



## Eurovision — All change!

# EBU

The last day of August 1993 was a red-letter day for Eurovision. As planned, it was during the night of 31st August to 1st September, soon after midnight, that the new Eurovision Control Centre in Geneva (EVC-G to those in the know) took over from the Brussels centre the task of managing the daily distribution of news exchanges (EVN) and other transmissions. The historic dispersion of Eurovision's activities between three buildings in two countries came to an end. The paint was scarcely dry, but the machine began to turn. EBU Technical Review proposes to take you on a guided tour of the EVC-G, housed in a brand-new building just across the car-park from the smoked glass building which has been the EBU's home for the past 15 years.

Down a few steps, through the front door, and here we are at the centre of operations of the EVC-G.

▼ Centre of attraction – the CICT control desk



Focal point of the International Technical Coordination Centre (CICT), the monitor wall brings colour and action to an area otherwise designed, through soft lighting, damped acoustics and elegant styling, to relieve the stress of a job demanding attention, decision and prompt timing. This is where the provision of the international links required by the Members of the Union is coordinated. To one side



◀ The One Man Control (OMC) position



Bays of telecoms, video and audio equipment ▶



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there is the International Programme Coordination Centre (CICP), which keeps permanently in contact with the programme conference network and serves as the interface between the CICT and the Member-broadcasters so that last-minute requirements can be dealt with. On the other side of the CICT, the one-man control (OMC) position has everything needed to allow a single operator to drive the CICT in off-peak periods. Behind the monitor wall, out of sight to passers-by, the equipment room with its bays of high-tech routing, switching and monitoring apparatus. Other facilities include an editing and recording room and an area reserved for future HDTV transmissions.

On the same floor as the EVC-G, the "Programmes" and "News" coordinators' offices. This is where the requirements of the Members' editorial offices are collated, whether it be for news, sport or general programming. The "News" is for television what the stock exchange is to the world of finance and it functions under the watchful eye of a news coordinator nominated by a Member-broadcaster for a ten-day period. The basic tools for this job: a four-wire telephone news coordination conference network, the NCC, on which Members "trade" their offers and demands for material for inclusion in the day's newscasts, together with BASYS newsroom support terminals and VSAT satellite data links. Once the programming orders have been placed, the action moves to the next area: transmission planning.



▲ Video recording area

The main contract for the EVC-G was awarded to the **AAVS** company of Paris.

The principal sub-contractors were: **Barco, Drake and Sandar.**

Here, the team of technicians – the "planners" – are as familiar with the Eurovision network (thousands of kilometres of terrestrial links and four satellite feeds currently carrying six composite television channels) as they are with the palm of their hand. They organize the routing not only of request transmissions passed via the programme coordinators, but also of transmissions requested directly by the Members, all of which will be set up as physical links by their CICT colleagues a few hours later. For this task, the planners rely above all on their experience, although a specially-designed software tool, the TPP (transmission planning procedures) will certainly help, too. First step: the synopsis which lists the timing and routing. The corresponding circuit bookings and switching instructions are then sent automatically via the Telex Service's Cray-Case Beeline system to all the Members and telecoms services involved. In the background the entire operation is very carefully recorded to allow bills and statistics to be prepared. And all that without even taking the lift.

(Photos : Piraud & Grivel)



▶ Telex room



◀ Planning

