



2

■ the budget for the lighting equipment in a typical television studio of 1,000 square meters is 3 million francs

range makes up the largest part of our business in sales of lights for television studios," says Hocquard, who has successfully moved his company into the growing field of television studio lighting.

In the past few years, French television has been enjoying a period of both great change and rapid expansion. Of the three original French channels, TF1 is now private, or no longer under government control, like Antenne 2 and FR3. Two additional private channels, La 5 and La 6, now broadcast, and La Sept, the French cultural channel, which has been broadcasting in limited time slots on FR3 will begin full-time broadcasting via satellite as of May 89. All of this activity means a voracious appetite for new programming, and while American imports are popular fare, there is increasing pressure to produce more home-grown product. Dimaphot, in the right place at the right time, was ready to effectively offer its services to the growing French television industry, ready with both high-quality lighting equipment for sale and an engineering and installation department, which offered technical and consulting services for new studios. "We offered one-stop shopping," says Hocquard, "and could supply everything from A to Z for the lighting side of a television studio."

In 1988, the studio lighting end of Dimaphot's business accounted for more than one-third of their activities, leading Dimaphot to set up a subsidiary company, D. Studios, to specialise exclusively in studio lighting. D. Studios began operation as a separate entity in October 88, taking over the sales, engineering and installation services that Dimaphot offered to television studios. "The business is very competitive," comments Hocquard, "and we set up D. Studios in order to more effectively deal with our clients."

While the company does not manufacture any actual lighting equipment, D. Studios does design made-to-order grids and support systems. The company customizes each studio to the customer's needs, and oversees the installation and future maintenance of the equipment purchased. Under the direction of Guy Payelle, D. Studios has become one of the leaders in the field of television lighting in France.

Payelle came to Dimaphot in 1985 to head its television lighting division. Prior to joining Dimaphot, Payelle worked for 17 years at Mole-Richardson France, where for eight years he was a gaffer in television and film studios. He then moved on to head Mole-Richardson's sales department, selling their products to rental houses. In addition to Payelle, D. Studios has a full-time staff of nine, including a studio designer, an engineer, a research team, and several technicians.

"There is a big market for our services right now," says Payelle, "and of the twenty or so studios built in France last year, D. Studios designed ten of them." The budget for the lighting in these studios ranges from 200,000 francs (UK £19,000, US \$33,000) to 3 million francs (UK £285,000, US \$500,000), according to the size of the installation. For its efforts D. Studios grossed 8 to 9 million francs (UK £.75 million, US \$1.3 million) last year. "There is only an 8-10% profit margin in this figure," he claims, "as there is a great deal of competition and prices are low. The market is very complicated." In other words, the budget for the lighting equipment in a typical television studio of 1,000 square meters is 3 million francs (UK £285,000, US \$500,000), for which Dimaphot sees a profit of 50,000 francs (UK £4,900, US \$8,500). "There is only an 8% profit on many products," explains Hocquard, "and the television market is very small here. We still buy most of our television programs from the United States."

Two of the most recent studios designed and outfitted by D. Studios are those of A.B. Productions, located at the northern edge of Paris in re-converted industrial buildings. The larger of these two, which measures 1,000 square meters and whose lighting equipment cost 3 million francs (UK £285,000, US \$500,000), is used to film *Dorothée*. This popular children's program on TF1 is often broadcast live, and with a studio audience. The smaller studio of 500 square meters will be used for a series based on stories by the French writer, La Comtesse de Segure.

These studios are far from the dark ages, and are equipped with DeSisti lights and Strand control boards. The lighting systems for these studios were designed by D. Studios in concert with A.B. Production's chief electrician, Patrick Le Ny, and their director of photography, Serge Husum. "We only put six circuits on each light bridge in the larger of the two studios, when I really wanted nine," comments Le Ny. "Now we have to go back and add the other three circuits and buy additional spots." The smaller studio is well-equipped and better," he says, "because the bridges here are mobile, moving up and down as need be." Le Ny would also like to have moving lights in the studios, but those such as Vari*Lite are only available on a rental basis. "For the time being they are just too expensive," he says. "We were in competition with Strand Lighting for this job," explains Payelle, looking out from the control booth onto the studio floor. When D. Studios was awarded the contract, they found themselves in a delicate diplomatic position vis-a-vis Strand. "At present, we are not the exclusive French distributor for any one