



A tale of the search for sound

by Tricia Romano

Once upon a time not so long ago

in the land of Seattle there were many cool, local bands creating their own sound. They were Alice in Chains, Soundgarden, Mudhoney, Nirvana and Pearl Jam. Their music was the locals' little secret.

One day a wonderful man in the record industry, known by the name of David Geffen, signed Nirvana. Since that historical moment, nothing has been the same. People from all over have flocked to hear the "Seattle sound," giving numerous bands loads of notoriety, fame and fortune.

Substitute local Las Vegas artists like Mark Huff, Cries and Whispers, Hers Tabula Rasa, Scrubs and Endless Mindless in place of Seattle and you have a Las Vegas fairytale in the making.

Some doubt that a music revolution is feasible in the near future.

A few, however, beg to differ. Local promoter Susan Hahn of Full Moon Productions transported herself from the Los Angeles underground a little over a year ago, and has since figured prominently in the Vegas music scene. She has worked with both local and national acts and has done her share to help the growth of the post-modern scene.

Hahn said record companies have not taken notice of Las Vegas because they aren't aware.

"Eventually it's going to catch on," she said. "You just keep beating it long enough, and someone is going to take notice."

One way to get the labels to take notice is to send a demo tape to a record company 3,000-4,000 times, but, as Hahn pointed out, A&R people receive up

to 300 pieces of music per week.

Chances for a band that doesn't know someone who knows someone are slim to nothing. So, what's a local band to do, with no connections, but who are tired of waiting around for the David Geffen-type person to sign them?

They could do what Mark Huff did: start their own record company. Huff first created Exodus records in 1990, mainly to support his solo career. The album, *Happy Judgement Day*, while not a commercial success, was sold in record stores in various parts of the country. Record stores will not sell any release if they are not signed to a label. By having his record on sale, it gained Huff exposure in towns outside of Vegas. He's played in New York's Greenwich Village as well as some gigs in L.A.

"I'm a songwriter," said Huff, "and I was tired of waiting around for the industry shit." He pointed out the music industry tends to follow current trends and changes their mind daily as to what is hot and what is not. Huff realized his music is not recognized by record companies as a commercially viable product, so he set out to start a company that would do it a better way: his own.

Creating a record company is not an incredibly easy task. After the red tape is cut and the paperwork is set, the final deciding factor is money, something that Huff concedes he was fortunate enough to get. While Exodus Records was launched primarily to promote Huff's own band (his new album with the Inflatables, *Truth is Chaos*, is slated for release in early December) the company will also serve as a recording home for other local bands, including Hers Tabula Rasa and tentatively Cries and Whispers.

Shaun Flannery and Kevin Carter also learned the woes of starting a record company when they and several other business partners set out to create Lemuria Records earlier this year. While Mark Huff's label concentrates mainly on local acts, Lemuria records want to expand outside of Las Vegas and ultimately become a national label. The first release off of Lemuria Records is a local act, but the company plans to push the band heavily outside of Las Vegas. It also hopes that the independent release will spur a major label to pick up the band. But Flannery and Carter do not foresee a "Seattle awakening".

"I think it could happen but only if the city is blessed with a David Geffen," said Flannery.

Hers Tabula Rasa's record, *Perverse*, is also set for a December release on Exodus. While they have also recognized the advantages of being on a small independent label, they are quick to point that a major label deal is not completely ruled out.

Brent Legault, lead singer for Hers, said, "If a major label comes along with a good deal (the

band would sign). As long as we have creative control. It'd have to be a good deal, otherwise, we'd just do it ourselves. It's easier to do it ourselves. I'm surprised more bands haven't done it."

Media hype—or rather a lack there of—seems to be one of the contributing factors to the poor showing of the Vegas scene. Vegas just doesn't have musical history. As Scott Beare, one of the representatives of Lemuria records pointed out, Seattle took off in part because of its history. Big artists like Jimi Hendrix and Heart created a national storm long before Nirvana was around. And, unfortunately, Las Vegas just doesn't have that type of background, nor does it have the amount of attention that comes with having a big scene.

As Lance Kruger of Scrubs explained, "The Seattle scene has happened before a thousand times over in other cities. It just isn't as publicized."

The upcoming year will see releases from numerous local bands, including tentative releases from Cries and Whispers, Scrubs and Endless Mindless. Again, the deciding factor in this is money. Endless Mindless, a band looking to put out an EP, is thinking of doing it themselves, too.

"I think that every band, whether bad or good, deems itself a credible and fantastic entity," said Russell Rader, lead singer of Endless Mindless. "Otherwise they would stop, pack up shop and work at Mc Donald's." Rader pointed out that most bands just want to be heard. "So, if the big companies don't have the good taste to understand what they are hearing, then the bands will just have to produce themselves," he said.

Others just want to play. "Someday," said Kruger, "eventually we'll put out an EP. We don't give a shit. We're going to be doing this in our living room anyway."



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