove this new mode of expression.

HD Not Dead Yet

There has been a great deal of pessimism expressed about the future of HD imaging as an entertainment medium, namely because of the high costs of production, acquisition and distribution. There are certainly points to be made for these issues.

But I firmly believe that, if enterprising and visionary people continue to forge ahead many, if not all, of the goals set out for HD imaging will be realised. Namely, superior picture quality, a totally transparent transmission medium (a worldwide standard?) and widespread diffusion of the hardware and the software.

Theatre television, in its new form, could very well be the driving force that will lead to the realisation of these laudable goals.

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