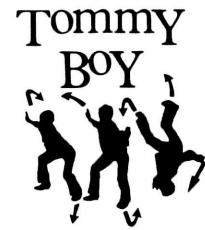




TOM SILVERMAN - President



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INTERVIEW WITH TOM SILVERMAN

Q: Give me some background on you personally.

A: I started at Colby College in Maine as Music Director at the college radio station. Then I went to graduate school in western Michigan studying environmental geology because I really didn't think that the radio business was solid enough for me. While applying for jobs in environmental studies, my old roommate from Colby, Scott Anderson, called me from L.A. He was then doing the R&B charts at Cashbox. He said there were a lot of people interested in a dance music, or at that time, "disco" tip sheet. At that time disco was real big...He had great profit predictions so I said "What the Hell"...I left graduate school, finishing everything but my thesis, and came back to New York and set up the business. A few months later Scott came in and we started Disco News in about 1978.

Q: Why didn't you go to L.A. and join him there to start the publication?

A: He was from the east and we both knew that disco was really happening here, not there. All of the records were coming out of the northeast, especially out of New York.

Q: Go on from there.

A: It was a weekly tip sheet. Then when the industry got hit hard and disco took the blame we changed to a bi-weekly. In about 1980 we changed the name to Dance Music Report to avoid any misconnotations by the trade, and there it remains today.

Q: What happened to Scott?

A: In about 1980 we had set up a little independent distributor called Nu-Music Distributing and he decided he would rather do that than this so we split the business...He's doing a pretty good business now, based in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Q: How did the record label come about?

A: I thought it would be a good idea since everybody was bringing me product for the Dance Music Report and I was hearing all of the newest music anyway. Besides, I am an entrepreneur. I've even been to school for entrepreneurs, and I really feel that running a successful company is an exciting thing. As publisher Dance Music Report I've had an opportunity to get close to a lot of labels and to find out what their mistakes and triumphs were...how they made money and how they lost money. It was more of a business challenge than a musical challenge.

Q: Why the name "Tommy Boy"?

A: I went down in my grandfather's basement and I found a piece of wood laying there. It was the side of a crate of, I don't even know what it was. Anyway this kid on the crate looks a little like me when I was a baby and it says "Tommy Boy" on it...so I decided why not name it that.

Q: When was the label started?

A: Our first release was in May of '81. It was a song called "Having Fun" by Cotton Candy and it sort of had a "hip hop" beat to it, which has become the trademark of Tommy Boy Records. I spent a lot of money trying to break that record since it was to establish my label and I lost about \$5,000. At that point I was in really bad shape debtwise. My second record was Afrika Bambaataa And The Jazzy Five and a song called "Jazzy Sensation". I put that out and it took off like crazy and got me most of the way out of debt...That was my first production, as executive producer, with Arthur Baker. My second production with him (after a series of other releases) was Afrika Bambaataa And Soulsonic Force with the record "Planet Rock"...We thought it was a great record when we came out of the studio and we thought we'd do better than we did with "Jazzy Sensation", maybe 50 or 60,000. It cost us about \$2,500 to make the record and I guess it was a little bigger than we expected, it's gone over 600,000 in the U.S. alone, and that is all 12"s.

Q: What's happening with the record internationally?

A: 21 Records picked it up for international and has releases it in some overseas markets with their Polygram deal, but there are many countries that it still hasn't been released in...21 Records has licensed Jonzun Crew, Planet Patrol and Soulsonic Force for the world outside the U.S.

## WHO'S WHO AT TOMMY BOY RECORDS

Q: Tell me how your philosophy differs from other labels.

A: There are a lot of things different in our philosophy. One is that we believe in limits to growth and that small is beautiful. You don't need a mega office to sell a lot of records. We also don't believe you have to spend a \$150 an hour in a studio. We never spend more than \$75 per hour. We don't believe you have to spend a lot of time in the studio. I've just purchased a Synclavier. We lay down tracks in my home and can have a record 90% finished before we go into the studio to polish it. The only thing we want to use the studio for is vocals and to do an automated mix with a lot of outboard equipment. It's easier to be creative at home when the clock isn't ticking. We also don't believe our office has to be on the record business strip in the area of 1650 Broadway.

Q: What's the advantage of being out of that area?

A: You don't have the guys hawking you. People come by to sell you on their promotion, to sell you on their publishing, the DJ's who come to pick up records...They don't come up here. They can make 20 stops in 5 blocks around 57th Street and Broadway and pick up 100 records.

Q: You don't think it's to your advantage to have those DJ's get your records?

A: No, absolutely not. We'd have to hire somebody just to deal with them and there's no need for that. We have Dance Music Report with direct contact to all the DJ's in the country. We service the record pools heavily. If a disco DJ is not in a record pool, almost without exception, he can't get a promotional record. We service the radio DJ's by computer.

Q: Are you planning to diversify musically at all?

A: We will be diversifying because we've sort of created the electro-boogie sound that people have referred to as the "Tommy Boy school of electronic funk" and there are a lot of people that are jumping into it now...the pie is being split up finer and finer. We're looking for a new direction and in three or four months people will be seeing a different kind of sound coming from Tommy Boy.

Q: Still dance oriented?

A: Oh yeah, but it will continue to evolve...We know who our audience is. I'm targeting for a 13 year old Black male from an urban area. Someday that market is going to cross over but in the interim we're gonna have to be happy selling only 100,000 to a half million a record. (ha ha ha) We're also really looking to do a movie soundtrack. We are very much influenced by horror movies, science fiction and fantasy movies and our music is a reflection of those visual aesthetics as well as the aural aesthetics of all of the various arcade machines.

Q: How are you going about getting into that market?

A: There are two documentaries coming out in Europe on the "Break Dancing" style of music that surrounds our music, and those two movies are going to use primarily Tommy Boy records for the soundtracks. And we're talking to a few other people too.

Q: Let's get back to your philosophy. Is there anything else different about your label.

A: Well, we're not like most of the other small independent labels in that we are very interested in artist development. We have a definite plan for each of our artists. I also believe in label identification...We have a lot of people who buy every Tommy Boy release...Kids call us all the time, they want to know what our next release is...So I can't really diversify. If I want to do another kind of music I'll have to start another label. I'll have a different target audience for that other label. I learned that from my early mistakes.

Q: To sum up, give me a quote.

A: OK, I want everything to be different about our company as long as it doesn't adversely affect sales.

### MONICA LYNCH - Vice President



Monica grew up in Chicago where she attended an all Catholic girls high school. In 1974, at age 17, she began to rebel and worked as a "go go" dancer at a local gay disco...She also became involved with a theatre group called "Horses" which did such things as dress up as nuns and go bowling. In 1976 she was working as a fashion model while in '77 she also had her own punk rock band. A year later she came to New York for a fashion shoot and stayed. At first she worked as a stripper and then graduated to waitress, working the graveyard shift at the Empire Diner. Gradually she worked her way uptown as a waitress until last year when she answered an ad in the Village Voice for an office manager at Tommy Boy. She is now Vice President of the label and notes, "Everything that I did up until the time I began working for Tommy Boy has been useful in making a career for myself in the music industry."

STAFF - President: Tom Silverman/ Vice President: Monica Lynch/ Office Manager: Stella Korotchen  
Head Of A&R: Wiz Kid

TOMMY BOY ARTIST ROSTER: Afrika Bambaataa and Soulsonic Force/The Jonzun Crew/Planet Patrol/  
Pressure Drop/D.J.