sired her because I believed in Mark Kamins, who I thought was the greatest DJ, and he wanted to be a producer. So I gave him some money to bring in an artist and the third or fourth thing he brought me was Madonna. 

And yes, I was very involved in the beginning. Then I realized, "This woman is smarter than all of us. Just get out of her way."

By then Sire was owned by Warner Music Group. How did Madonna move from Sire to Warner?

In the past, Mo Ostin had tried to stop me from signing artists. Sometimes he was right when he stopped me from making a deal, often he was wrong. The same thing with the Voidoids, who Richard Gottehrer brought to the studio for an hour. They played about 18 songs in about 20 minutes. But I kept it all afloat, although it was a struggle.

Richard left for personal reasons about 1974 or 1975, right before the Ramones and Blondie were getting attention. We both landed on our feet.

About 40% of the world's population lives in India and China. Are you signing artists there?

So what's going on with you now?

I just signed a new deal with WME for four years. I am still at Warner Bros. and there are these new people running the label. I've signed the first band I have signed on my own in a long time.

You have an affinity for the music scenes in India and China. Are you signing artists there?

About 40% of the world's population lives in India and China, and we need them. When I came into the music business, North America was about 70% of the music industry's volume. Now it's about 30%. So the whole equation has flipped over. Sure, there is a lot of piracy in India and China, but I remember what piracy was once like in Europe. Italy was once almost completely a pirate market. Portugal was totally pirate, and now there is no piracy. It will be easier to get a handle on piracy in India because it's a democracy.

India has great, talented producers, who also are artists and songwriters. I liken it to the scene in Sweden, but only a hundred times bigger. Hong Kong was totally pirate, and now there is no piracy. It will be easier to get a handle on piracy in India because it's a democracy.

India has great, talented producers, who also are artists and songwriters. I liken it to the scene in Sweden, but only a hundred times bigger. India has 1.1 billion people and 450 million of them live over the poverty line. It also has the world's biggest English-language newspaper, the Times of India, which has it's own record company, which is a power to be reckoned with.

In China, they are thieves when it comes to music—however, given a reason not to be thieves and they will stop. If some Chinese artist starts to make it globally, they will stop. The Chinese are very proud people and they have some artists who have the ability to make it internationally. If that happens, it will change things.

One day India and China will become an important part of the record business and I hope I live to see it. So will Brazil, Turkey, Indonesia, and places all over the globe. Music is the common denominator all throughout the world. 

An extended version of this interview is available on Billboard.biz.

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Sire’s Top 100 Hits

1. LIKE A VIRGIN
   Madonna/Sire/Warner Bros.

2. VOGUE
   Madonna/Sire/Warner Bros.

3. TAKE A BOW
   Madonna/Maverick/Sire/Warner Bros.

4. KISS FROM A ROSE
   (IN "TOMMY"
   )
   Seal/ZTT/Sire/Warner Bros.

5. I REMEMBER (REMEMBER ME)
   Madonna/Maverick/Sire/Warner Bros.

6. CAUSING A COMMOTION
   Madonna/Sire/Warner Bros.

7. EXPRESS YOURSELF
   Madonna/Sire/Warner Bros.

8. TRUE BLUE
   Madonna/Sire/Warner Bros.

9. CHERISH
   Madonna/Sire/Warner Bros.

10. KEEP IT TOGETHER
    Madonna/Sire/Warner Bros.

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from >>32 First distribution deal was with London Records. I think the first record was Parry by the Deviants, with Mick Farren. It didn't fare well. I was putting a lot of English stuff. There was a lot of great records coming out of that and nobody wanted them. I could get them for nothing. The EMI stuff I got for nothing. or just about.

How did you and Richard handle responsibilities?

At [Date/Columbia], Richard was making records and he made them at Sire, too. But I got very involved in A&R, too, because I am not a producer, I was picking up mostly finished product and in some cases finding bands, which came a bit later. But I kept us afloat, although it was a struggle.

Richard left for personal reasons about 1974 or 1975, right before the Ramones and Blondie were getting attention. We both landed on our feet.

So as Richard is leaving, punk is just about to happen. How did you get down to CBGB abroad of everyone else?

I was almost a little late. I was doing so well picking up good English bands. I went down a few times—they had a lot of shit bands too—but I never stopped going (CBGB winner) Hilly (Krista) was special. He gave everyone a shot.

[Musician writers] Lisa Robinson and Danny Fields were the first people to tell me about the Ramones. When they were playing next, I got them to sign for me. I signed the first band I have signed on my own in a long time.

You have an affinity for the music scenes in India and China. Are you signing artists there?

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