

INTERVIEW NOTES WITH RAY CAVIANO

In his capacity as president of RFC Records, Ray Caviano is both head of that particular label, which is totally funded and supported by Warner Brothers, and also head of the Dance Music Department for Warner Brothers, with RFC acting as a full service promotional department for the entire Warner group. Caviano points out the label will remain small with only five artists on the roster. At present RFC has signed worldwide agreements with Gino Soccio, Janice McClain, Change and a new signing to be announced. This still leaves one extra slot open. Ray notes that after only about a year and a half in operation he is very close to his first gold record with Change. "The odds for a new operation to achieve a gold record so quickly is very encouraging to us and has, quite frankly, given us immense credibility in our quest for further signings, getting people on the phone and so on," Ray explains. When pushed further on whether he intends to sign a fifth artist Caviano notes; "I am going to go by what I hear and I don't hear an awful lot that I'd like to sign these days. Vince Aletti, our vice president of A&R, screens anywhere from twenty to thirty tapes a week and I may listen to two or three out of that group and usually pass on those . . . for us it's important what we sign, not what we don't sign."

As the conversation progressed Ray noted that RFC has recently set up a music publishing company called Get Ready Music (BMI) which he will administer. When asked about worldwide subpublishing affiliations, Caviano explained that the publishing company is only in an "embryonic stage" and will become more important only after RFC has fully established itself as a record and promotion company.

When asked whether RFC could rightfully be called a "disco label" Ray answered; "Well I think you could call it a disco label but you can then also categorize that further . . . Disco is whatever is being played in the disco/clubs, it got formalized and has gone through an evolutionary period but the clubs are still there. That outlet of exposure is still vital. I've always used the clubs as 'arenas of exposure' to 'cherry pick' the songs that are crossable. Not every song that is played in a club is crossable. If there are forty records played in a night I think there often not more than six or eight that are good for the radio, in that they are melodic, they are good songs, they have a message and they are not just thump, thump . . . The key is hit songs that are danceable . . . Is Disco dead when you open the charts and see things like Queen with their new single which broke in the clubs and is breaking on R&B radio now? . . . Queen is going to be bigger because it includes the conotation of dance . . . It takes it into the arena that sold Rod Stewart's record or Pop Muzik or broke Prince or the SOS Band."

In discussing the role of RFC as the Dance Music Department for Warner Records I wondered if there was not some conflict of interest between Caviano's own RFC label and the other custom labels attached to the Warners group. Ray felt that there was somewhat of a check and balance situation since his label is totally funded by Warner Brothers and is thus not really an independent situation. With this in mind, the better he and his staff does for the other Warner Brothers product, the stronger it makes his position in the company.

As we talked further concerning the Dance Music Department and the overall picture at Warner's, Caviano is aware that he is just part of the whole but an important part, in his words; "There are Pop priorities, R&B priorities and Dance Music priorities . . . We became the first real Dance Music Department in the business, and did it right . . . this is not a one-man disco department. There is no way that one man can deal with the twenty thousand discos in the United States not including roller rinks and so called 'dance rock clubs.'" Caviano went on to show me an elaborate organization of reports from clubs, tracking of radio play, a daily "Dance Music Hotline" that is distributed throughout the Warner group. "We keep track of what's breaking in the dance rock clubs, what's breaking in the black clubs, what's breaking in the suburban clubs, what's happening at certain radio stations, activity on records that we are working, store reports and general relative information."

When asked about video Ray emphasized its importance as a promotional tool in clubs but felt we are still as much as ten years away from seeing a substantial impact on the home market. As far as new trends, Caviano especially noted the importance of Black music on the record industry. In Ray's words, "Black is Pop in the 1980's".

When asked about the possible expansion of RFC, Caviano's answer was, "Success breeds success . . . if my basic responsibility is in the Dance Music area and you can look at the charts and see how much of it we represent and at the same time I can say that we have a record that's going gold on the RFC label then I leave the rest for you to put together. . ."

RAY CAVIANO: President of RFC/Executive Director at Warner Brothers Dance and Music Department.



Ray grew up in "Little Italy" and in his teens became involved in organizing free concerts and managing local groups in the East Village. He then moved into record promotion for the Moog synthesizer album *Switched On Bach*. Partially as a result of Caviano's clever use of progressive and free-form radio, the album went gold. He next took a position as Circulation/Promotion Director for the newly formed *Rolling Stone* magazine. Ray later worked on Andy Warhol's *Interview* as well as *Rock Magazine*.

Caviano next became National Publicity Director for London Records working on such artists as The Moody Blues, The Rolling Stones, 10cc, ZZ Top, Al Green and others. From there, Ray took a position as North American Director of Miles Copeland's *British Talent Manager* co-ordinating promotion and organizing road tours for such British groups as Al Stewart, Camel, The Climax Blues Band, Renaissance and others.

In 1976 Caviano began working records at the discos on Fire Island in New York. There Ray made a name for himself breaking such acts as The Savannah Band, Vicki Sue Robinson and the Village People. Henry Stone was impressed enough with Ray's abilities there to make him Vice President of Promotion for TK Records. At TK, he was instrumental in breaking what seemed like an endless stream of crossover hits for artists like The Ritchie Family, T. Connection, Voyage, Roxy, K.C. and the Sunshine Band, Ralph McDonald, Peter Brown and numerous others.

It was Ray Caviano's ability to take dance music to the masses that attracted the attention of Mo Austin at Warner Brothers Records and led to his present position.

BOBBY SIEGEL: General Manager of RFC



Siegel's first position in the music industry was an administrative assistant at TK Records in New York in 1977. Within a few months he was named National Promotion Coordinator for the label.

When Ray Caviano moved to Warner Brothers, Bobby joined him as Director of Special Projects/Assistant To The President. Six months later, Caviano named him the General Manager of the RFC operation.

In his present capacity, Siegel is involved in all facets of running the label on a daily basis as well as acting as the focal point for coordination of the RFC/Warner Dance Music Department.

VICE ALETTI: Vice President of A&R for RFC Records



Vince became involved in the music industry as a contributor to music oriented publications beginning in 1968 with New York's *RAT* as music editor, followed by columns in *Crawdaddy* and *Creem* and articles and reviews for these magazines as well as *Rolling Stone*, *Fusion*, *Interview*, *the Village Voice*, *Penthouse New York* and others. Also during this period, Vince spent one year in the publicity department of Columbia Records. In 1975 Vince began the "Disco File" column for *Record World* magazine which continued weekly for four years until the end of 1978 when he joined RFC at its inception.

At present Aletti's responsibilities include reviewing all tapes along with any import records that come into the office. He then reviews and sends them back with letters, or on to Warners in Burbank for a second opinion, or forwards them to Ray for consideration for the RFC label. Vince also listens, with Caviano, to all material scheduled for release on the W.B. labels to select those best suited to the Dance Music market.

STEPHEN PATRIE: National Dance Rock Promotional Representative

After three years of working the lights at some of Manhattan's largest discos, Stephen accepted a position at TK Records. He began in the mailroom while learning about promotion from Dan Joseph. Patrie gradually became interested in New Wave rock and in February 1979 he began promoting dance rock music for RFC.

BOBBY SHAW: N.Y. and Midwestern Dance Music Promotional Rep.

While working as a bartender at a disco called "Barefoot Boy", Bobby met Ray Caviano who was then working in promotion for TK. In 1978 Shaw also joined TK and in 1979 moved with Caviano to RFC.

BOB GHOSSEN: Southern and Northeastern Dance Music Promotional Rep.

Bob began in the music business as an administrative assistant at Casablanca Records in New York. After two months he was moved into East Coast retail and Northeastern promotion. When Casablanca closed its N.Y. office, Ghossen accepted a position in independent national retail for RFC. Shortly thereafter he was promoted to his present position responsible for clubs, radio, and retail promotion in his specific areas.

LETITIA TOLSON: Secretary, East Coast

JACK WITHERBY: West Coast and Southwestern Dance Music Promotional Rep.

Jack won Billboard's "Disco DJ of the Year" award in 1965, '66, and '67. He was the co-founder (along with Erika Smith) of the Southwest Disco Pool. In 1978, after spinning records for more than ten years, he became National Director of Disco Promotion for Ariola America. In 1979 he joined RFC.

BRENDA WINFIELD: Secretary, West Coast