

Inductees: Herb Alpert (born March 31, 1935), Jerry Moss (born May 8, 1935)

Herb Alpert and Jerry Moss founded A&M Records, one of the most successful independent labels of the rock and roll era. Over the decades a number of independents changed music history - including Sun, Asylum, Chrysalis, Island, Stiff, I.R.S., Arista, Geffen and A&M. The last of these had one of the longest runs of all, functioning as an independent label from 1962 to 1989 and lasting ten more years, after Alpert and Moss sold it, under the corporate aegis of PolyGram and Universal.

The company began in Alpert's garage as Carnival Records, releasing two singles in 1962. After learning that another record company had "Carnival" in its name, the pair rechristened their label A&M, using the first initials of their surnames.

"We had a desk, piano, piano stool, a couch, coffee table and two phone lines," Moss recalled of the early days in Alpert's garage office. The familiar label logo was light brown with a trumpet beneath the letters "A&M." The first release was "The Lonely Bull," by trumpet player Alpert himself. For the first few years, A&M served as an outlet for the mariachi- and Brazilian-flavored pop-jazz recordings of Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass, the Baha Marimba Band, and Sergio Mendes and Brazil '66. They also dabbled in softer-sounding pop and folk acts like the Sandpipers, Chris Montez and We Five.

Several key hires were made at A&M in 1964 and 1965, including engineer Larry Levine, general manager Gil Friesen, and A&R director Tommy LiPuma. All would have great impact in the music industry in general and at A&M in particular.

In 1966 Alpert and Moss moved their company to the historic Charlie Chaplin Studio, at the corner of Sunset and La Brea Boulevards in Hollywood, where it remained until 1999. A&M began acquiring more rock-oriented performers in the late Sixties. These included such British blues-rock acts as Joe Cocker, Free, Humble Pie and Spooky Tooth, not to mention pioneering American country-rockers the Flying Burrito Brothers. On the American side, keyboardist Lee Michaels and folksinger Phil Ochs signed to A&M. In the early Seventies, A&M struck gold with Cat Stevens, the Carpenters and Carole King (who was signed to the A&M-distributed Ode label). In terms of jazz and R&B, A&M did well with Billy Preston and Quincy Jones. In the mid-Seventies, the label had great success with such arena-rock acts as Styx, Supertramp, Nazareth and Peter Frampton. The double live album Frampton Comes Alive became one of the top sellers of the rock and roll era. A&M even sold great numbers of comedy albums by the duo Cheech & Chong.

It should be pointed out that even though Alpert and Moss are being inducted as nonperformers, Alpert himself has been a prolific musician and recording artist. Herb Alpert & the Tijuana Brass are inarguably one of the most popular acts of all time. Seemingly every suburban household owned at least a few Herb Alpert albums in the

Police, Joe Jackson, the Go-Go's and Human League. Sting remained on A&M as a solo artist after the Police disbanded. A&M artists who helped carry the label in its later years included Bryan Adams, Amy Grant, Suzanne Vega and Sheryl Crow. A&M also served as a distributor for other independents, including Ode, Windham Hill, I.R.S. and George Harrison's Dark Horse imprint.

In 1989 Alpert and Moss sold A&M to PolyGram for a reported \$500 million dollars. Ten years later, the label was acquired by a new corporate overseer: Universal Music Group, which had been bought

out by the liquor company Seagram. Huge staff cuts were implemented and the label was effectively shut down.

“I saw that train coming, [with] the sharp contrast between the independent world and the corporate,” Alpert told the Los Angeles Times. “I don’t think their bottom line has much to do with music or artists.”

At the time of its closure, A&M’s deposed president, Al Cafaro, observed: “The record business is changing fundamentally. It’s a Wall Street world now.”

When asked by interviewer Richard Warner what had made A&M so successful, Alpert replied: “We had a feel. What we did was respond to our gut. When we liked an artist, we recorded them. When we didn’t, we passed. If we felt good about it, we tried to find a way to do it. We’ve used that process right from the get-go and not bottom-lined it.

“We always felt that if you do something with quality and integrity, then it’s going to come back to you. I’m an old-timer in the business from the sense that when you do something you feel good about, there might be another person out there who feels the same way. Or a hundred. Or a couple million.”

Essential Recordings

The Lonely Bull, by Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass

Recommended Readings

A&M Corner

Website at <http://www.amcorner.com/> (Note: This website is devoted to the music, history and legacy of A&M Records.)

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UCLA Music Library.

University of California at Los Angeles. Los Angeles, CA. (Note: Herb Alpert and Jerry Moss donated sound recordings, letters, photographs and other archival materials related to their A&M Records label to UCLA Library.)

TIMELINE

1962: Musician Herb Alpert and businessman Jerry Moss cofound Carnival Records. They release two singles and then change the company name to A&M Records upon learning of another Carnival label.

November 10, 1962: “The Lonely Bull,” by the Tijuana Brass with Herb Alpert, enters the Top Forty, where it will peak at #6. It is the title track of an album that stays on the charts for 157 weeks.

1965: Two albums by Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass - Going Places and Whipped Cream...And Other Delights - are released on the A&M label. Both albums reach Number One, remain on the charts for over three years, and are certified gold (500,000 copies sold).

June 22, 1968: "This Guy's in Love With You," by Herb Alpert, hits Number One for the first of four weeks. It is the first tune by the songwriting duo of Burt Bacharach and Hal David to top the charts.

November 1969: Almo/Irving Music, a music publisher co-owned by Herb Alpert and Jerry Moss, buys the Beach Boys' Sea of Tunes song catalog from Murry Wilson (father of three Beach Boys) for \$700,000.

1970: A&M Records releases hit records including Cat Stevens' Tea for the Tillerman and Joe Cocker's Mad Dogs and Englishmen. A&M also strikes a deal to distribute Lou Adler's Ode Records label, whose artist roster includes Carole King and Spirit.

July 25, 1970: A&M recording artists the Carpenters place the first of three Number One on Billboard's singles chart with "Close to You" (followed by "Top of the World" and "Please Mr. Postman").

July 17, 1973: A&M recording artist Billy Preston hits Number One on Billboard's singles chart with "Will It Go Round in Circles." He will repeat the feat in October 1974 with "Nothing from Nothing."

April 26, 1975: Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass release Coney Island, their 19th album. It will be their last until 1984's Bullish.

March 9, 1977: The Sex Pistols are signed to A&M Records and dropped a week later for offensive behavior. A&M's success in the punk/New Wave era will come with less contentious acts like the Police, Joe Jackson and the Go-Go's.

October 20, 1979: "Rise," by Herb Alpert, tops Billboard's singles chart for the first of two weeks.

R&B artist.

October 1989: Herb Alpert and Jerry Moss sell A&M Records to PolyGram for roughly half a billion dollars.

June 18, 1993: Herb Alpert and Jerry Moss leave A&M Records, now owned by PolyGram, midway through their five-year contract, feeling they did not have the autonomy they'd been promised.

December 10, 1998: PolyGram, which includes A&M and other labels, is sold to the Seagram corporation, which merges PolyGram with its Universal Music Group subsidiary.

January 22, 1999: After 37 years, A&M Records - the label founded by Herb Alpert and Jerry Moss - virtually ceases operations. A&M and four other Universal Music Group-owned labels - Island, Mercury, Geffen and Motown - undergo a massive downsizing and restructuring.

October 1999: A&M Studios is closed by Universal Music Group, finalizing A&M Records' dissolution. This same year, Herb Alpert and Jerry Moss sue Universal for violation of an "integrity clause" that had been written into A&M's sale to PolyGram in 1989. The lawsuit is settled in 2000.

January 2006: Herb Alpert and Jerry Moss donate archives relating to A&M Records, the label they cofounded in 1962, to the University of California at Los Angeles.

March 13, 2006: Herb Alpert and Jerry Moss are inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame at the 21st annual induction dinner. tk is their presenter.

All Right Now, by Free
Every Breath You Take, by the Police
A Whiter Shade of Pale, by Procol Harum
A Little Help from My Friends, by Joe Cocker

Will It Go Round in Circles, by Billy Preston

Don't You Want Me, by Human League
Miss You Much, by Janet Jackson
Show Me the Way, by Peter Frampton
Close to You, by the Carpenters

Recommended Reading On A&M Records

Website at: <http://www.onamrecords.com/>

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