

Who's Who In A&R At Prelude

INTRODUCTION:

In the last two issues our A&R Spotlight has dealt with relatively large record company A&R staffs. In contrast, Prelude Records is a small new disco oriented label where A&R is very much a part of the overall running of the company. With disco playing an increasingly important role in contemporary music, we felt it would be interesting to take a closer look at this emerging new label.

PERSONNEL:

Marvin Schlachter — President

Stan Hoffman — Executive Vice President

Starr Arning — Director of Disco Promotion

Jeff Deliniko — Controller

Stacy Frankel — Accounts Receivable

Phyllis Katz — Assistant to Controller

Francois Kevorkian — Director of A&R

Joe Kolsky — Sales Manager

Gerry Kuster — Production

Bob Lowe — Retail Promotion

Eric Plotkin — Mail Room

Brenda Winbush — Receptionist/Secretary

MARVIN SCHLACHTER: President



A native New Yorker, Marvin received a degree in Business Administration from City College in 1955. After 2 years in the army, he spent 4 months in the CBS mailroom before moving to Cashbox Magazine as an advertising representative from 1958 to 1960.

He spent the next 9 years building Scepter Records with Florence Greenberg. As a principal in the company and Executive Vice President, Schlachter played a vital role in Scepter's unprecedented growth.

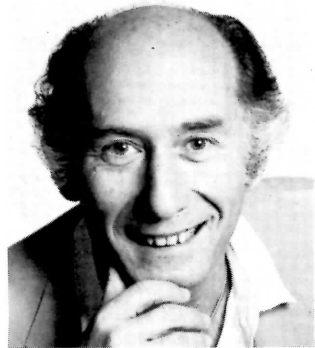
When Janus Records was established in July of 1969, Marv accepted the firm's Presidency. He promptly established Janus with eleven hit singles, including a gold record and several chart albums in the first year of operation. By March of 1971 he was President of the entire GRT Record Group, including Chess-Janus and GRT Records.

Schlachter set about building a well-rounded record company through both internal expansion and exclusive distribution agreements with labels such as Westbound and Barnaby, the reactivation of GRT Nashville, and the acquisition of the highly successful Metromedia Record's Country Label.

Marv was also President of ATV's PYE Records for a short time, before the establishment of Prelude Records.

It's interesting to note that, although Marvin has been successful in diversifying companies, he has chosen to specialize in one special area of music . . . disco. His reasons become evident in the interview that follows.

STAN HOFFMAN: Executive Vice President



Stan's career in the music business began with a shipping clerk's position at King Records in Baltimore in 1952. By '53 he accepted the position of Sales Manager for General Distributors in Baltimore, where he remained until 1958. At that time, Stan took over as Vice President and General Manager for Marnel Distributing. Two years later, Hoffman took advantage of the opportunity to purchase Marnel, and subsequently became President and Owner.

After 6 years, Stan sold Marnel to Schwartz Bros. and joined them as General Manager. Soon thereafter Marvin Schlachter, then President of Chess/Janus, hired Stan as General Manager for Chess/Janus Records, where Hoffman remained until 1975.

In '76, he rejoined Marvin as Vice President of PYE Records and from there entered into a partnership with Schlachter in the establishment of Prelude Records in January 1977.

FRANCOIS KEVORKIAN: Director of A&R



Francois became actively involved in the music business as a drummer in a Jazz-Rock band while attending college in his native country, France. In September of 1975 he moved to the states and took various side jobs while he tried to support himself with his drums. At one point he was hired to sit in the middle of the dance floor at a disco called The Galaxie 21 Club and play along with the records.

Gradually Francois became more interested in disco and began to D.J.; first at a club called Experiment 4 and then at the well known New York-New York, where he is still working on weekends.

While making the rounds to the various record companies to pick up the new releases he was offered a position at Prelude. Seeing the opportunity to actually get into the studio to record while learning the inner workings of a record company, Francois accepted the position of Director of A&R. He then worked on such hits as "In The Bush" and "Feed The Flame" by Lorrain Johnson, "A-Freak-A" and "Chance To Dance" by Lemon, "High On Love" by Claire and Associate Produced "Sticky Fingers."

His job now consists of seeking out new imports, screening material, assessment of work already signed, and editing and supervising the mastering of records. Francois also helps in marketing and packaging product to make it available to D.J.'s and looks forward to soon going into the studio on his own productions.

PRELUDE ARTIST ROSTER

Saturday Night Band	Lorraine Johnson	Lemon	Pacific Blue
Constellation Orch.	Musique	Sticky Fingers	Claire
	Peter Jacques Band	Theo Vaness	Macho

Interview with Marvin Schlachter — 

- Q: Following your situation at PYE-ATV, what prompted you to set up your own company?
- A: When the decision was made by ATV to close the company down rather than to make the necessary investment in order to try and salvage the label, I was faced with another decision in my life. That was; What road to pursue in the music industry? I had owned my own company in a partnership at Scepter Records. I had sold my interest at Scepter and started Janus Records for GRT and PYE . . . and so I really had a taste of both the corporate structure and individual ownership. I made a decision that, based on my own personal desires and, what was happening in the industry and, how I saw myself within the industry, that the best move for me would be to start my own company.
- Q: What about deciding on direction once that decision was made?
- A: Well, the direction of the company was certainly something that took us several months to determine. My partner, Stan Hoffman and I just went into business. After we had gone into business we began to examine the directions we wanted to take. I had made an arrangement with PYE Records to acquire three or four of the artists that were on the label that had either not had records finished and released or, in one or two instances, records that had just been released but not promoted, because of the closing of the label. So when we went into business we had three or four pieces of product already available, one of which was a disco album . . .
- We used these albums as the foundation and for the first several months we tried to determine two things, one: Where our strength lay . . . in terms of our experience and capabilities and, two; What was happening in the industry.
- We felt, at that time, and that was the spring of 1976, that disco music was something that was going to have a long-ranged impact on the industry and secondly, since most of the majors at that time were ignoring it . . . it meant that there was, for us, less competition. That is, less competition relative to signing artists and producers . . . less problems in promoting the product because it was in an entirely different area of exposure, an area that was not structured by playlists and limited by the programming of a station. So we felt that it was an area that was right for Prelude. In November of '76, we went into the studio to produce our first disco album.
- Q: You say you went in to produce your own disco album, was that because you didn't find masters that were available that you felt strongly enough about to acquire and release?
- A: . . . The first album we put out, other than the disco album we had acquired from PYE, was a project that we produced . . . with a producer that we signed and worked with and directed in terms of the kind of product we wanted, so it was not an acquired master.
- Q: What was the group's name?
- A: The group was the Saturday Night Band and the album called "Come On and Dance, Dance" subsequently went to number two on the disco charts.
- Q: Who produced it?
- A: Moses Dillard and Jesse Boyce. Immediately afterwards, they went back in the studio and produced another album with a group called The Constellation Orchestra that also went top 10. It wasn't until after that, that we acquired our first disco master by an artist named Theo Vaness. That was produced in Paris by a group called Boona Music.
- Q: It's interesting that your first acquired master was something from Europe rather than from the states . . . is there a reason for that?
- A: Yes, there was a reason in that we were really first establishing ourselves at that particular time, so it was not to be expected that too many people were approaching us with finished product. We were aware of this particular album and the impact it was having in the States, so we went after it and were successful in acquiring it.
- That was another top 10 album. Quite frankly, every album that we have put out has gone top 10 disco and five have crossed over into the top charts.
- Q: We look around us recently and see the numerous distribution deals being made . . . are you also considering linking up with a major? Is there an advantage or disadvantage to remaining independent?
- A: Well, at the moment for me, and I say at the moment because things change so readily, what has been happening in the industry really works to Prelude's advantage. One; the companies that have gone out of independent distribution, in many ways, have strengthened Prelude's position with those independent distributors . . . we become more important to them; Secondly, along with that, our success has made us more important and; Thirdly, the impact that disco music is having has made us more important. So quite frankly, unless something additionally drastic happens, and by that I mean if Arista, Motown, Fantasy, Mushroom, Chrysalis, TK, etc. are going to disappear, merge or sell or whatever, and that in turn would affect certain independent distributor's ability to function . . . well then certainly I would have to reappraise any position. But at the moment . . . I'm very happy with it.
- Q: From what you've told me so far, I presume you are going to remain disco oriented. Are you planning to diversify at all?
- A: My feeling is that we are headed toward the mainstream of contemporary music by just doing what we're doing. When you find Dolly Parton cutting disco and Rod Stewart cutting disco . . . I don't think it makes sense for us to head in a different direction.

Who's Who In A&R At Prelude (Continued)

Q: Since my write-ups have been spotlighting A&R, please explain to me how A&R works at Prelude? How do people approach Prelude with product, which way does it come in, who listens to it, etc?

A: This is a very unique situation. You could say that Prelude has only been in business since March 1977 when we released our first disco album. And, as I explained earlier, the first albums were initiated by me when we sat with producers who we thought were very talented but had not yet achieved a high degree of success, for whatever reasons. We spent time in the discos, we listened to other product, we discussed what was happening and when we all agreed on the kind of product we wanted, the producer went in and, fortunately, gave us what we expected. It's been just within the last three or four months that Prelude's success has become evident to the industry that it is a viable label that should be approached when someone is finishing a piece of product or has a master or has a concept, etc. Up until then there was no A&R department. The A&R department was myself and when there were questions on the direction a piece of product should take, Stan Hoffman and I discussed it. Now we are approached daily by producers, artists, people who have masters to sell and so on, so we now have added Francois Kevorkian, who is our A&R department. He screens material. There is also a great deal of work that has to be done on projects that are completed by the producers . . . He re-mixes things from time to time, he edits, re-programs, and so on. After listening to product, we sit and discuss what is viable and what's not . . . what producers we may want to discuss projects with, and so on.

Q: Are you making a conscious decision as to the number of releases you are planning each year?

A: No, that is really governed by the availability of the kind of product that we think is viable and the concern we have about our ability to handle what we put out. While I expect our release schedule will be somewhat larger this year than last, we're certainly not going to jump from 8 to 30

Q: The prevalence of disco product at the recent MIDEM convention was obvious. How are you taking advantage of this internationalization of disco?

A: I'm not sure what you mean by "taking advantage" . . . to me, as evidenced by what was happening at MIDEM and as evidenced by what our records are doing worldwide, disco is the most internationally accepted form of music in the world. There is no country that does not have a market for this music . . . it's unbelievable!

We have licensing agreements, at this time, with practically every territory in the world. We've had 3 top 15 singles in England in the last six months . . . we've had hits in Italy, in France, in Canada we recently received 2 gold records, in Mexico, South America, there isn't a territory in the world that our product isn't selling. And furthermore, disco product is exported by every country. If a record is produced in France and released in France, two days after it is produced, if it's worth anything, it's here in the states and vice versa You go into a discoteque in Europe, in any country, and you won't know whether you're in New York or Paris or London or Milan . . . they're all the same . . . they're all dancing to the same music.

Q: You don't feel that the disco phenomenon has peaked?

A: I think that it hasn't started . . . forget about peaking. Stations all over the country are changing to a disco format and, in every instance, those stations are getting ratings that were inconceivable a few months ago. WKTU in New York is not a freak situation, it is a very important example of what will happen to radio and the world of music. It's happening and there's no way its gonna stop!

