

Polydor U.K. Inks Deal With Big Life Label

BY PIPPA COLLINS

LONDON Polydor (U.K.) and independent record label Big Life have set up a joint venture deal that will allow Big Life to operate autonomously in the U.K. while the label is licensed exclusively by Polydor throughout the rest of the world.

Big Life was set up by Jazz Summers, former manager of the Wham! duo of George Michael and Andrew Ridgely and its roster is topped by Yaz, who is married to Summers, and who has sold 1.2 million albums and 3 million singles worldwide. She also comfortably won many of the U.K. "top female singer" awards in popularity polls over the past 12 months.

Her album, "Wanted," has been a big seller worldwide and her single hits include "Where Has All The Love Gone," "Fine Time" and "Stand Up For Your Love Rights." As a result of this new deal, Yaz will no longer be with Elektra in the U.S. but will instead be handled by PolyGram.

Other important Big Life acts include Coldcut and De La Soul.

The Polydor venture means that the major receives a share of Big Life profits, plus overseas licensing income. Polydor managing director David Munns says: "This is a tremendous deal for us and we're delighted to have acquired the licensing of these artists overseas. I have the utmost confidence in Jazz Summers' ability to develop Big Life into a major force not only in the U.K. market but also worldwide."

For Big Life the new deal represents an immediate cash injection. Says Summers: "The effect of the venture will be two-fold. It represents an immediate financial investment in all our artists, and at the same provides coordinated releases worldwide."

"I describe this as a deal with a difference because Polydor will allow me to stay independent and run my company as I have in the past, while giving me that coordinated support I need for our artists overseas."

South Africa's Shifty Label Hit With Government Bans

BY JOHN MILLER

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa Three of South Africa's most liberal and anti-apartheid white Afrikaans acts have been banned from various campus concerts here and many of their recordings have been withdrawn from airing on state radio and television.

The "Voelvry" tour, which features two rock-oriented acts and a folk singer, has been barred from appearing at four Afrikaans universities as well as at a string of high schools. The reason given was that their music is "too contentious."

Lloyd Ross, founder and director of Shifty Records, which handles the concert packages and the recordings, says the concert bannings were "not that surprising" but he says the situation has made more Afrikaans aware of what is being sought in an eventual postapartheid atmosphere here.

Ross set up his controversial label here six years ago, operating at first from a caravan and now with a team of four in a Johannesburg office. He was initially funded by an injection of cash as an advance from a Swedish buyer of the Shifty catalog of some 30 acts, half of whom are black.

Despite the ban on product by the state broadcasters, Ross says his company's support for the basic human rights policy of freedom of expression goes on, as does the work to create a postapartheid democratic country here.

The release and distribution of the album "Change Is Pain," by black political detainee Mzwakhe Mbule, has been banned, Ross says, with security forces claiming it would "encourage revolution." This factor merely adds to the Shifty determination to fight on, he says.

In fact, the Mbule album was released through Rounder Records in the U.S., Sweden, and West Germany. Ross says: "The problem has been getting together with Mbule to work on a follow-up album, first mooted a year ago. He's had four or five spells in detention under the ongoing state of emergency in South Africa."

The Shifty label also has problems over distribution through the majors to some retail outlets. But label policy remains that "the artist should not be compelled to tailor his work to suit a major company's commercial requirements."

Eric Clapton To Headline Swaziland Benefit Concert

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa Eric Clapton and Johnny Clegg headline a roster featuring some 30 Southern Africa acts set to perform in a three-day festival in July as part of the King of Swaziland's Trust fund-raising organization.

The event is to take place in the 35,000-capacity Somhlolo National Stadium in Swaziland, with proceeds going to the children's charity set up by King Mswati III along the lines of the Prince's Trust established by Prince Charles in London.

Officials of the South Africa-encircled kingdom have negotiated with authorities in Pretoria, South Africa, to have border posts open 24 hours a day during and prior to the event.

Clapton is providing an "all-star band," including Steve Farrone (formerly of Duran Duran), Nathan East (formerly with Michael Jackson), Ray Cooper (Elton John percussionist), Alan Clark (formerly with Dire Straits), Phil Palmer, Katie Kissoon, and Tessa Niles. Along with Clegg, other acts include Ray Phiri and Stimela, plus performers from South Africa, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Mozambique, and several leading Swaziland groups.

Tickets are already on sale in both South Africa and Swaziland for what will be the first international concerts of Swaziland's 21 years of independence from the U.K. About 100,000 fans are expected over the three days.

Swaziland is one of the few countries in the region not to be affected by South African destabilization policies as claimed by the other front-line states, even though the population of 750,000 live in an apartheid-free society and condemn the internal policies of their powerful neighbor.

Karl-Heinz Lang, marketing manager for the event, says that response from overseas musicians has been "overwhelming," even though none of them are being paid. But one problem had been that many acts noted a clash of dates with their own tours.

After his stay in Swaziland, Clapton is set to play two concerts in Zimbabwe, and one each in Botswana and Mozambique. JOHN MILLER

Argentina Rocks To Beat Of 2 New Music Channels

BY PAUL KLEINMAN

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina Despite all its economic and social problems, Latin America is breaking convincingly into the age of cable and satellite television.

Two decades ago, with the upsurge in popularity of television, Buenos Aires earned the title of "television capital of South America" and became very much the industry leader.

Those were the years of Goar Mestro's Rio de la Plata TV, golden years that saw the birth of some of the most memorable classics in the emergent South American TV scene.

Today, the Buenos Aires influence is declining to an extent but the city remains the most important cultural center of Latin America, producing the most creative talents. And here the first, and only, two music channels are developing.

They are CVmusic and CableClip, owned by local cable firms Cablevision and VCC.

Juan Carlos Reguero, for 30 years a television producer and CableClip director, says, "We're still at a launch stage, but our ambitions for the future run high."

Both channels are "very international," reflecting the cosmopolitan atmosphere of this city. Their programs include international (mainly U.K. and U.S.) clips from pop names and product from Latin American (mostly Argentinian) rock bands. Neither uses tango, salsa, or other Latin music genres but they don't precisely follow the route of U.S. and British networks.

Juan Cebrian, CVmusic director, says, "We don't copy anyone but are looking for a style of our own."

It is generally agreed that rock music has been the most important cultural movement in Argentina over the past five years, and a high percentage of youngsters there belong to rock bands with varying levels of professionalism and talent.

The Argentinian underground mu-

sic market has created a tremendous impact, growing at a remarkable speed since the return of political freedom and democracy in 1983.

CVmusic and CableClip follow two very different programming routes. CVmusic opts for a wide audience age group, playing anything from Depeche Mode and the Bangles to Ella Fitzgerald and Frank Sinatra, from Soda Stereo and Charly Garcia to Erasure and Madonna.

But CableClip goes straight for the youth market, offering music-related special features alongside video pack-

ages.

CableClip's main V.J. is Raquel Mancini, a noted model; CVmusic has no chat between videos, except for a weekly special, "Backstage," hosted by director Cebrian.

Both channels are still on an "experimental" basis and plan to go on satellite in the next few months so they can be received by cable companies and satellite TV customers throughout the Western Hemisphere.

There are some commercials, but as yet very few on either channel.

Malaysia Goes International Execs Say Piracy Down, Sales Up

BY Y.S. MING

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia International music sales have shown considerable improvement in recent months, according to industry executives who stress that the growth has not been at the expense of vernacular and regional product.

Says Eric Yeo, PolyGram's marketing manager, "The music market for legitimate product is obviously much bigger without the piracy that has bugged our efforts for so long."

He estimates that international music comprises 35% of sales in this territory, "a very encouraging improvement over our average performances in recent years."

In the bad old days of Malaysian piracy, PolyGram cornered the market for Chinese product, particularly recordings emanating from Hong Kong, while it built a strong base for vernacular Malay recordings.

"International acts, which aver-

aged less than 4,000 units previously, now sell well in excess of 10,000," Yeo says.

Though current chart releases do well here, Yeo says a substantial part of the international gross comes from back catalog titles. Other reasons for the upturn include better radio and television programming, anti-piracy activities and aggressive marketing tactics.

The MGB-Pacific label claims that consumers and dealers use Radio-Television Malaysia's locally compiled Top 10 charts as a barometer for sales.

On the international sector repertoire front, heavy metal seems to provide the staple best seller for PolyGram and for EMI, while market leader WEA relies heavily on its pop and jazz-fusion products.

EMI's best-selling rock release, German band the Scorpions' "Savage Amusement," earned the group a

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Was (Not Was), Living In A Box, Cover Girls Also Win Prizes Israel's Haza Wins Tokyo Music Fest

BY SHIG FUJITA

TOKYO Singing a modern version of a folk song that goes back to the 16th century, "Im Nin' Alu," Israel's Ofra Haza scooped the grand prize and a cash award of some 3 million yen (about \$21,125) at the 18th Tokyo Music Festival, staged June 2 at the Nippon Budokan Hall.

Was (Not Was) from the U.S. took the best-performance trophy and about \$14,100 in cash for its energetic performance of "Walk The Dino-

saur."

Haza and Was (Not Was) were among 12 finalists competing in the 10,000-seat venue.

The U.K.'s Living In A Box, performing "Blow The House Down," and U.S. trio the Cover Girls, singing "All That Glitters Isn't Gold," each took gold awards and cash prizes of just more than \$7,000.

Three silver awards and cash prizes worth roughly \$3,500 went to Alyssa Milano (U.S.) for "What A Feeling," Julia Fordham (U.K.) for

"Happy Ever After," and Vaya Con Dios (Belgium) for "Don't Cry For Louie."

Originally there were to be 13 acts involved in the festival, but the U.K.'s Jonathan Butler canceled because of illness. The other finalists appearing were Rouge (West Germany), Danny Chan (Hong Kong), Yang Soo-Kyung (South Korea), and Yukari Morikawa and Ayako Shimizu, both from Japan.

Sheena Easton of the U.K. was the guest singer this year.