



JOHN LUONGO - President



RAY ALESSI - Director of Dance Promotion & Retail Marketing

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INTERVIEW WITH JOHN LUONGO

Q: How did you get into the business?

A: Geez, we're going back before God...I went to Northeastern to become a civil engineer. Also I was an on-the-air jock at the radio station there and going out to clubs at night. I went into a club called the Townhouse and saw a disc jockey playing records and the people were dancing and this made such a big impact on me, I said this is it...I went up to the DJ and I figured that I'm gonna give him my number but he's never gonna call. That Saturday I got called out of a shower. The DJ quit and left my number. He said 'We need you tonight' ... So I was doing that and in a while I was driving the people to a frenzy and the owners would come up and tell me to tone it down.

Q: When was all this?

A: About 1969. Anyway, the owners kept telling me to tone it down. I said 'I can't not make a crowd get excited'. So I left and went to a club called the Rhinoceros. It was a White businessman's club. I turned the entire place Black within a month. It became the biggest Black club in New England...People kept coming up and asking me for the names of records I was playing...so I got sick of writing them on ashtrays and the bottoms of matchbooks...a friend of mine said why don't we start a magazine. So we started a magazine called Nightfall. It had the top 12 records in Boston called "TC's Disco Dozen", for John T.C. Luongo. Meanwhile I was also working at a radio station in Cambridge called WTBS, it was owned by M.I.T.

Q: Give me a date on this now.

A: That was 1972. The radio show was doing great...I was getting calls from all over New England and we were really affecting record sales...In 1974 I set up the Boston Record Pool. It started with the ten best jocks and became influential because these guys all playing a record simultaneously had clout. Then in 1975 we set up the "Nightfall National Dance Awards"...it was the Disco Academy Awards...Now I had all these different entities going and I met Mark Kriener and Tom Cossie. They had MK Prodn's. and promotions and they asked me to come to work for them and I decided that I would do it.

Q: They were working out of New York weren't they?

A: Yes but I stayed in Boston. It was the first major promotion entity headed up in Boston. Soon everything we were touching was becoming a number one dance record and crossing over to Black and to Pop. Now it comes to the point where I've got to make a decision.

Q: When was this?

A: It was '78-'79. Now we're rollin' and we're getting records brought in to promote and I don't like them. For example, CBS brought me "You Stepped Into My Life" by Melba Moore. A friend there named Cheryl Machat said 'what can you do with this record'. I said 'No way, it's too slow...speed it up, put in a little percussion, it needs a break, add some strings...She said 'why don't you do it...we need it tomorrow'. So I just jumped in...came to New York, remixed it. We then promoted it and it became a giant dance record and also went on the Black charts and Pop charts. Then we did Gonzales, and then "Shake Your Body" and "Blame It On The Boogie", "This Time Baby", a lot of different records. I enjoyed working with product that I could cross over...making a great dance record while still keeping its song sensibility. Finally I got tired of making all this money for everyone and I spoke to Cheryl's father Martin Machat and her brother Steve and I said 'I'd like you to represent me'.

Q: Where are we in time now?

A: It's the end of '79, close to '80. I had done so many records for CBS that I felt very comfortable there. So I set up Pavillion and went with the Epic side, as a real label not a P&D deal.

Q: What was your first record on Pavillion?

A: I signed a girl from Canada, Barbara Law, that a producer I had worked with named Harry Hind brought to me. But it was the first time I had been a president of a label and I was trying to learn that at the same time and it was just too much.

Q: Be more specific...what didn't work?

A: Well I was going in there expecting to learn a little bit more from CBS, asking about how the promotion end worked...and what they were expecting was for me to come in and tell them. Then we signed Jimmy Maelen, a great percussionist.

Q: What happened with that?

A: It did fair...the problem with that was that we had done an album that for its time was right but by the time it was released it was too late...still learning the system. Then in 1981, we had a big record with Fantasy called "You're Too Late". After that we clipped 'em again with "Zulu" by the Quick. Then we did Silverado which was rock and roll and went on the pop charts with "Ready For Love". Now we've got all the mechanics down. But it's very tough if you want to be involved in a corporate atmosphere. A small label can hear a song and put it out, I can't do that. One of the problems with the dance albums is you get one good song and a lousy album... absolutely no depth. But they can do that...they can make a profit on 30-40,000 records but at CBS that doesn't pay the telephone bills.

Q: Alright, tell me more about what you are doing now?

A: Art In America is our biggest project. In only 3½ weeks we're 60,000 albums.

Q: Now that's not a dance oriented record...why would you get into that?

A: Because I'd like to be able to think I can do them both. Remember I came from Boston and that's a rock and roll city. And as much as I love dance music, you've got to be realistic enough to realize that that's not gonna be your future. There's never been a dance group that has gone on to sell a million records every shot like REO Speedwagon, Genesis, Journey or Boston. Art In America is the first in what we hope to be a series of successes.

Q: Tell me a little bit more about the set up here. Along with the record label you also do outside promotion and production work. Is it all the same company?

A: O.K., we're Pavillion Records Inc. which is a CBS Associated Label in the same way Epic or Portrait is. That's one entity. The job of Pavillion Records is to find new young talent that is buildable into a superstar category. Then we've got Pavillion Promotions with Ray Alessi as the Director of Dance Promotion and Retail Marketing. Ray is in constant touch with all National Billboard reporters as well as Directors of the national record pools and New York/New Jersey R&B radio reporters, and keeps them up to date on all releases we are working. Then Peter Napoliello is the Director of National AOR Promotion and also coordinates the trades, rock DJ's and rock record pools. Cookie Rufino is Publicist and generally coordinates our campaigns and systems. They are all record business veterans and collectively represent years of experience in all facets of our industry, which accounts for our effectiveness. Mixed Up Music is the production end. I do projects both for E/P/A, CBS and other companies. The Greg Kihn Band "Jeopardy" is my re-mix and one of the hottest crossover records of the year. I've also recently worked with groups like Blancmange, Soft Cell, Bananarama, The Waitresses, Cheap Trick and Queen.

Q: In that case Mixed Up Music is doing primarily remixes for the dance market?

A: No, not really...certain records just aren't right sometimes, they're not always dance.

Q: Let's get back to the record company...Who else is signed to Pavillion Records besides Art In America?

A: Right now that's all I'm doing for '83. I wanted a fresh start with an all new artist roster. I'm talking to a Black group out of Florida but I don't want to mention the name until I get the contracts signed...and we're also working on a group I'm gonna be signing from England, but I can't mention any names right now.

Q: Are either of these groups dance oriented?

A: Yes, the Black group will be primarily dance and the British group about 50% dance and 50% AOR... See I figure with a small label like myself we have to do three dance groups for each pop just to keep the contacts and music flowing...But I really believe Art In America is going to be a very big record for us. It's a very exciting feeling and I know that Pavillion Records will be around for a very long time.