



"That's great. How many albums can we give you?" And Ahmet said, "Wow—let's go for 15." I remember [Flynn] grabbing hold of me and maybe Jon Anderson or another one of the guys in the band and bringing us into the bathroom and saying, "Oh, man, I just sat down with this guy, and it's fantastic. He wants to sign us for 15 albums." We were like, "Wow, he must really think we're good." We were getting all jazzed on that, and then the toilet flushes and the door opens, and Ahmet walked out into the main part of the bathroom with a big smile on his face, 'cause obviously the points were very low and he had us locked into a long-term deal. So we spent the rest of the '70s trying to renegotiate our deal and up the points.

SOLOMON BURKE

I met [Ertegun] and Jerry Wexler together. It was the day Ray Charles had left the label, and we walked in and 10 minutes later we were signed to the label. Jerry said, "I think we're gonna make a deal," and Ahmet just says, "Hey, baby, sign it. Sign it, baby." That was it. But over the years his suggestions were always brilliant and exciting and different. He was always willing to listen to the artists and get comments that made sense instead of just putting all himself in it. "Why don't we try this, man? What do you think?" That was always important to me.

JERRY GREENBERG

First president at Atlantic after Ertegun, co-owner of Rainbow Bar & Grill in Las Vegas.

His whole life was music. But he could go from talking to [Henry] Kissinger to talking with Solomon Burke, and all on the same night. He was about people with a good sense with songs.

Ahmet brought in all these entrepreneurial record labels into Atlantic. He was doing business with Chris Blackwell before Island opened up an office there. He was doing business with Robert Stigwood, and he nurtured David Geffen and helped him start Asylum. Jerry brought Stax into Atlantic and Buddy Killen and Dial Records—which had Joe Tex, who would have something like 20 R&B hits—and Malaco.

Nesuhi, Jerry and Ahmet all had incredible music backgrounds. To be groomed by the three of them, it was like going to Yale.

DAVID CROSBY

Back in those days, when we were signed [to Atlantic], there were a number of guys running record companies who were there because they loved music. Ahmet was one of those. He loved music. He would go to a Ray Charles concert and wind up crying.

When Ahmet heard our first tapes that Stephen [Stills] and I put together, he started funneling money to us. He actually fed us and gave us money for rent and kept us alive while we managed to put it together and get [Graham] Nash out of the Hollies and into our band.

He was our father. Our mentor. Our guy. He signed us personally, and he took care of us personally and was our friend for a long time. He would call up and say, "What have you done? How are you doing? Are you OK? Do you have any money to eat? What did you write today? When are you recording?" He actually gave a damn. You don't see that anymore.

RUSS SOLOMON

Founder of Tower Records

He invented the record business with people like Syd Nathan at King Records and the Chess Brothers and the Greenes at Mercury Records in Chicago.

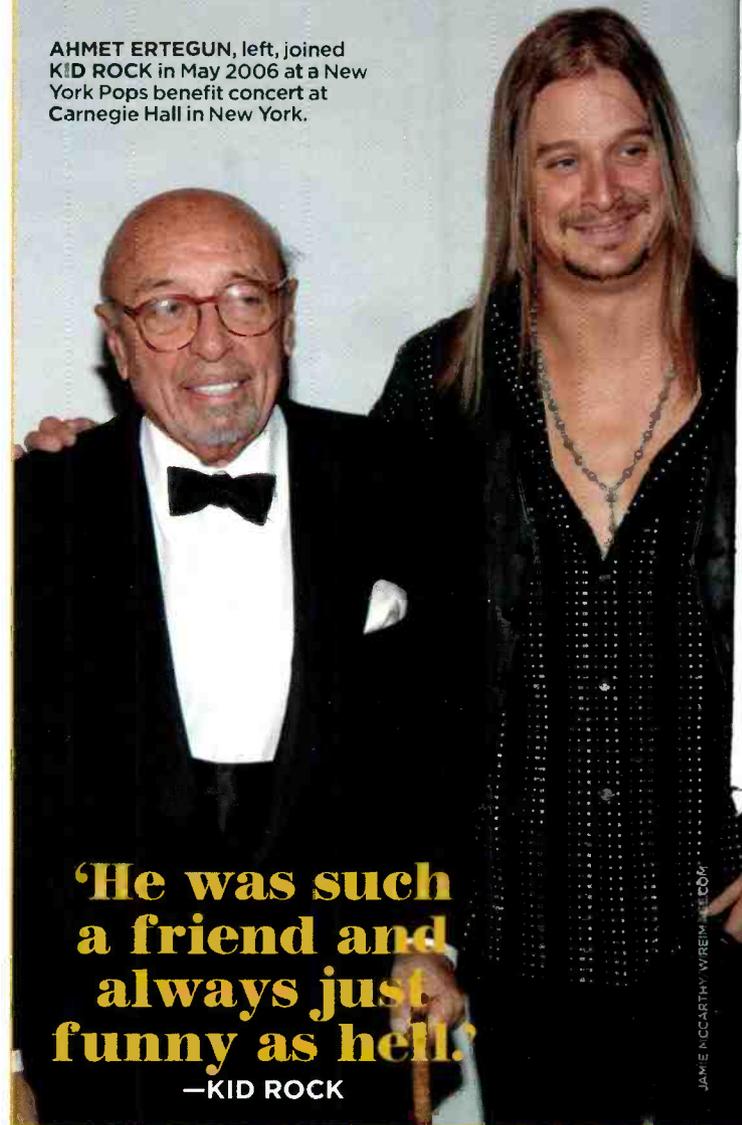
The thing about Ahmet was he hung out with real folks on the street and that's how he knew about all kinds of music... Atlantic put out all kinds of music, too. Think of all the music they put out—the jazz, the blues, piano blues, the whole gamut; the cabaret music and the country music. They did all kinds of American music. You should look at their catalog someday and see how deep they went.

ROBERT PLANT

My earliest recollections of Ahmet were [when] I was a fumbling, bumbling wreck barely out of my teens and whisked into this environment where one

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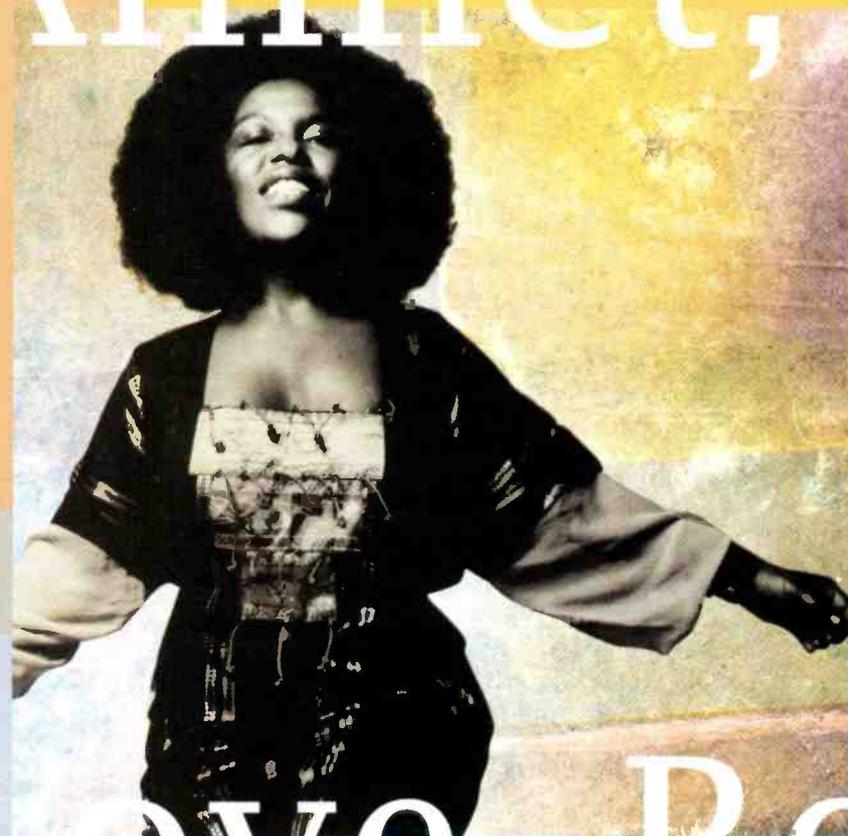
AHMET ERTEGUN, left, joined KID ROCK in May 2006 at a New York Pops benefit concert at Carnegie Hall in New York.



'He was such a friend and always just funny as hell.'
—KID ROCK

JANE MCCARTHY/WIREIMAGE.COM

Ahmet,



...and I'm missing you, too.

Love, Roberta