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The 'A' & 'M' in A&M exit after 31 years. (A and M Records Inc. Chairman Jerry Moss and Co-Chairman Herb Alpert) *Craig Rosen*.

Abstract: A&M Records Chmn Jerry Moss and co-chairman Herb Alpert are expected to leave the company they established in 1962. Lawyers for parent company Polygram are currently negotiating Alpert and Moss out of the remaining two years of their five-year contract. Industry analysts view the duo's departure as part of A&M's continuous reshuffling as a result of corporate buyouts and the ageing of top executives.

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LOS ANGELES - Although parent company PolyGram has yet to confirm the impending departure of A&M chairman Jerry Moss and co-chairman Herb Alpert, sources confirm their imminent exit and say it will not affect the label's day-to-day operation.

Some industry observers, however, view Moss and Alpert's departure from A&M - the label they established more than 30 years ago - as part of a continual changing of the guard brought on by corporate buyouts and the graying of top executives.

"There will be no changes except for emotional ones," says a source. "Their departure won't have anything to do with the way A&M markets, promotes, and sells records.

The A&M logo first appeared in 1962 on a single called "The Lonely Bull" by "the Tijuana Brass featuring Herb Alpert." Alpert and Moss originally had tagged their imprint Carnival Records but discovered someone already had laid claim to that name. To this day, the A&M logo still sports Alpert's trademark - the silhouette of a trumpet.

It's unclear if Alpert - who has topped the Billboard album chart five times during his career - will continue to record for the label he co-founded.

While lawyers negotiate Alpert and Moss out of the remaining two years of their five-year pact with PolyGram, sources say the duo already has begun packing their belongings at A&M and will relocate to the La Cienega Boulevard headquarters, of their publishing company, Rondor Music, formerly known as Almo/Irving. Alpert and Moss have held offices at Rondor's headquarters, but until now, they have remained unused.

PolyGram purchased all of A&M's assets, with the exception of the publishing company, for \$500 million in October 1989. Included in the deal were A&M's repertoire and artist contracts, back catalog, music video arm, and real estate holdings such as the famed A&M Studios and the Chaplin Soundstage. At the time, PolyGram said A&M would continue to operate autonomously under Alpert and Moss (Billboard, Oct. 21, 1989).

Approximately six months after the sale, Gil Friesen resigned as president of A&M, ending his 25-year tenure at the label (Billboard, April 4, 1990). At the time, Moss assumed the position of president, but by the end of the year, Al Cafaro, previously senior VP/GM of A&M, was upped to president (Billboard, Dec. 8, 1990). Cafaro subsequently added CEO to his title and was named an executive VP of Polygram Holding Inc.

According to sources, up until approximately 18 months ago, the label's A&R department continued to report to Moss, but those responsibilities soon drifted to Cafaro.

Although a source maintains A&M continues to operate autonomously from Polygram, they say Alpert and Moss were unhappy dealing with the large corporation.

Friesen, who is now a partner in a company that develops programming for cable television, says the news of Alpert's and Moss' pending departure did not come as a shock. "The company has changed dramatically," he says. "There are different people involved, and business has changed significantly since we have moved into the '90s. They had a great 30 years and have had many great accomplishments over the years, but there comes a time when it's better to move on gracefully."

Friesen added the departure of Moss and Alpert is part "of a changing of the guard, and it's certainly significant. It's symbolic of the '90s."

Several observers have noted that many of the record industry's top executives from the '60s, '70s, and '80s have retired, such as former Capitol-EMI Music president/CEO Joe Smith, or are near retirement age. Even some executives who are a bit younger are in an awkward position, since the labels they oversee were purchased by large conglomerates.

At a Cities In Schools dinner honoring Moss April 14, Alpert hinted at the duo's departure. "My partner Jerry and I started this company on a handshake 31 years ago and it turned into a hug," Alpert said from the stage. "It's sad to see it winding down after 31 years."

PolyGram, A&M, Moss, and Alpert either declined comment on the matter or had not returned phone calls by press time.

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