

INTRODUCTION

Bearsville Records developed as a viable record company as Albert Grossman gradually made the transition from a management operation to a record company. Originally, Albert managed such acts as Bob Dylan, The Band, Janis Joplin, Peter, Paul & Mary, Gordon Lightfoot, Ian and Sylvia, The Paul Butterfield Band, James Cotton, The Electric Flag and others. As Vince Fusco explains it, "When Albert really started to live up here in Bearsville more, his focus became more into developing a recording situation. After the band did "Big Pink" the feasibility of recording in the country became more realistic. The Band was living here and other artists were starting to move up. Then the accountants moved up and the focus of the company began to move toward the record business . . . as a successful manager, many people were after Albert to form a record company. He originally formed a company with Ampex. Jesse Winchester and Todd Rundgren were two of the important acts that were signed to the label at that time. When the Ampex situation didn't work out, at that point a deal was reached with Warner Brothers . . . Bearsville is now into its second five-year agreement with Warners."

Bearsville recently closed its New York City offices and moved its promotion operation to the West Coast. Fusco explains that this was done to better co-ordinate with the existing Warner Brothers promotion team. Something is obviously being done right as Bearsville Records is now enjoying considerable chart success.

The record company's main offices, however, are in the small town of Bearsville, N.Y., right next to Woodstock. Bearsville is actually a small artists' community with very few commercial trappings. The offices themselves are housed in two unobtrusive white buildings with no signs or billboards. In fact, if you don't know exactly where you are going, it's easy to drive right by. Just down the road from the office is a self-sufficient, twenty-four track, state-of-the-art recording facility with one complete on-line room and two rooms wired into the main. There are some twenty-four different apartments to house musicians who come up to record at Bearsville and, recently, Todd Rundgren has built a major new video studio as well. The people at Bearsville are also especially proud of their Chinese restaurant (also established by Albert) called the Little Bear, with a chef brought in especially to create, in Vince Fusco's words, "One of the finest Chinese restaurants in the world!"

There's a strong family atmosphere about Bearsville and it's worth noting that the people who work there, many of whom have been with Albert Grossman even before the establishment of the record company, feel a genuine affection and allegiance to him personally as well as to the philosophy of closeness and independence he has tried to develop.

A&R at Bearsville

In discussing A&R at Bearsville one can't help but notice the relatively small roster of artists on the label. Although there is no actual quota, it's interesting to note that the emphasis seems to be on working with the acts on the label more than actively seeking new artists. Although Vince Fusco says, "We're interested in signing a rock'n'roll band. We're interested in new wave. We're also interested in singer-songwriters and artists that show a potential for longevity." The label is not actually out actively scouting for these things but will listen when they get a chance. As Ian Kimmet explains, "We'll only work with artists who are serious about what they're doing and we get very deeply and personally involved. As a result, my time is spent primarily with those artists that are already signed to the label." Ian goes on to point out that they do try and stay in touch with what is going on in each of the cities he visits and at the same time Willie Mitchell in Memphis and Howard Rosen in L.A. are very much aware of what is happening in their respective areas.

When asked about unsolicited tapes Ian admits, "That's been a problem. The tapes have been building up at the office and we've recently tried meeting at least once a week. What happens though is that Vinny hears them when he gets a chance and I listen when I get a chance and I now have a girl working for me named Cindi, and we're asking her to listen . . . but I rarely find anything that way."

In speaking further with Ian, he continually came back to the same theme of an artist's sincerity and seriousness, even when discussing unsolicited tapes; "If you get a tape from someone and its there with another two dozen tapes, then there's the follow through that becomes important . . . If people bug you a bit and are serious about what they're doing, it helps separate the chaff from the wheat. When Randy (Van warmer) appeared in my office in London, he had come all the way from Cornwall with a big tape recorder that he had hauled on a train just for an appointment . . . he was absolutely serious about what he was doing." Ian also stresses the importance of what an artist has to say, "We're really concerned that an artist has something to say . . . something that's worthwhile. There's not too much fiction in Bearsville artists . . . There's a lot of fiction in the charts and that's O.K., it's entertaining, but if an artist has something to say it's somehow much more worthy."

Kimmet also feels very strongly about the effect that English music is having today on our U.S. market; "It really is exciting in London, and I think the clubs and the radio here are playing a lot of the best English music, and its such a breath of fresh air." However, when asked if he intends to perhaps travel back there to look for acts for Bearsville, Ian noted, "It's hard because if anything happens in Britain it gets snapped up right away by the companies there."

In summing up, it seems that an artist does not get signed to Bearsville unless someone there gets personally involved and believes completely in the act. Usually this means the artist must have something to say and must be totally dedicated to his or her music. Also, once signed, the company places more emphasis on working with their existing artists than in seeking new talent.

ALBERT GROSSMAN: President and Chairman of the Board

Albert Grossman is one of those legendary people whose name almost everyone in the music industry recognizes although at the same time he maintains a very low profile and avoids the publicity and hype often associated with other record company executives. He was one of the original directors of the Newport Folk Festival and managed such artists as Bob Dylan, The Band, Peter, Paul & Mary, Janis Joplin, Gordon Lightfoot, Ian and Sylvia, The Paul Butterfield Band, James Cotton, the Electric Flag and others before establishing Bearsville Records. He now spends most of his time at Bearsville overseeing the record company and related operations while gradually adding to and enhancing the artistic community he has helped attract to the area.

WHO'S WHO IN A&R AT BEARSVILLE

HOWARD ROSEN: Vice President and General Manager



Howard grew up in New York and attended C.W. Post College in pre-law before working for a short time at NBC News. From there he took his first music business related position as manager of the mail room for Bell Records. In a short time he moved up to National College Promotion Director for Bell. Howard next moved to Sire Records in approximately 1971 as National Promotion Director. After about a year at Sire, Rosen took over as Director of East Coast Promotion for Elektra-Asylum. From there he then accepted the position of National Promotion Director for Paramount Records until 1974 when Howard established his own independent promotion company. Two years later he became Vice President of Promotion for Private Stock and then in mid 1977, Rosen moved to the West Coast as National Promotion Director for Casablanca Records. In '78 he was promoted to Vice President of Promotion for Casablanca.

Last year Howard joined Bearsville Records as Vice President and General Manager where he is now involved in every area of the company's West Coast operations.

SUZY BLOSSER: Secretary and Assistant to Howard Rosen

VINCE FUSCO: Director of International Operations and Music Publishing



Vince Fusco was born and raised in New York. He then attended college to study accounting and, while there, became an avid Bob Dylan fan. After seeing Albert Grossman in "Don't Look Back", Vince wrote him a letter asking for a job interview. In a short time he became Albert's assistant at the management company. Vince then spun-off from Albert's company to handle the group, "Lighthouse" in 1969. Fusco entered a partnership with Larry Magid at the Electric Factory and produced the Atlantic City Pop Festival. Vince continued to handle artists and produce concerts for the next 6 years. He then moved out of the music industry as one of the founders of the School of Holography and the Museum of Holography in New York City. Vince was then involved with producing the first holographic exhibit at the International Center of Photography as well as the lazer light show at Battery Park called "By The Light Of The Lazer Moon", sponsored by the movie Superman. In 1977 Vince even wrote a children's book entitled "The Amazing Adventures of Holoman", illustrated by the same artist who had done Batman and the Flash, Joe Giella. At this point the book has sold some 100,000 copies and may yet become a T.V. series. When CBS originally optioned it for T.V. Fusco moved to Los Angeles where he also worked on a T.V. series with Phil Spector. At this point Vince began to move back

into music as he began to manage Christian entertainers for the Vineyard Church as a born again Christian. Upon leaving the Church, he and his new wife Jacquelyn drove back across the country and by July of '79 he accepted his present position at Bearsville Records.

MARGOT VESTERGAARD: Secretary and Assistant to Vince Fusco

IAN KIMMET: Director of A&R



Born and raised in Scotland, Ian began playing in groups by the age of 14. As a teenager he played guitar behind such artists as Lulu, Nazareth, and Alex Harvey. When it was time to leave school and make a career for himself Ian excelled in art and, seeing no real future in the music scene in Scotland, he began as a furniture designer instead. After 2½ years a friend took a job in a small studio in London and suggested that Ian come try his luck. Ian gave up his designer job and moved to London. After working for a year as a department store clerk, Kimmet eventually found a position with Feldman's Music which represented Albert Grossman's music publishing concerns in London. During this time Ian produced records for Vertigo Records and then in '71 Ian left to work in a band of his own on RCA called "Jook". When the group did not work out financially, Ian took a position at Island Music and the remainder of Jook became members of what was then to become the group Sparks. While at Island, Ian met Randy Van Warner, which was the beginning of a long and eventually rewarding relationship. After approximately six months at Island Music, Albert Grossman asked Ian to set up an office for him working out of WEA in London. Kimmet accepted the position and worked for Albert for the next 2½ years in London. During this time Ian and Randy's relationship grew. In Ian's words, "We really feel that we helped each other in many ways and we've grown together." In January

1978 Albert asked Ian to join him in the U.S. and Randy came over shortly thereafter.

It's interesting to note that Ian still plays guitar occasionally as a special member of Johnny Average and The Falcons under the stage name "Little Roy Watson" along with Jon Holbrook as "Brian Briggs" and Mick Barrigan as "Shayne Fontayne". In Ian's words, "It's therapy . . . it keeps us in touch."

CYNDI CASHDOLLAR: Secretary and Assistant to Ian Kimmet

WILLIE MITCHELL: Executive Director and Director of Memphis Operations



Willie grew up in the Memphis area where he taught himself trumpet and keyboards while still in high school. After years of playing in marching bands and club groups and a stint in the Army, he put together the Willie Mitchell Combo in Memphis based around the 'Memphis Sound'. In Willie's words, "It's heavy on rhythm and heavy on beat. I call it the sound that makes your blood boil."

Mitchell enjoyed chart success as an artist with "20-75" and "Soul Serenade". He also organized the Memphis Horns in 1963, which have since appeared on more than 200 gold records. In the 60's his Willie Mitchell Combo placed third in a disc jockey national poll and in '68 was listed in Cashbox as its Number One instrumental group.

As a producer, Mitchell has achieved some 18 gold records, mostly with Al Green and one with Denise La Salle, as well as a platinum record with "Al Green's Greatest Hits" LP. Willie also produced such artists as O.V. Wright, Ann Peebles, the Bill Black Combo and Ace Cannon.

Mitchell has written and/or co-written hits for Green, La Salle, the Doobie Brothers and Bob Seger and appeared as an artist on albums by Neil Diamond, the Box Tops and numerous other groups.

In June of 1979, Mitchell resigned as Vice President of the Memphis based Hi Records to become an artist, Executive Producer and Director of Memphis Operations for Bearsville Records.

RENEE KIRK: Secretary and Assistant to Willie Mitchell