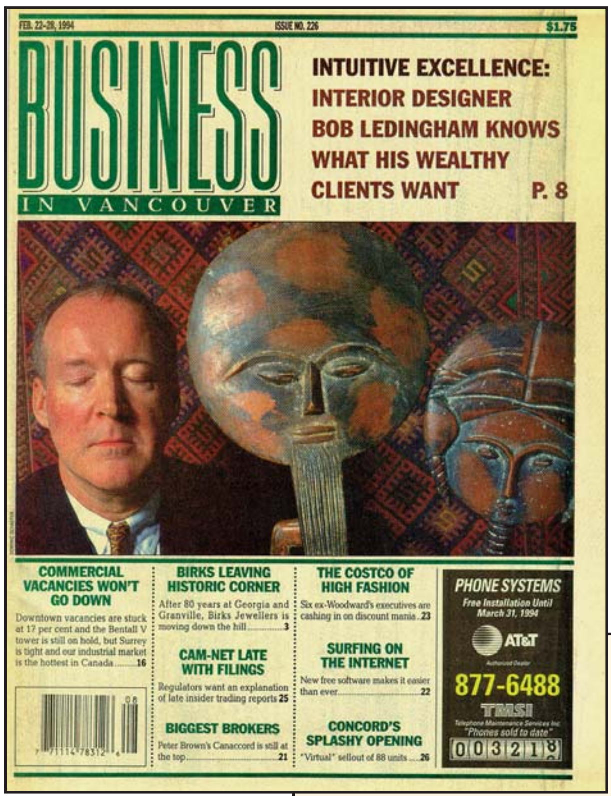

BUSINESS IN VANCOUVER
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Thomas Fung silent on plans for Chinese-language TV monopoly

BY IAN EDWARDS

The Vancouver entrepreneur best known for developing Richmond's **Aberdeen Centre** has committed $11.5 million to become Canada's Chinese-language television broadcasting mogul. But so far, **Thomas Fung** is keeping his plans for his new empire to himself.

Fung— with partners including huge Hong Kong television broadcaster **TVB International Limited** —has completed the acquisition of two Canadian television properties and one multilingual radio station in the past 17 months.

His **Fairchild Broadcasting Group** has bought **Talentvision** (formerly national pay-TV network **Chinavision Canada Corporation**) and **Fairchild Television** (formerly regional multilingual pay station **Cathay International Television Inc.**). Fung also owns 20 per cent of CJVB-AM, which presents Chinese programs through **Canadian Chinese Radio**.

The acquisitions give Fung a monopoly on commercial Chinese television broadcasting in Canada and a pipeline for the lucrative Chinese advertising market. In Vancouver alone, the growing Cantonese-speaking market is estimated at $1.4 billion annually. Average household income is $38,000 and one in four households report income in excess of $50,000.

Sonny Wong, president of **Hamazaki-Wong Advertising**, says the amalgamated ownership "makes the Asian media market really exciting" and predicts better national Chinese advertising campaigns, with greater reach and efficiency. However, he says, the changes are still too new for advertisers to adopt new Chinese marketing strategies. Nor is Fung shedding any light on the future of his outlets.

The amalgamation of Chinese TV ownership ends years of jurisdictional and program-supply tussles between the two outlets. The more-established Cathay TV had programs supplied by TVB, while Chinavision bought less popular Chinese programming from **ATV**, also of Hong Kong.

"A key benefit of Fairchild's proposal is the company's commitment to continue operating [Fairchild TV and Talentvision] as separate, complementary services," says **Canadian Radio-television & Telecommunications Commission** chair **Keith Spicer**. "Based on the evidence in front of the commission, it was clear that neither service was likely to survive under separate ownership with head-to-head competition in the key Vancouver market."

Common ownership of Fairchild TV and Talentvision allows rationalization of costs and resources. Over the long term, Fairchild has promised to increase service and Canadian content, and contribute to a program-development fund.

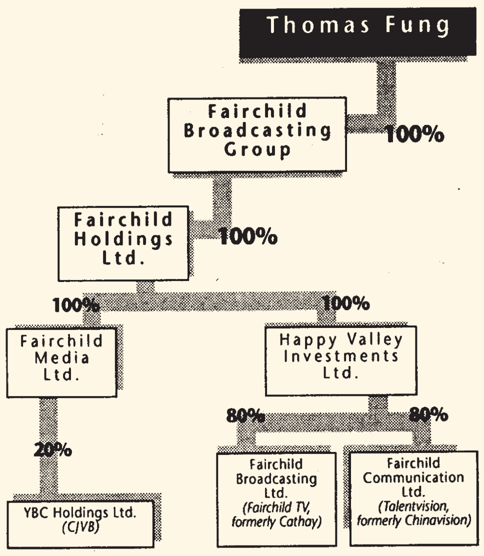
The only immediate change to service is that, in Vancouver, Fairchild TV (channel 45) becomes the national broadcaster, while Talentvision (channel 43) becomes the local broadcaster, says Fairchild's executive VP **Ken Kwan**. Both are available for a fee paid to local cable-TV carriers.

Chinavision (now Talentvision), which boasts 17,700 subscribers in Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton and Toronto, was bought by **Fairchild Communication Ltd.** on October 19 for $9.25 million. **Cathay** (now Fairchild TV) was purchased by **Fairchild Broadcasting Ltd.** on December 9, 1993 for $3.8 million.

In both cases, the Fairchild companies own 80 per cent while **Condor Entertainment B.V.**— owned by TVB and headquartered in The Netherlands —owns the balance.

On September 10, 1992, **Fairchild Media Ltd.** bought 20 per cent of radio station CJVB (operated by **YBC Holdings Ltd.**). Fung shares equal ownership with four other shareholders— **Wardley Canada Inc.**, real estate agents **Brian Hui** and **Steven Kwok**, and radio veteran **Jack Stark**.

The bill for the three properties totals $18.15 million, of which Fung is responsible for 63 per cent. Fung says his business background includes securities and banking in New York, advertising and film production, as well as commercial real-estate development.◆



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No word on what's in store for key intersection as Birks Jewellers leaves Georgia and Granville

BY JODIE HEAP

If anybody knows, nobody's saying what's likely to grace the intersection of West Georgia and Granville streets once longtime landmark retailer **Birks Jewellers** moves down the hill. Birks is relocating down the street to 698 West Hastings in **Novam Development Ltd.**'s restoration of the historic **Imperial Bank of Commerce** building. Built in the early part of the century, the former banking temple is being converted to a 35,000-square-foot retail centre. 20,000 square feet have reportedly been claimed by the jewellery chain.

But there's been no official word yet from Birks about the departure from its premises on the southeast corner of the intersection, at 710 Granville Street. The company has been doing business at that corner since 1913, and the Birks clock on the sidewalk has been a well-known meeting place for generations of Vancouverites.

Local urban-planning consultant **Phil Boname** One possibility he sees is to subdivide the lower level on the mall into smaller stores, and have a single tenant, possibly another jewellery store, at street-level.

Bruce Campbell, who chairs the **Downtown Vancouver Association**'s subcommittee on Granville Street, thinks VCDL should keep in mind the surrounding residential development in the Downtown South and **Concord Pacific Developments Ltd.**'s project on False Creek North.

"The 700 and 800 blocks of Granville Street have to have businesses that draw people out of the condos at Concord [Pacific Place] into Granville Street. This is an extremely crucial period for Granville Street."

"Birks' departure is a bad sign in the sense that they've decided this is not a good location," admits Campbell.

"It's a big loss from historical and business standpoints," adds Boname. "Birks is the major landmark of that intersection."

Boname feels that the pedestrian-only con on the mall was one of two factors contributi its current plight. The other factor is somet that he admits being involved in— the deve ment of **Pacific Centre** shopping mall, which pedestrian traffic off the street.

Granville Mall has not been ignored by city, which is looking at ways to revitalize it. S tions being examined include offering incen to developers to build projects there and to p erty owners to upgrade their buildings; and li the moratorium on liquor licences in the 800 900 blocks to encourage the developme entertainment establishments.

Although the departure of Birks is a blo one part of Granville, Campbell thinks the rel tion is a blessing to another portion of the str

Architect **Peter Busby**, who chaired the committee last year, agrees. "It's a shame Birks is moving. But they are staying downt and investing in downtown, so that's great."