

New Asylum Label Readies First Product

Laura Nyro and Joni Mitchell Signed Reveals Manager-Turned-Label Chief Geffen



David Geffen

Photo: Joel Bernstein

By TONY LAWRENCE

■ HOLLYWOOD — As the turbulence of that phenomenal entity called rock and roll continues with facilities closing, heroes dying and a general re-

sistance from many factors, one person who continually comes out on top is David Geffen—one of the most influential individuals in rock and probably the most consistently successful agent and manager in its history.

Often called the "greatest negotiator in the business," it was rumored that once he made a deal for Johnny Rivers on some publishing contracts and that his percentage for the contract was Rivers' mansion in Trousdale in Beverly Hills. Geffen flunked out of three colleges and then became an usher at CBS. From there he went to the mail room at William Morris in New York and remained there for six months in 1964 before moving up as a secretary, then a junior agent and finally a full agent. He was responsible for the beginnings

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Columbia 'Music People' Hold Most Successful Convention to Date

■ LOS ANGELES — Columbia and Epic/Columbia Custom Labels has just completed the most productive and successful national sales convention in company history. Attended by members of the Columbia and Epic families, representatives of CBS International from throughout the world, artists and guests, the convention ran from July 21-25 at the Century Plaza Hotel, location of the 1969 meeting.

Clive Davis, newly appointed President, CBS/Records Group, placing him in charge of worldwide recorded music and related activities for CBS, addressed the convention delegates on opening day (see separate story). One of the most challenging years in the recording industry, 1970 was the year Columbia was awarded 20 out of 44 Grammy Awards.

Bruce Lundvall, Vice President, Marketing, opened the first

day of business meetings on Thursday, July 22, by greeting the delegates and guests. In his speech (see separate story), Lundvall set the theme for the 1970 Convention by outlining the criteria of excellence that has been and must continue to be maintained by The Music People—the convention theme.

Stan Snyder, Vice President, Sales and Distribution, spoke, placing particular emphasis on the ever-expanding role of national and local promotion in the consistent success pattern established by the ever-increasing Columbia family, and Ron Alexenburg, Vice President, Epic/Columbia Custom Labels, gave the convention gathering an update and rundown of the growth of those labels. After pointing out the strengthening of Epic A&R on both coasts and in Nashville, Alexenburg congratulated the sales and promotion force for

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MCA's Maitland Reveals Near-Total L.A. Move

■ MCA Records, Inc., President J. K. ("Mike") Maitland has made the following announcement in connection with the corporate changeover that has made Los Angeles the near-total base of operations for the company:

"The move has been long-planned," Maitland said, "and I have often discussed it in interviews and in releases made

by the company under my name."

Maitland said that the moving of almost all of the company's activities here is an "obvious" and "natural" occurrence in the face of the industry as it exists today. "Los Angeles is a major record capital of the country," Maitland em-

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Grossman Exiting Merco Enterprises?

■ At press time last week, it was reliably reported that Jack Grossman has exited his post as President of Merco Enterprises, Inc. There was a possibility that Grossman would continue in another position within Capitol Industries.

AGAC Enrolls 62

■ NEW YORK—In the last two months, AGAC has enrolled 62 new members, reveals Robert B. Sour, Membership Relations.

Among them: Sherman Edwards, John Kander, Alan Bergman, Chris Kenner, Irvin Graham, Dorcas Cochran, Milo Sweet, John Prine and Johnny Northern.

Sales, Promo Execs In UA Reorganization



Dan Alvino



Budd Dolinger



Bernie Sparago



Jim Saltzman

■ A series of major organizational changes involving key personnel in sales and promotion, were announced by Michael Lipton, Vice President Marketing for United Artists Records, Inc., to take effect immediately.

Dan Alvino has been named General Manager and Vice President of U.D.C., Inc. He was formerly Western Regional Manager.

Budd Dolinger has become National Sales Manager of United Artists Records, Inc. He

previously served as General Manager for Mediarts Records.

Bernie Sparago is now Director of National Accounts as well as General Manager of Sunset Records. Sparago was National Sales Manager for United Artists Records.

Jim Saltzman has been appointed Director of National Promotion. He was formerly Los Angeles and St. Louis Branch Manager for the label.

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Geffen Readies First Asylum Releases

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of such groups as the Youngbloods and the Association. When he became very hot he quit William Morris to head the music department for Ashley Famous and also quit that to have his own management firm handling Laura Nyro, David Crosby, Steve Stills, Graham Nash and (later) Neil Young.

Growing tired of management he turned the business over to his partner and long-time friend Elliot Roberts and went to CMA as a Senior Vice President. About six months ago he decided to finally realize his ultimate wish: to have his own record company which is now called Asylum Records.

The following is a recent interview with Geffen.

Record World: How did Asylum Records get started?

Geffen: I made a deal with Ahmet Ertegun at Atlantic. He's not only the most soulful cat in the music business but he's a terrific record person. Having dealt with every label as either an agent or manager there was no other company I could even consider going to.

Record World: Why did you choose the name Asylum?

Geffen: We felt the music business is an insane asylum. It also means a refuge and a sanctuary. We'd like to feel that that's what our company is to the people we're involved with.

Record World: How is the company set up distribution-wise?

Geffen: Atlantic distributes us in the United States and Canada. We will be the fourth label in the group of Atlantic, Atco, Cotillion and Asylum. We will run our company independently and they will distribute our records. We are responsible for the signing, recording, promotion and advertising of our people.

Record World: How many acts do you have?

No Limits

Geffen: We don't have any limits or numbers. We expect to record whoever we come across who is talented. We certainly can't compete with Atlantic or Columbia or those kinds of companies. We don't pay large advances. As a matter of fact we pay very small advances.

Record World: It has been said that you pay no advances.

Geffen: Well, we help support all the people involved. If they need money we give it to them. We don't pay them to sign with us but we also don't let them starve. We're a family. We exist for each other and hopefully we'll all be together for a long time.

Record World: How will this new company affect Laura Nyro? Will she record for you?

Geffen: Laura's contract with Columbia is over. She is signed with us and her first album on Asylum, "Gonna Take a Miracle," will be out Sept. 1. Joni Mitchell is also going to record for us.

Record World: Many people seem to be skeptical about someone like Jackson Browne who hasn't gone anywhere so far. Now that he is firmly with you, what direction do you foresee for him? What's going to happen with him?

Geffen: Jackson Browne is a genius. When his record comes out, he will be a star. The reason that he hasn't made a record in all this time is because we put no pressure on our people. I have a great deal of money invested in him and I've supported him for a long time. We are not in the business of paying out a lot of money and then forcing someone to make a record so we can recoup it. If it took Jackson two or three years to make a record then I would sit here patiently because I believe in him as I do in Laura or Joni and always have from the very first day I met them which was also before either of them had made it.

Everybody in the business likes to second-guess and after you've made it they say, "Well, of course, how could you miss with Joni Mitchell or Laura Nyro?" But Laura Nyro was a total failure as a performer and as a writer when I became involved with her. Joni had been around for many years. David Crosby was thrown out of the Byrds and Columbia thought so little of him they gave him a release. The Buffalo Springfield were never really very successful. Graham Nash was unknown. The Hollies were not the most significant group in America and Graham was one of seven people. Jackson Browne is like them. He is one of the most talented people in the world. As far as I'm concerned he is up there with everyone else we represent and you'll see how great he is when

his record comes out in September.

Record World: Is that the first Asylum record?

Geffen: No. I can't say what the first Asylum record is at the moment but it will probably be out in August.

Record World: Is it a one-record set?

Geffen: No. I just can't announce the artist at this moment.

Record World: Who's producing Jackson's album?

Geffen: Jackson and Richard Sanford who is an engineer.

Record World: Who's doing the promotion for you?

Geffen: We will have an independent promotion staff plus Atlantic's promotion team which is the best in the world, I think. But ultimately it's the music that sells and not the people selling it.

Record World: Do you believe that every record is a hit?

Geffen: I believe that every record I put out will be a good record. I don't care if they're all hits or not. Not every artist is a hit artist but that doesn't mean they're not talented. We're recording David Blue and we are very proud to record him. He's never sold a record with two other labels. But I think his album will be successful and if it isn't I'll be real happy that I recorded it.

Record World: What about budgets for albums?

Geffen: Whatever it costs to make the best album then that's what they get. We try and have as few restrictions as possible. I don't want artists to release anything they are not totally happy with. That's the only restriction I have.

Record World: Having been a successful agent and manager, do you entertain the possibility that maybe it just isn't there for you as a record person?

Still Productive, Creative

Geffen: That's entirely possible. Anything is possible. What has made me a successful agent and manager is that I've always found talented people and protected them and helped them build and maintain their careers. Everyone I've handled is still around being productive and creative. They haven't come and gone. Those are the kinds of people I'm going to record of they want to record

for me. I mean Jo Jo Gunne (recently signed to Asylum) are going to be a big group. They've been knocking people out all over town and they took less from us than anyone else because that's who they wanted to be with. They were offered more by every other label but they went with us. They'll never have to hassle with us about putting out a single they don't want to put out or editing one of their songs or repackaging one of their albums. We just won't do that—ever. Record companies don't make artists. Artists make record companies. I didn't make Laura Nyro. If anything she made me. I feel that way about Joni and everybody else. I mean it's a team effort.

Record World: How did you help Laura Nyro? What do you feel you did?

Geffen: Laura is a totally unique, creative person. Without a hit record ever, and without any AM airplay ever, Laura is a star and a personality and a success and she's never had to do those things that people don't want to do because I've never asked her to. Laura's a talent and a talent always makes it no matter how long you have to wait. When you're dealing with The Iron Butterfly or Grand Funk Railroad, who knows how long it's going to last because you don't understand what made it in the first place. But a talent is forever.

Record World: Have you ever been wrong?

Geffen: I'm wrong every day: I've never been wrong, however, about people I've believed in.

Record World: In your trade ads it says at the bottom "Direction: Geffen Roberts Management." Is it more that now, a direction of sorts? What direction is planned for someone like Steve Stills?

Geffen: It's more to keep artists from making mistakes. With Steve we try to keep as much pressure from him so that he can create. You have to give an artist what they need. Everyone has different needs. In the case of Joni Mitchell she doesn't work, she hasn't done a concert in a couple of years and she makes one album a year and tries to maintain a private life and we try to help her do that. God knows she doesn't need us to tell her how to write the songs or how to

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Columbia Convention Most Successful to Date

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their individual expertise in moving Epic's fine new product, singling out the special concentration of the Mid-West Region for Chase, the Philadelphia Branch for Redbone, and the East Coast staff for Edgar Winter's White Trash. In addition, Alexenburg emphasized the increasing importance of the 10 exclusively distributed Columbia Custom Labels.

A most significant event of Thursday morning's opening program was a live demonstration of Columbia StereoQuad. This innovation in sound was demonstrated to the press, international delegates and guests—many of whom were experiencing quadrasonic sound for the first time—via a StereoQuad disc featuring David Frost explaining the mechanics of quad and taking listeners on a tour of sound through various kinds of music.

There were four enthusiastically received banquet/shows beginning with Wednesday evening's country music presentation featuring Ray Price, whose records are enjoyed by country and pop audiences alike; Tammy Wynette, Epic's Queen of Country Music; Columbia's Earl Scruggs; and Epic's Tommy Cash. Other artists from Columbia's and Epic's country rosters rounded out the evening of Nashville Sound.

Thursday's banquet/show rocked to Taj Mahal, Edgar Winter's White Trash, Chase and newly-signed Columbia group Dr. Hook and the Medicine Show.

Highlighting Friday evening's entertainment was Columbia super-group Chicago, Epic's Poco and Madura, another new addition to Columbia produced by James William Guercio.

The closing convention spectacular presented newly-signed Karen Wyman, Percy Faith and his Orchestra and Chorus, Mark Lindsay, Boots Randolph and, in a special appearance, Johnny Mathis.

Over the course of three business days, July 22, 23 and 24, the staffs of Columbia and Epic/Columbia Custom Labels' merchandising and promotion departments accentuated this year's person-to-person seminars and product presentations with tape, slide and film presentations.

The Archive Series presentation included highlights from the life and career of John Ham-

mond, this year's archives releases' namesake, and Columbia and Epic utilized a triple screen slide show to dramatize their singles product. Odyssey, Harmony, Masterworks and the 10 Columbia Custom Labels also presented original slide and film montages in programs designed to showcase their new product.

Additionally, the three business days included special presentations of new artists on the label, country artists and fall product from Columbia's Children's Books and Records. There was also an opportunity during the business sessions for Milton Selkowitz, Director, Audio products and Accessories, to introduce the growing line's new addition's, including the provocative SQ 440—the first quadrasonic system equipped to handle both tapes and discs soon to be made available to the consumer.

Noteworthy Events

Other noteworthy events of the 1971 Sales Convention included the presentation of annual awards to outstanding members of the promotion field force (story next week); Masterworks' special luncheon and presentation of their "Johann Awards" (see separate story); a cocktail party hosted by CBS International Division; a special Stravinsky presentation spotlighting the career and work of the maestro; and the major highlight of the convention, the special Columbia Convention Film. Produced by Arnold Levine, Creative Director. Advertising and Sales, and film-maker Howard Enders, the film features 30 Columbia and Epic artists spanning all categories of music and was shot on location in New York, Los Angeles, Nashville and Detroit.

The 1971 National Sales Convention was coordinated by Chairman Roselind Blanch, with Bruce Lundvall, Vice President, Marketing, serving as Creative Design Chairman, and Dave Wynshaw, Director, Artist Relations, as Convention Expediter. Miss Blanche commented that this convention's success was owed in great part to the able assistance of Columbia's Engineering Department and Photo Department, and thanked her entire convention personnel staff for their cooperation and help in producing the Music People Present the Music/Convention '71.

London Has Hot LP Summer

London Records has announced four new LPs to follow on the heels of the "Jesus Christ Superstar" excerpts album by the Kingsway Youth Opera Company of London. The new deluxe, one-disc package, carrying the special price of \$4.98, was released a fortnight ago and is already garnering heavy on-the-air activity as well as in-store displays. The company has blue-printed a sustained push on this album.

Due for immediate release are albums by the Moody Blues on their London-distributed Threshold label and by Engelbert Humperdinck on Parrot, according to Herb Goldfarb, Vice President for Sales and Marketing for London. Also upcoming within a few weeks are new albums by British imports, Savoy Brown and Brotherhood of Man.

The Moodies package is the first new release by the group this year, "Every Good Boy Deserves a Favour." From the new set, which for the first

time for the group, includes lyrics to all songs in the album printed on the inner disc sleeve, a single, "Story in Your Eyes," has been rush-released. A massive promotion effort has been launched on the album, which will be closely coordinated with a U. S. national concert tour for the group in September.

Also due for early August release is the new Humperdinck album, "Another Time, Another Place," which is also the title of the singer's new single.

De-Lite, Red-Lite Increase Roster

NEW YORK — De-Lite and Red-Lite Records announce the addition of several new artists to their rosters.

Pactees to De-Lite are Johnny Washington and Yvonne Daniels. Joining Red-Lite are Dennis Robinson, Jimmy Peterson and the Reggie Saddler Revue.

Geffen/New Asylum Label

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sing them. None of our clients need that from us. However when they started out, nobody needed them and nobody wanted them. Clive Davis passed on Joni Mitchell four years ago.

Record World: What kinds of mistakes do you think are made with artists?

Geffen: Well, I think someone like Elton John has been handled very poorly. He has too much product, too much over exposure, too much hype. I think that's hurt him. Artists have to be handled with a great deal of care.

Record World: What if he wants that for himself?

Geffen: Well, if he wants that then he's responsible. I don't think you can maintain like that.

Record World: Why are you going in to the record business?

Not for Money

Geffen: I want to create an atmosphere where the people we care about can do their art as comfortably as possible. For me, though, if the company doesn't make money, if it only breaks even then I'll be happy. I'm not starting it for the money. I have plenty of money. I took no advance from Atlantic

to start this company. I don't want a pressured situation for myself or for the artists. If you get into a money trip you start from the first day with an enormous pressure. Who needs it?

Record World: What about the stories concerning you and the Rolling Stones?

Geffen: The Rolling Stones asked me to help them put together an American tour and I've helped them for this coming tour. We've done that as an accommodation for them. Mick asked me to do that. We don't manage them and we don't want to manage them, frankly. They live in the south of France and we live here. They manage themselves. There isn't a person in the world who can manage them.

Record World: Who do you respect most in the industry? I mean people that you aren't connected with in any way.

Geffen: I love Cat Stevens and Carole King. I have a great love for composers like Bob Dylan. When Albert Grossman was into it, he was the best manager in the world. He got tired of it and it's understandable because it's a real tough business.