

Robert Hopkins Comments

Operation Digital — Going Live

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Program material in digital form is everywhere. Hollywood has been making digital master tapes for several years, whether the program is a movie or a TV show. What is not available is digital program material in HD, or in 16:9 standard definition.

Sony Pictures has mastered more than 350 movies in digital HD. Other studios have started mastering in digital HD — I suspect they have more than 100 titles in HD. Sony Pictures has more titles because they started sooner. A conscious decision was made in 1995 to begin mastering only in HD.

Columbia Tristar MOWs have been mastered in HD for two or three years. They are down converted to SD for delivery to the networks. MGM is posting their MOWs in HD.

Columbia Tristar TV has been doing post production of most, if not all, of their TV shows in the 16:9 format this year. They began with “The Nanny” about three years ago, and it has spread to most of the shows now. They generally take the center 4:3 portion for delivery to the network.

Why are we not doing the TV shows in HD? You have not asked us to do it!

We all expect the cost to be a bit higher, partly because the HD equipment is more expensive. And, Hollywood already has the equipment to do 4:3 standard definition TV. For HD we have to go out and buy new equipment, whether it is the same price, or more expensive.

You, the broadcasters, have to step up to the plate and say, “I want my digital HDTV!” Guess what? You will get it. And fast.