

BY BILL LEE

TURNING UP THE MUSIC

THERE'S no doubt that television has revolutionised the music industry. The advent of the music video over two decades ago resuscitated lagging sales, while simultaneously creating a new genre in cable television.

Since then, we've seen a host of music channels emerge, with the grandfather of them all, MTV, successfully spinning off a number of related channels. But music television has been going through something of an identity crisis in recent years, which has resulted in less music for viewers - and fewer benefits for record companies.

THIS SITUATION has come about gradually and the reasons for it are easy to understand: in order to prevent viewers for channel surfing and thereby bolster ratings, music channels sought to create "appointment viewing". To achieve this, they began adding reality shows, original series, movies and award shows to their schedules. While some of this programming features music stars or is music-themed in some way, much of it is unrelated to music. Meanwhile, the actual music videos upon which these channels were founded have become increasingly rare sights.

So has the strategy worked? Yes and no. Some incredible franchises have been created, such as VH1's super-successful *Behind The Music* and MTV's *The Real World*. But the market is also littered with numerous failures that have left audiences wondering what happened to the "music" in "music television".

So when we came up with the idea for the Soundtrack Channel (STC), we wanted to give viewers back what they came to music television for in the first place: music videos. And we wanted to couple these with the most successful programming genre on cable today: movies.

WHAT WE have learned at STC is that, in today's multi-channel universe and tough economic environment, cable channels in general need to offer more to operators than a strong programming concept. The inevitable question is: "What can this network do for my bottom line?" The answer, in STC's case, is that we were created to be

an ideal environment for promoting current services, such as pay-per-view movies and concerts. And STC is also a great environment for promoting future technology, such as interactive-TV or VOD services.

And so while music television isn't what is used to be, it might very well be evolving into something better. I believe that, by mixing new technology with the lessons we've learned from 20 years of experience, it is possible to create music television for the 21st century and beyond.

**BILL LEE IS FOUNDER AND
PRESIDENT OF THE SOUNDTRACK
CHANNEL.**

SOUND BENEFITS

STUDIOS spend millions on marketing their films, and aspire to the highest production values when it comes to creating movie music videos. With the Soundtrack Channel (STC) the promotional benefit to both the studios and the record companies is extended. We provide both with a marketing solution for their soundtrack category, which historically has not been supported beyond the initial release of a feature film. In addition, STC can be localised in each market to support that territory's own film, television and record industries.

