

WHO'S WHO IN A&R AT MILLENNIUM

JIMMY IENNER: President



Jimmy began singing professionally in New York at age 11 and by the time he was sixteen he had been on too many hit records to count. He also paid some dues . . . "We played at a Kelso gas station after driving 522 miles expecting to find a school, and what's more, when we went back to the Brill Building that Monday, the guy who set up the deal didn't exist . . . there was a desk and no person; Or then there was a time I had to pump gas all night to earn enough money to drive back from our gig . . ."

Jimmy was also an athlete . . . "It got very confusing because I'd be on the football field thinking about what songs we were gonna do in what sequence that night and I'd be on stage going into a three point stance. I went to a major football college one year on a scholarship and those guys were serious! Also I have a very ethnic background, being from New York, and no matter where the play was, I was getting hit . . . I said wait a minute, time, I don't look like a ball . . . it was called get the guy with the big nose and don't forget those teeth."

It's interesting to note that by the age of 16, Ienner was the youngest executive in music publishing at Peer-Southern Music . . . "I was with Southern Music at a very young age, 16 years old, so I learned international publishing and I saw how it worked . . . I saw the computer system, I learned about ASCAP and BMI and during all of that time I was producing under pseudonyms." In fact, before Jimmy was 21, he had produced

some 17 top 10 records, under various names.

Ienner next moved into a co-ownership situation at CAM-USA, a publishing-production company that went on to enjoy phenomenal success with Jimmy producing such artists as Grand Funk Railroad, Three Dog Night, Blood, Sweat & Tears, The Chambers Brothers, The Raspberries, Eric Carmen, Lighthouse and the Bay City Rollers, to name only a few.

After involvement in 39 Gold and Platinum albums and 58 Gold singles, Jimmy started Millennium Records in 1977. The label attained immediate recognition with its first release of Meco's "Star Wars".

In February 1979, Millennium entered a new worldwide distribution agreement with RCA Records.

DON IENNER: Vice President & National Promotion Director



Don has been with Millennium since its inception. As well as his many VP responsibilities, he supervises the entire Millennium field promotion force, as well as maintaining and coordinating functions with all independent promotion persons on behalf of Millennium.

In addition, he works directly with all stations and in conjunction with the RCA national, regional and local promotion staffs.

Prior to joining Millennium Records, Don Ienner was National Promotion Director at CAM-USA. Based at CAM for five years, Don helped bring prominence to such artists as Blood, Sweat & Tears, Lighthouse, The Raspberries, Eric Carmen, Bay City Rollers, Grand Funk Railroad, and Three Dog Night and many more.

BOBBY RAGONA: National Director of Sales and Marketing



At Millennium, Bobby's involvement is in all areas of product development and creating cohesive campaigns for Millennium artists in all phases of their careers. He works with the company's marketing staff to insure the artists' maximum coverage, and acts as liaison between touring artists and retail stores. As well as his marketing and sales functions, he helps coordinate all creative services, including album artwork, promotional aids and advertising.

He works directly with retail accounts, one-stops, racks, as well as with the RCA Sales & Marketing Departments, Branch Managers, and field sales force.

Bobby came to Millennium Records with a great deal of experience in the music industry, having held managerial positions in the Promotion, Sales and Marketing Departments of various companies such as Pickwick, Sire, Hilary, Ebony Sound, and Bareback Records.

OTHER MILLENNIUM PERSONNEL:

BEVERLY BERMAN: Administrator/International Co-ordinator

KEN FRANKLIN: Director National College Promotion

BARBARA WAMSER: Assistant to the President/Production Co-ordinator

SHELLY PETNOV-SHERMAN: Promotion & Sales Administrator

Interview with Jimmy Ienner

Q: Jimmy, talk to me a little about Jimmy Ienner the producer. For instance, how did your years of performing the old "do-wop" music effect you as a producer?

A: I made the transition from straight "DO-WOP" without even knowing it . . . I mean I wasn't directional in that respect. I always loved harmonies and I still do. If you look at my involvement with my acts, the Three Dog Nights, the Raspberries, the Grand Funks, the Eric Carmens . . . whatever it might be . . . they'll all reminiscent of that. The only album that I ever remember being involved with that enjoyed massive success that didn't have great harmonies are Meco's "Star Wars" . . . and that was an instrumental.

Q: So you lean toward vocal harmonies?

A: I still do . . . I mean I don't lean toward that era but vocal harmonies are very important to me. The Eric Carmen albums are just loaded with them.

Q: What about the electronic and technical aspect of producing?

A: I was never a fan of the technical aspect, for whatever reason; maybe because it bored me, maybe because I didn't know enough to be interested in it. I also felt that was the engineers' end of it. I knew what was right and I knew what was wrong, but I didn't take pride, like many other producers, in knowing what DB to work with, what EQ, what frequency, what limiter. I also felt the role of a producer was to remain neutral. I never talked to a musician from a musician's point of view or an engineer from an engineer's point of view. I would always talk as a layman in between so that all of the elements involved; whether they be musicians, vocalists, engineers, whatever; would not see me coming from any side. I would be coming from a total pivot point. So when people say, "How could you go from 3 Dog Night to Grand Funk Railroad to Blood, Sweat & Tears, to a Chamber's Brothers to the Bay City Rollers to Eric Carmen?", I'd say "Well why not? It's all music." You see, I'm not producing my style, I'm producing their music. I was voted number one producer in the country three different years, but what you have to understand is that it wasn't me, it was the acts and the songs. I've never heard of a producer totally responsible for taking a bad song and a bad act and making it a hit. I've heard them improve it, . . . I've heard many times where they've killed it . . . but I never heard that miracle.

Q: What led you out of producing?

A: What led me out of it was that I felt like, after being involved in over forty gold and platinum albums and sixty gold singles, I felt like a mother who was giving birth and then selling her children. I lived with it from the creation on . . . and once it was delivered to the record company there was a defense mechanism about who's doing what. I mean first it was exciting, then it became intriguing, then it became questionable and then it became a hassle; because you sort of give up your rights to that child once you've delivered it.

Q: Now that you have a label situation where you have control, what about producing again?

A: This is not a producer's label, this is a record company. I feel that my strengths at the moment are as an overseer.

Q: Don't you miss it?

A: No, I don't miss it because I still get my licks in . . . I'll call a producer at 3 o'clock in the morning and say "that guitar solo sucks!" . . . and we'll argue back and forth and since I'm paying the bills, I can say "do it two ways" and then my line that I used as a producer was "If you like it that much, I'll make you a copy . . . but you won't hear it on vinyl." When any product on this label is in the studio, I'm getting tapes from basics, to overdubs, to vocals, to backgrounds, to mixes, and I give my input . . . and if they're right, they're right, and I'll back off. Also, I master everything. I mean I physically sit down with George Marino or Greg Calbi and work on the final touches; the sequencing and all of that. I'm involved in every aspect of it. But this is not a producer's label, it's a real record company and it will succeed on the merit and involvement of the people with me . . . like Don Ienner who has been my back-up ears besides being one of the best promotion men in the business. I also feel we are one of the tightest and best run organizations for any company our size . . . and this is constantly being reinforced by the people we are dealing with on a daily basis.

Q: Talk to me a little about Millennium. Millennium was relatively quiet last year . . .

A: . . . Millennium was excessively quiet last year. We had two minor releases, but basically I've been involved with the RCA situation and helping, wherever I can, in the new distribution arrangement. My thinking was that the stronger I make my big brother, the stronger I will become. During that transition period we waited patiently and now they are much stronger and we are ready.

Q: So you feel better about the situation now?

A: Oh I don't just feel better, I feel very strongly about it.

Q: Why, Jim, what has changed so much other than a change in some personnel?

A: I think that's not to be regarded lightly, because a lot of the problem was that they had the dollars, they had the facility, they had the machine but they didn't have the proper personnel aligned to execute and follow through. Also you must keep in mind that; because of A&M's involvement, Millennium's potential, and Solar's success; the people there are in a position to do what they haven't been able to do in the past. Number two; with the added business from A&M at the same time the rest of the industry has slowed down, there is an equation there that has helped neutralize and perhaps even out some of the advantages once held by the other majors. The other thing that is very important is that RCA is going into the 80's very strong. If they don't succeed now, I don't think it will be on reputation, it will be on fault, because they are situated and aligned right.

Q: What about Millennium's roster?

A: The roster is a baby roster. When we got our divorce from Casablanca, part of the settlement was that they got the artists although we retained override rights, master retention and other things, but in essence we started over again. So for the last fourteen months we've been rebuilding. But we're starting the brand new year with Hanie that, third week out, is number 109; Tommy James debuts at number 76; Bruce Cockburn is record of the year in Canada and already has a platinum album and we'll be out with him soon; the Yipes material is ready to go; and this is just a start. Also this year I plan on signing some known acts because now we're at that level where we know we can do it . . . This is only the beginning.

Q: What about trends now. What direction do you see us going musically?

A: I'm the last person in the world to ask about trends. I don't like trends, I like ideas.

Q: So you're not thinking in terms of "new wave" or whatever?

A: I like the music of Yipes which was consistent with what has been going on but who knows what to call it. I don't know what fits into "new wave" . . . Is it a point of sales? Are the Cars still "new wave" or are they now "old turf"? . . . I don't know. If they go platinum are they no longer "new wave" . . . Is it the success or failure that makes it? If an act doesn't sell does that make it new wave? . . . I don't know.

Q: All right, enough on that subject, what about A&R here at Millennium; who does what?

A: We're all A&R here. I have the final decision but I don't do it divorced from my people. Our schedule has been that on Thursday nights, the bulk of listening material is dealt with from 6 o'clock on. The things that we're considering I then study for the weekend. I spend at least 10 hours a weekend, minimum, listening to new things. That Monday I'll make a decision on those I feel are not ready, the ones that are done, and the ones we'll pursue. These decisions are based on where we see ourselves going and our strength in a given area as well as other considerations.

Q: What about unsolicited tapes? Do you get many and, if so, what do you do with them?

A: Oh God do we get them! I must tell you something, although Millennium has been quiet, the attention has been wonderful. We have been averaging an amazing number of tapes every week. The thing that I like to do, and I've made a practice of doing, is to try and really respond to the tapes, not just saying yes or no. I try to personally do as many as physically possible myself. I spend at least two nights a week when I will probably not finish until one or two o'clock listening to tapes. Now that's not counting the Thursday night general staff meeting or the weekends which consist of just the ones we're considering . . . This ain't a part-time gig!