

THE MAJORS

(Continued from page A-4)

the middle."

Chart share figures bear that claim out, with the company ranking third in the Top 100 singles/albums tally for the January-September period. Moving into Christmas, WEA has 10 of the top 40 albums, equal with CBS.

Highlights of the year for WEA have been the breaking of Tracy Chapman, with 200,000 sales of her self-titled album. INXS, who are at the time of writing sitting at No.2 on their 58th chart week with "Kick," have passed 400,000.

Tiffany, suffering under a virtual airplay boycott, has reached the 100,000 mark. Both Little River Band ("Monsoon") and Guns N' Roses ("Appetite For Destruction") are at 70,000, and the "Cocktail" soundtrack shifted 25,000 in its first week. While Paul Simon's "Negotiations And Love Songs" hits package surges up the chart, "Graceland" keeps ticking over, with 150,000 sales in 1988 contributing to a cumulative total of 470,000.

"This year we did a strong campaign on Guns N' Roses, Aerosmith and Van Halen, which has increased the profile of all three bands," says Turner. "We've also broken Transition Vamp and the Escape Club. But I think the one we're feeling best about is 1927, a new local act which entered the charts at No. 17 with their Ish album and have had two big hits straight up. Then, of course, there's INXS' back catalog which has just gone crazy."

WEA's own back catalog strength contributed toward a unique 1988 achievement. In October, the company became the first to sell one million CDs for the year, beating even PolyGram, the originator and ceaseless champion of the format.

"I feel tremendously proud of that," beams Turner. "WEA was the first company to bring the price down from \$26.31 to \$21.92. Now we have a middle price [\$15.35] range of 400 titles, which has accounted for around half of that one million. I think we have helped give the CD the shot in the arm it needed to get it moving. Now there's no looking back for any of us. If January-February sees the hardware boom

that's been predicted, it will be a great 1989."

MCA has been licensed to WEA worldwide since 1984. Says MCA's international VP Stuart Watson from London: "Our turnover in the marketplace has increased steadily in the five-year period and in the last three years ending November '88 has doubled. At this stage [of '88] our sales for the year are up 75% over '87.

"Australia as a market now accounts for approximately 10% of MCA's worldwide income outside the U.K., U.S. and Canada. The first quarter of '89 promises to be our strongest ever in Australia with releases from Jody Watley, Charlie Sexton, Tiffany, Patti LaBelle, Jan Hammer, Holly Johnson, Bobby Brown, and U.K. signing Big Bam Boo."

BMG/RCA: John "Whispering Jack" Farnham was the most significant contributor to what BMG/RCA managing director Brian Smith describes as "a tremendous year." The singer's "Whispering Jack" album is now in its 104th charting week, and due to hit the domestic million mark before Christmas. Its successor, "Age Of Reason," with around 420,000 sales has been in the top five for 18 weeks now.

"We started the year with 'Dirty Dancing' fever, which shows no sign of abating," remarks Smith. "Between them, the two albums have done almost half a million. We've also reached 240,000 with Rick Astley's 'When You Need Somebody,' which I think is incredible for a new act.

"Bruce Hornsby, Kenny G and Eric Carmen are all platinum and Clannad is gold. With three visits by Whitney Houston, our total for her two albums is now over 750,000. We're also particularly proud of John Denver's 'Higher Ground,' which we recorded locally and achieved platinum with it. He's now been re-signed by the company for the rest of the world on the basis of that success."

With recent single chart success with new acts Fairground Attraction, S-Express, the Timelords and Fisher Z, BMG/RCA is exuding a confident air.

"We've had our booms over the years with Abba, Village People and now Farnham," Smith explains, "but we were never really able to use them to their best advantage. Now the structure and the attitude is very different, and we are being accepted as a serious record company and a viable competitor.

"One of the main effects is that, when it comes to local artists, we are able to talk to them at the first rather than the last opportunity. They look at Farnham, and think, 'If the company can do that for him, then it can also do it for other acts.' I think we're very well positioned for a good 1989."

POLYGRAM: "We had a very slow start," comments PolyGram managing director Michael Smellie about 1988, "but we've finished like a house on fire. Apart from a run of very strong releases in the second half of the year, I'm now feeling very confident about the company itself. I've got the right players in the right places and my team is younger and more aggressive than in the past. My immediate goal is to increase PolyGram's market share by at least 3%."

Part of that strategy was the winning over from Festival of ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corp.) Records, albeit at an extremely high price. As the long-time licensee of the similarly oriented BBC Records, PolyGram is predicting big things from the association.

In fact, Smellie claims he has promised ABC management a gold album a month. First will be an album of Australian animal songs by Don Spencer. "You've Always Got The Blues" by Kate Ceberano and Wendy Matthews went gold for Festival before the handover and has sold as many again to become platinum under PolyGram's distribution.

Smellie sees PolyGram's second major event of the year to be the securing of the rooArt independent label coestablished by INXS manager Chris Murphy.

"That signing was of great psychological value to the company," he believes. "The scope for success with just the acts on the gold 'Youngblood' compilation album is quite enormous."

PolyGram has reaped tour benefits this year from visits by John Cougar Mellencamp, Jerry Harrison's Casual Gods and the Robert Cray Band. Its biggest sales spinners for 1988 have been Bon Jovi's "New Jersey," which went instantly top three and is presently around the 150,000 sales mark; Dire Straits' "Money For Nothing" at over 100,000; Def Leppard's "Hysteria" at 50,000; "The Cream Of Eric Clapton" at over 40,000, and Robert Cray's "Don't Be Afraid Of The Dark" at 35,000. Looking good for Christmas were

(Continued on page A-20)



PROUDLY REPRESENTING
INXS
JENNY MORRIS
AND INTRODUCING
BIGSTORM



SYDNEY
 145 Brougham Street Kings Cross Sydney 2011 NSW Australia
 ph: (02) 356 4944 fax: (02) 358 5880 fax: (02) 357 7118

NEW YORK
 Suite 21M 211 West 56th Street New York N.Y. 10019
 United States of America
 fax: (212) 245 9836 ph: (212) 245 9835

LONDON
 7 Prospect Road Childs Hill London NW2 2JT England
 fax: (1) 622 9402 ph: (1) 627 8317