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Autor: Meakin, Derek
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WORLD TV NETWORKS TO BACK NEW MONTREUX FESTIVAL

By DEREK MEAKIN

These are busier-than-ever days for bustling Raymond Jaussi, manager of the Montreux tourist office. For what was only a novel idea at the back of his mind twelve months ago has suddenly assumed tremendous proportions. It could, in fact, turn into the most popular series of international festivals ever held in Switzerland.

The opening next May of the first International Festival of Television Arts and Sciences could well do for Montreux what other forms of show business have done for Cannes and Venice — but on a much larger scale. Television is already the most powerful form of entertainment the world has ever known, and its appeal is still spreading to fantastic proportions.

Strangely enough, of all the countries that now enjoy a high standard of living, it is Switzerland itself that is the only one not riding on the crest of the TV wave. Whatever the reasons — the high cost of sets, reception difficulties caused by the mountainous nature of the country, or the restrictive pattern of the programmes themselves — it remains a fact that television is not making much headway in Switzerland.

The idea of an annual television festival could so easily have been launched by the United States, where there are more than 50 million viewers, Britain, where there are ten million, Germany, where there are more than three million, or France, where there are nearly two million.

All the more credit, then, to Mr. Jaussi for seizing the initiative and by his own personal effort ensuring that the honour should go to Switzerland.

Once the project was approved by the powerful European Broadcasting Union, which represents some of the world's top television networks, including the BBC and the independent television companies, the success of the Montreux festival was assured.

Only one country, in fact, tried to beat Switzerland to the post. This was tiny Monaco, which decided to mount its own television festival and sent out invitations to 57 countries. This, however, failed to win EBU support and consequently is looked upon as a purely commercial occasion.

For Montreux, organising an international festival on the scale now planned is going to be a very expensive affair. But there is little doubt that in the years to come it will prove to be worth every centime.

A principal feature of the festival will be a contest for the best television variety show. Entries will not, however, be restricted to programmes previously recorded on film or tape. The Swiss Television Service has decided to provide studio and outside broadcasting facilities in Montreux so that any networks who wish to present their entries live will be able to do so.

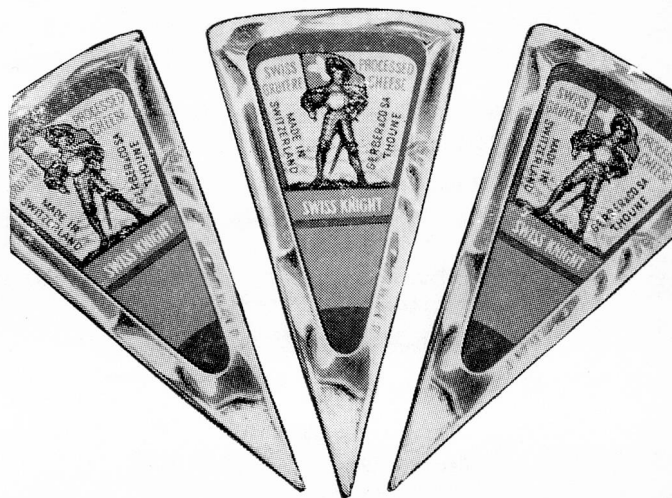
This unexpected development has already caused widespread interest. The first country to take advantage of it is Persia, which is to send a live show to Montreux. If the same thing is done by programme companies in Britain and America it would result in a flood of leading international TV stars travelling to Switzerland to compete for the coveted Golden Rose award and a cash prize of 10,000 Swiss francs (about £826).

The contest will be governed by rules laid down by the European Broadcasting Union, and there will be a seven-man panel of judges.

In addition to this competition there will be a trade fair displaying the very latest developments in television techniques. Firms in Britain and five other major manufacturing countries have already agreed to take space, and many thousands of pounds' worth of equipment will be on show.

There will also be a series of technical and scientific conferences attended by TV experts from all parts of the world, including executives of the Russian and East European TV networks who have been invited through the Prague-based International Organisation of Radio and Television — the Communist "Eurovision".

(*Helvetic News Service.*)



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