

## RICK RUBIN, AMERICAN RECORDINGS AIM TO BRING BACK DONOVAN

(Continued from page 14)

I play a concert, the audience wanted to hear the history of my career," Donovan says. "I found introducing new songs a challenge. It was a gas."

Once the sessions with Donovan were complete, Rubin augmented the tracks with contributions from a number of other instrumentalists, including frequent Donovan collaborator Danny Thompson (bass), Steve Ferrone (drums), and Benmont Tench (keyboards) of Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers. Rubin also invited a younger crop of musicians to play on the album, including Red Hot Chili Peppers guitarist Dave Navarro, American Recordings artist Jonny Polonsky, and Spain singer/bassist Josh Haden.

Although Donovan isn't familiar with the work of all of the guest players on the album, he did catch a live performance by Spain and was quite impressed. "They're like Leonard Cohen on downers," he enthuses.

The singer/songwriter was also impressed by Rubin's production work when he heard the mixes of the songs of "Sutras," complete with the overdubs.

"I got out a little notebook, and the most astonishing thing was that I didn't make any notes at all until I got to the ninth track. He had mixed and arranged the things just the way I would have. It just goes to show the synchronicity between Rick and I," Donovan says.

American is hopeful that consumers who purchase new age products will also be in sync with Donovan.

American Recordings VP of new media and marketing Marc Geiger says the label will target new age bookshops even more aggressively than traditional music retail outlets.

It will also target subscribers of The

Utne Reader and The New York Times and listeners of National Public Radio with a direct mailing.

In addition, Donovan will go on a promotional tour in the fall, stopping at various new age conventions, where he will discuss his music and perform.

In spring, the singer/songwriter will likely go on a more traditional tour, either as a headliner or a support act. (Plans for an earlier tour as a support act for Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan were aborted after Donovan ran into some visa problems stemming from a 1966 misdemeanor charge for possession of marijuana.

The situation has since been rectified.) Donovan is booked by the William Morris Agency.

On the radio front, American plans to aggressively pursue airplay at triple-A and new age stations. At press time, the label was considering "Please Don't Bend" or "The Way" as the first track it will service to radio.

While Geiger says that "Sutras" will appeal to longtime Donovan fans, he makes the distinction that it should not be confused with some of his familiar '60s pop-leaning material. "This is not a pop record," he says. "There's no 'Hurdy Gurdy Man' or 'Sunshine

Superman.' It's a deep record, and we will be more successful with word-of-mouth rather than trying to leverage the mass media."

Geiger also notes that Donovan's album is different than the Cash album, which appealed to younger fans, as well as the faithful. "This is not a kids' record," he says. "I'm not saying that there aren't kids that will enjoy this, but I don't believe it is the same, and we aren't going to position them in the same way."

However, young rock fans may find a song called "Nirvana" of particular interest, although the song was

inspired by an ancient Buddhist text that Donovan and Rubin studied, not by the band fronted by the late Kurt Cobain.

"After I wrote it and played it for a few friends, they went, 'Wow, that's a great song for Kurt.' Then I realized that the lyrics 'Gone, gone to the other shore' could just as easily be for Kurt, too," says Donovan. "It's curious when you are a songwriter. Sometimes you can get a song that comes out that reflects a mass experience. It was about Kurt as well. It didn't start that way, but it certainly turned out that way."

## TMBG BANKS ON LOYAL FOLLOWING

(Continued from page 13)

sales, potentially, we could have a very big record with them."

The band tours exhaustively, spending more than half a year on the road in support of an album. "They've been on the road for the last 10 years or so," says Marcia Edelstein, senior director of marketing and product manager for Elektra. "They work very hard, and touring has been a huge part of how they've developed."

On tour, TMBG sees a profit selling an ever-changing selection of T-shirts. Their newest design, by artist Tony Millionaire, depicts Flansburgh and Linnell at age 90 or so. "It's really disturbing," says Linnell, "It actually kind of freaks me out to look at it."

Although greeted by enthusiastic fans at their headlining dates, the band's audiences at its warmup gigs have sometimes differed. "They're basically waiting for you to leave, so it's a little bit demoralizing sometimes," says Linnell. The band can take some

comfort in the fact that the members of Hootie & the Blowfish are TMBG fans themselves.

"The Hootie opportunity is to play in front of a very large audience," says Kleinberg, "Obviously, there's going to be people there who've not seen the Giants before and might be unfamiliar with their music. And we see that as a potential upside."

They Might Be Giants tour as headliners Sept. 5-28 and join Hootie & the Blowfish Oct. 4-Nov. 2. Additional TMBG headlining dates will follow in November.

With the album's October release coming in the middle of the tour, "we're looking to position this at retail very aggressively," says Kleinberg. "We're considering rolling them out into some stores when they're out on the road and doing some in-store appearances. And we're always doing things with radio, whether it's performances or on-air appearances."

At radio, Elektra is staging a multi-format assault, sending advance copies of "Factory Showroom" to college stations the second week of September. The "S-E-X-X-Y" single will go to alternative and triple-A stations at the end of the month, followed by top 40 one week later.

On the Internet, Elektra will be posting information about the new album on its World Wide Web site (<http://www.elektra.com>). The Elektra site is linked to They Might Be Giants' soon-to-be-opened Web site (<http://www.tmbg.com>). "That's perfect for these guys and for their fans," says Edelstein, "We should be including some bits from the new album on the site, and hopefully they'll be doing some online things with us."

At present, there is no scheduled video shoot for "S-E-X-X-Y." "We're hoping to do a video very shortly," says Kleinberg, "We're looking to get a little bit of feedback from the marketplace,

from radio. Videos are an awful lot of money, and any record company at this point is trying to be more prudent about what we push buttons on. And frankly, the band should be as well, because they pay for a portion of it."

Flansburgh doubled as video director for TMBG's earlier single "The Guitar" and has directed clips for Frank Black, Soul Coughing, and Edwyn Collins. Flansburgh's other outside projects include his Hello CD of the Month Club, which releases material by TMBG members and others.

But Flansburgh's most ambitious outside project is Mono Puff, a full-fledged band whose album "Unsupervised" was released earlier this year by Rykodisc. The video for the single "The Devil Went Down To Newport (Totally Rocking)" has received airplay on MTV's M2.

Linnell's back-burner projects include a collection of 50 songs written for all 50 states (five have been recorded for Hello) and a series of songs about the mayoralty of New York.

With such inarguably marginal pre-occupations on the band's part, observers might be surprised that They Might Be Giants ever found a home outside the innovative Bar/None, which released their self-titled debut album, its follow-up, "Lincoln," and a B-side collection.

Linnell explains that a major label was the only place the band could go. "There was a moment when we started selling so many copies of 'Lincoln' that Bar/None—God bless them—just wasn't really able to keep production up. They couldn't meet with demand. That wasn't a reflection on their enthusiasm for the project. They didn't have the resources to expand that quickly. So Elektra was really the right move at that moment."

Says Elektra's Kleinberg, "Their albums have had varying success rates, with [label debut] 'Flood' being the biggest of them all. We think that the potential audience base is enormous, because between their lyrics and their music, we think the songs are quite good. And good songs appeal to a lot of people." Three albums remain on TMBG's contract with the label.

Linnell thinks the key to TMBG's success is the strong bond they have with their audience. "We have this kind of not huge but loyal following," he says. "They're going to continue to buy our records. If Elektra puts out a They Might Be Giants record, it will get sold, even if they don't spend a ton of money promoting it. They can rely on that."

hold it,  
pull it,  
slide  
it...  
get it

- 1 Pulls open easily  
No breakable hinge tabs - No #&@? center hub
- 2 Shows your stuff  
More graphics space - Free top spine ID
- 3 Treads lightly  
Easy on the environment  
Uses 10% less plastic

LASERFILE®  
THE ULTIMATE IN CD PACKAGING

Get a Sample 201 567 8998

NAIRD