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Industry Ponders Roads Not Taken Did Bypassing Tours Impact Top Acts' Sales?

BY CRAIG ROSEN and ED CHRISTMAN

LOS ANGELES—While several superstars have recently chosen not to tour the U.S. in support of new albums, industry observers are divided



R.E.M.

on whether or not their avoidance of the concert circuit has hurt their record sales.

Among those who have decided not to tour this year are R.E.M., Mariah Carey, and Madonna. In addition, Michael Jackson, who recently ended his European concert swing due to ill health, has no plans to tour the U.S.

In the year since it came out, Jackson's "Dangerous" album has sold more than 4 million units in this country, mostly in its first few months of release. While no mean achievement, that sales level falls short of the 6 million units that his previous album, "Bad," sold domestically.

Madonna's "Erotica," only a couple of months after its release, is closing in on double-platinum, according to Warner Bros.; but, in its seventh week on The Billboard 200, the album has slipped to No. 21.

On the other hand, consider the situation of R.E.M.: After more than a decade of building a loyal cult following from constant touring, R.E.M. (Continued on page 80)

Garth, U2 Top Billboard Awards Winners List

BY CRAIG ROSEN

LOS ANGELES—For the second consecutive year, Garth Brooks was a dominant force at the Billboard Music Awards.

The country superstar topped his five-award run at 1991's show by roping in seven trophies at the show, which was broadcast live on the Fox Broadcasting Co. from the Universal Amphitheatre here Dec. 9.

Brooks took honors for No. 1 Pop Artist, No. 1 Billboard 200 Album (for the 8 million-seller "Ropin' The Wind"), No. 1 Billboard 200 Artist, No. 1 Country Artist, No. 1 Hot Country Singles Artist, No. 1 Hot Country Album (also for "Ropin'"), and No. 1 Country Albums Artist.

(Continued on page 75)

Seattle Station Staffers Quit In P'gramming Row

BY ERIC BOEHLERT

NEW YORK—Schisms between volunteers and paid staffers at community radio stations are not unusual. The battle over the future direction of KCMU Seattle, though, is shaping up to be a monumental one.

For those fighting for control of KCMU, one of the most influential commercial-free stations in the country, as well as the launching pad for local acts such as Nirvana, Mudhoney, and Soundgarden, a defining moment came one night early last month.

That was when station volunteer announcer Dick Burton was suspended after he reported on-air that a group of fellow volunteers had united to protest KCMU programming (Continued on page 63)

German Authors Society Bans Composers Of Neo-Nazi Songs

This story was prepared by Dominic Pride in London, Mike Hennessey in Frankfurt, and Wolfgang Spahr in Hamburg.

LONDON—In an unprecedented step, the German authors' rights society, GEMA, has declared that it will not handle material by composers who produce neo-Nazi songs and lyrics. The major labels belonging to German industry federation BPW applauded the GEMA stand and agreed not to sign skinhead bands, whose lyrics are said to incite racial hatred.

GEMA took its decision Dec. 8-9 at a board meeting in Munich. The organiza-

nization said it will "distance itself from the combination of composers, lyricists, and publishers" of neo-Nazi music groups, who produce works "which contradict the constitutional principles of freedom and democracy."

The rights body has also made it known that it will refuse to grant membership to artists who are conveying neo-Nazi sentiments in their music. So far, this situation has not arisen because none has applied for membership.

GEMA spokesman Gabriel Stein-schulte says the organization is taking (Continued on page 75)

Swiss See Higher \$ Peaks With New Copyright Ruling

BY MIKE HENNESSEY

ZURICH—Switzerland is among Europe's most lucrative music markets on a per-capita basis. But, due to legal uncertainties that were resolved only a year ago, it has also been one of the continent's leading markets for record pirates and bootleggers.

Switzerland is not a signatory of the Rome Convention on neighboring rights, and its

copyright law has no provision for secondary rights. Until recently, it was also unclear about the status of sound carriers that were out of copyright in such countries as Italy and Luxembourg and were being imported for sale in Switzerland.

However, the uncertainty that has made Switzerland an easy target for pirate and bootleg product was swept away Dec. 20, 1991, when the convention (Continued on page 42)



New & Old Fans 'Plug' In To Hit Eric Clapton Set

BY LARRY FLICK and THOM DUFFY

NEW YORK—With sales of his current "Unplugged" album fast approaching the 7-million-



CLAPTON

mark worldwide, veteran guitar hero Eric Clapton is hot.

A consistent sales draw throughout his decade-plus solo career, Clapton is now enjoying the best-selling album of his career. After three months on The Billboard 200, "Unplugged," which is No. 6 on this week's chart, has sparked cross-generational consumer interest, and its weekly sales regularly match the out-of-the-box performance of numerous new platinum-level releases.

According to Lou Dennis, se-

(Continued on page 81)

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Black 47 Satisfies Thirst For Unique Sound Band's SBK Debut Fuses Celtic Flavor, Street Beats

BY CATHERINE APPLEFELD

NEW YORK—Forget about album sales and sold-out gigs. Black 47 front man Larry Kirwan has his own gauge to determine whether the band's charged performance of Celtic-flavored, street-inspired rock will fly in a given market: "If there's beer there, then we're fine," he says.

This formula isn't so far-fetched for an act that has been packing Manhattan watering hole Paddy Reilly's twice weekly for more than a year, has successfully marketed its

own album, and has inspired "Rocky Horror"-type interaction among its cult following.

Along with guitarist/singer/songwriter Kirwan, the band includes Dexy's Midnight Runner Geoffrey Blythe on saxophones, Fred Parcels on trombone and tin whistle, percussionist Thomas Hamlin, David Conrad on bass, and New York police officer Chris Byrne on uilleann pipes and tin whistle.

The resultant hybrid sound caught the attention of Pete Ganbar, director of A&B at SBK, who helped wo-

ken the band to the EMI Records fold. "There's a trend going back to real music, live performance," he says. "And that's just what these guys are."

Ganbar says he was "blown away" when he listened to Black 47's demo tape last spring and consequently went to see a live performance. "After listening to loads of tapes that sound exactly the same, it really perks your ears up" to hear something so unique, he says, describing the band's aural assault of traditional Irish instruments, a drum machine, power chords, soulful horns, and occasionally rapped lyrics.

"It went from being the most bizarre, different, weird thing to the most obvious band that we needed to sign in a matter of a couple days," says Ganbar.

SBK released the five-song EP "Black 47" last month and plans to have a full-length album, "Fire Of Freedom," out by mid-February. Both projects were co-produced by Kirwan and Ric Ocasek.

"Pete was very important to our relationship with SBK," says Kirwan. "A lot of people [at SBK/EMI] were so fanatical about the music. I'd wake up in the morning and these people would be at the foot of my bed! At one time we were thinking of not going with any major label ...

(Continued on page 16)



BLACK 47: Thomas Hamlin, Fred Parcels, David Conrad, Larry Kirwan, Chris Byrne, and Geoffrey Blythe. (Photo: Kurt Mundahl)

W/C Creative VP Shows A Talent For Finding Talent

IF YOU CAN MAKE IT Here ...

From Largs, a small Scottish town, to the Big Apple is quite a contrast in culture and decibel count. Yet for Warner/Chappell VP of creative services Kenny MacPherson, the New York fit is comfortable—and good for business. (Other native sons of Largs include Stuart Hornall, who operates Rondor Music, and Graham Lyle, who produced and wrote many of Tina Turner's hits.)

MacPherson, who started out in management in the U.S. 14 years ago, is charged with finding a wide spectrum of contemporary talent to further drive Warner/Chappell's revenues.

Prime on MacPherson's wish list when he came

aboard nearly three years ago was an expansion of the New York offices as a desirable environment for songwriters. This was accomplished by a move late last year to new New York headquarters. Now, 15 staffers sift the marketplace for new acts that could be lured to the publisher by the presence of a state-of-the-art eight-track studio there. "We used to be perceived as nothing more than a satellite of the Los Angeles office. With the merger [of Chappell and Warner Bros. Music] there was a scramble to find space."

With support from the company's management team in Los Angeles—and, in particular, of New York office chief Frank Military, a senior VP of legendary music publishing stature—MacPherson got his wish. MacPherson notes that Military, who also shepherds the fortunes of the publisher's treasure-trove of Broadway writers past and present, has proved a personal asset in that "he gave me a lot of guidance in walking me through the dark woods of corporate structure."

MacPherson says a substantial New York base also enables him to deal with greater speed and efficiency with European markets to facilitate talent reviews and decision-making. As for the New York setting itself, MacPherson says, "There are as many major labels based in New York as there are in Los Angeles."

After the creative viability of a new act is established, says MacPherson, deal-making must address "economic value. Each deal is different and goes as high as supply and demand dictate."

"For every \$85,000 you give an act, you've got to sell 100,000 copies of an album in order to recoup—and you'd surely be lucky to do it the first time out."

Competitive as the contemporary talent search might be among his peer companies, MacPherson calls for the sharing of more information among publishers and the encouragement of writer collaborations that cross publisher lines. "I'd rather have

50% of something than 100% of nothing," he says.

"We publishers have to create our own projects," he adds. "I find it just amazing that we're in the communication business and yet people don't pick up the phone to ask about something. You can't have blinders on and think you can do it on your own."

Among the artists and/or producer/writers MacPherson is currently working with are Helmet, White Zombie, Suzanne Vega, Ween, Momentum Music, Pantera, Alan Gorrie, Steve Jordan, Blue Nile, Gerry De Vaux, Tommy Stinson, Jenni Muldaur, Garland Jeffreys, Walter Afanasieff, and Danny Kortchmar.

Besides Frank Military, MacPherson's other New York-based associates are David Stamm, creative manager; Don Pacione, director of creative services; and Allan Tepper, creative manager for special projects. As for MacPherson's views on other aspects of industry practices, don't get him started on the controlled composition clause.

DATES WITH JUDY: In her 40th year in the world of entertainment, most of them in music publishing, Judy Hicks has retired—her last post having been as Los Angeles-based senior director of publishing at BMG Music Publishing. Starting out on the staff of "The Tennessee Ernie Ford Show" in 1952, she has also held posts, also in Los Angeles, at Frank Music, Metromedia Music, and Interworld Music Group.

"When the [Tennessee Ernie Ford Show] went off the air [in 1954] I was offered a secretarial job with Frank Music, going from secretary to West Coast manager before they closed the office in 1963," she says. "At that time, all employees of music publishing companies who 'plugged' songs had to be a member of the songpluggers' union. They didn't want a female pluggler, but Frank forced me upon them in order for me to go out among music people. The guys hated it so much, they never informed me when and where the union meetings were being held. Over the years, we have laughed about it, but at that time the men were very serious about keeping us girls out of their world."

PRINT ON PRINT: The following are the best-selling folios from Warner Bros. Publications: 1. Megadeth, Countdown To Extinction 2. Classic Queen 3. Best Of Red Hot Chili Peppers—What Hits? 4. Vince Gill, I Still Believe In You 5. Black Crowes, Southern Harmony & Musical Companion.



by Irv Lichtman

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THELONIOUS MONSTER'S CAPITOL DEBUT

(Continued from preceding page)

calls. Down but not out, Forrest passed a Monster tape to a friend at a Dodger game; that tape ultimately landed the group its deal with Signal/Capitol.

"At that point I thought we were dead in the water," Forrest recalls. "But we just kept playing, because I didn't know what else to do."

Forrest and the Monster have finally found an apparently happy home with Capitol. "It's not life or death if we don't sell half a million copies of the first record," Forrest says.

Capitol director of artist develop-

ment Rob Gordon says the label is "taking the street approach" to breaking Thelouious Monster.

"We're going to break the band from the road," he says, pointing out that it played 15 dates with Soul Asylum in late September and early October, before "Beautiful Mess" was released. Gordon adds the band will play 75-100 dates in the next few months, from club shows to acoustic sets at retail outlets and one-stops.

College and alternative radio outlets, MTV's "120 Minutes," The Box, and local and regional video shows will also play a role in the marketing plan, Gordon says.

Meanwhile, Forrest, who attacks ex-girlfriend Julie Ritter of Mary's Danish in the album cut "Song For A Politically Correct Girl From The Valley," continues to offend some people in the industry. In recent live performances he has taken to changing the words of Thelouious Monster's "Sammy Hagar Weekend" to "Perry Farrell Weekend."

"I'm going to record that, I think," Forrest says. "It's not a cut on him, it just shows that I parted 15 years ago in parking lots to Sammy Hagar, Van Halen, and Black Sabbath, and there are kids partying now to Pearl Jam and the Chili Peppers."

Might the song affect Thelouious Monster's chances of landing a spot on the prestigious Lollapalooza tour (masterminded by Farrello) next year? "Probably," Forrest laughs. "But I've never claimed to be the sharpest businessman in show business."

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ARTIST DEVELOPMENTS

FAILURE'S SUCCESS

There aren't many similarities between the music of the Doors and Failure, but the lead singers of these L.A. bands, Jim Morrison of the '60s unit and Ken Andrews of the contemporary modern rock group, share a similar career left turn—out of film school into rock'n'roll.

"I wanted to go to school for the heck of it, and film was the least objectionable major," says Andrews, who was enrolled in California State Univ.-Los Angeles' film program two years ago.

But Andrews got together with bassist Greg Edwards, an old friend from San Diego, and began auditioning drummers ("usually in large groups—it was pretty awful," Andrews recalls). Skin man Robert Gauss completed the lineup.

And Failure "sorta happened," according to its leader, and become one of the more talked-about bands on the L.A. club scene, attracting attention with its roiling, bottom-heavy sound.

For its Slash Records debut album, "Comfort," the band sought the production services of Steve Albini, the former mastermind of the noisy Chicago-based group Big Black. It was an unlikely collaboration: Andrews cites such unusual inspirations as the Cars, AC/DC, and Van Halen, and wasn't a Big Black fan "until way late in the game."

"We liked two records he had done,

Jesus Lizard and the Breeders' 'Pod,'" Andrews adds.

But Albini succeeded in focusing Failure's rumbling, almost grunge-style sound in the studio. "A lot of the real acoustic loveliness comes off the way Steve records the drums," Andrews says. "He makes a conscious effort to do that."

Failure has recently been supporting "Comfort" with a national club tour, opening for Darling Buds and Mary's Danish. The trio will begin another two- to three-month jaunt in late January.

Slash president Bob Biggs anticipates that a round of European touring will follow the release of "Comfort" overseas in February. "America is really the most formatted place going," Biggs says. "What I would like to do with this band is have them playing in front of people where formats are not important."

Part of Biggs' plans for Failure echoes the strategy the label used to break Faith No More: "We're trying to allow the natural audience for the band to show itself."

While Biggs indicates the label may make a video for Failure at some point, former film student Andrews balks at the opportunity to direct it himself.

"I don't want to deal with it—look through the camera at myself," he says.

CHRIS MORRIS

ARTISTS IN CONCERT

(Continued from preceding page)

"Midnight Flyer."

JIM BESSMAN

PETER HIMMELMAN Wow Hall, Eugene, Ore.

ROCKER Peter Himmelman played to a capacity crowd of 900 at Eugene's Wow Hall on the opening night of his 40-city U.S. tour. The cross-country outing promises to be a successful one for the songwriter, due in part to radio support for his song "Untitled," better known by some as "the taxi song."

Himmelman's six-piece band consisted of an electric guitar (skillfully covering mandolin parts on a Strat), bass, keyboards, drums, and a background vocalist, with Himmelman playing acoustic and electric guitar, and occasional percussion.

Known and admired for his spontaneity, Himmelman never prepares a set list, and has been known to lead an entire audience outside the theater

onto the roof to play under the stars. At this show, the band romped through a joyously impromptu 2½-hour set (with a half-hour break), taking requests from the audience and working out some tricky arrangements on the spot.

The set opened with "Flown This Acid World," a song that sparked recognition in most of the audience, who sang along with the choruses. Throughout the show, Himmelman's lyrics were punctuated by enthusiastic outbursts from the crowd, as he touched on themes ranging from hope to dissolution, disillusion, and despair. In particular, the crowd recognized the Elvis Costello-like "You Know Me Better Than I Do," and sang along during an a cappella breakdown of the chorus.

Himmelman introduced an older piece, "The Eleventh Confession," by describing it in his usual deadpan as "a big hit—I'm surprised you don't know it." As the band launched into the open-

ing chords, Himmelman learned that the percussionist's shaker was lost and, following some banter about how it was probably going to cost him 20 bucks to replace it, suggested that his background singer play spoons during the intro instead. Coaching her good-naturedly on the proper rhythm and part, he waited until the intro sounded the way he wanted it before beginning to sing.

One of many musical high points of the set was a version of "I Feel Young Today," in which the bass player executed African rhythms in a line reminiscent of Paul Simon's "Graceland." Wowwelman's voice took on a variety of personae during the evening, from balladeer to pop rocker, from gravely bluesman to political commentator.

Half an hour into the show, Himmelman asked the audience for requests. An El Salvadorian man with a self-described "Hebrew-sounding name" requested a dance song and the band burst into a 15-minute rendition of "Havah Negila" with a Latin beat. The whole room danced the hora as the keyboardist called out the chords to the rest of the band. At one point, a bearded, middle-aged "neo-Hasid" took the stage and sang three choruses of the song utilizing Middle Eastern scales, after which Himmelman rapped spontaneously over the Havah Negila progression about El Salvador, Eugene, and other contemporary matters.

The show was sponsored by popular Eugene radio station KAVE 95.3, a station whose playlist is as eclectic as Himmelman's repertoire. Wow Hall's acoustics tend to be slightly cavernous, which gave the band a good, solid, and grungy edge.

DANIEL LEVITIN

BLACK 47 SATISFIES THIRST FOR UNIQUE SOUND

(Continued from page 14)

but the business end of it was taking up too much time."

SBK's plan, then, is to take care of business so Kirwan and company can continue to do exactly what they've been doing, but on a broader scale and with greater financial support.

"We're going to get them out on the road playing in pubs," says Ganbar. "What's happening here can happen in every other city." First single "Funky Ceili" (pronounced "key-lee") is getting play on college and alternative outlets, and the band has just wrapped a video for that song, featuring Kirwan's son Jimmy in a cameo. That video was shot by George Semirana in Paddy Reilly's.

Ganbar says another promotional plus is the close-knit nature of the Irish pub community and dedication of Paddy Reilly's owner Steve Duggan. "He's calling pubs in cities all over the country and they work out some kind of barter system."

Describing Black 47's brew as a marriage of traditional Irish music and "the downtown sound," Kirwan says he has always been fascinated by this blend. "Historically, the Irish and blacks are very connected," he says. "When they first came to this country, both of them were underclass. So I figured they must have met, even if it was in fighting."

"The music I play is what I hear on the street, and basically hip-hop and dancehall is what you hear," he continues. "The Irish comes because we started playing Irish bars in the Bronx and I'm from Ireland and we decided to write about certain subjects."

Subject matter, beer-hall tales of working-class life in both Ireland and New York, includes everything from berating worker exploitation to crashing an ex-girlfriend's wedding. Kirwan, who is a family man, says most of the stories are true, "but I take extra things and put them in there." The band's political bent is even reflected in its name, taken from the worst year of the Irish potato famine.

Kirwan's writing extends to the stage. Among his many works is "Liverpool Fantasy," a play staged in New

York and Dublin about life if the Beatles had never made it big. He was also a founding member of rock act the Major Thinkers.

Keeping Black 47's sound fresh is important to Kirwan and partially stems from his disillusionment with the status quo of mainstream rock'n'roll. "Why bother listening to R.E.M. when you can listen to the Byrds? It's all fourth, fifth generation. It's like with any other art form. If it is going to get recycled and copied all the time, it really doesn't interest me."

Billboard

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