

**Whitney Houston Soundtrack Bridges Gospel, Pop**

**BY LARRY FICK**

NEW YORK—With the soundtrack to Whitney Houston's new movie, "The Preacher's Wife," due to invade retail Tuesday (26), Arista is launching a complex multisphere campaign that is designed to illuminate the various musical styles showcased on the album.

Arista's inspirational power ballad "I Believe In You And Me" started the ball rolling when it hit radio Nov. 20, drawing instant raves from pop programmers. In its first day, the song received 151 spins on 82 radio stations, and clubs statewide and in Canada shortly before the Dec. 13 North American opening of the Touchstone Pictures film.

And if that's not enough, on Tuesday (29), Whitney Houston will be on gospel radio stations four-song promotional CD of the album's songs, with Houston paired with the Georgia Mass Choir.

"This is all intended to create an exciting musical event around the film, as well as serve to reinforce the fact that this album offers the best in contemporary pop, R&B, and gospel music," says Roy Lott, executive VP/GM (U.S.) of the label. "We've geared up with a wealth of riches in that we have 15 incredible Whitney Houston songs, with the potential for plenty of follow-up singles.

So far, programmers are responding well to the label's multiple-singles approach. "It opens up the project to getting airplay on a wide range of stations," says Tom Poleman, PD at WHTZ New York. "This approach should also be effective in bringing a lot of attention to the entire album.

Retailers are equally optimistic that the early exposure of so much music will accelerate album sales. "Not only wood it really need the help," says Tim Devin, manager of Tower Records' operations in New York. "There's already a tremendous amount of interest in this project. But it's good for people to understand right away that there's a mix of pop and gospel music on the album.

Jay Krugman, Arista's senior VP of marketing (U.S.), says the label will strive to "bridge the cultural gap between the pop and gospel worlds" with a healthy serving of press and TV appearances that will emphasize the variety of music on the soundtrack.

On Thursday (28), Houston performs material from the album on Fox's 50th-anniversary special on ABC-TV, while December will see spots on "The Rosie O'Donnell Show" and "Saturday Night Live." Addition- ally, specials are planned for MTV, VH1, and BET. Each will likely inter- sperson interviews with music videos and national vocalists.

The tour will soon shoot clips to support "I Believe In You And Me" and "Step By Step" with director F. Gary Grey.

The international marketing strategy for "The Preacher's Wife" will closely mirror that used in the States, with the exception of slotting "I Believe In You And Me" as the follow-up to "Step By Step." Houston will visit Japan in January for several concert appearances.

The music for "The Preacher's Wife" was largely overseen by Houston; Arista president (U.S.) Clive Davis, and Maureen Crowe, VP of A&R (U.S.) for Arista soundtracks.

Houston helmed many of the cuts in the studio with noted gospel producer Mervyn Warren, with additional studio contributions by David Foster, Babyface, and Stephen Lipson.

The great thing about this soundtrack is that it demanded both gospel and pop music," says Crowe. "There's nothing gratuitous added for the sake of having 'hit singles.' Every song supports the movie and its characters in some fashion.

Houston is the primary singer throughout "The Preacher's Wife," save for a duet with Shirley Caesar and a solo cut by Cassy Houston. Digging into such traditional church numbers as "I Go To The Rock" and "I Love The Lord" allowed the singer the chance to travel back to her musical roots.

"This project was especially close to my heart," Houston says. "My beginnings are in gospel music. This is where I'm most comfortable."

She and Davis are proud of the results. "I look at this as one of our major projects," Davis says. "Very few albums showcase such a dazzling array of musical formats the way that this one does. I think Whitney—as well as everyone involved in making the music of this project—has done a remarkable job."

**RECORD COMPANIES.** Red Ant Entertain- ment in New York appoints Randy Phillips president, Randy Miller GM/executive VP of marketing, Mark Walker VP of business affairs, Lorne Saifer senior VP of music publishing and international, and Jonathan Coffino senior VP of sales. They were, respectively, a partner in the artist management firm Stiefel-Phillips Entertainment and president of Guso- Alix Records, executive VP/GM at MCA Records, VP of legal affairs at PolyGram Holding, senior VP at Stiefel-Phillips, and senior VP of sales and marketing at MCA.

Linda Ferrando is promoted to senior VP of Atlantic Records in New York. She was VP of video promotion and media development.

Kedar Massenburg is appointed president of Kedar Entertainment and senior VP of A&R for Universal Rec- ords in New York. He was president of Kedar Management.

Dennis Boerner is promoted to VP of video and East Coast alternative promotion for MCA Records in New York. He was director of video promotion.

Sony Music in Santa Monica, Calif., promotes Jill Ann Goldblatt to director of A&R administration, West Coast, for the Columbia Records Group and the Work Group and Phil Midiri to director of A&R administration, West Coast, for the Epic Records Group and Sony Wonder. They were both associate directors of A&R administration.

Bob Tyldeley is promoted to nation- al director of sales for Discovery Music Group in Nashville. He was manager of national promotions.

MCA Music Entertainment Group in Universal City, Calif., names Ike Youssef associate director and Larry Linietsky manager, both of business development. They were, respectively, senior analyst in corporate develop- ment for MCA Inc. and financial services associate at Silcon & Co.

Danny "Danny C" Coniglio is named manager of dance music/mix- show promotion for Arista Records in New York. He was head of his own independent promotion company.

Benson Music Group in Nashville. She was manager of national promotions.

PolyGram Holding in New York pro- motes Marilyn Sidransky to senior director of royalty systems, Edward Rogers to senior director of royalty audits, and Michael Healy to senior director of royalty accounting. They were, respectively, director of royalty systems, director of royalty audits, and director of accounting.

**PUBLISHING.** Jeff Sacharow is pro- moted to senior VP of business and leg- al affairs for Windwest Pacific En- tertainment. He was VP of business and legal affairs.

**EXECUTIVE TURNTABLE**

**REDANT ENTERTAINMENT**

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