

Baunach Discusses Indies, Staff Changes At ABC-Dot

by Bob Campbell

NASHVILLE — ABC/Dot here has effected a change in personnel and procedure, including an integration of sales and promotion, designed to deal more efficiently with the recently announced switch by ABC/Dot's national office from branch to independent distribution.

According to Larry Baunach, vice president of sales and promotion for ABC/Dot, the Nashville office will have more control and authority over country product under the independent distribution system. Baunach said the new structural policies have been initiated in order to support a more aggressive role by the company here in record sales.

"In most of the United States we have gone to independent distribution using 17 different distributors," Baunach said, adding that this policy technically became effective Oct. 15. "In order to provide more effective direction and leadership for the independent distributors as concerns our product, we've made personnel changes, plus a lot of procedural changes.

'Direct And Advise'

"Before, we could rely on all of our own salesmen and the company-owned branches to do the field work, and our job was mainly involved in keeping track of the letters and daily sales figures," Baunach added. "Now it is going to be a initiative-oriented job. With independent distributors, you are just one of a hundred lines they might have, so you have to provide them much more help and guidance. This will give us a lot more authority because these distributors will be relying upon us to direct and advise them."

Baunach said two key personnel changes have been made: Jerry Flowers, who has worked with ABC/Dot for nearly two years as southern publicist, has been appointed national sales coordinator. Flowers will directly be involved in coordinating sales and advertising with the independent distributors. Martha Haggard, who was formerly the FM traffic/promotion director for WLAC Radio here, has been hired as Nashville publicity coordinator and she will work directly with tour publicity and artist development.

More Control

Baunach believes ABC/Dot here will gain a distinct advantage under the new distribution system because the company can exercise more control over merchandising and advertising of its country product. Baunach also said independent distribution can aid the success of crossover records. With these factors in mind, Baunach has reorganized and plans to add new emphasis to his sales and promotion force. Jeannie Ghent, ABC/Dot's national promotion coordinator, will also play a major role under the new set up.

"One new thing is that Jeannie Ghent will be working with the pop promo man, distributors and artists," Baunach said. "She will also be working directly with Jerry

Flowers and Martha Haggard. Jeannie will play an integral role in all this change. She is initiating new methods of working with the distributors. We are really going to get into merchandising and pinpointing our albums better for advertising purposes.

"Flowers will be coordinating advertising from the sales end," Baunach added. "Jeannie will be coordinating advertising from the airplay end. We are going to get more intensively into exactly what cuts and exactly what albums are being played by all the country stations much more than we ever have. Jeannie will keep up with an album airplay graph sheet so we can see exactly who is playing what as concerns album cuts. She will be tracking album airplay in order to help Flowers coordinate our advertising programs better. Jeannie will also work more closely with ABC pop promotion men and the independent promotion men to help get crossover airplay which is the biggest advantage of independent distribution."

Crossover Records

Baunach pointed out that the possibility of crossover records from ABC/Dot's country artists was a key consideration in the decision to re-structure the sales and promotion force. According to the Baunach, a viable reason for an increase in crossover hits can be traced to the simple logic that independent distributors are concerned with selling records.

"A lot of independent distributors own their own key accounts, and they are mainly interested in selling records whether it is R&B, pop or country," Baunach said. "If it is a hit, they want to bring it home.

"For instance, take John Wesley Ryles' 'Fool.' If they see a record like that selling so

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AFM Sponsors Phone Call Plan For U.S. Forces

LOS ANGELES — The American Federation of Musicians (AFM) will again sponsor its "Christmas Phone Call" program beginning Dec. 24, the 10th year the organization has helped American service persons abroad telephone their families for Christmas.

The 335,000-member musicians' union is planning to pay for all telephone calls placed to the United States through its facilities by American men and women in uniform during the 72-hour period from 12:01 a.m. EST Dec. 24 to 12:00 midnight EST Dec. 26.

In the 10 years of the program, more than 10,000 persons have made Christmas phone calls home courtesy of the AFM. "We mark the 10th birthday of our Christmas Phone Call program with very great pleasure," said Hal Davis, international president of the AFM. The procedure for the placement of such calls may be obtained through the AFM in New York.

EAST COASTINGS — TURKEY DAY FOLLIES — Lou Rawls, Neil Sedaka, Mel Tillis, The Trammps and the Salsoul Orchestra's Vince Montana were among the recording artists who performed on floats in one of New York's most famous annual holiday events, the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade . . . Recognizing that many members of the New York press and radio might be kept from spending Thanksgiving with their families because of distance or work priorities, Bearsville artist Nick Jameson and his manager Tony Outeda decided to bring some of these people together for a sit-down turkey dinner at Trax. Special entrees were cooked for the vegetarians in the crowd, including Jameson and his band, and the final course was a sizzling serving of rock and blues, prepared according to Nick's own recipe.



DETECTIVE WED — Michael Des Barres, lead singer for Swan Song recording artists Detective, was wed recently to Pamela Miller in Los Angeles. Pictured at the wedding are (l-r): John David Kalodner, west coast A&R director for Atlantic Records; the bride and groom; and Bob Greenberg, vice president and west coast general manager for Atlantic Records.

bizarre characters have attended the film in costumes and makeup, and have promised to come to the show in full outfits.

ONCE UPON A WISHBONE — "Probably the one reason we've been together so long is that we still have yet to win over America," muses Steve Upton, drummer and founding member of Wishbone Ash, which is currently on its first American tour in about two years. There just might be something to what he says. Wishbone has experienced only one personnel change since 1969, when co-lead guitarist Laurie Wisefield replaced Ted Turner in 1974. (Turner is now living happily ever after in the surf and sun in Santa Cruz, California.) Several ironic twists of fate have continued to impair the American campaign. The British group set up U.S. residence last year with the express intention of touring more extensively here, and proceeded to get so involved in successful European and Japanese tours that until now, they hadn't played here once since making the move. The same two year period involved a double label switch, from MCA to Atlantic and back to MCA. While Upton realizes that this behavior might have seemed frivolous to American observers, he pointed out that Wishbone had remained with MCA affiliates on a worldwide basis all along, so that it was "quite natural" for them to switch back to the label here.

CAFFEINE IS THE DRUG — "Storm Lake, Iowa?!" the young musician gasped in disbelief. His bandleader, the experienced Maynard Ferguson, reminded him that Radio City Music Hall is not the only place in the world to play. Ferguson recently drew a crowd of 4,800 in Storm Lake, Iowa, and has made equally strong showings in the high school gyms of many midwestern towns. Fact is that MF, master of the high-register trumpet, was a presence in many of these places long before top 40 stations began booming his versions of the themes from "Rocky" and "Star Wars." Ferguson also claims that a large majority of his fans in these areas are between the ages of 13 and 17, which might seem a bit hard to swallow until you consider that he has spent years working with high school and college stage bands, of which there are some 40,000 nationwide. His only regret is that the stepped-up schedule of appearances brought about by his singles success has forced him to turn down many of the seminars he loves to run. Oh yes, the subtitle: MF finds that his best pickup comes from the dark brown liquid he brews in his own portable espresso maker — and it's all quite legal.

SWISS SUSPICION — Things must have looked pretty bleak for Peter Gabriel and his entourage when they stopped their cars in La Gallen, Switzerland, and were accosted by a dozen policemen wielding cocked rifles. They were searched, and road manager Richard McPhail's suitcase was found to contain the large quantity of cash that touring bands normally carry in currencies of four nations. Because their equipment had been sent ahead, it was difficult for Gabriel and the band to convince police that they were musicians who were driving through Switzerland because an airline delay had made it impossible to fly to that evening's gig in France. No one had realized that the German license plates on their rented cars, bassist Tony Levin's picture-taking in the vicinity of a bank, and the scarf drawn across Gabriel's mouth to keep out cold air would incite the suspicions of local authorities, who had recently found the body of a kidnapped German industrialist right nearby. It seems that rock bands and terrorists don't look all that different from each other, so the police kept guns trained on them the entire time. Four band members even tried to prove their authenticity with an a capella rendition of the barber shop quartet number, "Excuse Me," but their captors thought it was just another trick. Finally, someone came up with a work permit issued through a Swiss promoter whom the police knew, and a few phone calls cleared up the problem. After all that, they were only one and a half hours late for their gig!

. . . P.S. Peter Gabriel is working on his new album with producer Robert Fripp at Relight Studios in Holland. They'll return to England to re-mix a few tracks, and be back in Holland to finish up shortly after Christmas.

PRUDISH BRITISH — While the rest of Europe is paranoid over the possibility of terrorism at airports, England's worries seem to be centered around the concert hall. The arrival of the Tubes in England triggered the nation's Murdochian press to print sensationalist reports on the group's lewd and lascivious stage act, which immediately caused several

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HOUSTON AT RENO SWEENEY'S — Private Stock recording artist Cissy Houston recently performed a two-week engagement at Reno Sweeney's in New York. Pictured (l-r) on opening night are: Joshua Blardo, national FM promotion for Private Stock; Harold Sulman, vice president of sales; Houston; Jerry Love, co-producer of Houston's recent release; Michael Zager, co-producer; Steve Scharf, director of A&R for Private Stock, and Susan McCusker, co-producer.



RABBITT RALLY — Elektra/Asylum country artist Eddie Rabbitt was greeted by label execs following his recent show at the Palomino. Shown (l-r) are: Rabbitt; Kenny Buttice, vice president of promotion; country singer Tanya Tucker and Jerry Sharell, vice president of artist development.