

INTERPUBLIC GROUP OF COMPANIES INC
Form S-3
October 02, 2003

[QuickLinks](#) -- Click here to rapidly navigate through this document

As filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on October 2, 2003

Registration No. []

**UNITED STATES
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION**

Washington, D.C. 20549

FORM S-3
REGISTRATION STATEMENT
UNDER
THE SECURITIES ACT OF 1933

The Interpublic Group of Companies, Inc.

(Exact name of Registrant as specified in its charter)

Delaware
(State or other jurisdiction of
incorporation or organization)

13-1024020
(I.R.S. Employer Identification No.)

**1271 Avenue of the Americas
New York, New York 10020
(212) 399-8000**

(Address, including zip code, and telephone number, including area code, of Registrant's principal executive offices)

Nicholas J. Camera, Esq.
Senior Vice President, General Counsel & Secretary
The Interpublic Group of Companies, Inc.
**1271 Avenue of the Americas
New York, New York 10020
(212) 399-8000**

(Name, address, including zip code, and telephone number, including area code, of agent for service)

Copies to:

Barry M. Fox, Esq.
Ethan A. Klingsberg, Esq.

Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen & Hamilton
One Liberty Plaza
New York, NY 10006
(212) 255-2000

**Approximate date of commencement of proposed sale to the public:
From time to time after the effective date of this Registration Statement.**

If the only securities being registered on this form are being offered pursuant to dividend or interest reinvestment plans, please check the following box.

If any of the securities being registered on this form are to be offered on a delayed or continuous basis pursuant to Rule 415 under the Securities Act of 1933, other than securities offered only in connection with dividend or interest reinvestment plans, check the following box.

Edgar Filing: INTERPUBLIC GROUP OF COMPANIES INC - Form S-3

If this form is filed to register additional securities for an offering pursuant to Rule 462(b) under the Securities Act, please check the following box and list the Securities Act registration statement number of the earlier effective registration statement for the same offering. o

If this form is a post-effective amendment filed pursuant to Rule 462(c) under the Securities Act, check the following box and list the Securities Act registration statement number of the earlier effective registration statement for the same offering. o

If delivery of the Prospectus is expected to be made pursuant to Rule 434, please check the following box. o

CALCULATION OF REGISTRATION FEE

| Title of Securities to be Registered(2) | Amount to be Registered(1)(3)(5) | Proposed Maximum Aggregate Offering Price(4)(5) | Amount of Registration Fee |
|--|----------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| Common Stock, par value \$0.10 per share, Preferred Stock, Depositary Shares, Debt Securities, Stock Warrants, Debt Securities Warrants, Stock Purchase Contracts and Stock Purchase Units | \$1,800,000,000 | \$1,800,000,000 | \$145,620 |

- (1) The amount to be registered is not specified as to each class of securities to be registered pursuant to General Instruction II.D of Form S-3.
- (2) Any securities registered hereunder may be sold separately or as units with other securities registered hereunder and may include hybrid securities including a combination of features of certain of the securities listed above.
- (3) Includes Debt Securities that may be issued upon exercise of Debt Securities Warrants and shares of Common Stock and Preferred Stock that may be issued upon exercise of Stock Warrants or in connection with the purchase obligations under any Stock Purchase Contracts or Stock Purchase Units. Also includes additional shares of Common Stock that may be issued upon conversion or exchange of any Debt Securities that may be issued, if and to the extent convertible into Common Stock.
- (4) Estimated solely for the purpose of computing the registration fee pursuant to Rule 457(o) of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended.
- (5) Or the equivalent thereof in one or more foreign currencies or composite currencies. If any Debt Securities or Debt Securities Warrants are issued at an original issue discount, such greater amount as shall result in an aggregate initial offering price not in excess of \$1,800,000,000.

The Registrant hereby amends this Registration Statement on such date or dates as may be necessary to delay its effective date until the Registrant shall file a further amendment that specifically states that this Registration Statement shall thereafter become effective in accordance with Section 8(a) of the Securities Act of 1933 or until the Registration Statement shall become effective on such date as the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, acting pursuant to said Section 8(a), may determine.

SUBJECT TO COMPLETION, DATED OCTOBER 2, 2003

The information in this preliminary prospectus is not complete and may be changed. We may not sell these securities until the registration statement filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission is effective. This preliminary prospectus is not an offer to sell nor does it seek an offer to buy these securities in any jurisdiction where the offer or sale is not permitted.

PROSPECTUS

\$1,800,000,000

The Interpublic Group of Companies, Inc.

Common Stock
Preferred Stock
Depositary Shares
Debt Securities
Stock Warrants
Debt Securities Warrants
Stock Purchase Contracts
Stock Purchase Units

We may offer and sell the following securities from time to time in one or more offerings:

common stock,

preferred stock,

depositary shares,

debt securities,

stock warrants,

debt securities warrants,

stock purchase contracts, and

stock purchase units.

This prospectus provides you with a general description of the securities we may offer. Each time we sell securities we will provide a supplement to this prospectus that contains specific information about the offering and the terms of the securities. The prospectus supplement may update or change information contained in this prospectus. You should carefully read this prospectus and any supplement before you invest in any of our securities.

Investing in the securities involves risks. See "Risk Factors" beginning on page 3 of this prospectus. See also "Special Note Regarding Forward-Looking Statements and Other Factors" on page 10 of this prospectus.

The securities may be offered directly or to or through underwriters, agents or dealers. The names of any underwriters, agents or dealers will be included in a supplement to this prospectus.

Neither the Securities and Exchange Commission nor any state securities commission has approved or disapproved of these securities or determined if this prospectus is truthful or complete. Any representation to the contrary is a criminal offense.

The date of this prospectus is _____, 2003.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| About this Prospectus | 2 |
| Risk Factors | 3 |
| Where You Can Find More Information | 9 |
| Special Note Regarding Forward-Looking Statements And Other Factors | 10 |
| Ratio of Earnings to Fixed Charges | 11 |
| Price Range of Common Stock and Dividend Policy | 12 |
| Use of Proceeds | 13 |
| Interpublic | 14 |
| Description of Debt Securities | 18 |
| Description of Preferred Stock and Depositary Shares | 30 |
| Description of Common Stock | 31 |
| Description of Warrants | 33 |
| Description of Stock Purchase Contracts and Stock Purchase Units | 35 |
| Book-Entry Procedures | 36 |
| Plan of Distribution | 39 |
| Validity of Securities | 40 |
| Experts | 40 |

We have not authorized anyone to give any information or make any representation about the offering that is different from, or in addition to, that contained in this prospectus, the related registration statement or in any of the materials that we have incorporated by reference into this prospectus. Therefore, if anyone does give you information of this type, you should not rely on it. If you are in a jurisdiction where offers to sell, or solicitations of offers to purchase, the securities offered by this document are unlawful, or if you are a person to whom it is unlawful to direct these types of activities, then the offer presented in this document does not extend to you. The information contained in this document speaks only as of the date of this document unless the information specifically indicates that another date applies.

ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS

This prospectus is part of a "shelf" registration statement (No. 333-) that we filed with the United States Securities and Exchange Commission, or the "SEC". By using this shelf registration statement, we may sell up to \$1,800,000,000 aggregate initial offering price of any combination of the securities described in this prospectus from time to time and in one or more offerings.

This prospectus provides you with a general description of the securities that we may offer. Each time we sell securities, we will provide a supplement to this prospectus that contains specific information about the terms of the securities. Those terms may vary from the terms described in this prospectus. As a result, the summary descriptions of the common stock, preferred stock, debt securities, stock warrants, debt securities warrants, stock purchase contracts and stock purchase units in this prospectus are subject, and qualified by reference, to the descriptions of the particular terms of any securities contained in the related prospectus supplement. The supplement may also add, update or

change other information contained in this prospectus. Before purchasing any securities, you should carefully read both this prospectus and any related supplement, together with the additional information described under the heading "Where You Can Find More Information."

You should rely only on the information we provide or incorporate by reference in this prospectus and the applicable prospectus supplement, and in any pricing supplement. We have not authorized anyone to provide you with different or additional information. We are offering to sell the securities offered by this prospectus, and seeking offers to buy these securities, only in jurisdictions where offers and sales are permitted. The information contained in this prospectus is accurate only as of the date of this prospectus, regardless of the time of delivery of this prospectus or any sales of the securities.

Unless otherwise indicated, all references in this prospectus to the "Corporation", "Registrant", "we", "our" or "Interpublic" refers to The Interpublic Group of Companies, Inc. and its subsidiaries.

RISK FACTORS

You should consider carefully the following risks in addition to all the other information included or incorporated by reference in this prospectus, including the Special Note Regarding Forward-Looking Statements and Other Factors, before deciding to invest in the securities.

Our revenues have declined and are susceptible to further declines as a result of adverse economic and political developments.

An unfavorable economic and uncertain global political environment has resulted in reduced demand for our services. During past recessionary periods, our clients have looked to their advertising and marketing budgets for the quickest cuts in connection with implementation of their cost controls. In 2002, our worldwide revenues declined 9.7% as compared with 2001. In the first half of 2003, our revenues increased by 0.2% from the six months ended June 30, 2002, as the benefit of higher foreign exchange rates masked a revenue decline of 3.8% on a constant currency basis. We anticipate for the remainder of 2003 continued weakness in demand for advertising and marketing services. If the economy remains weak, or weakens further, or in the event of adverse political or economic developments, including in connection with hostilities in the Middle East or elsewhere or terrorist attacks or in connection with major epidemics such as severe acute respiratory syndrome, or SARS, our results of operations are likely to be further adversely affected.

We may be required to recognize additional impairment charges.

We periodically evaluate the realizability of all of our long-lived assets (including goodwill and fixed assets) and investments. As of June 30, 2003 we had approximately \$3.4 billion of intangibles on our balance sheet and approximately \$352 million in investments in less-than-majority-owned affiliates. Future events, including our financial performance and strategic decisions we make, could cause us to conclude that impairment indicators exist and that the asset values associated with these asset categories may have become impaired. Any resulting impairment loss would have an adverse impact on our reported earnings in the period in which the charge is recognized.

In 2002, we recorded impairment charges of \$127.1 million (\$89.7 million, net of tax), including \$33.0 million of fixed asset and capital expenditure write-offs, \$82.1 million of goodwill impairment and \$12.0 million to record the fair value of an associated put option, related to Motorsports, one of the operations of The Interpublic Sports & Entertainment Group. The remaining book value of long-lived assets relating to Motorsports was \$58.1 million as of June 30, 2003 and may be subject to further impairment charges depending upon the results of our exploration of strategic alternatives. In addition, Motorsports is contractually required to upgrade and improve some of its existing facilities over the next two years. The estimated capital expenditures relating to these operations that are currently considered impaired amount to approximately \$18 million and will be subject to impairment charges as incurred.

Any future impairment charge could adversely affect our financial condition and result in a violation of the financial covenants of our revolving credit facilities, which could trigger a default under those facilities and adversely affect our liquidity.

The revolving credit facilities allow for up to \$70 million of non-cash, non-recurring impairment charges (of which, as of June 30, 2003, we have recorded \$22.1 million) relating to the remaining book value of Motorsports and for unlimited impairment charges relating to capital expenditures made since January 1, 2003 on behalf of Motorsports. Any charges in excess of the \$70 million limit, or the recording of additional impairment charges not related to Motorsports, would be taken into account in determining whether we are in compliance with the financial covenants of our revolving credit facilities.

We will be incurring significant costs in the near term in connection with our planned restructuring program. The timing and ultimate amount of charges, and the savings we ultimately realize, may differ from what we currently expect.

We are executing a restructuring program to reduce costs permanently through further headcount reductions and real estate consolidation. We currently expect to incur approximately \$200 million of charges in connection with the restructuring program. Some of these charges will be incurred in periods ending after September 30, 2003. There is no guarantee that the timing and ultimate amount of charges we record, and the savings we ultimately realize, will not differ from what we currently expect.

The restructuring and related costs could adversely affect our financial condition and result in a violation of the financial covenants of our revolving credit facilities, which could trigger a default under those facilities and adversely affect our liquidity. The revolving credit facilities allow for up to \$200 million of restructuring charges (of which up to \$175 million may be cash charges) to be recorded in our financial statements through the fiscal quarter ending September 30, 2003. As of June 30, 2003, we have recorded \$94.4 million of restructuring charges (of which \$88.6 million were cash charges). Any charges in excess of these limits, or the recording of restructuring charges in periods after September 30, 2003, would be taken into account in determining whether we are in compliance with the financial covenants of our revolving credit facilities.

Downgrades of our ratings could adversely affect us and the trading prices of our securities.

On March 7, 2003, Standard & Poor's Ratings Services downgraded our credit rating to BB+. On May 14, 2003 Fitch Ratings downgraded our credit rating to BB+. Our current credit rating by Moody's Investors Services, Inc. is Baa3 with stable outlook; however, as reported by Moody's on May 8, 2003, this rating was placed on review for possible downgrade. In addition, our S&P and Fitch credit ratings are on negative outlook. We can give you no assurance that the credit ratings agencies will not take further adverse actions with respect to our ratings. Although the S&P and Fitch downgrades did not trigger, and a further ratings downgrade by any of the ratings agencies will not trigger, any acceleration of any of our indebtedness, these events may adversely affect our ability to access capital and would likely result in an increase in the interest rates payable under our two revolving credit facilities and future indebtedness. Any further downgrade could also negatively impact the market value of any securities we offer and sell under this prospectus.

The loss of uncommitted lines of credit could adversely affect our liquidity.

As of June 30, 2003, we had approximately \$81.5 million outstanding under \$795.4 million in uncommitted lines of credit. These borrowings are repayable upon demand. We use amounts available under the lines of credit, together with cash flow from operations and cash on hand, to fund our working capital needs. If we lose all or a substantial portion of these lines of credit, we will be required to seek other sources of liquidity. If we are unable to replace these sources of liquidity, for example through access to the capital markets, our ability to fund our working capital needs will be adversely affected.

We are still implementing our plan to improve our internal controls.

In the fourth quarter of 2002, we announced that we had identified total charges of \$181.3 million related to prior periods from January 1, 1997 through June 30, 2002 and restated our financial statements for these periods. Furthermore, on March 6, 2003, we announced that we had identified total charges of \$165.7 million related to prior periods from January 1, 1997 through September 30, 2002, including amounts related to impairment charges and other adjustments with respect to Motorsports. We have since restated our financial statements for those periods. In addition, we were first informed in the third quarter of 2002 by our independent auditors that they had identified a

"material weakness" (as defined under standards established by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants) relating to the processing and monitoring of intracompany transactions. Concurrently with, and in response to, the restatement of our financial statements filed with the SEC in December 2002, we identified various changes to our accounting and internal control structure that we believed were necessary to help ensure that accounting errors, such as those underlying our restatements, do not arise in the future. Although we have implemented many of these changes, and we and our management have concluded that, taking into account these changes to date, our disclosure controls and procedures are effective to provide reasonable assurance of achieving their control objectives, some of the measures are still in the process of being implemented. If, notwithstanding this reasonable assurance, further restatements were to occur or other accounting-related problems emerge, we could face additional litigation exposure and greater scrutiny from the SEC in connection with the SEC investigation currently

Edgar Filing: INTERPUBLIC GROUP OF COMPANIES INC - Form S-3

taking place. Any future restatements or other accounting-related problems may adversely affect our financial condition and would also likely negatively impact the market value of any securities we offer and sell under this prospectus.

Pending litigation could have a material adverse effect on our financial condition.

Shortly after we first announced, in August 2002, the restatement of our previously reported earnings, thirteen federal securities purported class actions were filed against us and eight of our present and former directors and officers by a purported class of purchasers of our stock. These lawsuits allege false and misleading statements to shareholders, including the alleged failure to disclose the existence of additional charges that would need to be expensed and the lack of internal financial controls, which allegedly resulted in an overstatement of our financial results during the period in question. Since that time, these lawsuits have been consolidated in the Southern District of New York and, in February 2003, we moved to dismiss the consolidated amended complaint. On May 29, 2003, our motion to dismiss was denied as to us and granted, in part, as to the present and former directors and officers named in the lawsuit. On June 30, 2003, we filed an answer to the consolidated amended complaint. We intend to continue to deny all allegations and defend ourselves against these claims vigorously. Two purported class actions were also filed in state court by a purported class of former shareholders of True North Communications, Inc., who exchanged their shares of True North for the shares of our common stock in connection with our acquisition of True North in June 2001. These two lawsuits allege that we and the present and former directors and officers named in the lawsuits failed to disclose the existence of additional charges that should have been expensed and the lack of adequate internal financial controls. On September 10, 2003, the state court stayed these lawsuits. On September 24, 2003, plaintiffs filed a notice that they will appeal the stay. In addition to these lawsuits, we are defending a shareholders' derivative suit alleging a breach of fiduciary duty to our shareholders. The derivative action is now before the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, and, on August 12, 2003, we moved to dismiss that complaint. Plaintiffs in all of these lawsuits seek unspecified damages. The outcomes of these proceedings are uncertain and their final resolution could have a material impact on our financial position, cash flows or results of operation.

An ongoing SEC investigation regarding our accounting restatements could adversely affect us or the market value of the securities.

Following our announcement in August 2002 of the restatement of our financial results for the periods from 1996 to June 2002, we were informed by the SEC that it was conducting an informal inquiry into the matters surrounding the restatement. In January 2003 we were informed by the SEC that it had issued a formal order of investigation with respect to these matters. While we are cooperating fully with the investigation, adverse developments in connection with the investigation, including any expansion of the scope of their investigation, could negatively impact the market value of any securities we offer and sell under this prospectus and could divert the efforts and attention of our management team from our ordinary business operations.

Our revolving credit facilities with syndicates of banks restrict our ability to take some corporate actions, including making dividend payments.

The current terms of our two revolving credit facilities with syndicates of banks restrict our ability to (1) make cash acquisitions or investments in excess of \$100 million annually, (2) declare or pay dividends or repurchase shares of common stock in excess of \$25 million annually and (3) make capital expenditures in excess of \$175 million annually. They also limit the ability of our domestic subsidiaries to incur additional debt. Our future earnings performance will determine the permitted levels of share buybacks and dividend payments (currently the permitted level of dividend payments and share buybacks is \$25 million). All limitations on dividend payments and share buybacks expire when earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA), as defined in the credit facilities, exceed \$1.3 billion for four consecutive quarters. We paid no dividend in the first half of 2003. Our future dividend policy will be determined on a quarter-by-quarter basis, will depend on earnings, financial condition, capital requirements and other factors and will be subject to the restrictions under the amended revolving credit facilities.

If our exploration of strategic alternatives for Motorsports does not result in a successful transaction, our stock price could be adversely affected.

We are exploring strategic alternatives with respect to some or all of our Motorsports holdings. We can give you no assurance that our efforts with regard to these holdings will result in a successful transaction. Our stock price could be adversely affected if we are unable to conclude a transaction with respect to some or all of our Motorsports holdings.

We may not realize all the benefits we expect from acquisitions we have made.

Edgar Filing: INTERPUBLIC GROUP OF COMPANIES INC - Form S-3

The success of acquisitions depends on the effective integration of newly-acquired businesses into our current operations. Important factors for integration include realization of anticipated synergies and cost savings and the ability to retain and attract personnel and clients. Between January 2001 and September 2002, we completed 29 acquisitions, including the acquisition of True North Communications Inc. in June 2001. There can be no assurance that we will realize all the benefits we expect from our recent or future acquisitions.

We compete for clients in a highly competitive industry.

The advertising agency and other marketing communications and marketing services businesses are highly competitive. Our agencies and media services must compete with other agencies and with other providers of creative or media services which are not themselves advertising agencies, in order to maintain existing client relationships and to obtain new clients. The client's perception of the quality of an agency's "creative product," our reputation and the agency's reputation are, to a large extent, factors in determining our competitive position in the advertising agency business. An agency's ability to serve clients, particularly large international clients, on a broad geographic basis is also an important competitive consideration. On the other hand, because an agency's principal asset is its people, freedom of entry into the business is almost unlimited and quite small agencies are, on occasion, able to take all or some portion of a client's account from a much larger competitor.

Size may limit an agency's potential for securing new business, because many clients prefer not to be represented by an agency that represents a competitor. Also, clients frequently wish to have different products represented by different agencies. Our ability to attract new clients and to retain existing clients may, in some cases, be limited by clients' policies on or perceptions of conflicts of interest. These policies can, in some cases, prevent one agency and, in limited circumstances, different agencies within the same holding company, from performing similar services for competing products or companies. In addition, these perceived conflicts, following an acquisition by us of an agency or

6

company, can result in clients terminating their relationship with us or reducing the number or scope of projects for which they retain those agencies. Moreover, as a result of the True North acquisition and the resulting larger number of clients, we face a greater likelihood of conflicts with potential new clients in the future.

If we fail to maintain existing clients or attract new clients, our business may be adversely impacted.

Our business could be adversely affected if we lose or fail to attract key employees.

Employees, including creative, research, media, account and practice group specialists, and their skills and relationships with clients, are among our most important assets. An important aspect of our competitiveness is our ability to retain key employee and management personnel. Compensation for these key personnel is an essential factor in attracting and retaining them, and there can be no assurances that we will offer a level of compensation sufficient to attract and retain these key personnel. If we fail to hire and retain a sufficient number of these key employees, we may not be able to compete effectively.

We are subject to regulations that could restrict our activities or negatively impact our revenues.

Advertising and marketing communications businesses are subject to government regulation, both domestic and foreign. There has been an increasing tendency in the United States on the part of advertisers to resort to the courts and industry and self-regulatory bodies to challenge comparative advertising on the grounds that the advertising is false and deceptive. Through the years, there has been a continuing expansion of specific rules, prohibitions, media restrictions, labeling disclosures and warning requirements with respect to the advertising for certain products. Representatives within government bodies, both domestic and foreign, continue to initiate proposals to ban the advertising of specific products and to impose taxes on or deny deductions for advertising which, if successful, may have an adverse effect on advertising expenditures and consequently our revenues.

International business risks could adversely affect our operations.

International revenues represented 42% of our total revenues in 2002 and the first six months of 2003. Our international operations are exposed to risks that affect foreign operations of all kinds, including, for example, local legislation, monetary devaluation, exchange control restrictions and unstable political conditions. These risks may limit our ability to grow our business and effectively manage our operations in those countries.

The market price of our common stock and our earnings per share could be reduced if our 4.5% convertible senior notes were to be immediately convertible or if we were to issue additional equity or convertible securities.

Edgar Filing: INTERPUBLIC GROUP OF COMPANIES INC - Form S-3

If the 20-consecutive-trading day average closing price of our common stock equals or exceeds \$14.90 per share, holders of our 4.5% convertible senior notes due 2023 have the right to convert those notes into shares of our common stock. If all holders of the 4.5% notes were to convert their notes, we would have to issue approximately 64.4 million additional shares of common stock, which would result in substantial dilution to the equity interests of holders of our common stock, including investors who purchase our common stock or securities convertible into our common stock under this registration statement. Public resales of our common stock following conversions of the 4.5% notes or other convertible securities could depress the prevailing market price of our common stock. Even prior to the time of actual conversions of the 4.5% notes, the perception of a significant market "overhang" resulting from the existence of our obligation to honor the conversions, as well as any perception of market overhang resulting from our ability to issue equity, convertible debt or preferred stock or

7

similar securities under this registration statement, could depress the market price of our common stock. Furthermore, for purposes of calculating diluted earnings per share, if the 20-consecutive-trading-day average closing price of our common stock equals or exceeds \$14.90 per share, accounting rules require us to assume conversion of all outstanding 4.5% notes for each of the days in the reporting period for which the average closing price per share equals or exceeds that level, which could reduce our earnings per share for that period.

Changes in the financial and credit markets could adversely affect the market price of the securities.

The market price of the securities will be based on a number of factors, including:

the prevailing interest rates being paid by companies similar to us and

the overall condition of the financial and credit markets.

The condition of the financial and credit markets and prevailing interest rates have fluctuated in the past and are likely to fluctuate in the future. Fluctuations in these factors could have an adverse effect on the price of the securities.

We are a holding company and debt securities will effectively be subordinated to all of our subsidiaries' existing and future indebtedness.

Substantially all of our operations are conducted through our subsidiaries. As a result, our cash flow and our consequent ability to service our debt, including debt securities sold under this registration statement, depends in large part upon our subsidiaries' cash flows. Additionally, except to the extent we may be a creditor with recognized claims against our subsidiaries, the claims of creditors of our subsidiaries will have priority, with respect to the assets and earnings of our subsidiaries, over claims of our direct creditors, including holders of debt securities. Furthermore, on August 15, 2003 a number of our U.S. subsidiaries guaranteed our two revolving credit facilities with syndicates of banks. The claims of the beneficiaries of this guaranty will also have priority, with respect to the assets and earnings of these subsidiaries, over claims of our direct creditors, including holders of debt securities.

An active trading market for the securities may not develop.

Prior to the offering of securities (other than our common stock) under this registration statement, there will not be a trading market for those securities. Although any underwriters to be engaged in the sale of securities under this registration statement may advise us that they intend to make a market in the securities, they may not be obligated to do so and may discontinue market-making activities at any time without notice. In addition, any market-making activities will be subject to limits imposed by the Securities Act and the Exchange Act. We cannot assure you that any market for the securities will develop or be sustained. If an active market is not developed or sustained, the market price and liquidity of the securities may be adversely affected.

8

WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION

Edgar Filing: INTERPUBLIC GROUP OF COMPANIES INC - Form S-3

We file annual, quarterly and special reports, proxy statements and other information with the SEC. You may read and copy any document that we file at the SEC's public reference room located at Room 1024, Judiciary Plaza, 450 Fifth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20549. Please call the SEC at 1-800-SEC-0330 for further information on the public reference room. Our SEC filings are also available to the public from the SEC's web site at <http://www.sec.gov>, and at the offices of the New York Stock Exchange. For further information on obtaining copies of our public filings at the New York Stock Exchange, you should call (212) 656-5060.

This prospectus "incorporates by reference" information that we have filed with the SEC under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934. This means that we are disclosing important information to you by referring you to those documents. Information contained in any subsequently filed document, to the extent it modifies information in this prospectus or in any document incorporated by reference in this prospectus, will automatically update and supersede the information originally in this prospectus or incorporated by reference in this prospectus. We incorporate by reference the following documents listed below (filed under SEC File Number 001-06686) and any future filings with the SEC under Sections 13(a), 13(c), 14 or 15(d) of the Exchange Act (other than information furnished under Items 9 or 12 of Form 8-K), until the termination of the offering of securities offered by this prospectus:

Our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2002 (Film Number 03625573);

Our Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q for the quarters ended March 31, 2003 (Film Number 03703335) and June 30, 2003 (Film Number 03845132); and

Our Current Reports on Form 8-K or 8-K/A (other than information furnished under Items 9 or 12 of Form 8-K) filed January 16, 2003 (Film Number 03515791), January 17, 2003 (Film Number 03518395), February 12, 2003 (Film Number 03555480), February 28, 2003 (Film Number 03586341), March 7, 2003 (Film Number 03596574), March 7, 2003 (Film Number 03596932), March 11, 2003 (Film Number 03599801), March 18, 2003 (Film Number 03607631), April 9, 2003 (Film Number 03643899), May 8, 2003 (Film Number 03688534), May 14, 2003 (Film Number 03699562), June 18, 2003 (Film Number 03748904), July 2, 2003 (Film Number 03772329), July 24, 2003 (Film Number 03800476), August 12, 2003 (Film Number 03838236), August 14, 2003 (Film Number 03843258), August 20, 2003 (Film Number 03858341), September 9, 2003 (Film Number 03887907) and September 10, 2003 (Film Number 03889049).

You may request a copy of these filings at no cost, by writing or telephoning our subsidiary, Financial Relations Board, at the following address:

Financial Relations Board
640 Fifth Avenue, 5th Floor
New York, New York 10019
Attn: Vanessa Schwartz
(212) 445-8433

The above SEC filings are also available to the public on our website at www.interpublic.com. (We have included our website address as an inactive textual reference and do not intend it to be an active link to our website. Information on our website is not part of this prospectus.)

SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS AND OTHER FACTORS

This document contains forward-looking statements. Our representatives may also make forward-looking statements orally from time to time. Statements in this document that are not historical facts, including statements about our beliefs and expectations, particularly regarding recent business and economic trends, the impact of litigation, dispositions, impairment charges, the integration of acquisitions and restructuring costs, constitute forward-looking statements. These statements are based on current plans, estimates and projections and are subject to change based on a number of factors, including those outlined in this section. Forward-looking statements speak only as of the date they are made, and we undertake no obligation to update publicly any of them in light of new information or future events.

Forward-looking statements involve inherent risks and uncertainties. A number of important factors could cause actual results to differ materially from those contained in any forward-looking statement. These factors include, but are not limited to, those associated with the effects

Edgar Filing: INTERPUBLIC GROUP OF COMPANIES INC - Form S-3

of global, national and regional economic and political conditions, our ability to attract new clients and retain existing clients, the financial success of our clients, developments from changes in the regulatory and legal environment for advertising and marketing and communications services companies around the world, and the successful completion and integration of acquisitions which complement and expand our business capabilities.

Our liquidity could be adversely affected if we are unable to access capital or to raise proceeds from asset sales. In addition, we could be adversely affected by developments in connection with the purported class actions and derivative suits that we are defending or the SEC investigation relating to the restatement of our financial statements. Our financial condition and future results of operations could also be adversely affected if we recognize additional impairment charges due to future events or in the event of other adverse accounting-related developments.

At any given time we may be engaged in a number of preliminary discussions that may result in one or more acquisitions or dispositions. These opportunities require confidentiality and from time to time give rise to bidding scenarios that require quick responses by us. Although there is uncertainty that any of these discussions will result in definitive agreements or the completion of any transactions, the announcement of any of these transactions may lead to increased volatility in the trading price of our securities.

The success of recent or contemplated future acquisitions will depend on the effective integration of newly-acquired businesses into our current operations. Important factors for integration include realization of anticipated synergies and cost savings and the ability to retain and attract new personnel and clients.

In addition, our representatives may from time to time refer to "pro forma" financial information, including information before taking into account specified items. Because "pro forma" financial information by its very nature departs from traditional accounting conventions, this information should not be viewed as a substitute for the information we prepare in accordance with GAAP, including the balance sheets and statements of income and cash flow contained in our quarterly and annual reports filed with the SEC on Forms 10-Q and 10-K.

Investors should evaluate any statements made by us in light of these important factors and the factors contained in the "Risk Factors" section.

10

RATIO OF EARNINGS TO FIXED CHARGES

Our ratio of earnings to fixed charges, as reported, has been adjusted to give effect to the disposition of NFO WorldGroup, Inc., ("NFO") on July 10, 2003. As a result of this disposition, the results of NFO have been reported as a discontinued operation for all periods presented. The ratio of earnings to fixed charges from continuing operations were as follows for the periods indicated:

| | Six Months Ended June 30, 2003 | Years Ended December 31, | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| | | 2002 | 2001 | 2000 | 1999 | 1998 |
| Ratio of earnings to fixed charges | * | 1.73x | * | 3.91x | 3.80x | 4.25x |

*

For the six months ended June 30, 2003 and the year ended December 31, 2001, we had a deficiency of earnings to fixed charges. Results as reported would have required additional earnings of \$6.5 million for the six months ended June 30, 2003 and \$586.4 million for the year ended December 31, 2001, respectively, to provide a one-to-one coverage ratio for those periods. The decline in the ratio of earnings to fixed charges subsequent to 2000 is due to lower income from operations, including restructuring- and merger-related charges (in 2001) and impairment charges (in 2001, 2002 and 2003), as compared to prior periods.

In calculating the ratio of earnings to fixed charges, earnings are the sum of earnings from continuing operations before income taxes, income applicable to minority interests and equity in net income (loss) of unconsolidated affiliates, plus fixed charges. Fixed charges are the sum of interest on indebtedness, amortization of debt discount and expense and that portion of net rental expense deemed representative of the

interest component.

PRICE RANGE OF COMMON STOCK AND DIVIDEND POLICY

Our common stock is listed and traded on the New York Stock Exchange ("NYSE") under the symbol "IPG." The following table provides, for the calendar quarters indicated, the high and low closing sales prices per share on the NYSE for the periods shown below as reported on the NYSE and dividends per share paid during those periods. The last reported sale price for our common stock on the NYSE on September 29, 2003 was \$13.90 per share.

| Period | NYSE Sale Price | | Dividends on Common Stock |
|--|-----------------|----------|------------------------------|
| | High | Low | |
| 2000: | | | |
| First Quarter | \$ 55.56 | \$ 37.00 | \$.085 |
| Second Quarter | 48.25 | 38.00 | .095 |
| Third Quarter | 44.62 | 33.50 | .095 |
| Fourth Quarter | 43.75 | 33.06 | .095 |
| 2001: | | | |
| First Quarter | 47.19 | 32.50 | .095 |
| Second Quarter | 38.85 | 27.79 | .095 |
| Third Quarter | 30.46 | 19.30 | .095 |
| Fourth Quarter | 31.00 | 19.50 | .095 |
| 2002: | | | |
| First Quarter | 34.56 | 27.20 | .095 |
| Second Quarter | 34.89 | 23.51 | .095 |
| Third Quarter | 24.67 | 13.40 | .095 |
| Fourth Quarter | 17.05 | 11.25 | .095(1) |
| 2003: | | | |
| First Quarter | 15.38 | 8.01 | (1) |
| Second Quarter | 14.55 | 9.30 | (1) |
| Third Quarter (through September 29, 2003) | \$ 15.44 | \$ 12.94 | (1) |

- (1) Dividend declared on November 1, 2002 was in respect of third quarter 2002 results. No dividend in respect of fourth quarter 2002 results was declared. No dividend has subsequently been declared.

As of September 29, 2003, there were approximately 21,823 registered holders of our common stock.

Dividend Policy

We paid no dividend in the first half of 2003. Our future dividend policy will be determined on a quarter-by-quarter basis and will depend on earnings, financial condition, capital requirements and other factors. It will also be subject to the restrictions under the amended revolving credit facilities with syndicates of banks, which limit our ability to declare or pay dividends. Under these facilities, our future earnings performance will determine the permitted levels of dividend payments (currently the permitted level of dividend payments and share buybacks is \$25 million) and all limitations on dividend payments expire when earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA), as defined in the credit facilities, exceed \$1.3 billion for four consecutive quarters.

12

USE OF PROCEEDS

Unless stated otherwise in an accompanying prospectus supplement, the net proceeds from the sale of common stock, depositary shares, preferred stock, debt securities, stock warrants, debt securities warrants, stock purchase contracts and stock purchase units described in this prospectus will be used by us for general corporate purposes, which may include:

repayment of long-term and short-term indebtedness;

working capital;

securities repurchase programs;

investments in, or extensions of credit to, our subsidiaries; and

financing of possible acquisitions.

When a particular series of securities is offered, the applicable prospectus supplement will set forth our intended use for the net proceeds received from the sale of those securities. Pending application for specific purposes, the net proceeds may be invested in short-term marketable securities.

13

INTERPUBLIC

Interpublic is a group of advertising and specialized marketing and communication services companies that together represent one of the largest resources of advertising and marketing expertise in the world. With offices and other affiliations in more than 130 countries, we had revenues of approximately \$5.7 billion and net income of approximately \$99.5 million in 2002.

Advertising and Specialized Marketing and Communications Services Businesses

In the last five years, we have grown to become one of the world's largest groups of global marketing services companies, providing our clients with communications and marketing expertise in three broad areas:

Edgar Filing: INTERPUBLIC GROUP OF COMPANIES INC - Form S-3

Advertising, which includes advertising and media management;

Marketing Communications, which includes direct marketing, database management and customer relationship management, public relations, sales promotion, event marketing, on-line marketing, corporate and brand identity, brand consultancy and healthcare marketing; and

Marketing Services, which includes sports and entertainment marketing, corporate meetings and events, retail marketing and other marketing and business services.

We seek to be the best in quality and a leading competitor in all of these areas.

We are currently organized into four global operating groups. Three of these groups, McCann-Erickson WorldGroup ("McCann"), The FCB Group and The Partnership, provide a comprehensive array of global communications and marketing services. Each offers a distinctive range of solutions for our clients. The fourth global operating group, The Interpublic Sports & Entertainment Group, focuses on sports marketing and event planning activities. In addition to these groups, Interpublic also includes a group of leading stand-alone companies that provide their clients with a full range of advertising and/or marketing communications services.

We believe this organizational structure allows us to provide comprehensive solutions for clients, enables stronger organic growth among all our operating companies and allows us to bring improved operating efficiencies to our organization.

A brief description of our current four global operating groups follows:

McCann-Erickson WorldGroup was founded on the global strength and quality of McCann, one of the world's leading advertising agencies. It includes companies spanning advertising, media, customer relationship management, events, sales promotion, public relations, on-line marketing communications and healthcare communications. Launched in late 1997, McCann-Erickson WorldGroup has expanded rapidly to become one of the world's leading networked marketing communications groups, now working with more than 25 key worldwide clients in three or more disciplines and with more than 40 U.S. clients in two or more disciplines. McCann-Erickson WorldGroup includes the following companies:

McCann-Erickson Worldwide (advertising),

Universal McCann Worldwide (media planning and buying),

MRM Partners Worldwide (direct marketing and customer relationship management),

Momentum Worldwide (entertainment, event and promotional marketing), and

Torre Lazur McCann Healthcare Worldwide (healthcare advertising and marketing).

The FCB Group is a single global integrated network centered on Foote, Cone & Belding Worldwide and its advertising, direct marketing and sales promotion capabilities. This group also includes the following specialized services:

FCBi (direct and digital marketing),

Marketing Drive Worldwide (integrated promotional marketing),

Edgar Filing: INTERPUBLIC GROUP OF COMPANIES INC - Form S-3

R/GA (web design and development),

FCB HealthCare (healthcare marketing), and

The Hacker Group (customer acquisition direct marketing).

The Partnership, a global, client-driven creative leader, is anchored on the quality advertising reputation of Lowe & Partners Worldwide. The Partnership provides collaboration across a global group of independently managed networks with creative and executional capabilities across all disciplines. The partners seek to preserve their uniqueness while creating the ability to interconnect seamlessly to better service clients. Partner companies include:

Lowe & Partners Worldwide (advertising),

Lowe Healthcare Worldwide (healthcare marketing),

Draft (direct and promotional marketing),

Zipatoni (promotional marketing),

Mullen (advertising), and

Dailey & Associates (advertising).

The Interpublic Sports & Entertainment Group focuses on sports marketing and event planning activities. IPG Sports & Entertainment was formed during the second quarter of 2002 through a carve-out from our other operating groups of related operations. It includes:

Octagon (sports marketing),

Motorsports,

Jack Morton Worldwide, and

Entertainment PR (Bragman Nyman Cafarelli and PMK/HBH).

Independent Agencies. Interpublic also includes a group of leading stand-alone companies that provide their clients with a full range of advertising and/or marketing communications services and partner with our global operating groups as needed. These include:

Campbell Ewald,

Deutsch,

Hill Holliday,

Edgar Filing: INTERPUBLIC GROUP OF COMPANIES INC - Form S-3

The Martin Agency,

Carmichael-Lynch,

Gotham,

MAGNA Global (advertising media negotiations and television program development),

15

Weber Shandwick Worldwide, Golin/Harris International and DeVries Public Relations (public relations), and

Initiative Media (media planning and buying).

In addition to domestic operations, we provide services for clients whose business is international in scope as well as for clients whose business is restricted to a single country or a small number of countries. Revenue for 2002 and 2001 is presented below by major geographic area:

| | Year Ended December 31, | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| | 2002 | 2001 |
| | (in millions) | |
| United States | \$ 3,313.6 | \$ 3,708.0 |
| International | | |
| United Kingdom | 584.5 | 615.8 |
| All other Europe | 986.8 | 1,024.6 |
| Asia Pacific | 384.7 | 439.0 |
| Latin America | 266.4 | 345.6 |
| Other | 201.5 | 219.7 |
| | 2,423.9 | 2,644.7 |
| Total International | | |
| | 2,423.9 | 2,644.7 |
| Total Consolidated | \$ 5,737.5 | \$ 6,352.7 |

Sources of Revenue

We generate revenue from planning, creating and placing advertising in various media and from planning and executing other communications or marketing programs. Historically, the commission customary in the industry was 15% of the gross charge ("billings") for advertising space or time; more recently, lower commissions have been negotiated, but often with additional incentives paid for better performance. For example, an incentive component is frequently included in arrangements with clients based on improvements in an advertised brand's awareness or image, or increases in a client's sales or market share of the products or services being advertised. Under commission arrangements, media bill us at their gross rates. We bill these amounts to our clients, remit the net charges to the media and retain the balance as our commission. Many clients, however, prefer to compensate us on a fee basis, under which we bill our client for the net charges billed by the media plus an agreed-upon fee. These fees usually are calculated to reflect our hourly rates and out-of-pocket expenses incurred on behalf of clients, plus proportional overhead and a profit mark-up.

Like other agencies, we are primarily responsible for paying the media with respect to firm contracts for advertising time or space placed on behalf of our clients. Our practice generally is to pay media charges only once we have received funds from our clients, and in some instances

we agree with the media that we will be solely liable to pay the media only after the client has paid us for the media charges. We make serious efforts to reduce the risk from a client's nonpayment including by generally carrying out credit clearances and requiring in some cases payment of media in advance.

We also receive commissions from clients for planning and supervising work done by outside contractors in connection with the physical preparation of finished print advertisements and the production of television and radio commercials and other forms of advertising. This commission is customarily 17.65% of the outside contractor's net charge, which is the same as 15.0% of the outside contractor's total charges including commission. With the increasing use of negotiated fees, the terms on which outstanding contractors' charges are billed are subject to wide variations and even include, in some instances, the replacement of commissions with negotiated flat fees.

We also derive revenue from other activities, including the planning and placement in media of advertising produced by unrelated advertising agencies; the maintenance of specialized media placement facilities; the creation and publication of brochures, billboards, point of sale materials and direct marketing pieces for clients; the planning and carrying out of specialized marketing research; the management of public relations campaigns; the creation and management of special events, meetings and shows at which clients' products are featured; and the design and implementation of interactive programs for special marketing needs.

Clients

The five clients that made the largest revenue contribution in 2002 accounted individually for approximately 1.8% to 8.1% of our revenue and in the aggregate accounted for approximately 16.4% of our revenue. Twenty of our clients accounted for approximately 29% of our revenue. Based on revenue, as of December 31, 2002, our largest clients included Coca-Cola, General Motors Corporation, Johnson & Johnson, Nestle and Unilever. While the loss of the entire business of one of our largest clients might have a material adverse effect upon our business, we believe that it is very unlikely that the entire business of any of these clients would be lost at the same time, because we represent several different brands or divisions of each of these clients in a number of geographical markets in each case through more than one of our agency systems.

Representation of a client rarely means that we handle advertising for all brands or product lines of the client in all geographical locations. Any client may transfer its business from an agency within our company to a competing agency, and a client may reduce its marketing budget at any time.

Our agencies have written contracts with many of their clients. As is customary in the industry, these contracts provide for termination by either party on relatively short notice, usually 90 days but sometimes shorter or longer. In 2002, however, 21% of revenue was derived from clients that had been associated with one or more of our agencies or their predecessors for 20 or more years.

DESCRIPTION OF DEBT SECURITIES

We may issue senior or subordinated debt securities. The senior debt securities, which will constitute part of our senior debt and will rank equally with all of our other senior unsecured and unsubordinated debt, will be issued under an indenture between us and The Bank of New York, as trustee. We refer to this indenture, as it may be amended or supplemented from time to time, as the "senior debt indenture." The subordinated debt securities will be issued under a separate indenture between us and The Bank of New York, as trustee. We refer to this indenture, as it may be amended or supplemented from time to time, as the "subordinated debt indenture." The subordinated debt securities will be subordinate and junior in right of payment to all of our senior indebtedness, as set forth in the subordinated debt indenture. If this prospectus is being delivered in connection with a series of subordinated debt securities, the accompanying prospectus supplement or the information we incorporate into this prospectus by reference will indicate the approximate amount of senior indebtedness outstanding as of the end of the most recent fiscal quarter. We refer to the senior debt indenture and the subordinated debt indenture individually as an "indenture" and collectively as the "indentures." In this section, the terms "we", "us" and "Interpublic" refer solely to The Interpublic Group of Companies, Inc. and not its subsidiaries.

We have summarized below the material provisions of the indentures and the debt securities, or indicated which material provisions will be described in the related prospectus supplement. For further information, you should read the indentures. The forms of the indentures are exhibits

Edgar Filing: INTERPUBLIC GROUP OF COMPANIES INC - Form S-3

to the registration statement we filed with the SEC, of which this prospectus is a part, and are available as set forth under "Where You Can Find More Information." The indentures are substantially identical, except for the provisions relating to our negative pledge and the limitations on sale and lease-back covenants, which are included in the senior debt indenture only, and to the subordination provisions, which are included in the subordinated debt indenture only.

General

The debt securities that may be offered under the indentures are not limited in aggregate principal amount. We may issue debt securities at one or more times in one or more series. Each series of debt securities may have different terms. The terms of any series of debt securities will be described in, or determined by action taken pursuant to, a resolution of our board of directors or in a supplement to the indenture relating to that series.

The prospectus supplement, including any related pricing supplement, relating to any series of debt securities that we may offer will state the price or prices at which the debt securities will be offered, and will contain the specific terms of that series. These terms may include the following:

- (1) the title of the series of debt securities;
 - (2) whether the debt securities are senior debt securities or subordinated debt securities or any combination of the two;
 - (3) the purchase price, denomination and any limit on the aggregate principal amount of the debt securities;
 - (4) the date or dates on which principal and any premium on the debt securities will be payable or the method of determination of principal and any premium;
 - (5) the rate or rates at which the debt securities will bear any interest or the method of calculating the rate or rates of interest, the date or dates from which interest will accrue or the method by which the date or dates will be determined, the dates on which interest will be payable, and any regular record date for payment of interest;
-
- (6) the place or places where the principal of and any premium and interest on the debt securities will be payable;
 - (7) the place or places where the debt securities may be exchanged or transferred;
 - (8) the terms and conditions upon which we may redeem the debt securities, in whole or in part, at our option;
 - (9) the terms and conditions upon which we may be obligated to redeem or purchase the debt securities under any sinking fund or similar provisions or upon the happening of a specified event or at the option of a holder;
 - (10) the denominations in which the debt securities will be issuable, if other than denominations of \$1,000 and any integral multiple of \$1,000;
 - (11) if other than U.S. dollars, the currency or currencies, including the currency unit or units, in which payments of principal and any premium and interest on the debt securities will or may be payable, or in which the debt securities will be denominated, and any particular related provisions;
 - (12)

Edgar Filing: INTERPUBLIC GROUP OF COMPANIES INC - Form S-3

if we or a holder may elect that payments of principal of or any premium or interest on the debt securities be made in a currency or currencies, including currency unit or units, other than that in which the debt securities are denominated or designated to be payable, the currency or currencies in which these payments are to be made, including the terms and conditions applicable to any payments and the manner in which the exchange rate with respect to these payments will be determined, and any particular related provisions;

- (13) if the amount of payments of principal of and any premium and interest on debt securities are determined with reference to an index, formula or other method, which may be based, without limitation, on a currency or currencies other than that in which the debt securities are denominated or designated to be payable, the index, formula or other method by which the amounts will be determined;
- (14) if any series of debt securities is not subject to our right to defeasance and discharge or covenant defeasance;
- (15) the period or periods within which, the price or prices at which, the currency or currencies in which, and the other terms and conditions upon which we may redeem the debt securities;
- (16) any provisions for the conversion or exchange of debt securities;
- (17) if other than the full principal amount, the portion of the principal amount of the debt securities which will be payable upon declaration of acceleration of maturity;
- (18) any changes or additions to events of default or covenants set forth in the indenture with respect to the debt securities;
- (19) whether the subordination provisions summarized below or different subordination provisions, including a different definition of "senior indebtedness" will apply to any debt securities that are subordinated debt securities;
- (20) any agents for the debt securities, including trustees, depositories, authenticating or paying agents, transfer agents or registrars;
- (21) if we will issue the debt securities in whole or in part in the form of global securities, the terms of the issuance; and
- (22) any other terms of the debt securities.

The debt securities may be issued as original issue discount securities to be offered and sold at a substantial discount below their stated principal amount. Original issue discount securities will bear no interest or will bear interest at a rate below the prevailing market rate at the time of issuance. In addition, less than the entire principal amount of these securities will be payable upon declaration of acceleration of their maturity. We will describe any United States federal income tax consequences and other special considerations applicable to any original issue discount securities in the applicable prospectus supplement.

Exchange, Registration, Transfer and Payment

Unless otherwise indicated in the applicable prospectus supplement, the principal of and any premium and interest on the debt securities will be payable, and the exchange of and the transfer of debt securities will be registrable, at our office or agency maintained for that purpose in New York and at any other office or agency maintained for that purpose. In the absence of any provisions to the contrary with respect to any series of debt securities, we will issue the debt securities in denominations of \$1,000 or integral multiples of \$1,000. Unless otherwise provided in the debt securities to be transferred or exchanged, no service charge will be made for any registration of transfer or exchange of the debt securities, but we may require payment of a sum sufficient to cover any tax or other governmental charge imposed because of the transactions.

Edgar Filing: INTERPUBLIC GROUP OF COMPANIES INC - Form S-3

All money paid by us to a paying agent for the payment of principal of and any premium or interest on any debt security which remains unclaimed for one year after the principal, premium or interest has become due and payable may be repaid to us, provided notice of unclaimed funds has been published in a publication of general circulation, and afterwards the holder of the debt security may look only to us for payment of those amounts.

In the event of any redemption, notice shall be delivered to each holder of debt securities to be redeemed 30 to 60 days prior to redemption. We will not be required to (a) issue, register the transfer of or exchange the debt securities of any series during a period beginning 15 days before the mailing of a notice of redemption of debt securities of that series to be redeemed and ending on the date of the mailing or (b) register the transfer of or exchange any debt security, or portion of any debt security, called for redemption, except the unredeemed portion of any debt security being redeemed in part.

Subordination of Debt Securities

Holders of subordinated debt securities should recognize that contractual provisions in the subordinated debt indenture may prohibit us from making payments on these securities. Subordinated debt securities are subordinate and junior in right of payment, to the extent and in the manner stated in the subordinated debt indenture, to all of our senior indebtedness. The subordinated debt indenture defines senior indebtedness as obligations of, or guaranteed or assumed by, us for:

borrowed money;

bonds, debentures, notes or other securities issued under the provisions of an indenture or similar instruments; and

amendments, renewals, deferrals, extensions, modifications and refundings of any of, or bonds, debentures, notes or other evidences of indebtedness for borrowed money issued in exchange for, that indebtedness or of those obligations.

Nonrecourse obligations, the subordinated debt securities and any other obligations specifically designated as being subordinate in right of payment to senior indebtedness and indebtedness and advances among us and our direct and indirect subsidiaries are not senior indebtedness under the subordinated debt indenture.

20

Unless otherwise provided in the applicable prospectus supplement, the subordination provisions of the subordinated debt indenture will apply to subordinated debt securities. The subordinated debt indenture provides that, unless all principal of and any premium or interest on the senior indebtedness has been paid in full, or provision has been made to make these payments in full, no payment of principal of, or any premium or interest on, any subordinated debt securities may be made in the event:

of any insolvency or bankruptcy proceedings, or any receivership, liquidation, reorganization or other similar proceedings involving us or a substantial part of our property; or

that (a) a default has occurred in the payment of principal, any premium, interest or other monetary amounts due and payable on any senior indebtedness or (b) there has occurred any other event of default concerning senior indebtedness, that permits the holder or holders of the senior indebtedness to accelerate the maturity of the senior indebtedness, with notice or passage of time, or both, and that event of default has continued beyond any applicable grace period and that event of default has not been cured or waived or has not ceased to exist.

Senior debt securities are our general unsecured obligations and rank senior in right of payment to all our existing and future indebtedness that is, by its terms, expressly subordinated in right of payment to the senior debt securities. Senior debt securities rank equally in right of payment with all our other existing and future unsecured indebtedness that is not so subordinated. Because we are a holding company, our rights and the rights of our creditors, including the holders of the debt securities offered under this registration statement, to participate in the assets of any subsidiary during its liquidation or reorganization, will be subject to the prior claims of the subsidiary's creditors, except to the extent that we are ourselves a creditor with recognized claims against the subsidiary. Furthermore, on August 15, 2003, a number of our U.S. subsidiaries guaranteed our two revolving credit facilities with syndicates of banks. The claims of the beneficiaries under this guaranty will have priority,

with respect to the assets and earnings of these subsidiaries, over claims of our direct creditors, including holders of debt securities.

Covenants

Except as described in this sub-section or as otherwise provided in the applicable prospectus supplement with respect to any series of debt securities, we are not restricted by the indentures from incurring, assuming or becoming liable for any type of debt or other obligations, from paying dividends or making distributions on our capital stock or purchasing or redeeming our capital stock. The indentures do not require the maintenance of any financial ratios or specified levels of net worth or liquidity. In addition, the indentures do not contain any provisions that would require us to repurchase or redeem or otherwise modify the terms of any of the debt securities upon a change in control or other events that may adversely affect the creditworthiness of the debt securities, for example a highly leveraged transaction.

Unless otherwise indicated in the applicable prospectus supplement, covenants contained in the senior debt indenture, which are summarized below, will be applicable to the series of senior debt securities to which the prospectus supplement relates so long as any of the senior debt securities of that series are outstanding. None of the covenants summarized below will be applicable to any series of subordinated debt securities unless noted in the applicable prospectus supplement.

Limitation on Liens. If we or our majority-owned subsidiaries that meet the requirements of a "restricted subsidiary" under the senior debt indenture incur any indebtedness for borrowed money secured by an interest in or lien on any of our assets or those of any "restricted subsidiary", we are required to secure the then-outstanding senior debt securities equally and ratably with, or, at our

option, prior to, this indebtedness. Under the senior debt indenture, a restricted subsidiary is any majority-owned subsidiary which meets any of the following conditions:

our and our other majority-owned subsidiaries' investments in and advances to the subsidiary exceed 10% of our total assets and those of our subsidiaries consolidated as of the end of the most recently completed fiscal year;

our and our other majority-owned subsidiaries' proportionate share of the total assets, after intercompany eliminations, of the subsidiary exceed 10% of our total assets and those of our subsidiaries consolidated as of the end of the most recently completed fiscal year; or

our and our other majority-owned subsidiaries' equity in the income from continuing operations before income taxes, extraordinary items and cumulative effect of changes in accounting principles of the subsidiary exceeds 10% of our income and that of our subsidiaries consolidated for the most recently completed fiscal year.

We refer to any of our subsidiaries that meets any of these conditions as a "restricted subsidiary".

The preceding provisions will not require us to secure the debt securities if the liens consist of either liens securing excepted indebtedness for borrowed money or any of the following:

- (1) liens on property or assets acquired or held by us or any of our restricted subsidiaries incurred to secure the payment of all or any part of the purchase price of the property or assets or to secure indebtedness for borrowed money incurred prior to, at the time of, or within 180 days after the acquisition for the purpose of financing all or any part of the purchase price, or liens existing on any property or assets at the time of its acquisition by us or any of our restricted subsidiaries, other than any liens created in contemplation of the acquisition that were not incurred to finance all or any part of the purchase price of the property or assets (so long as the liens do not extend to or cover any property or assets of any character other than the property or assets being acquired);
- (2) liens on property or assets of a person, including any entity, other than us or any of our restricted subsidiaries, existing at the time we or our restricted subsidiaries purchase or acquire the property or asset, so long as the liens were not created in contemplation of the purchase or other acquisition and do not extend to any property or assets other than those so purchased

Edgar Filing: INTERPUBLIC GROUP OF COMPANIES INC - Form S-3

or otherwise acquired;

- (3) liens affecting property or assets of a person, other than us or any of our restricted subsidiaries, existing at the time the person merges into or consolidates with us or a restricted subsidiary or becomes a restricted subsidiary or at the time of sale, lease or other disposition of the property or assets as an entirety or substantially as an entirety to us or a restricted subsidiary, so long as the liens were not created in contemplation of the merger, consolidation or acquisition and do not extend to any property or assets other than those of the person so merged into or consolidated with, or acquired by, us or the restricted subsidiary;
- (4) liens to secure indebtedness for borrowed money owing by a restricted subsidiary to us or to a restricted subsidiary;
- (5) liens existing on the date of initial issuance of the debt securities of a particular series;
- (6) liens in favor of the United States or any of its states, territories or possessions, or the District of Columbia, or any department, agency, instrumentality or political subdivision of any of those political entities, to secure partial, progress, advance or other payments;
- (7) liens on any property to secure all or part of the cost of its alteration, repair or improvement or indebtedness for borrowed money incurred to provide funds for this purpose in a principal amount not exceeding the cost of the improvements or construction;

22

- (8) purchase money liens on personal property;
- (9) liens created in connection with a capitalized lease obligation, but only to the extent that those liens encumber property financed by that capitalized lease obligation and the principal component of that capitalized lease obligation is not increased;
- (10) liens on property arising in connection with a securities repurchase transaction;
- (11) liens, including judgment liens, arising in connection with legal proceedings, taxes, fees, assessments or other governmental charges, so long as those proceedings, taxes, fees, assessments or other governmental charges are being contested in good faith and, in the case of judgment liens, execution on the liens is stayed, and for which we have established any reserves required in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, or GAAP;
- (12) carriers', warehousemen's, mechanics', landlords', materialmens', repairmens' or other similar liens arising in the ordinary course of business which are not overdue for a period of more than 90 days or are being contested in good faith by appropriate proceedings diligently pursued, so long as

any proceedings commenced for the enforcement of the liens have been stayed or suspended within 30 days after their commencement, and

provision for the payment of the liens has been made on our books to the extent required by GAAP;
- (13) easements, rights-of-way, zoning restrictions and other similar encumbrances incurred in the ordinary course of business which, in the aggregate, are not substantial in amount, and which do not in any case materially detract from the value of the underlying property or interfere with the ordinary conduct of our business or that of any restricted subsidiary;

- (14) pledges or deposits to secure obligations under workers' compensation laws or other similar legislation, other than in respect of employee benefit plans subject to the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, or to secure public or statutory obligations;
- (15) liens securing the performance of, or payment in respect of, bids, tenders, government contracts, other than for the repayment of borrowed money, surety and appeal bonds and other obligations of a similar nature incurred in the ordinary course of business;
- (16) any interest or title of a lessor or sublessor and any restriction or encumbrance to which the interest or title of the lessor or sublessor may be subject that is incurred in the ordinary course of business;
- (17) extensions, renewals, refinancings or replacements of any lien referred to in the above items, so long as the lien does not extend to or cover any of our property or that of the applicable restricted subsidiary, as the case may be, other than the property specified in these items and improvements to that property;
- (18) any contractual right of set-off or any contractual right to charge or contractual security interest in or lien on our accounts or the accounts of any of our restricted subsidiaries to effect the payment of amounts to a depository institution whether or not due and payable in respect of any indebtedness for borrowed money or financing arrangement and any other lien arising solely by virtue of any statutory or common law provision relating to banker's liens, rights of set-off or similar rights;
- (19) liens arising in the ordinary course of banking transactions and securing indebtedness for borrowed money in an aggregate amount of not more than \$15,000,000 that matures not more than one year after the date on which it is originally incurred;

23

- (20) any liens on assets of our subsidiaries organized outside of the United States in favor of lenders under short-term working capital lines of credit entered into in the ordinary course of business; and
- (21) any liens arising out of an interest bearing cash deposit account to be established and maintained by the agent for the lenders under our 364-day credit agreement with a syndicate of banks.

We refer to the liens described above as "permitted liens."

Limitations on Sale and Lease-Back Transactions. We and our restricted subsidiaries will not sell or transfer any assets with the intention of entering into a lease of the assets for a term of more than three years unless:

the assets have not been owned by us or any of our restricted subsidiaries or have not been in full operation for more than one year prior to the sale or transfer;

we or the restricted subsidiary could incur indebtedness for borrowed money secured by a lien on the assets at least equal in amount to the "attributable debt" (as defined below) with respect to the transaction without equally and ratably securing the debt securities under the limitation on liens in the indenture;

we apply an amount equal to the value of those assets within 180 days of the sale of those assets

- (a) to the defeasance or retirement, other than any mandatory retirement, mandatory prepayment or sinking fund payment or by way of payment at maturity, of debt securities or other indebtedness for borrowed money incurred

Edgar Filing: INTERPUBLIC GROUP OF COMPANIES INC - Form S-3

by us or a restricted subsidiary that matures more than one year after the creation of the indebtedness, or

(b)
to the purchase, construction or development of other property; or

the transaction is between us and any of our restricted subsidiaries.

The term "attributable debt" means, with respect to any sale and lease-back transaction, at the time of determination, the lesser of:

the fair market value of the property subject to the transaction, as determined in good faith by our board of directors;

the present value, discounted at the lease's identified or implicit rate of interest, if determinable, of the total net amount of rent (as defined below) required to be paid under the lease during the remaining term of the lease, including any renewal term or period for which the lease has been extended; or

if the obligation with respect to the sale and lease-back transaction constitutes an obligation that we must classify and account for as a capitalized lease for financial reporting purposes in accordance with GAAP, the amount equal to the capitalized amount of the obligation determined in accordance with GAAP and included in the financial statements of the lessee.

The term "rent" does not include amounts required to be paid by the lessee, whether or not designated as rent or additional rent, on account of or contingent upon maintenance and repairs, insurance, taxes, assessments, water rates and similar charges. In the case of any lease that is terminable by the lessee upon the payment of a penalty, the net amount of rent will be the lesser of (a) the net amount determined assuming termination upon the first date the lease may be terminated, in which case the net amount will also include the amount of the penalty, but no rent will be considered as required to be paid under the lease subsequent to the first day upon which it may be so terminated and (b) the net amount determined assuming no termination.

24

Excepted Indebtedness. Notwithstanding the limitations on liens and sale and lease-back transactions described above, and without limiting our or any restricted subsidiary's ability to issue, incur, create, assume or guarantee indebtedness for borrowed money secured by permitted liens, we or any restricted subsidiary will be permitted to incur indebtedness for borrowed money secured by a lien or may enter into a sale and lease-back transaction, in either case, without regard to the restrictions contained in the preceding two paragraphs entitled "Limitations on Liens" and "Limitations on Sale and Lease-Back Transactions," if at the time the indebtedness for borrowed money is incurred and after giving effect to this indebtedness, the sum of (a) the aggregate principal amount of all indebtedness for borrowed money secured by liens, other than permitted liens, or, if less, the fair market value of the property subject to the lien, as determined in good faith by our board of directors and (b) the attributable debt of all our sale and lease-back transactions, in each case not otherwise permitted in the preceding two paragraphs, does not exceed 15% of:

our total assets and those of our majority-owned subsidiaries, including, without limitation, all items that are treated as intangibles in accordance with GAAP, less

our total liabilities and those of our majority-owned subsidiaries, including, without limitation, all deferred taxes,

in each case determined on a consolidated basis and in accordance with GAAP (but without giving effect to any cumulative translation adjustments, whether positive or negative).

Consolidation, Merger and Sale of Assets

Edgar Filing: INTERPUBLIC GROUP OF COMPANIES INC - Form S-3

We may not consolidate or merge with or into any other person, including any other entity, or convey, transfer or lease all or substantially all of our properties and assets to any person or group of affiliated persons unless

we are the continuing corporation or the person, if other than us, formed by the consolidation or with which or into which we are merged or the person to which all or substantially all our properties and assets are conveyed, transferred or leased is a corporation organized and existing under the laws of the United States, any of its states or the District of Columbia and expressly assumes our obligations under the debt securities and each indenture; and

immediately after giving effect to the transaction, there is no default and no event of default under the relevant indenture.

If we consolidate with or merge into any other corporation or convey, transfer or lease all or substantially all of our property and assets as described in the preceding paragraph, the successor corporation will succeed to and be substituted for us, and may exercise our rights and powers under the indentures, and afterwards, except in the case of a lease, we will be relieved of all obligations and covenants under the indentures and all outstanding debt securities.

Events of Default

Unless otherwise specified in the applicable prospectus supplement, "events of default" under each indenture with respect to debt securities of any series will include:

default in the payment of interest on any debt security of that series when due that continues for a period of 30 days;

default in the payment of principal of or premium on any debt security of that series when due and payable;

default in the deposit of any sinking fund payment on that series when due;

25

failure to comply in any material respect with any of our other covenants, agreements or warranties contained in the indenture for a period of 60 days after notice to us by the trustee or by the holders of at least 25% in principal amount of the debt securities of that series;

occurrence of an event of default within the meaning of another mortgage, indenture or debt instrument under which there may be issued, or by which there may be secured or evidenced, any of our indebtedness for borrowed money, other than the debt securities of that series, whether the indebtedness now exists or shall hereafter be incurred, in an amount in excess of \$20,000,000 and which results in the indebtedness becoming or being declared due and payable prior to the date on which it would otherwise become due and payable, and we have not cured the default in payment or the acceleration is not rescinded or annulled within 10 days after written notice to us from the trustee (if the event be known by it) or to us and to the trustee from the holders of at least 25% in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series; provided, however, that if, prior to a declaration of acceleration of the maturity of the debt securities of that series or the entry of judgment in favor of the trustee in a suit pursuant to the applicable indenture, the default has been remedied or cured by us or waived by the holders of the indebtedness, then the event of default will be deemed likewise to have been remedied, cured or waived; and

occurrence of an event of bankruptcy, insolvency or reorganization with respect to us and our restricted subsidiaries, as described in the applicable indenture.

No event of default with respect to a particular series of debt securities, except as to those events involving bankruptcy, insolvency or reorganization with respect to us as described in the applicable indenture, necessarily constitutes an event of default with respect to any other series of debt securities.

Edgar Filing: INTERPUBLIC GROUP OF COMPANIES INC - Form S-3

In general, each indenture obligates the trustee to give notice of a default with respect to a series of debt securities to the holders of that series. The trustee may withhold notice of any default, except a default in payment on any debt security, if the trustee determines it is in the best interest of the holders of that series to do so.

If there is a continuing event of default beyond any grace period permitted under the indenture, the trustee or the holders of at least 25% in principal amount of the debt securities of an affected series may require us to repay immediately the unpaid principal, or if the debt securities of that series are original issue discount securities, the portion of the principal amount as may be specified in the terms of that series, of and interest on all debt securities of that series. In the case of an event of default resulting from events of bankruptcy, insolvency or reorganization with respect to us, the principal, or the specified portion of the principal, of and interest on all debt securities of that series will become immediately payable without any act on the part of the trustee or any holder of debt securities. Subject to conditions, the holders of a majority in principal amount of the debt securities of a series may rescind any acceleration of repayment and may waive past defaults, except a default in payment of the principal of and any premium and interest on any debt security of that series, payments to the trustee and some covenant defaults under the terms of that series.

Under the terms of each indenture, the trustee may refuse to enforce the indenture or the debt securities unless it first receives satisfactory security or indemnity from the holders of debt securities. Subject to limitations specified in each indenture, the holders of a majority in principal amount of the debt securities of any series will have the right to direct the time, method and place of conducting any proceeding for any remedy available to the trustee or exercising any trust or power conferred on the trustee.

26

No holder of any debt security of any series will have any right to institute any proceeding, judicial or otherwise, with respect to each indenture or for the appointment of a receiver or trustee, or for any other remedy under each indenture unless:

the holder has previously given to the trustee written notice of a continuing event of default with respect to debt securities of that series, and

the holders of at least 25% in principal amount of the debt securities of that series have made a written request, and offered indemnity reasonably satisfactory to the trustee, to the trustee to institute the proceeding as trustee, and the trustee has not received from the holders of a majority in principal amount of the debt securities of that series a direction inconsistent with the request and has failed to institute the proceeding within 60 days;

it being understood and intended that no holder of any debt security who avails himself of the conditional right to seek a remedy, may disturb or prejudice the rights of any other holders of any series of debt securities.

Despite the enforcement restrictions described above, the holder of any debt security will have an absolute and unconditional right to receive payment of the principal of and any premium and interest on the debt security on or after the due dates expressed in the debt security and to institute suit for the enforcement of any payment.

Each indenture requires us to furnish to the trustee annually a certificate as to our compliance with the indenture.

Modification of the Indentures

Each indenture permits us and the relevant trustee to amend the indenture without the consent of the holders of any of the debt securities:

to evidence the succession of another corporation and the assumption of our covenants under that indenture and the debt securities;

to add to our covenants for the benefit of the holders of debt securities or to the events of default or to surrender any of our rights or powers under the applicable indenture or to make other changes which would not adversely affect in any material respect the holder of any outstanding debt securities;

Edgar Filing: INTERPUBLIC GROUP OF COMPANIES INC - Form S-3

to cure any ambiguity, defect or inconsistency; and

for other purposes as described in each indenture.

Each indenture also permits us and the trustee, with the consent of the holders of a majority in principal amount of the debt securities of each series affected by the amendment, with each affected series voting as a class, to add any provisions to or change or eliminate any of the provisions of the indenture or any supplemental indenture or to modify the rights of the holders of debt securities of each series, provided, however, that, without the consent of the holder of each debt security so affected, no amendment may:

change the maturity of the principal of or any premium on or any installment of principal or interest on any debt security;

reduce the principal amount of any debt security, or the rate of interest or any premium payable upon the redemption, repurchase or repayment of any debt security, or change the manner in which the amount of any of these items is determined;

reduce the amount of principal payable upon acceleration of maturity;

27

change the place of payment where, or the currency or currency unit in which, any debt security or any premium or interest on the debt security is payable;

reduce the percentage in principal amount of affected debt securities the consent of whose holders is required for amendment of the indenture or for waiver of compliance with some provisions of the indenture or for waiver of some defaults;

change our obligation with respect to the redemption provisions of the indenture in a manner adverse to the holder; or

modify the provisions relating to waiver of some defaults or any of the provisions relating to amendment of the indenture, except to increase the percentage required for consent or to provide that some other provisions of the indenture may not be modified or waived.

The holders of a majority in principal amount of the debt securities of any series may, on behalf of the holders of all debt securities of that series, waive, insofar as is applicable to that series, our compliance with some restrictive provisions of the indentures.

We may not amend the subordinated debt indenture to alter the subordination of any outstanding subordinated debt securities in a manner adverse to the holders of senior indebtedness without the written consent of the holders of senior indebtedness then outstanding under the terms of that senior indebtedness.

Defeasance and Covenant Defeasance

We may elect either:

to be discharged from all our obligations in respect of debt securities of any series, except for our obligations to register the transfer or exchange of debt securities, to replace temporary, destroyed, stolen, lost or mutilated debt securities, to maintain paying agencies and to hold monies for payment in trust (we will refer to this discharge as "defeasance"), or

to be released from our obligations to comply with some restrictive covenants applicable to the debt securities of any series (we will refer to this release as "covenant defeasance");

in either case upon the deposit with the trustee, in trust, of money and/or U.S. government obligations which will provide money sufficient to pay all principal of and any premium and interest on the debt securities of that series when due. We may establish this trust only if, among other things, we have delivered an opinion of counsel to the trustee to the effect that the holders of debt securities of the series (a) will not recognize income, gain or loss for federal income tax purposes as a result of the deposit, defeasance or covenant defeasance and (b) will be subject to federal income tax on the same amounts, and in the same manner and at the same times as would have been the case if the deposit, defeasance or covenant defeasance had not occurred. The opinion, in the case of defeasance under the first bullet point above, must refer to and be based upon a ruling of the Internal Revenue Service or a change in applicable federal income tax laws occurring after the date of the relevant indenture.

We may exercise the defeasance option with respect to debt securities notwithstanding our prior exercise of the covenant defeasance option. If we exercise the defeasance option, payment of the debt securities may not be accelerated because of a default. If we exercise the covenant defeasance option, payment of the debt securities may not be accelerated by reason of a default with respect to the covenants to which covenant defeasance is applicable. However, if the acceleration were to occur by reason of another default, the realizable value at the acceleration date of the money and U.S. government obligations in the defeasance trust could be less than the principal and interest then due on the debt securities, in that the required deposit in the defeasance trust is based upon scheduled cash flow rather than market value, which will vary depending upon interest rates and other factors.

28

Regarding the Trustee

The Bank of New York will serve as trustee under both indentures.

Each indenture contains limitations on the rights of the trustee, should the trustee become our creditor, to obtain payment of claims in some cases, or to realize on specified property received in respect of these claims, as security or otherwise. The trustee and its affiliates may engage in, and will be permitted to continue to engage in, other transactions with us and our affiliates. However, if the trustee acquires any conflicting interest as described under the Trust Indenture Act of 1939, it must eliminate the conflict or resign.

29

DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED STOCK AND DEPOSITARY SHARES

Description of Preferred Stock

Pursuant to our certificate of incorporation, our board of directors has the authority, without further stockholder action, to issue up to 20,000,000 shares of preferred stock without par value in one or more series and on the terms and conditions determined by our board of directors. In connection with the creation of any class or series of preferred stock, our board of directors may specify the designation or title of the shares, its powers and preferences, any relative, participating, optional or other special rights and any qualifications, limitations or restrictions. If we offer preferred stock, the specific terms of the preferred stock will be described in the prospectus supplement, including the following terms:

the number and designation or title of the shares;

any liquidation preference per share;

any dividend rate or rates and the dates of payment (or the method for determining the dividend rates or dates of payment), as well as the place or places of payment;

any voting rights,

any redemption, repayment or sinking fund provisions;

whether the preferred stock is convertible or exchangeable and, if so, the securities or rights into which the preferred stock is convertible or exchangeable (which could include any securities issued by us or any third party, including any of our affiliates), and the terms and conditions of conversion or exchange;

any additional rights, preferences, qualifications and limitations of the preferred stock.

As of the date of this prospectus, there were no shares of our preferred stock outstanding.

In this section, the terms "our" and "us" refer solely to The Interpublic Group of Companies, Inc. and not its subsidiaries.

Description of Depositary Shares

We may, at our option, elect to offer fractional shares of preferred stock, or "depositary shares," rather than full shares of preferred stock. In that event, we will issue receipts for depositary shares, each of which will represent a fraction of a share of a particular series of preferred stock as described in the applicable prospectus supplement.

The shares of any series of preferred stock represented by depositary shares will be deposited under a deposit agreement between us and the depositary named in the applicable prospectus supplement. Subject to the terms of the deposit agreement, each owner of a depositary share will be entitled, in proportion, to all the rights and preferences of the preferred stock, including dividend, voting, redemption, subscription and liquidation rights. The terms of any depositary shares will be set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement and the provisions of the deposit agreement, which will be filed with the SEC.

30

DESCRIPTION OF COMMON STOCK

General

We are incorporated in the State of Delaware. The rights of our stockholders are generally covered by Delaware law and our restated certificate of incorporation and by-laws. The terms of our common stock are therefore subject to Delaware law, including the Delaware General Corporation Law and the common and constitutional law of Delaware. Our restated certificate of incorporation and by-laws are filed as exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus forms a part and we encourage you to read them.

We are authorized to issue up to 800,000,000 shares of common stock with a par value of \$0.10 per share. As of August 31, 2003, there were 391,413,309 shares of common stock issued and outstanding. All outstanding shares of our common stock are fully paid and non-assessable. Our common stock is traded on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol "IPG."

Certificates

Our common stock is issued in registered form. Every holder of our common stock is entitled to a share certificate.

Meetings

Meetings of our stockholders are held at least annually. Written notice must be mailed to each stockholder entitled to vote not less than ten nor more than 60 days before the date of the meeting. The presence in person or by proxy of the holders of record of a majority of our issued and outstanding shares entitled to vote at the meeting constitutes a quorum for the transaction of business at meetings of the stockholders. Special meetings of the stockholders may be called for any purpose by our board of directors and must be called by the chairman of the board of directors or the secretary upon a written request, stating the purpose of the meeting, submitted by a majority of the board of directors or by the holders of a majority of the outstanding shares of all classes of capital stock entitled to vote at the meeting.

Voting Rights

Edgar Filing: INTERPUBLIC GROUP OF COMPANIES INC - Form S-3

Each share of common stock is entitled to one vote, and a majority of the votes cast with respect to a matter will be sufficient to authorize action upon that matter. The holders of our common stock may vote by proxy. Directors are elected by a majority of the votes cast. Stockholders do not have the right to cumulate their votes in the election of directors. For that reason, holders of a majority of the shares of common stock entitled to vote in any election of directors may elect all of the directors standing for election.

No Preemptive or Conversion Rights

Our common stock will not entitle its holders to any preemption, redemption, conversion or other subscription rights.

Assets Upon Dissolution

In the event of our liquidation, dissolution or winding-up holders of common stock would be entitled to receive proportionately any assets legally available for distribution to our shareholders with respect to shares held by them, subject to any prior or equal rights of any of our preferred stock then outstanding.

31

Distributions

Holders of common stock will be entitled to receive ratably the dividends or distributions that our board of directors may declare out of funds legally available for these payments. The payment of distributions by us is subject to the restrictions of Delaware law applicable to the declaration of distributions by a corporation. Under Delaware law, a corporation may not pay a dividend out of net profits if the capital stock of the corporation is less than the stated amount of capital represented by the issued and outstanding stock of all classes having a preference upon the distribution of the corporation's assets. In addition, the payment of distributions to shareholders is subject to any prior or equal rights of outstanding preferred stock.

Dividend Policy

No dividend was paid in the first half of 2003. Our future dividend policy will be determined on a quarter-by-quarter basis and will depend on earnings, financial condition, capital requirements and other factors. It will also be subject to the restrictions under the amended revolving credit facilities with syndicates of banks, which limit our ability to declare or pay dividends. Under these facilities, our future earnings performance will determine the permitted levels of dividend payments (currently the permitted level of dividend payments and share buybacks is \$25 million) and all limitations on dividend payments expire when earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA), as defined in the credit facilities, exceed \$1.3 billion for four consecutive quarters.

Transfers

Our by-laws do not allow our board of directors to refuse to register transfer of shares.

Other Rights

Holders of our common stock have no preemption, redemption, conversion or other subscription rights.

32

DESCRIPTION OF WARRANTS

This section describes the general terms that will apply to any warrants for the purchase of common stock or preferred stock that may be offered by us, which we refer to in this prospectus as "stock warrants" or for the purchase of debt securities that may be offered by us, which we refer to as "debt warrants". In this section, the terms "we", "us" and "Interpublic" refer solely to The Interpublic Group of Companies, Inc. and not its subsidiaries.

Edgar Filing: INTERPUBLIC GROUP OF COMPANIES INC - Form S-3

Warrants may be offered separately or together with common stock, preferred stock or debt securities, as the case may be. Each series of warrants will be issued under a separate warrant agreement to be entered into between us and one or more banks or trust companies acting as warrant agent. The applicable prospectus supplement will include details of the warrant agreements covering the warrants being offered. The warrant agent will act solely as our agent and will not assume a relationship of agency with any holders of warrant certificates or beneficial owners of warrants. The following sets forth certain general terms and provisions of the warrants offered under this prospectus. The specific terms of the warrants, and the extent to which the general terms described in this section apply to those warrants, will be set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement.

Stock Warrants

The particular terms of each issue of stock warrants will be described in the related prospectus supplement. This description will include, where applicable:

the designation and aggregate number of stock warrants;

the price at which the stock warrants will be offered;

the currency or currencies in which the stock warrants will be offered;

the designation and terms of the common or preferred stock purchasable upon exercise of the stock warrants;

the date on which the right to exercise the stock warrants will commence and the date on which the right will expire;

the number of common or preferred stock that may be purchased upon exercise of each stock warrant and the price at which and currency or currencies in which that amount of securities may be purchased upon exercise of each stock warrant;

the designation and terms of any securities with which the stock warrants will be offered, and the number of the stock warrants that will be offered with each security;

any date or dates on or after which the stock warrants and the related securities will be transferable separately;

whether the warrants are subject to redemption or call and, if so, the terms of the redemption or call provisions;

material U.S. tax consequences of owning the warrants; and

any other material terms or conditions of the warrants.

Debt Warrants

The particular terms of each issue of debt warrants will be described in the related prospectus supplement. This description will include, where applicable:

the designation and aggregate number of debt warrants;

the price at which the debt warrants will be offered;

the currency or currencies in which the debt warrants will be offered;

the aggregate principal amount, currency or currencies, denominations and terms of the series of debt securities that may be purchased upon exercise of the debt warrants;

the designation and terms of any securities with which the debt warrants are being offered and the number of the debt warrants that will be offered with each security;

any date or dates on or after which the debt warrants and the related securities will be transferable separately;

the principal amount of debt securities that may be purchased upon exercise of each debt warrant and the price at which and currency or currencies in which that principal amount of securities may be purchased upon exercise of each debt warrant;

the date on which the right to exercise the debt warrants will commence and the date on which the right will expire;

the minimum or maximum amount of debt warrants that may be exercised at any one time;

whether the warrants will be subject to redemption or call, and, if so, the terms of the redemption or call provisions;

material U.S. tax consequences of owning the debt warrants; and

any other material terms or conditions of the debt warrants.

DESCRIPTION OF STOCK PURCHASE CONTRACTS AND STOCK PURCHASE UNITS

We may issue stock purchase contracts, including contracts obligating holders to purchase from us, and us to sell to the holders, a specified number of common stock or preferred stock, at a future date or dates, or similar contracts issued on a "prepaid" basis, which in each case are referred to in this prospectus as "stock purchase contracts." The price per common stock or preferred stock, as the case may be, and the number of common stock or preferred stock, as the case may be, may be fixed at the time the stock purchase contracts are issued or may be determined by reference to a specific formula set forth in the stock purchase contracts. The stock purchase contracts will require either the stock purchase price be paid at the time the stock purchase contracts are issued or that payment be made at a specified future date. The stock purchase contracts may be issued separately or as part of units consisting of a stock purchase contract and our debt securities or obligations of third parties (including U.S. treasury securities), which are referred to in this prospectus as "stock purchase units," and may or may not serve as collateral for a holder's obligations. The stock purchase contracts may require holders to secure their obligations under those contracts in a specified manner. The stock purchase contracts also may require us to make periodic payments to the holders of the stock purchase contracts or vice versa, and these payments may be unsecured or refunded on some basis.

The applicable prospectus supplement will describe the terms of the stock purchase contracts or stock purchase units, as well as material U.S. federal income tax considerations applicable to the holders of the stock purchase contract and the stock purchase units.

The preceding description and any description of stock purchase contracts or stock purchase units in the applicable prospectus supplement represent a summary of the material provisions of the stock purchase contracts, and, if applicable, collateral, depository or custodial

arrangements relating to the stock purchase contracts or stock purchase units. For further information, you should read the form of stock purchase contract and any related arrangement and the form of stock purchase unit agreement, to be filed by amendment or as an exhibit to a document filed under the Securities Act and incorporated by reference in connection with any offering of securities. They are also available as set forth under "Where You Can Find More Information."

In this section, the terms "we," "us" and "our" refer solely to The Interpublic Group of Companies, Inc. and not its subsidiaries.

BOOK-ENTRY PROCEDURES

The securities offered by this prospectus may be issued in the form of one or more global certificates, each of which we refer to as a global security, registered in the name of a depository or a nominee of a depository and held through one or more international and domestic clearing systems, principally, the book-entry system operated by The Depository Trust Company, or "DTC", in the United States, and Euroclear Bank S.A./N.V., or the "Euroclear Operator", as operator of the Euroclear System, or "Euroclear", and Clearstream Banking S.A., or "Clearstream", in Europe. No person who acquires an interest in these global securities will be entitled to receive a certificate representing the person's interest in the global securities except as set forth herein or in the applicable prospectus supplement. Unless and until definitive securities are issued, all references to actions by holders of securities issued in global form refers to actions taken by DTC, Euroclear or Clearstream, as the case may be, upon instructions from their respective participants, and all references herein to payments and notices to the holders refers to payments and notices to DTC or its nominee, Euroclear or Clearstream, as the case may be, as the registered holder of the offered securities. Electronic securities and payment transfer, processing, depository and custodial links have been established among these systems and others, either directly or indirectly, which enable global securities to be issued, held and transferred among the clearing system through these links.

Although DTC, Euroclear and Clearstream have agreed to the procedures described below in order to facilitate transfers of global securities among participants of DTC, Euroclear and Clearstream, they are under no obligation to perform or continue to perform these procedures and these procedures may be modified or discontinued at any time. Neither we, nor any trustee, nor any registrar and transfer agent with respect to securities offered hereby will have any responsibility for the performance by DTC, Euroclear or Clearstream or their respective participants or indirect participants or the respective obligations under the rules and procedures governing their operations.

Unless otherwise specified in the applicable prospectus supplement, the securities in the form of a global security will be registered in the name of DTC or a nominee of DTC.

DTC

DTC has advised us as follows: DTC is a limited-purpose trust company organized under the laws of the State of New York, a "banking organization" within the meaning of the New York Banking Law, a member of the Federal Reserve System, a "clearing corporation" within the meaning of the New York Uniform Commercial Code and a "clearing agency" registered pursuant to the provisions of Section 17A of the Exchange Act. DTC was created to hold securities for its participating organizations, or "DTC participants," and to facilitate the clearance and settlement of securities transactions between DTC participants through electronic book-entry changes in accounts of the DTC participants, thereby eliminating the need for physical movement of certificates. DTC participants include securities brokers and dealers, brokers, banks, trust companies and clearing corporations and may include certain other organizations. Indirect access to the DTC system is also available to others, or "indirect DTC participants," for example banks, brokers, dealers and trust companies that clear through or maintain a custodial relationship with a DTC participant, either directly or indirectly.

Under the rules, regulations and procedures creating and affecting DTC and its operations, DTC is required to make book-entry transfers between DTC participants on whose behalf it acts with respect to the securities and is required to receive and transmit distributions of principal of and interest on the securities. DTC participants and indirect DTC participants with which investors have accounts with respect to the securities similarly are required to make book-entry transfers and receive and transmit payments on behalf of their respective investors.

Because DTC can only act on behalf of DTC participants, who in turn act on behalf of indirect DTC participants and certain banks, the ability of a person having a beneficial interest in a security

Edgar Filing: INTERPUBLIC GROUP OF COMPANIES INC - Form S-3

held in DTC to transfer or pledge that interest to persons or entities that do not participate in the DTC system, or otherwise take actions in respect of that interest, may be affected by the lack of a physical certificate of that interest. The laws of some states of the United States require that certain persons take physical delivery of securities in definitive form. Consequently, the ability to transfer beneficial interests in a security held in DTC to those persons may be limited.

DTC has advised us that it will take any action permitted to be taken by a holder of securities (including, without limitation, the presentation of securities for exchange) only at the direction of one or more participants to whose account with DTC interests in the relevant securities are credited, and only in respect of the portion of the aggregate principal amount of the securities as to which that participant or those participants has or have given the direction. However, in certain circumstances, DTC will exchange the global securities held by it for certificated securities, which it will distribute to its participants.

Euroclear

Euroclear was created in 1968 to hold securities for participants of Euroclear and to clear and settle transactions between Euroclear participants through simultaneous electronic book-entry delivery against payment, thus eliminating the need for physical movement of certificates and risk from lack of simultaneous transfers of securities and cash. Transactions may now be settled in many currencies, including United States dollars and Japanese yen. Euroclear provides various other services, including securities lending and borrowing and interfaces with domestic markets in several countries generally similar to the arrangements for cross-market transfers with DTC described below.

Euroclear is operated by the Euroclear Operator, under contract with Euroclear Clearance System plc, a U.K. corporation, or the "Euroclear Clearance System." The Euroclear Operator conducts all operations, and all Euroclear securities clearance accounts and Euroclear cash accounts are accounts with the Euroclear Operator, not Euroclear Clearance System. The Euroclear Clearance System establishes policy for Euroclear on behalf of Euroclear participants. Euroclear participants include banks (including central banks), securities brokers and dealers and other professional financial intermediaries and may include the underwriters. Indirect access to Euroclear is also available to other firms that clear through or maintain a custodial relationship with a Euroclear participant, either directly or indirectly. Euroclear is an indirect participant in DTC.

The Euroclear Operator is a Belgian bank. The Belgian Banking Commission and the National Bank of Belgium regulate and examine the Euroclear Operator.

The Terms and Conditions Governing Use of Euroclear and the related Operating Procedures of Euroclear and applicable Belgian law govern securities clearance accounts and cash accounts with the Euroclear Operator. Specifically, these terms and conditions govern:

transfers of securities and cash within Euroclear;

withdrawal of securities and cash from Euroclear; and

receipts of payments with respect to securities in Euroclear.

All securities in Euroclear are held on a fungible basis without attribution of specific certificates to specific securities clearance accounts. The Euroclear Operator acts under the terms and conditions only on behalf of Euroclear participants and has no record of or relationship with persons holding securities through Euroclear participants.

Distributions with respect to securities held beneficially through Euroclear will be credited to the cash accounts of Euroclear participants in accordance with Euroclear's terms and conditions, to the extent received by the Euroclear Operator and by Euroclear.

Clearstream

Clearstream was incorporated as a limited liability company under Luxembourg law. Clearstream is owned by Cedel International, *société anonyme*, and Deutsche Börse AG. The shareholders of these two entities are banks, securities dealers and financial institutions.

Clearstream holds securities for its customers and facilitates the clearance and settlement of securities transactions between Clearstream customers through electronic book-entry changes in accounts of Clearstream customers, thus eliminating the need for physical movement of certificates. Clearstream provides to its customers, among other things, services for safekeeping, administration, clearance and settlement of internationally traded securities, securities lending and borrowing and collateral management. Clearstream interfaces with domestic markets in a number of countries. Clearstream has established an electronic bridge with the Euroclear Operator to facilitate settlement of trades between Clearstream and Euroclear.

As a registered bank in Luxembourg, Clearstream is subject to regulation by the Luxembourg Commission for the Supervision of the Financial Sector. Clearstream participants are recognized financial institutions around the world, including underwriters, securities brokers and dealers, banks, trust companies and clearing corporations. In the United States, Clearstream participants are limited to securities brokers and dealers and banks, and may include the underwriters for the Securities. Other institutions that maintain a custodial relationship with a Clearstream participant may obtain indirect access to Clearstream. Clearstream is an indirect participant in DTC.

Distributions with respect to the securities held beneficially through Clearstream will be credited to cash accounts of Clearstream participants in accordance with its rules and procedures, to the extent received by Clearstream.

38

PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION

We may sell the securities described in this prospectus to or through underwriters, agents or dealers or directly to one or more purchasers without using underwriters, agents or dealers.

The applicable prospectus supplement will identify or describe:

any underwriters, agents or dealers;

their compensation;

the net proceeds to us;

the purchase price of the securities;

the initial public offering price of the securities; and

any exchange on which the securities are listed or to which application will be made to list the securities.

We may designate agents to solicit purchases for the period of their appointment to sell securities on a continuing basis, including pursuant to "at the market offerings". Unless otherwise indicated in the related prospectus supplement, any agent will be acting on a best efforts basis for the period of its appointment.

We may offer these securities to the public through underwriting syndicates represented by managing underwriters or through underwriters without a syndicate. If underwriters are used for a sale of securities, the securities will be acquired by the underwriters for their own account. The underwriters may resell the securities in one or more transactions, including negotiated transactions at a fixed public offering price or at varying prices determined at the time of sale. Unless otherwise indicated in the related prospectus supplement, the obligations of the underwriters to purchase the securities will be subject to various conditions precedent and the underwriters will be obligated to purchase all the relevant securities offered if any of the securities are purchased. Underwriters may sell securities to or through dealers, and the dealers may receive compensation in the form of discounts, concessions or commissions from the underwriters and/or commissions from the purchasers for whom they may act as agent. Any initial public offering price and any discounts or concessions allowed or reallocated or paid to dealers may be changed from time to time.

Edgar Filing: INTERPUBLIC GROUP OF COMPANIES INC - Form S-3

Underwriters and agents may from time to time purchase and sell the securities described in this prospectus and the relevant prospectus supplement in the secondary market, but are not obligated to do so. No assurance can be given that there will be a secondary market for the securities or liquidity in the secondary market if one develops. From time to time, underwriters and agents may make a market in the securities.

In order to facilitate the offering of the securities, the underwriters may engage in transactions that stabilize, maintain or otherwise affect the price of these securities or any other securities the prices of which may be used to determine payments on these securities. Specifically, the underwriters may over-allot in connection with the offering, creating a short position in the securities for their own accounts. In addition, to cover over-allotments or to stabilize the price of the securities or of any other securities, the underwriters may bid for, and purchase, the securities or any other securities in the open market. Finally, in any offering of the securities through a syndicate of underwriters, the underwriting syndicate may reclaim selling concessions allowed to an underwriter or a dealer for distributing the securities in the offering, if the syndicate repurchases previously distributed securities in transactions to cover syndicate short positions, in stabilization transactions or otherwise. Any of these activities may stabilize or maintain the market price of the securities above independent market levels. The underwriters are not required to engage in these activities, and may end any of these activities at any time.

39

One or more firms, referred to as "remarketing firms," may also offer or sell the securities, if the prospectus supplement so indicates, in connection with a remarketing arrangement contemplated by the terms of the securities. Remarketing firms will act as principals for their own accounts or as agents. The prospectus supplement will identify any remarketing firm and the terms of any agreement into which it may have entered with us, and will describe the remarketing firm's compensation. Remarketing firms may be deemed to be underwriters in connection with the remarketing of the securities. If required by applicable securities laws, this prospectus and an applicable prospectus supplement may also be delivered in connection with the exercise by a holder of an early settlement option or similar feature of share purchase or similar contracts.

Underwriters named in a prospectus supplement are, and dealers and agents named in a prospectus supplement may be, deemed to be "underwriters" within the meaning of the Securities Act of 1933 in connection with the securities offered thereby, and any discounts or commissions they receive from us and any profit on their resale of the securities may be deemed to be underwriting discounts and commissions under the Securities Act of 1933. We may have agreements with the underwriters, agents and dealers to indemnify them against certain civil liabilities, including liabilities under the Securities Act of 1933, or to contribute to payments they may be required to make in respect of these liabilities. Underwriters, agents and dealers may engage in transactions with or perform services for Interpublic or our subsidiaries and affiliates in the ordinary course of businesses.

Unless indicated in the applicable prospectus supplement, we do not expect to apply to list the securities on a securities exchange, except for shares of our common stock, which are listed on the New York Stock Exchange.

VALIDITY OF SECURITIES

The validity of the securities described in this prospectus will be passed upon for us by Nicholas J. Camera, Esq., our Senior Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary.

EXPERTS

The consolidated financial statements incorporated in this prospectus by reference to Interpublic's Current Report on Form 8-K, filed September 9, 2003, except as they relate to Deutsch, Inc. and subsidiary and affiliates as of and for the year ended December 31, 2000, and True North Communications Inc. as of and for the year ended December 31, 2000, have been audited by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, independent accountants, and, insofar as they relate to Deutsch, Inc. and subsidiary and affiliates, and True North Communications Inc., by J.H. Cohn LLP, and Arthur Andersen LLP, respectively, independent accountants, whose reports thereon have been incorporated in this prospectus. The financial statements have been incorporated in reliance on the reports of these independent accountants given on the authority of these firms as experts in accounting and auditing. The Report of Arthur Andersen LLP is a copy of the report previously issued by that entity and has not been reissued by it.

Arthur Andersen has informed us that it can no longer provide any consent to the incorporation by reference of its reports into our existing or future registration statements. Arthur Andersen has been found guilty of federal obstruction of justice charges. Events arising in connection with this conviction and related matters are reasonably likely to materially and adversely affect the ability of Arthur Andersen to satisfy any claims that may be made by investors or by us with respect to its audit reports and the related financial data included in our annual reports and

incorporated by reference into this registration statement. Additionally, because Arthur Andersen is unable to provide us with a consent for the inclusion of its reports, investors may not be able to sue Arthur Andersen pursuant to Section 11 of the Securities Act, and rights of recovery under that section may be limited.

PART II

INFORMATION NOT REQUIRED IN PROSPECTUS

Item 14. Other Expenses of Issuance and Distribution

The following table sets forth the approximate amount of fees and expenses payable by Interpublic in connection with this registration statement and the distribution of the securities registered hereby. All of the amounts shown are estimates except the SEC registration fee.

| | | |
|--|----|---------|
| SEC registration fee | \$ | 145,620 |
| Accountant's Fees and Expenses | \$ | 20,000 |
| Attorneys' Fees and Expenses | \$ | 150,000 |
| Printing and engraving expenses | \$ | 25,000 |
| Trustee's and Transfer Agent's Fees and Expenses | \$ | 40,000 |
| Miscellaneous | \$ | 14,380 |
| | | <hr/> |
| Total | \$ | 395,000 |
| | | <hr/> |

Item 15. Indemnification of Directors and Officers.

Section 145 of Title 8 of the General Corporation Law of the State of Delaware ("GCL") gives a corporation power to indemnify any person who was or is a party or is threatened to be made a party to any threatened, pending or completed action, suit or proceeding, whether civil, criminal, administrative or investigative (other than an action by or in the right of the corporation) by reason of the fact that the person is or was a director, officer, employee or agent of the corporation, or is or was serving at the request of the corporation as a director, officer, employee or agent of another corporation, partnership, joint venture, trust or other enterprise, against expenses (including attorneys' fees), judgments, fines and amounts paid in settlement actually and reasonably incurred by him in connection with such action, suit or proceeding, provided that the director, officer, employee or agent acted in good faith and in a manner reasonably believed to be in or not opposed by the best interests of the corporation, and, with respect to any criminal action or proceeding, provided that the director, officer, employee or agent had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful. The same Section also gives a corporation power to indemnify any person who was or is a party or is threatened to be made a party to any threatened, pending or completed action or suit by or in the right of the corporation to procure a judgment in its favor by reason of the fact that the person is or was a director, officer, employee or agent of the corporation, or is or was serving at the request of the corporation as a director, officer, employee or agent of another corporation, partnership, joint venture, trust or other enterprise against expenses (including attorneys' fees) actually and reasonably incurred by the person in connection with the defense or settlement of such action or suit if he acted in good faith and in a manner reasonably believed to be in or not opposed to the best interests of the corporation, except that no indemnification shall be made in respect of any claim, issue or matter as to which the person shall have been adjudged to be liable to the corporation, unless and only to the extent that the Court of Chancery or the court in which such action or suit was brought shall determine upon application that, despite the adjudication of liability but in view of all the circumstances of the case, the person is fairly and reasonably entitled to indemnity for the expenses which the Court of Chancery or such other court shall deem proper. Section 145 of the GCL further provides that, to the extent that a director, officer, employee or agent of a corporation has been successful on the merits or otherwise in defense of any such action, suit or proceeding, or in defense of any claim, issue or matter therein, he or she shall be indemnified against expenses (including attorneys' fees) actually and reasonably incurred by him or her in connection therewith.

The Registrant's by-laws contain specific authority for indemnification by the Registrant of current and former directors, officers, employees or agents of the Registrant on terms that have been derived from Section 145 of Title 8 of the GCL.

Edgar Filing: INTERPUBLIC GROUP OF COMPANIES INC - Form S-3

Item 16. Exhibits.

The following is a list of all exhibits filed as a part of this registration statement on Form S-3, including those incorporated in this registration statement by reference.

| Exhibit Number | Description of Exhibits |
|-------------------|--|
| 1.1* | Form of Underwriting Agreement with respect to common shares. |
| 1.2* | Form of Underwriting Agreement with respect to preferred shares. |
| 1.3* | Form of Underwriting Agreement with respect to debt securities. |
| 1.4* | Form of Underwriting Agreement with respect to stock purchase contracts. |
| 1.5* | Form of Underwriting Agreement with respect to stock purchase units. |
| 3.1 | Restated Certificate of Incorporation of the Registrant, as amended, is incorporated by reference to Exhibit 3(i) to the Registrant's Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended June 30, 1999 (File Number 001-06686). |
| 3.2 | Bylaws of the Registrant, amended as of July 31, 2003, are incorporated by reference to Exhibit 3(ii) to the Registrant's Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended June 30, 2003 (File Number 001-06686; Film Number 03845132). |
| 4.1* | Form of Senior Debt Indenture to be entered into between the Registrant and The Bank of New York, as Trustee, including form of senior debt securities. |
| 4.2* | Form of Subordinated Debt Indenture to be entered into between the Registrant and The Bank of New York, as Trustee, including form of subordinated debt securities. |
| 4.3* | Form of Warrant Agreement for common stock. |
| 4.4* | Form of Warrant Agreement for preferred stock. |
| 4.5* | Form of Warrant Agreement for debt securities. |
| 4.6* | Form of Deposit Agreement. |
| 4.7* | Form of Stock Purchase Contract and any related Custody Agreement |
| 4.8* | Form of Stock Purchase Unit Agreement. |
| 5.1 | Opinion of Nicholas J. Camera, Esq., Senior Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary of the Registrant. |
| 12.1 | Statement of Computation of Ratio of Earnings to Fixed Charges. |
| 23.1 | Consent of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP. |
| 23.2 | Consent of J.H. Cohn LLP. |
| 23.3 | Consent of Nicholas J. Camera, Esq., Senior Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary of the Registrant (included in Exhibit 5.1). |
| 24.1 | Power of Attorney (included on signature pages of this Part II). |
| II-2 | |
| 25.1 | Statement of Eligibility of Trustee on Form T-1 under the Trust Indenture Act of 1939, as amended, relating to the Senior Debt Indenture, dated September 24, 2003, between the Registrant and the Bank of New York, as trustee. |

Edgar Filing: INTERPUBLIC GROUP OF COMPANIES INC - Form S-3

25.2 Statement of Eligibility of Trustee on Form T-1 under the Trust Indenture Act of 1939, as amended, relating to the Subordinated Debt Indenture, dated September 24, 2003, between the Registrant and the Bank of New York, as trustee.

*

To be filed by amendment or as an exhibit to a document filed under the Securities Act and incorporated by reference in connection with any offering of securities.

Item 17. Undertakings.

(a) The undersigned Registrant hereby undertakes:

(1) To file, during any period in which offers or sales are being made, a post-effective amendment to this registration statement:

(i) To include any prospectus required by Section 10(a)(3) of the Securities Act;

(ii) To reflect in the prospectus any facts or events arising after the effective date of this registration statement (or the most recent post-effective amendment thereof) which, individually or in the aggregate, represent a fundamental change in the information set forth in this registration statement. Notwithstanding the foregoing, any increase or decrease in volume of securities offered (if the total dollar value of securities offered would not exceed that which was registered) and any deviation from the low or high end of the estimated maximum offering range may be reflected in the form of prospectus filed with the SEC pursuant to Rule 424(b) if, in the aggregate, the changes in volume and price represent no more than a 20% change in the maximum aggregate offering price set forth in the "Calculation of Registration Fee" table in the effective registration statement; and

(iii) To include any material information with respect to the plan of distribution not previously disclosed in this registration statement or any material change to the information in the registration statement;

provided, however, that paragraphs (a)(1)(i) and (a)(1)(ii) do not apply if the information required to be included in a post-effective amendment by those paragraphs is contained in periodic reports filed with or furnished to the SEC by the Registrant pursuant to Section 13 or Section 15(d) of the Exchange Act that are incorporated by reference in the registration statement;

(2) That, for the purpose of determining any liability under the Securities Act, each post-effective amendment shall be deemed to be a new registration statement relating to the securities offered in this prospectus, and the offering of the securities at that time shall be deemed to be the initial bona fide offering thereof; and

(3) To remove from registration by means of a post-effective amendment any of the securities being registered which remain unsold at the termination of the offering; and

(4) That, for purposes of determining any liability under the Securities Act, each filing of the Registrant's annual report pursuant to Section 13(a) or Section 15(d) of the Exchange Act that is incorporated by reference in the registration statement shall be deemed to be a new registration statement relating to the securities offered in this prospectus, and the offering of the securities at that time shall be deemed to be the initial bona fide offering thereof.

II-3

(b) Insofar as indemnification for liabilities arising under the Securities Act may be permitted to directors, officers and controlling persons of the Registrant pursuant to its articles, bylaws or otherwise, the Registrant has been advised that in the opinion of the SEC such indemnification is against public policy as expressed in the Securities Act and is, therefore, unenforceable. In the event that a claim for indemnification against such liabilities (other than the payment by the Registrant of expenses incurred or paid by a director, officer or controlling person of the Registrant in the successful defense of any action, suit or proceeding) is asserted by the director, officer or controlling person in connection with the securities being registered, the Registrant will, unless in the opinion of its counsel the matter has been settled by controlling precedent, submit to a court of appropriate jurisdiction the question whether the indemnification by it is against public policy as expressed in the

Securities Act and will be governed by the final adjudication of such issue.

II-4

SIGNATURES

Pursuant to the requirements of the Securities Act of 1933, the Registrant certifies that it has reasonable grounds to believe that it meets all of the requirements for filing on Form S-3 and has duly caused this registration statement to be signed on its behalf by the undersigned, thereunto duly authorized, in the City of New York, State of New York, on October 2, 2003.

THE INTERPUBLIC GROUP OF COMPANIES, INC.

By: /s/ NICHOLAS J. CAMERA

Name: Nicholas J. Camera
 Title: *Senior Vice President, General Counsel
 and Secretary*

POWER OF ATTORNEY

KNOW ALL PERSONS BY THESE PRESENTS, that each individual whose signature appears below hereby constitutes and appoints Nicholas J. Camera, David A. Bell or Christopher J. Coughlin or any of them his true and lawful agent, proxy and attorney-in-fact, with full power of substitution and resubstitution, for him and in his name, place and stead, in any and all capacities, to (i) act on, sign and file with the Securities and Exchange Commission any and all amendments (including post-effective amendments) to this registration statement together with all schedules and exhibits thereto and any subsequent registration statement filed pursuant to Rule 462(b) under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, together with all schedules and exhibits thereto, (ii) act on, sign and file such certificates, instruments, agreements and other documents as may be necessary or appropriate in connection therewith, (iii) act on and file any supplement to any prospectus included in this registration statement or any such amendment or any subsequent registration statement filed pursuant to Rule 462(b) under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, and (iv) take any and all actions which may be necessary or appropriate in connection therewith, granting unto such agent, proxy and attorney-in-fact full power and authority to do and perform each and every act and thing necessary or appropriate to be done, as fully for all intents and purposes as he might or could do in person, hereby approving, ratifying and confirming all that such agents, proxies and attorneys-in-fact or any of their substitutes may lawfully do or cause to be done by virtue thereof.

Pursuant to the requirements of the Securities Act of 1933, this registration statement and power of attorney have been signed by the following persons in the capacities and on the dates indicated.

| | <u>Title</u> | <u>Date</u> |
|--|--|------------------------|
| <p><u> /s/ DAVID A. BELL </u> David A. Bell</p> | <p>Chairman of the Board, President and Chief Executive Officer (Principal Executive Officer) and Director</p> | <p>October 2, 2003</p> |
| <p><u> /s/ CHRISTOPHER J. COUGHLIN </u> Christopher J. Coughlin</p> | <p>Executive Vice President, Chief Financial Officer (Principal Financial Officer), Chief Operating Officer and Director</p> | <p>October 2, 2003</p> |

II-5

| | | |
|---|--|------------------------|
| <p><u> /s/ RICHARD P. SNEEDER, JR. </u></p> | <p>Senior Vice President and Controller (Principal Accounting Officer)</p> | <p>October 2, 2003</p> |
|---|--|------------------------|

Edgar Filing: INTERPUBLIC GROUP OF COMPANIES INC - Form S-3

Richard P. Sneider, Jr.

| | | |
|--------------------------|----------|-----------------|
| /s/ FRANK J. BORELLI | Director | October 2, 2003 |
| Frank J. Borelli | | |
| /s/ REGINALD K. BRACK | Director | October 2, 2003 |
| Reginald K. Brack | | |
| Director | | |
| Jill M. Considine | | |
| /s/ JOHN J. DOONER, JR. | Director | October 2, 2003 |
| John J. Dooner, Jr. | | |
| /s/ RICHARD A. GOLDSTEIN | Director | October 2, 2003 |
| Richard A. Goldstein | | |
| /s/ H. JOHN GREENIAUS | Director | October 2, 2003 |
| H. John Greeniaus | | |
| /s/ MICHAEL I. ROTH | Director | October 2, 2003 |
| Michael I. Roth | | |
| /s/ J. PHILLIP SAMPER | Director | October 2, 2003 |
| J. Phillip Samper | | |
| II-6 | | |

EXHIBIT INDEX

| Exhibit Number | Description of Exhibits |
|----------------|--|
| 1.1* | Form of Underwriting Agreement with respect to common shares. |
| 1.2* | Form of Underwriting Agreement with respect to preferred shares. |
| 1.3* | Form of Underwriting Agreement with respect to debt securities. |
| 1.4* | Form of Underwriting Agreement with respect to stock purchase contracts. |
| 1.5* | Form of Underwriting Agreement with respect to stock purchase units. |
| 3.1 | Restated Certificate of Incorporation of the Registrant, as amended, is incorporated by reference to Exhibit 3(i) to the Registrant's Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended June 30, 1999 (File Number 001-06686). |
| 3.2 | Bylaws of the Registrant, amended as of July 31, 2003, are incorporated by reference to Exhibit 3(ii) to the Registrant's Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended June 30, 2003 (File Number 001-06686; Film Number 03845132). |

Edgar Filing: INTERPUBLIC GROUP OF COMPANIES INC - Form S-3

| Exhibit Number | Description of Exhibits |
|---------------------------|--|
| 4.1* | Form of Senior Debt Indenture to be entered into between the Registrant and The Bank of New York, as Trustee, including form of senior debt securities. |
| 4.2* | Form of Subordinated Debt Indenture to be entered into between the Registrant and The Bank of New York, as Trustee, including form of subordinated debt securities. |
| 4.3* | Form of Warrant Agreement for common stock. |
| 4.4* | Form of Warrant Agreement for preferred stock. |
| 4.5* | Form of Warrant Agreement for debt securities. |
| 4.6* | Form of Deposit Agreement. |
| 4.7* | Form of Stock Purchase Contract and any related Custody Agreement |
| 4.8* | Form of Stock Purchase Unit Agreement. |
| 5.1 | Opinion of Nicholas J. Camera, Esq., Senior Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary of the Registrant. |
| 12.1 | Statement of Computation of Ratio of Earnings to Fixed Charges. |
| 23.1 | Consent of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP. |
| 23.2 | Consent of J.H. Cohn LLP. |
| 23.3 | Consent of Nicholas J. Camera, Esq., Senior Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary of the Registrant (included in Exhibit 5.1). |
| 24.1 | Power of Attorney (included on signature pages of this Part II). |
| 25.1 | Statement of Eligibility of Trustee on Form T-1 under the Trust Indenture Act of 1939, as amended, relating to the Senior Debt Indenture, dated September 24, 2003, between the Registrant and the Bank of New York, as trustee. |
| 25.2 | Statement of Eligibility of Trustee on Form T-1 under the Trust Indenture Act of 1939, as amended, relating to the Subordinated Debt Indenture, dated September 24, 2003, between the Registrant and the Bank of New York, as trustee. |

*

To be filed by amendment or as an exhibit to a document filed under the Securities Act and incorporated by reference in connection with any offering of securities.

II-7

QuickLinks

[TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

[ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS](#)

[RISK FACTORS](#)

[WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION](#)

[SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS AND OTHER FACTORS](#)

RATIO OF EARNINGS TO FIXED CHARGES

PRICE RANGE OF COMMON STOCK AND DIVIDEND POLICY

USE OF PROCEEDS

INTERPUBLIC

DESCRIPTION OF DEBT SECURITIES

DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED STOCK AND DEPOSITARY SHARES

DESCRIPTION OF COMMON STOCK

DESCRIPTION OF WARRANTS

DESCRIPTION OF STOCK PURCHASE CONTRACTS AND STOCK PURCHASE UNITS

BOOK-ENTRY PROCEDURES

PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION

VALIDITY OF SECURITIES

EXPERTS

PART II INFORMATION NOT REQUIRED IN PROSPECTUS

Item 14. Other Expenses of Issuance and Distribution

Item 15. Indemnification of Directors and Officers.

Item 16. Exhibits.

Item 17. Undertakings.

SIGNATURES

POWER OF ATTORNEY

EXHIBIT INDEX