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LOOKING AHEAD TO
1992

With the removal of trade barriers between the European countries in 1992, Jean-François Hocquard (3), president of Dimaphot, feels that more manufacturers will try to sell directly, without the middleman, or a distributor like Dimaphot. "There will be much more competition in the future," he says. "Companies will have to really be organized in order to stay competitive." Even with good prices and good service, Hocquard feels that the big distributors will have a hard time remaining competitive. "The profit margin is just not big enough," he says, "there may be a return to small Mom and Pop distributors with only one product. Real specialised

distribution—only gobos—only lamps. And prices will have to average out on a European level since people will be able to buy what they want where they want. Look, once the borders are open, you can drive to London to go shopping. With what you save on 20 rolls of gel alone, you can pay for your trip." Guy Payelle of D. Studios, a subsidiary of Dimaphot, disagrees. "The market may be different in the future, but lighting professionals won't take the time to drive to London," he says, "and while the frontiers may open, national mentalities will not change. And with the language problem, it will not be cost effective for other European companies to come here. Who knows, maybe it will work in the other direction and Dimaphot will go to other countries."

dimmer system. So when we were given the contract, and we needed dimmer systems we had to buy Strand systems. It created a somewhat awkward situation."

This situation will be rectified in the future when D. Studios becomes the exclusive French distributor for Varintens, a brand of dimmer controls which they will import from Switzerland. "These dimmers are now only available in Germany," according to Payelle. "When we bring them to France we can stop buying dimmer boards from our competition." The competition in this case was Eclalux, Strand Lighting's French distributor. D. Studio's other main competitor, L.T.M., owner of France's La Victorine Studios near Nice, is taking a less active role than they had in the past, in Payelle's estimation, leaving Dimaphot and Strand as the major players in the television lighting business. "Eclalux serves as Strand's distributor, but now Strand is here as well, selling directly," he explains, "making the situation more complex than ever."

While D. Studios concentrates on lighting for television studios, Dimaphot continues to sell lighting equipment to a wide range of clients including photography studios, and the rental houses, such as Transpalux and Multivolts, who supply film production companies. "Although there are 120 to 140 films made in France each year, there are very few studios," explains Payelle. "The films are shot mostly with exteriors, so there is not much of a market for film studio lighting." To stimulate the French lighting market, Hocquard feels that more schools are needed to give students a taste for the theatre and to train technicians. On this point Payelle agrees: "Because of a lack of technical knowledge, choices are often made on a subjective rather than objective basis."

Hocquard and Payelle are in agreement when it comes to pricing structures. Both would like to see a system where the prices were lower, and they weren't always giving discounts. "Take a roll of Rosco gel," explains Payelle. "The list price for a roll of Cinécolor is 650 francs (UK £62, US \$108) in France, and 380 francs (UK £36, US \$63) in England. But by the time we give the expected discount to our faithful customers, it ends up being cheaper to buy it here in France." As for customer loyalty, Hocquard feels that "clients are only loyal as long as you offer a good price for a good product, and with good service. After all, business is business."