



# AUDIO ENGINEERING SOCIETY, INC. SAN FRANCISCO SECTION

JANUARY 1999

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## Group hopes to unify recordable DVD factions

A group of 29 manufacturers have announced a plan to forge a common format for digital video disks that they hope will eliminate the competing approaches to rewritable DVD. Word of the effort came last week as consumer-electronics companies announced plans at the Consumer Electronics Show for additional recordable disk-based options that could further splinter a market struggling to coalesce.

The Optical Storage Technology Association (OSTA) has organized a group of companies that will meet in South San Francisco this week to define a single disk format, readable by any DVD player or recorder, by the end of the year. But even participants in the effort expressed mixed feelings about whether consumers will embrace the many products already out or in the works.

In a move that surprised even DVD+RW development partner Sony and Philips announced at CES that they will launch a stand-alone rewritable-videodisk recorder next year. The drive will use a new Philips algorithm to read the video format of today's prerecorded DVD disks, thus allowing playback of the rewritable disks on any regular DVD player. The system will be based on the company's 4.7-Gbyte DVD+RW format. The drive will use real-time MPEG-2 variable-bit-rate recording to accommodate disks that provide 2 or 4 hours of video. The recordable disks will not have to be housed in a cartridge, as some schemes require. Philips said its new recordable drive marks a technology breakthrough because it allows the video recorder to use the same video format defined for prerecorded DVDs.

Separately, a working group within the DVD Forum is discussing a new Real Time Read/Write video recording format, presumably for DVD-RAM. The OSTA has set a more ambitious goal: to create a world of compatible disks for any DVD player by developing what could be called Son of MultiRead. When various incompatible rewritable technologies for CDs emerged a few years ago, OSTA members created the widely used MultiRead specification to allow any CD disk to be read on any type of drive.

Currently, two rewritable technologies are

nose-to-nose in the bid to dominate the nascent market: DVD-RAM, backed by Hitachi and Matsushita, and DVD+RW, developed by Sony and Philips. Pioneer, with its DVD-R technology, has made some headway in professional recording markets. A spokesman for that group was noncommittal about OSTA's potential for success. "The DVD Forum has not received any OSTA proposal officially, so it has not been on the DVD Forum's agenda yet," he said. The spokesman said that "establishing a multiread capability among various DVD formats was the DVD Forum's original target" but observed that it is "not pleasant to discuss DVD-RAM and Sony/Philips's DVD+RW at the same table."

Set to slug it out over the next 12 months are the second-generation, 4.7-Gbyte DVD-RAM; DVD-R/W, a 4.7-Gbyte technology promulgated by Pioneer; NEC's 5.2-Gbyte Multimedia Video File disk system; and Philips' planned 4.7-Gbyte DVD+RW offering. Sony is also working on DVD+RW but has yet to move in lockstep with Philips on a rewritable videodisk recorder. Sony believes rewritable video recording would require "at least an 8-Gbyte capacity or possibly use of blue laser." The issue that concerns Sony most is the picture quality of the recorded images. Matsushita reportedly has been working on DVD-RAM products that may be incorporated into TVs. Hitachi has set a fall launch target for a DVD camcorder based on an 8 cm diameter DVD-RAM disk format. Asked last week when DVD-RAM-based video recording might reach the market, a Matsushita spokesman conservatively responded, "Within the next five years."

Thomson Electronics, said last week that the company is "currently evaluating" NEC's 5.2-Gbyte Multimedia Video File (MMVF) disk system. Thomson has yet to reach a decision but will likely do so in the first half of this year. (NEC is one of the four companies that signed agreements last month to purchase 7.5 percent equity positions in Thomson Consumer Electronics. The others are Alcatel, DirecTV and Microsoft.) Multimedia Video File specifications resemble those for DVD disks, although the two are not compatible. The 5.2-Gbyte density is largely attributable to the use of partial-response, maximum-likelihood (PRML) signal-processing technology, which makes it possible to record in narrower-pitch tracks.

MEETING NOTICE!

AUDIO ENGINEERING SOCIETY, INC.

SAN FRANCISCO SECTION

60 EAST 42ND STREET, ROOM 2520

NEW YORK, NY 10165-2520

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



# JANUARY MEETING



## **Joint AES/SMPTE Meeting**

**Subject:** ..... Bay Area Broadcast DTV and HDTV:  
Are We There Yet?

**Speaker:** ..... Roy Trumbull - KRON, Will Washington - KPIX,  
Bill Zou - General Instrument

**Place:** ..... KPIX-TV, North Studio, 855 Battery St., San Francisco

**Time and Date:** ..... January 28, 7:30 PM (refreshments at 7:00 PM)

For the first time since the national launch of HDTV/DTV in November 1998, an inside look at digital developments at San Francisco stations will be given. Details about how the technology works will be discussed.

Bill Zou of General Instrument will explain the heart of the (H)DTV process, the encode/decode system. The digital signal will be described, as it leaves the network, makes its way to and through the local affiliate's plant, and gets to the home DTV decoder. For the first time in history, video and audio signals reaching consumer TV sets will theoretically suffer no degradation after leaving the originating studio.

Roy Trumbull will discuss both the dark and light sides of how KRON is getting their digital signal into Bay Area living rooms. Will Washington from KPIX will share some of their experiences, both similar and different to KRON's.

People from several of the other TV Stations will participate in the Question & Answer portion of the meeting. The event will end with a General Instrument equipment demo, and a tour of KPIX's digital broadcast installation.

## Directions

**From the South Bay,** Take 101 north, take I-80 exit towards the Bay Bridge, take the Fourth St. exit towards Embarcadero. Merge onto Bryant St., turn left onto 3rd St., 3rd St. becomes Kearney St., turn right onto Bush St., turn left onto Sansome St., turn Right onto Vallejo St., turn right onto Battery St.

## **From East Bay**

Take 80 west to the Bay Bridge, After the bridge take the Fremont St. exit, turn left onto Fremont St. Fremont St. becomes Front St., turn left onto Pine St., turn right onto Sansome St. Turn right onto Vallejo St., turn right onto Battery St.

# COMING EVENTS

Jan 13 - 15  
Live Sound Workshop  
Anaheim, CA

Jan 28 - 31  
Winter NAMM  
Los Angeles, CA

Feb 17 - 21  
Gavin Seminar  
New Orleans, LA

# JOB BOARD

## **USB Audio Applications Engineer for North America**

Philips Semiconductors, one of the worlds leading supplier of USB Audio Solutions is looking for a USB Audio Applications Engineer to support the North American Market. The USB Audio Apps Engineer is responsible for first and second line customer support of existing products, application notes and development of demonstration material. Further responsibilities include training of the Field Application Engineers and the Sales Force.

Based in Sunnyvale, CA the USB Audio Apps Engineer will be part of a young team that works on innovative and cutting edge Audio systems and solutions for the PC as well as the consumer market. A competitive compensation package and a fun work environment await a motivated professional. A B.S. degree in Electrical Engineering or better, good Audio systems know-how and 3-5 years of related experience are desired. Philips is an equal opportunity employer.

For more information please contact Jim Wright at (408) 991-2334.

Additional job openings are posted on the AES web page.

## **SAN FRANCISCO SECTION**

<b>CHAIRPERSON</b>	<b>RON KNAPP</b> 408-487-3215 RKNAPP@SRSLABS.COM
<b>VICE CHAIRPERSON</b>	<b>BRANDON PROCTOR</b> 415-826-9195
<b>TREASURER</b>	<b>ANNEMARIE STAEPELAERE</b> 650-328-8338
<b>SECRETARY</b>	<b>BRIAN CHENEY</b> 510-222-4276
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## **AUDIO ENGINEERING SOCIETY, INC.**

**INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS**  
60 EAST 42ND STREET, ROOM 2520  
NEW YORK, NY 10165-2520  
TEL. 212-661-8528  
FAX 212-682-0477  
HTTP://WWW.AES.ORG

**SAN FRANCISCO SECTION**  
3429 MORNINGSIDE DRIVE  
EL SOBRANTE, CA 94803  
TEL. 510-222-4276  
FAX 510-232-3837  
HTTP://REALITY.SGI.COM/CSP/AESSF

SECTION NEWSLETTER  
BILL ORNER  
TEL 650-903-0301  
FAX 650-903-0409  
EMAIL BILL.ORNOR@IEEE.ORG