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Along with more serious information about these films the report provides some light relief in the form of such diverting trivia as the fact that *Strictly Ballroom* bombed in Blackpool, the heartland of ballroom dancing.

Much of the financial information is in the form of estimates by Reid herself, because of what she accurately describes as 'a long tradition of non-disclosure of financial information in the Australian film industry' (though she acknowledges that those interviewed for this report were more generous with information than is usual). Normally, the players justify this reticence on grounds ranging from the need for commercial confidentiality to the possibility of jeopardising future sales: everyone blames everyone else. Reid believes that the industry as a whole would benefit from the availability of more information, but concedes that this would be hard to achieve. Without it, she thinks the industry 'cannot consider itself sophisticated in the business of film'.

In the final section of this report, Reid draws out the features common to the three films studied which may provide some pointers to success. One thing they all have in common is that they were all made by first time directors who wrote or co-wrote the script, leading to the possible 'bizarre conclusion that inexperience is an asset'!

The main quibbles CU has about this report are the lack of an index - hard to justify in these days of computerised indexing - and the appearance of the dreaded *it's* - as in 'It's video sales...were slightly better' (p.26), and in too many other places. □

History Nearly Repeats Itself

There were resonances of earlier times in the announcement that the Packer-Murdoch-Telecom consortium had instigated Federal Court action against the ABA seeking to have the allocation of the A and B satellite licences declared invalid.

The action, based on a claim that the two licensees engaged in misleading and deceptive conduct, would almost certainly have further delayed the advent of satellite-delivered pay TV, to the ultimate benefit of the major players who missed out on obtaining one of the initial licences.

In the event, the networks and Telecom dropped the action. There were reports of differences between the players themselves and that the Minister had expressed displeasure and surprise at the role of Telecom.

On the face of it, this outcome is a victory for commonsense and reason, and may signal a less confrontational approach by the networks than has been the case in the past. It presents an encouraging contrast with an event within recent memory (which would rule out many of the current Canberra press gallery!): the successful attempt to postpone the advent of a third commercial television service in Perth.

The Perth inquiry dragged on for nearly four years and its costs to all parties and the Australian taxpayer were estimated at many millions of dollars.

The incumbent licensees, TVW and Swan, were strongly opposed to the third licence from the outset. Hearings began at the end of 1984 and dragged on intermittently until 1986, with over 13,000 pages of transcript. The major contributing factor to the delay was the total of 16 different actions brought in the Federal Court by the incumbent licensees against the then regulator, the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, and in one case,

against the Minister (then Michael Duffy) himself.

Of course, the labyrinthine complexities of the old Broadcasting Act were of great assistance to the opposing parties in Perth in mounting their many actions on matters of detail. Had the PMT action proceeded, the court would have been dealing with completely new broadcasting legislation. It would have been an interesting test of the new Act, which has already been shown to have its weak points.

In the end, though, the effect would probably have been much the same: a great deal of money in the pockets of top barristers, a considerable setback for less cashed up parties, and further delay in the introduction of satellite pay TV. □

OK - The interview goes to the highest bidder - photo opportunities to the rest of you!

