

newsline...

EMI MUSIC AUSTRALIA is to acquire a 10% stake in music retail market leader Sanity's online and interactive operation, sanity.com, the music company announced Sept. 9 in Sydney. EMI says that, in exchange for the stake, it will "supply sanity.com with expertise, services, and content in connection with its online music business." According to Brett Blundy, managing director of Sanity parent Brazin Ltd., sanity.com will establish itself as a free Internet service provider and an Australian music portal. The deal allows for EMI's stake to rise to 25% upon achieving certain performance criteria. Brazin, which is also parent of lingerie chain Bras'n Things, enjoyed a 45% increase in sales in the past year, with \$28.2 million Australian (\$18.33 million) net profit. Blundy says the strongest growth came from Sanity, which opened 47 stores in the past 12 months, bringing its total to 197 stores. Blundy says Sanity's target of having a total of 250 stores by the year's end will be met. **CHRISTIE ELIEZER**

THE 33RD ANNUAL CMA AWARDS, to be held Wednesday (22) in Nashville, will this year receive its highest U.K. profile to date. BBC Radio 2 will broadcast the event live, in addition to a concert from artist Reba McEntire's studio, while TV highlights will air on BBC 2 Sept. 28. The Country Music Assn. (CMA) will also run a U.K. retail campaign centered on the awards in association with the British Assn. of Record Dealers, involving all the major chains and 150 indie stores. **PAUL SEXTON**

MIKE HENEGHAN, managing director of U.K. label Independiente since it was set up by Go! Discs founder Andy Macdonald in early 1997, has left the company. Macdonald, who is chairman of Independiente, will assume Heneghan's responsibilities. Independiente, which employs about 20 staff members, counts Paul Weller, hit alternative rockers Travis, techno act Vitro, and singer/songwriter John Martyn among its signings. The label was created after PolyGram acquired Go! Discs in 1996. **MARK SOLOMONS**

GERMAN PRODUCTION COMPANY Jack White Productions closed the subscription period for its initial public offering (Billboard, Aug. 28) earlier than planned on account of strong investor interest. It was discontinued on Sept. 9 in view of massive over-subscription for the 1.59 million shares. Originally, the subscription period was to continue until Sept. 10. The music production company's shares were listed on the Neuer Market segment of the Frankfurt Stock Exchange for the first time on Sept. 13. **WOLFGANG SPAHR**

MARTIN TAYLOR, former chief executive of banking firm Barclays, is to become chairman of U.K. retail chain and newspaper distributor WHSmith Group (Billboard Bulletin, Sept. 8). Taylor takes over from Jeremy Hardie, who is retiring, on Nov. 1. He will join the Smith board Oct. 1. The move brings Taylor to Smith for the second time; he was previously a nonexecutive director of the group from 1993-98. Group chief executive Richard Handover says, "Martin Taylor's extensive business experience will enable him to provide the executive team with invaluable counsel as we continue to develop the WHSmith brand and businesses." Taylor, who adds the chairmanship to a portfolio of other high-profile posts, is expected to spend around one or 1½ days each week at Smith. **TOM FERGUSON**

THE U.K.'S PERFORMING RIGHT SOCIETY (PRS) has postponed its annual general meeting, which was to take place Sept. 17, until Oct. 22. According to PRS, the rescheduling was necessary because of an error in sending out voting papers. At the meeting, the body is due to debate proposed changes to its constitution to increase the participation of lower-earning members in its decision-making and the creation of a worldwide rights administration structure (Billboard Bulletin, July 23). "Despite the best professional efforts of all concerned, there was, on this unprecedented occasion, an unfortunate sequence of events, partly as a result of which the papers were posted one day late by Electoral Reform (Ballot Services) Ltd.," says PRS in a statement. PRS members will be sent new voting papers; postal votes already cast for the election of board directors will stand. **MARK SOLOMONS**



AUSTRALIAN HARMONICA PLAYER and pioneer of the local country music scene Horrie Dargie died at 82. His 1952 live album, "The Horrie Dargie Concert," recorded at the Sydney Town Hall before a tour of England, sold 50,000 copies and was the first local album to be certified gold in Australia. Dargie got his break while stationed in New Guinea during World War II and was pushed onto the stage to play with Larry Adler, who hailed him as one of the best harmonica players in the world. Dargie toured Europe constantly, contributed to recent soundtracks "Crocodile Dundee 2" and "Doing Time For Patsy Cline," and was inducted into the Australian Record Industry Assn.'s Hall of Fame in 1996. **CHRISTIE ELIEZER**

Polydor Censors Japanese Rocker

BY STEVE McCLURE

TOKYO—Polydor K.K. says it will not release the latest album recorded by veteran Japanese rocker Ki-yoshiro Imawano and his backing group, Little Screaming Revue, after Imawano refused to remove a rock version of Japan's national anthem, "Kimigayo," from the set.

The album, "Fuyu No Jujika" (The Cross Of Winter), will instead be released on Imawano's own indie label, Swim Records, on Wednesday (22). "Kimigayo," whose ambiguous lyrics are usually interpreted as a paean to Japan's emperor, was for decades Japan's de facto national anthem but only achieved official status after relevant legislation was passed by Japan's Diet (parliament) in August. The move was controversial because of the song's association with Japanese militarism in the 1930s and '40s and its glorification of the emperor.

In a statement released by his management office, Imawano was quoted as saying his version of "Kimigayo" only represented an attempt to sing the national anthem in his own way.

Says one industry source, "I think what Imawano has done is really great. It shows he's got the real rock 'n' roll spirit."

Polydor, for its part, says releasing an album containing Imawano's take on the song could "arouse controversy concerning a politically and socially sensitive issue, which could divide public opinion in two. It may also give the impression that we are taking one side of the two opinions."

Observers say the most likely explanation for Polydor's stance is that the label fears the prospect of harassment by Japan's ubiquitous *uyoku* right-wing groups, which specialize in playing recordings of martial music at ear-splitting volume from speakers mounted on trucks.

A well-known English translation of "Kimigayo's" lyrics, which are in ancient Japanese, reads, "Thousands of years of happy reign be thine/Rule on, my lord, till what are pebbles now/By age united to mighty rocks shall grow/Whose venerable sides the moss doth line."

The incident isn't the first time Imawano has encountered record label censorship. Back in the '80s, his former band, RC Succession, recorded a song with an anti-nuclear power stance, only to have it rejected by the act's label, Toshiba-EMI. Major electronics company Toshiba is heavily involved in Japan's nuclear power industry.

In 1995 Imawano tweaked his nose at the authorities when he gave the name the Timers to a group he started up. *Taima* is a Japanese slang term for marijuana.

Other examples of censorship by Japanese labels include one in which rock group Soul Flower Union recorded a song in the wake of the 1995 Kobe earthquake comparing the plight of people in Kobe's working-class Nagata district to the

politicians in Tokyo's Nagata-cho, where the Diet is located. Ki/oon Sony Records found that reference too controversial, so Soul Flower Union released the song on an indie label.

In 1993 pop/rock trio Shonen Knife was asked by its label, MCA Victor (now Universal Victor), to remove an alleged drug reference from a song on the album "Rock Animals." The song, "Catnip Dream," originally included the line "Tane o maetara happa ga dettekita," which translates as "I sowed a seed in the



IMAWANO

ground, and leaves came out."

In colloquial Japanese, *happa* (literally, "leaves") means marijuana.

"The problem wasn't specifically the use of the word 'happa,'" said a label official at the time. "The problem was one of general nuance."

"Catnip Dream" describes how catnip makes cats feel dreamy and contains lines such as "Catnip wa nekkochan no drug" ("Catnip is a kitty-cat drug"), which was not cut from the song.

Bass player Michie Nakatani, who wrote the song, says she was surprised when MCA Victor asked her to cut the *happa* reference.

"I didn't mean it as a drug reference," she says. "I meant it as something a cat takes and enjoys, like medicine. But Japanese people are too strict—they don't understand jokes. There are bands that say a lot worse things than us."

Dutch Pirates Suffer Major Blow

1½-Yr. Investigation Uncovers Counterfeit CD Scheme

This story was prepared by Mark Solomons in London and Robbert Tilli in Amsterdam.

A crackdown on organized piracy in the Netherlands has led to 10 arrests on a string of charges that carry penalties of up to eight years' imprisonment.

Nine Dutch nationals and a German appeared in court in the Netherlands Sept. 13 to face charges of copyright infringement and membership in a criminal organization. The most serious charge they face is control of a criminal organization, which carries a maximum penalty of an eight-year jail sentence.

The 10 were arrested in a series of raids on more than 50 locations in the Netherlands and Germany Sept. 8 (Billboard Bulletin, Sept. 10), following an 18-month undercover operation by police and investigators from Dutch rights body BUMA/STEMRA, coordinated by Dutch anti-piracy federation BREIN. In addition to BUMA/STEMRA, BREIN includes local International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) affiliate NVPI and film industry body MPA.

A number of firearms and more than 2 million guilders (\$1 million) in cash was recovered during the raids, which involved some 400 law enforcement personnel. Two other people arrested were released without charge.

On Sept. 13, two of those arrested were remanded in custody for a week, and a hearing to further extend their detention was set for Thursday (23). Eight others were similarly remanded Sept. 10. The Dutch prosecution authorities can apply for a maximum of three con-

secutive periods of 30 days' detention in such cases.

According to a statement from the IFPI, the arrests represent the biggest crackdown yet on the illegal CD trade in the Netherlands, resulting in the "breaking up of the complete production process of pirate compilation CDs of the Braun MTV and Hitexplosion labels." The body estimates that this group has sold more than 4.3 million CDs of current hit repertoire in the Netherlands over the last four years, mainly in schools and youth centers, with a street

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