CBS U.K. Hits New Heights With Diverse Mix Of Artists

by Fred Goodman

NEW YORK — In 1981, CBS U.K. had a banner year. Garnering $350 million and seven silver singles, as well as $13 gold and 11 silver singles, the company emerged as a marketplace to its market. In a recent interview with Cash Box, Maurice Oberstein, chairman, CBS U.K. attributed much of the company’s success to its ability to access a diverse roster of British and international acts despite a harsh economic climate. “We have a genuine interest and investment in talent, mainly British, but also American and international.”

Among the artists topping the CBS U.K. roost, releasing debuts for the British music industry and the Ants, the Nolans, Altered Images, and Shakin’ Stevens. But also contributing to the British success were older names like Julio Iglesias, Barbra Streisand, and downtown stars like the Ants, the Nolans, Altered Images, and Shakin’ Stevens.

Maurice Oberstein

Oberstein added, “We've been in the U.K. have converted more American artists to best-sellers in our own market than any other company with American sources. But REO was the only American act to wind up in our Top 20 in 1981. So tastes are different.”

“Perhaps at the moment your stuff is a little less interesting to the U.K. because of the British music industry, but I have been following it, and I don’t think it means anything to the British.”

“While the troubled British economy may be great for the popular music market, it has also had some very real effects on the record industry. While Oberstein concedes that tough economic times can hit entertainers, he is not afraid to predict the industry as a selective victim.”

“Britain now has the highest unemployment it’s ever had since the 30’s,” he said. “When so many young people are unemployed, we are a problem for our traditional market. But it really hasn’t been the fault or particular problem of the record industry. Everybody’s in trouble. I’m tired of the record industry feeling that somehow we've been singled out, that we’re poorer managed or profligate with our money. It’s because we're rich, not because we're silly or spent too much money on our parties.”

“Another major difference between the American and British markets is the power of small, independent labels to make inroads in the market. While Oberstein maintains that "the mystique of the industry is overdone," he sees them exerting very real pressures on a major company like CBS U.K.”

“The industry represents a force that keeps us from being complacent. "There is no ownership of the market because the small indies continue to prove that talent can come from anywhere. You don't control anything, you don't have the sexy image of the record industry," Oberstein told the record manufacturers’ meeting.”

Speaking to the power of the British press, Oberstein noted that the size of the country was key. “We have a national press,” he said, “and that makes it functionally different than in the U.S. Here, newspapers like The Daily Mail or The Sun or The Mirror have daily circulation figures of five million. Along the same lines, we have a music press that probably attracts 10 million readers nationally with publications like New Musical Express, Sounds, Melody Maker and so on. The music press is incredibly important. And we can easily reach people who are interested in music through print, radio, and television, all on a national level.”

Although CBS U.K. has the networks through which to give almost any artist a shot, the chairman pointed out that not every established artist from another market will score in Great Britain.

“You make records in America for American audiences," he said, "and America is doing less well overseas than it used to. REO Speedwagon and Journey are great acts — great acts. But when you try to do it in Britain the same way in other countries, it only means the rest of the world has slightly different tastes. "It may be self-serving for me to say this,"

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BUENOS AIRES — The Operation of the Record Label in 1981 involved the following, at its first target, since the company headed by Nestor Selasco has the lowest participation in the market. While other companies are RCA, EMI, CBS, Micronof and PolGram and hence could be affected most by the move. From the label’s viewpoint, the main worry was that Rodolfo Gonzalez, owner of the Centro Cultural del Disco and one of the most brilliant minds in the trade, joined the boycott. The Centro Cultural is one of the most important accounts in the industry.

Next thing to come, after a hard month for the record industry, was that EMI and RCA (which also distributes Gram and Micronof) decided not to sell records or tapes to any account who didn’t buy from PolyGram. This move was aimed at obliging all the independent labels, at last, for the moment, and the situation returned to “business as usual.”

Also, the Centro Cultural is now steadily increasing its sales and participation in the market, although its new participation in the market is limited to the major catalog items. In January, it may have been more than one percent of the whole country. The company, Interdisc — not included traditionally in the markets, although its share of the total volume is huge — decided not to sell its product through it, probably to avoid any conflict with the downtown dealers. Thus, the Record Supermarket gets some of the Interdisc titles through one of the distributors, to please its customers.

The experience will undoubtedly continue, and the labels are satisfied with it, but the relation with dealers, both in this zone and in other parts of the country, still has some bad effects. At least one of the major accounts was described as “unwilling to sell in the case of non-payment or delay by dealers and suspending the mailing of its catalogs to the dealers.”

Thus, the market may have dropped, but the financial shape of the company has improved a lot.

Argentina

miguel smonetto

Australia

MELBOURNE — Split Enz and Cold Chisel are both in the studio working up their next LPs, while Angel City has just released its latest, produced by Ed Thacker and titled “Night Attack.” Split Enz has flown in English heavyweight Hugh Padgham to produce its next at Sydney’s Paradise Studios. Padgham produced the new Pollie LP, “Ghost in the Machine,” and the recent Genesis LP, among many others. Paradise Studios is the complex owned and operated by Brian Cadd. ABC Records, whose self-produced LP, “Bad Habits,” has been released in numerous countries, Split Enz’s Paradise booked throughout February.

The Rocky Horror Picture Show lives on and again, and again, and again, and again, so much so, that the Rocky Horror Picture Show has been doing great business for a long time, not only in Sydney, produced by Englishman Wilton Morley (son of actor Robert Morley), but also has been around in Australia for some time. The Australian cast recording (that’s the 1981 cast) of six tracks in 12” configuration at a budget price.

Kamahl, the Malaysian-born singer who is second only to country artist Slim Dusty in terms of Australian record sales, has just released his fourth LP, “The Best of Kamahl.” Following a four week promo tour of the U.S. that included several TV and radio appearances, he is back for a Royal Command Performance for the Duke and Duchess of Kent, currently visiting the antipodes.

italy

Italy

MILAN — Riccardo Fogli, CGD recording artist, won the 32nd edition of the Sanremo Festival — which took place from Jan. 28-29 — with the song “Storie Di Tutti I Giorni” (published by Come Il Vento-Parking-Sugarmusic). At the second position were Al Bano & Romina Power, with the song “S’Era una Volta” (published by Televis-Maalino, released on Baby), followed by Drupi with “Sollievo Dal Sentire La Sensazione,” released on Fonti Ceta label.

Producer Claudio Fabio announced the creation of his own label, Aleph, distributed by the main Italian label, EMI. The band members are the Mercenari (A new Italian rock group) and singer Enzo Malpasso.

Claudio Fabio is the president of the Carosello record company, announced the appointment of Mario Repaolo as general manager of the group, Ignazio Lucio Salvarini, who left the company. In addition, Aida Falduti is the new head of the international division.

The 16th edition of the SIM (Music Instruments and Hi-Fi Fair) will be connected to the IVES (International Video and Electro Show), which is scheduled for Milan from Sept. 2-6, 1982. It is being organized by Roberto Pinna Elettrotecnica.

A new classical midline, Viva, has been studied by Decca Dischi Italia. The first releases will be on the market in March.

United Kingdom

LONDON — Following three years at Charisma, Records as general manager, Mike Gaskin joined Chrysalis Records in December as international director, with the departure of Des Brown. Watts has been made international director. Brown has been replaced by Albatross managing director, which producer Scott Millaney to form their own company, Premier Programming Ltd. Watts will be succeeded by Steve Welman, previously with RCA in London. He is joined at Charisma by Judy Lipsey, who is press officer. Lipsey joined from CBS U.K. — John M. Hewlett has been appointed manager, talent acquisition, at A&M Records, effective immediately. Hewlett recently returned to the U.K. after three years in America, where he managed and produced The Dickies, chart act for A&M, and a new act, Four Squares. Previous to that, he had been in publishing with Apple and in management at Island Records.

Chris Wright, co-chairman of the Chrysalis Group, has announced that Chrysalis Records has presented a deal for the U.K. representation of the Combinwe Music catalog. The deal was negotiated over a period of time and was finalized in December. The agreement represents work that has been done by the company in Sydney, produced by Englishman Wilton Morley (son of actor Robert Morley). The deal includes work that has been done in Australia, including such songs as “Help Me Make It Through The Night” and “Me And Bobby McGee.”

Paul bridge

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