

# Hoyts Expansion Continues With Interstate Acquisition

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finalized late last week by HCC head Bud Rykin, international theater operations head John Rochester and corp.'s chief operating officer Paul Johnson, is the largest yet for Hoyts in the U.S. It includes 25 screens held in partnership with General Cinema and sees screens spread across 42 locations in the Northeast, where Hoyts has decided to focus its activities.

With further plans for expansion via acquisition and development — company, for example, has an association with Pyramid Shopping Centers for construction of multiplexes in selected future shopping malls — screen count is projected at 469 by end 1989, 600 by the end of that year, making the company the sixth largest U.S. exhib based on current rankings. Hoyts currently enjoys 15th ranking sans the interstate screens.

With the latest acquisition, it's estimated more than \$100,000,000 has been invested in the U.S. operation to date. U.S. box office revenue, however, is expected to approach \$75,000,000 per year from the next fiscal year onward, per corporate development and finance exec director Peter Ivany, who also heads up the Corp.'s global theater operation.

**Debt Financing**  
U.S. expansion is being financed via debt funding, to date arranged with a major Aussie bank, but negotiations are underway for U.S. backing too, he reports.

U.S. expansion is part of massive, strategic growth Hoyts has undergone over the past few years, growth that now applies to all fronts of the group's operation and underlies the company's desire to become a global entertainment conglomerate.

## ADS STRESS OSCARS

### Col 'Disappointed' At 'Emperor' B.O.

By RICHARD GOLD

New York, April 18 — When mid-week boxoffice surged dramatically for Bernardo Bertolucci's "The Last Emperor" following its nine-Oscar triumph last week, it appeared that the controversial history of the film's handling by Columbia Pictures had been superseded by success.

With the cheers from the Shrine still fresh, the Colpix publicity machine moved swiftly to spread the message in the trade and consumer press that the administration of Columbia Pictures Entertainment supremo Victor Kaufman and Col proxy Dawn Steel was committed to bolstering a prosperous post-Oscar box office reign for the made-in-China epic brought to the studio by its cashed-in former chairman, David Putnam.

But notwithstanding an all-out multimillion-dollar advertising blitz and the near doubling of the picture's domestic screens last weekend, the April 15-17 boxoffice take of \$3,098,662 for "The Last Emperor" left Columbia's president of domestic distribution, James R. Spitz, "fairly disappointed," he says today.

Weekend gross for the pic aver-

aged out to \$3853 per screen on 882 screens, an overall increase of more than 320% from the prior week, Spitz said, but clearly below Col's projection of \$4500-5000 per screen.

During an interview at Columbia's Gotham offices, Spitz and Col marketing prez Dan Michel zeroed in on one overriding factor in their dashed expectations for "Emperor's" first post-Oscar weekend: the six are mixing this foreign epic.

"The film plays very well in major markets," Spitz said, "but in the smaller markets the urgency to see the picture is just not there — even with the panache and cachet of nine Academy Awards."

Without saying so specifically, the two execs indicated that the failure of Main Street U.S.A. to line up around the block for "The Last Emperor" might be related to its relatively obscure subject — the life and downwardly mobile times of imperial China's last monarch, P'u Yi — and the low profile of his film director Bertolucci in the biosphere, compared to his standing with big-city filmgoers who are familiar with his previous efforts, such as "Last Tango in Paris" and "1900."

Spitz and Michel downplayed the absence of marquee stars in contributing to the so-so reception accorded "Emperor" in secondary markets. "If this picture had starred Clint Eastwood and Meryl Streep, it would have had no effect on the boxoffice," Spitz wryly remarked.

Columbia opted to take a "short cut" around the possibility of educating middle-America about Bertolucci's career, by putting all its promotional marbles on a marketing campaign tied to the picture's dominance of Oscar night, Michel said.

Highlights of Col's media push behind "Emperor" last week were "roadblocked" spots April 12 on the evening newscasts of the three major network local affiliates in Los Angeles and New York; three-way roadblocked national network spots tripled up in primetime April 14 and prominent major market newspaper spreads April 12, 13 and 16. Michel estimates that "60-70% of our target audience" was reached by Col's see-the-Emperor message.

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## OBITUARIES

### Martin Schafer

New York, April 18 — Martin Schafer, 44, a leading West German cinematographer, died April 6 of an undisclosed cause.

Schafer's career as a director of photography began with Rudolph Thome's 1972 black & white film "Freunde Stadt" (Strange City), after working as Robby Muller's assistant on Wim Wenders' first feature "The Gnostic Anxiety At The Penalty Kick" in 1971.

He assisted Muller on many subsequent Wenders films, including "The Scarlet Letter," "Wrong Move," "Kings Of The Road,"

"The American Friend" and assisted Ed Lachman on Wenders and Nicholas Ray's 1979 feature "Lightning Over Water," in which Schafer also appeared on screen.

As chief cinematographer, he racked up many credits in recent years, co-photographing the 1978 documentary "What I Am (Is My Film): A Portrait Of Werner Herzog," Peter Przygodda's docu "Born As A Diesel," three films for Chris Pent, "Radio On," "An Unsuitable Job For A Woman" (in collaboration) and "Flight To Berlin," and Thome's "Berlin Chamsisoplatz."

He also lensed "The Subjective Factor," a project "The World Of Gilbert And George," "Thome's "System Without Shadow," "Nothing Left To Lose," "Thousand Eyes," "Love Is Where The Trouble Begins," a segment of the 1984 portmanteau film "Paris Vu Par... 20 Ans Apres," and docu "Chekhov In My Life" (by Vadim Glowna) and "A Gathering Of Spirits."

His latest credits include "Strawberry Fields," Mark Rappaport's "Chain Letters," Thome's "Tart," Glowna's "The Devils' Paradise," Donuzik Graf's "The Cat" and Thome's just-completed "The Microscope."

Survived by his wife, Laurence Givronn, a French filmmaker and journalist.

### Eva Novak

Eva Novak, 90, silent screen actress, died Sunday of pneumonia at the Motion Picture & Television Country Hospital in Woodland Hills.

Novak followed her older sister, Jane, already an established actress for Hal Roach, out to Hollywood from St. Louis shortly after the end of World War I. She initially found work as a bathing beauty and playing slapstick comedy for Mack Sennett.

She then was Tom Mix' leading lady in about 10 of the Western star's popular outings, including "Sky High" and "Trailin'," and subsequently played opposite William S. Hart in three Westerns.

In 1921, she married assistant director and stuntman William Reed. One of Novak's distinctions throughout her career was that she performed all of her own stunts.

In the late 1920s, she and her husband went to Australia, where they made a series of Australian "Westerns," including "For The Term Of His Natural Life," which was rereleased in its country of origin two years ago.

In the mid-1930s, they returned to Hollywood, where Novak appeared opposite Jack Benny in the comedian's first starring vehicle. She later played supporting roles in several pictures by her brother-in-law, director Alfred E. Green, was seen in "The Wild Seed," and did cameos for her friend, John Ford, in "Stagecoach," "She Wore A Yellow Ribbon" and "Fort Apache."

She also appeared as a nun in "The Bells Of St. Mary's" and had a recurring role on "The Ann Southern Show."

She is survived by her sister, who is 93, two daughters, 10 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren.

## Status Of AEG's Vision Unclear

Atlantic Entertainment Group held a number of offers Monday for its Vision Pictures specialty arm, and the company is "not eliminating any options," said president Tom Coleman.

But the eight-month-old in-house production unit was operating as usual as part of AEG Monday after a deal with a New York group led by Jamie Rose fell through.

"[The Vision] really never went on the selling block," Coleman said Monday. "This group approached us, and it evolved into a situation where we were going to sell them Vision Pictures. They would have owned and operated it, but all pictures would have been distributed by Atlantic."

## New York Box-Office

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"Beetlejuice" handling jumped \$670,000 in third week at 104 outlets after \$1,091,483 in 99 last week.

"Biloxi Blues" marching toward crewcut \$365,000 in fourth at 87 bunkers after third week at 90 aimed at \$385,108.

"Bright Lights, Big City" urban \$325,000 in third sojourn at 61 abodes after \$503,519 in 84 before.

"The Seventh Sign" demonstrating cunning \$300,000 in its third at 55 mansions after second at 88 got \$430,450.

"Stand And Deliver" educational \$170,000 in fifth at 19 rooms after fourth semester at 27 earned \$170,110.

"The Milagro Beanfield War" hoing well developed \$125,000 in third week at 17 ranches, after second week at 22 yielded \$163,620.

"Good Morning, Vietnam" spinning tuncful \$85,000 in 26 booths, 14th week following \$135,438 in 41 before.

"A New Life" greying in fourth week with \$75,000 at 12 apartments after \$313,379 in 42 in the third.

"Police Academy 5: Assignment Miami Beach" fifth week down to 14 screens and corrupt \$35,000 after \$95,948 in 39 in the fourth.

"Masquerade" blanching \$27,000 in fifth frame at six manes after fourth at 30 did \$141,346.

Odds and ends on exclusive scene: "Bethman And True" tite \$8300 in third and last at Carnegie Hall Cinema after \$12,164. "Night Zoo" tame \$5600 (third week) after \$9291 at Cinema II. and "Subway To The Stars" dark \$3300 in fourth at Lincoln Plaza after \$5067 before.

"The Fox And The Hound" closed third reissue week with \$246,885 in four rounds, and "D.O.A." buried its fourth frame at 30 houses with \$64,808.

A private memorial mass will be held tomorrow, followed by burial at San Fernando Mission Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations are suggested to the Motion Picture & Television Fund.

## Kanzaburo Nakamura

Tokyo, April 18 (AP) — Kanzaburo Nakamura, a leading kabuki actor and recipient of cultural awards from the government, died of a heart attack April 17. He was 78.

Nakamura, whose real name was Seiji Namino, was active in promoting kabuki overseas and led a troupe of actors to New York in 1960 during the theater's U.S. debut. He also had performed in Europe.

Nakamura is survived by his wife and three children.

## Bendat Joins Network Media

Network Media (America) Inc., parent of Syndicast Services, a syndicator, and Network Media Sales, a barrier sales operation, has reached Down Under for its new chief operating officer.

Paul Bendat, manager of planning and development for Channel 10 Perth, Australia, has been named not only COO for Network Media (America) Inc., but also chief exec officer of Syndicast Services and Network Media Sales. He'll report to Geoffrey Talbot, chief exec officer, Network Media (America), and relocate to New York City.

Last week Network Media Sales acquired Crestwood Communication and during the upcoming 1988-89 season figures to handle barrier sales for as many as six first-run series in syndication (Daily Variety, April 15).

## U's 'Big Country' Moves 'Outdoors'

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and John Candy as brothers-in-law whose rivalry sets the stage for a series of misadventures during a family vacation at a lakeside resort.

Directed by Howard Deutch, film was scripted by John Hughes, who will be executive producer for the June 24 opener.

"Fox" "Big" tells the story of a 12-year-old who grows up overnight and wakes up as a 35-year-old man (played by Tom Hanks).

Pic also stars Elizabeth Perkins, Penny Marshall directs the James F. Brooks-Robert Greenhut production, which opens June 3.

## Fox Boosts Bassman To Sound Director

Don Bassman has been promoted to director of 20th Fox Film's sound department.

A 32-year veteran of the studio's sound department, Bassman has been a production sound mixer, winning an Academy Award for his work on "Patton" and an Emmy for "Eleanor And Franklin."

## JESSE LASKY, JR.

September 19, 1910 - April 11, 1988

