

YOUNGEST 'MAJOR AGENCY'

Gemini's Bookings 70% On Campuses

By JIM FISHEL

NEW YORK—Campus bookings account for nearly 70% of the overall business at Gemini Management Artists, the youngest "major agency" in the country.

According to founder Mike Martineau, formerly with Premier Talent, his agency is keying in on the collegiate market as means of building careers for his acts.

Although the agency is only one year old, it boasts one of the more impressive rosters in the business. Included are Morris Albert, Bloodstone, Iron Butterfly, Leonard Cohen, Judy Collins, the Commodores, James Cotton Band, Duke and the Drivers, El Chicano, David Frye, Marvin Gaye, Golden Earring, Leon Haywood, Jackson Five, Tom Jans, Kool & the Gang, Little Big Man, James Montgomery Band, Freda Payne, the Stairsteps, the Supremes, the Temptations and the Younghearts.

Many of these acts came to the agency after having worked with him in the past at Premier.

"I started at Premier in 1966, when we were active with Herman's Hermits, the Animals and other British acts, and then I worked on my own with some jazz acts like Dave Brubeck before I eventually moved to England in 1970 and helped American groups set up tours," he says. "When I returned to Premier, I helped out with the college department, which I began in 1968."

Martineau says that his emphasis on black music has to do with its current surge. He has watched it pick up bits of rock 'n' roll, including the stage gimmicks.

"Rock seems to have run the gamut and colleges, as well as commercial promoters are now looking at black music as a money-maker," he asserts. "Since all types of music have had a go of it during the last 20

years, it is now a huge kettle with eight million things to choose from."

Schools usually look for something different and Martineau has something for everyone—soul, MOR, British rock, folk, blues, Latin-rock, funk, jazz-rock and even special events.

This latter category is handled by partner Rand Stoll, formerly of College Entertainment Associates. Among the attractions Stoll has brought to Gemini are "Bogey's Back," magician Harry Blackstone Jr., plus the films "Godspell," "One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest," "World Of Lenny Bruce," "The Rolling Stone Review," "Clarence Darrow" starring Henry Fonda, plus The Madhouse Company of London, the National Lampoon Show, Uri Geller, World Skating Derby and Richard Dreyfuss.

"We find that schools are looking for every kind of entertainment on campus, and that's why Rand is so valuable to our operation," Martineau says. "Not only does he have access to all of the attractions, but he also has some very good connections at many schools."

Martineau says he is careful with the acts he signs because he doesn't want to become a clearing house "like some of the other agencies."

When he opened the operation in February 1975, he staffed it with fellow partner Ira Okun and agents Bert Zell, Paul Schiffrin and Gene Shore, because the office here didn't officially open until October 1975.

"One of the biggest lessons I learned from Frank Barsalena of Premier was to be personalized and I try to do this with every call I receive, whether it's from a college booker or a professional promoter," he states. "One innovation that we have installed at Gemini is computerization

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Classical Explosion At Eastern Colleges

PHILADELPHIA—The classical music explosion on the college campuses of Eastern Pennsylvania-Southern New Jersey promises to make the campus as important to the big concert names as the in-town concert halls.

While last term saw a growing number of concerts scheduled on the campus with classical singers, instrumentalists and a string quartet here and there, the offerings now are assuming spectacular proportions.

Pennsylvania State Univ. at University Park, Pa., had three sold-out performances in its new 2,500-seat University Auditorium for the world premiere of an opera, "Be Glad Then America," which composer John La Montaine described as a non-fiction opera about the American Revolution.

It was given full-scale production, staged professionally under the direction of Sarah Caldwell, of the Opera Society of Boston, who conducted the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, four renowned guest soloists, the 200-voice university choir, a fife and drum corps and a huge cast of student actors.

The opera was commissioned by

the university's Institute for Arts and Humanistic Studies and the featured vocalists included folk singer Odetta, Donald Gramm, Richard Lewis and David Lloyd.

Even the big symphony orchestra has the welcome mat at the colleges. Lafayette College in Easton, Pa., marked its 150th anniversary with a concert in its Kirby Field House by the American Symphony Orchestra conducted by Kazuyoshi Akiyama, Monday (23). On Wednesday (3), West Chester (Pa.) State College kicks off an All-Star series with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sergiu Commissiona; while the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra conducted by Henry Lewis, with Berl Senofsky as violin soloist, comes to Glassboro (N.J.) State College.

Curtis String Quartet, one of the top names among chamber music groups, also made a stop at Lafayette College in Easton. East Stroudsburg (Pa.) State College packaged it big for afternoon and evening concerts Sunday (29) for a Welsh Music Festival featuring concert pianist John Verbalis, the Pocono Boy Singers, the associated choirs of the college, and a guest orchestra.

Talent In Action

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creative and entertaining and very well-suited for White's flashy brand of showmanship.

White gives his audience a lot of slang, heavy breathing, allusions to sex and love, romantic advice, and ornamentation. As these are all elements that can be found in any ghetto bar, White should concentrate more on his music if he wishes to hold his current popularity.

ROBERT FORD JR.

JONI MITCHELL L.A. EXPRESS

Nassau County Coliseum, N.Y.

Mitchell is a fine composer. She is a fine musician. She is a dynamite singer. She is a dynamite performer. She should not play the Nassau County Coliseum.

As a matter of fact, no artist who depends on lyrics, musicianship and a controlled voice should play this barn-like venue.

Despite the difficulties she faced singing in a stadium designed for basketball, hockey and horse shows, Mitchell proved an exceptionally competent performer, dedicated to her music and quite willing to experiment with new songs in order to give something extra to her audience.

One of the new songs "Coyote" was quite interesting and the second, "Don Juan's Reckless Daughter" was truly exciting in its musical intricacies. Unfortunately, the acoustics made it a bit difficult to fully understand the lyrics.

She was much more appreciated when doing familiar melodies from her recordings such as "In France They Kiss On Main Street" which is currently getting lots of local airplay.

Of course, when she did "Big Yellow Taxi" she virtually caused the building to shake as the soldout audience clapped and sang along. Here there was no problem with the lyrics since just about everyone knew them by heart.

L.A. Express, the Caribou Records group which both opened the show and backed Mitchell, proved to be quite good in a jazz vein and it should do exceptionally well in the future.

The show Feb. 20, despite the difficulties with the venue, was gratifying for its musical content and Mitchell's dynamic performance.

RUDY GARCIA

SMOTHERS BROTHERS MINNIE RIPERTON

Riviera Hotel, Las Vegas

Although hampered by opening night sound difficulties Feb. 19, Epic Records artist Riperton delivered a musically pleasing debut in her first Vegas exposure. The 5½-octave singer breezed through a snappy, 35-minute, seven-song set before a sold-out Versailles room audience which hung on her every vocal somersault.

She opened with "Reasons," a jazz-rock number penned by the singer and her husband Dick Rudolph. Even with poor mike reception which slurred the words, Riperton swayed through a smooth, lyrical version of Quincy Jones' "If I Ever Lose This Heaven" and followed with a comedy sketch of Snow White at the well, highlighting her childhood days while singing "I'm Wishing." Her best audience response came during her hit, "Loving You" where her controlled high-notes soared effortlessly.

Singing a reprise of "Reasons" preceded by word-muddled "Adventures In Paradise" and a rocking rendition of "Everytime He Comes Around," Riperton successfully bridged the rock concert scene to the sophisticated cabaret forum. Backup vocal Sidney Barnes scored well on three duets with Miss Riperton, especially as the voice of the well in the Snow White sequence. Vegas audiences will look forward to her return with more songs and perhaps less chatter, as Riperton amply proved her musical credentials.

The musical-comedy talent of the reunited Smothers Brothers more than demonstrated itself during their full hour-long, eight-song segment which featured witty material with Tommy on guitar and Dick on bass. The duo's timing, backed by entertaining songs such as the Eagles' "Peaceful Easy Feeling" and Gilbert-Sullivan's "Poor Wandering One" although interrupted by give-and-take jabs, showed their musical skills.

HANFORD SEARL

GEORGE CARLIN TRAVIS SHOOK & THE CLUB WOW

Roxy, Los Angeles

Carlin was funny and ultra-sharp all the way through his 105-minute Feb. 25 "return to cabarets after three years" before a packed audience studded with star comics from Groucho Marx to Ted Knight, Jack Albertson and Ed Begley Jr.

His approach is warmer and more mellow

than this reviewer has ever observed in previous engagements.

The Little David Records best-seller's routine was based around shared experiences that stressed a common humanity with his audience. Although naturally Carlin was concentrating on the kind of subconscious universal experiences that the rest of us would rarely think through and verbalize to others. Example: The arm-rail belt on an escalator always seems to move faster than the stairs. Carlin's pantomime of this effect made it a hilarious bit.

There was still enough blue language to make the near-hysterical onlooker at an adjoining table mutter between giggles that here was a comedian "like Lenny Bruce in his prime." But the obscenities now seem less piled on and blend much more smoothly into the total delivery.

The evening's most pretentious funny line came over the PA during the over-long intermission with the solemn announcement, "There will be no drinks served during Mr. Carlin's set." Not even the most sensitive/artsy singer at any local club has ever come up with that one before. Is drink service supposed to throw off the timing and offend the dignity of a comic loose enough to say "cockaucker" in the second sentence after starting his act?

A sample line that sums up Carlin's style these days: "If God didn't want us to masturbate, we'd have been born with shorter arms."

The charmingly weird opening act, Travis Shook & The Club Wow, is in actuality the comedy duo of John Travis and Steve Shook. The pair are outstanding musicians on guitar and electric bass. They come across like longhair-freak Smothers Brothers with a musical sound along the lines of the lamented Dan Hicks & His Hot Licks.

Their act could use more consistent core roles by each partner. But many moments were wildly funny. Particularly impressive was the way they used their musicianship for rock superstar take-offs on Neil Young and the Who.

NAT FREEDLAND

STEVE MARTIN LIBERTY

Boarding House, San Francisco

The comedian demonstrated a remarkable amount of chutzpah at the late show here Jan. 6 by contriving to stretch the show a quarter hour past when it had nominally "ended." It is a usual Martin ploy to come off the stage and to continue working the crowd as he fades into the back of the club and out a convenient door, and that sort of risky intimacy—which requires not only having brought the crowd to the point where they will follow the pied-piper routine but also holding them without a mike—is an integral part of Martin's coolly controlled charm.

Martin's is a comedy of whimsy and his chief tools are the non-sequitur, the unfinished line, the mixed metaphor, the elevation of the absurd.

Liberty, a sextet recording on John Denver's Windsong label, delivered a sprightly opening set of well-executed Western swing/30s revival stuff, with band members rotating fairly constantly on various instruments and lead vocals.

JOHN McDONOUGH

MELISSA MANCHESTER Troubadour, Los Angeles

Manchester is twice the performer in person that one hears on her records. She projects harder and more directly onstage than on disks. The effect is to create a bombastic impression which will keep you glued to your seat, but also creates a one-dimensional feeling for her ability.

Feb. 22 before a standing-room-only house, she solidified her position with Angelenos, obviously reaffirming in her own mind that she can play L.A. and win. Two years ago she bowed at this club to not-too-favorable reviews. This year she is on top with her young fans.

In the year that she has been on the road, this reviewer would have thought she and her quintet would have learned how to use dynamics and how to appreciate subtlety, softness and tenderness. Unfortunately this is not the case with her in-person performance.

She works at full throttle, using explosive energy and power for subtlety and dynamics for dramatics, thus missing much of her potential to truly interpret lyrics in depth.

Melissa is a product of the high energy approach to pop music which calls for every instrument in her band to fly away at top power, totally forgetting they are supporting a human voice and there should be moments when they relegate themselves to the background to allow their leader to truly be in center stage in a position to get into her lyrics and touch her au-

dience with the beauty of the words, their majesty or poignancy or bittersweet remembrances.

Sadly this unit thinks nothing of these points in its live performance. So Melissa is often competing with her electric bassist, drummer or guitarist.

And being caught up in the flow of this rhythmic, dynamic musical concept, she only demonstrates her ability to project loudly. Her LPs allow her more freedom for tenderness. With only a few exceptions on the program, she is fortissimo all the way. The band's power forces her to shout, not sing.

The core of the program are cuts from her new Arista LP, with "Just Too Many People," "I Want To Dance With You" and "Midnight Blue" from her successful times last year.

Half of the 12 songs during her hour's turn are done at the keyboard. When she's standing before the quintet, acting very gutsy and poking at air with her left hand, she is a ball of frenzy.

But this reviewer doesn't hide the fact that two songs—"You Can Make It All Come True" and "Sing, Sing, Sing"—are weak, unmelodic pieces of material.

Better are "Good News," "Just You And I" and "We've Got Time." "Midnight Blue," a previous hit, shows off her velvety quality, her ability to glide, caress and dissect words with her voice. When you can hear those qualities, Melissa's a treat.

ELIOT TIEGEL

RONNIE MILSAP GARY STEWART

Troubadour, Los Angeles

Country stars Milsap and Stewart turned in their usual excellent performances in their pop club debut here Feb. 24, though it is evident Milsap will require changes in his act if he is to pull in pop crowds on a steady basis and just as evident that Stewart can play almost anywhere he wishes.

There is no question that Milsap is a strong singer and performer, and since he is a major country attraction it is really unfair to judge him on pop merits. Nevertheless, he played before a primarily pop audience and some criticism must be offered.

While he shifts easily from pure country to soul to rock to MOR material and adjusts his voice well throughout, his four-piece backing band is only competent and his use here of a six-piece string section hurt matters somewhat when signals were crossed.

Songs like "Pure Love," "Please Don't Tell Me How The Story Ends" and "A Legend In My Time" are hits and were well received. The closing rock medley, however, contains songs a bit too familiar to most pop crowds.

From a strictly country standpoint, the show that singer-keyboardist Milsap scores so well with on the road was certainly a success. The presentation, however, is just a bit too country for a Los Angeles pop club crowd.

None of this is to say things cannot be remedied, for the man is a genuine talent with a loyal following. And he has adjusted to new musical directions several times in his career already. Country crowds would not abandon him if he were to beef up his shows a bit, and pop crowds would welcome some of the hard rock and r&b Milsap is capable of handling.

Stewart is a joy. The king of the honky tonk and drinking songs mixes country and rock as well as anybody in either field and has such a good time himself that the audience cannot help but be drawn in.

Working with the Pridesmen (Charley Pride's band, of which Stewart is a former member) and his own drummer, Stewart strung together his own hits like "Out Of Hand," "Drinking Thing," "Sweet Temptation" and "Flat Natural Born Good Timin' Man" along with Hank Williams material and early rock from Jerry Lee Lewis.

Stewart owns one of those rare, fluid voices that, somewhat like early Jerry Lee Lewis, is right at home in either country or rock. Working on guitar (as he did for most of the set) or playing a superb rock/honky tonk piano, the infectious nature of the artist carried off everything he did.

The only possible complaints might be that Stewart did not play enough piano and that his hits tend to deal too much with the same subjects, drinking and cheating.

However, Stewart is seemingly on his way to becoming a major force in country and there is no reason he should not be able to exert the same force in pop. If those guiding his career place him only in country venues a serious mistake will be made. The artist is every bit as competent as most of the Southern rock bands touring the country and more fun and exciting than most.

BOB KIRSCH