

Adler's Ode Label Continues A&M Ties; Ink New 3-Yr Deal

HOLLYWOOD — After months of industry speculation of many multi-million dollar deal offers, Ode Record president and founder Lou Adler has opted to remain entirely independent and will continue his distribution ties with A & M Records via a new three-year agreement.

In so doing, Adler—one of the most successful and creative forces in the recording industry—said he deliberately made a decision that reverses a recent industry trend he helped establish: that is, where a major company or conglomerate acquires a small, hot label with a stock and/or cash offer. As one of the co-founders of Dunhill Records, Adler was later to sell that hot, small label to ABC Records.

Adler's Philosophy

"Having total autonomy and being able to personally control every aspect of the Ode operation is the main reason I didn't want to sell the com-

pany," Adler revealed. "For no matter how many promises of total autonomy, and no matter how many codicles are written into a contract, one loses certain degrees of freedom and independence to act when one is acquired," he emphasized. "Sometimes this loss is subtle, sometimes it isn't, but after 15 years of producing and directing talent, I know that any degree of loss is to be avoided at all costs."

Adler also said he never seriously considered any other distribution association than one with A & M. "I feel comfortable and at home at A & M," he stated. "We respect each other and the way we operate our company.

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Alpert, Adler, Moss

Ode's New Pact With A & M

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ies . . . Similarly, A & M understands me and my operation as well as my business and music philosophy."

Although no specific acquisition of new distribution offers for Ode were ever made public, talk of them has been discussed and digested for months in the record industry. One quoted figure was a purchase offer made by a foreign-based leisure-time conglomerate for \$15-million. This proposed arrangement was said to have Adler remaining with Ode for five years under a personal service contract.

Similarly, unprecedeted distribution deals were also purported to have been made to Adler once it became general knowledge that his original arrangement with A & M would come to a close on Jan. 1, 1974.

In the end, Adler chose to continue his very personal relationship with A

& M whereby Ode is the only "outside" label it distributes. Also, Adler's association with Herb Alpert began in 1958 when they got together to compose and produce many west coast surfing hit singles.

The Beginning

Ode was founded on Jan. 1, 1967, and was originally distributed by Columbia Records under a three-year contract. Adler then chose to have A & M distribute his product under another three-year pact. Their association began on Jan. 1, 1970, and has turned out to be one of the phenomenons of the record industry within recent times:

During the past three years, Ode has released 16 albums that have sold a shade under 30-million copies (29.7-million) worldwide (as of the Sept. 1 audit), according to label sources.

In the past 30-months, during which 10 of those 16 LPs have been released, all 10 have made the charts—8 in the Top Ten. And 7 out of those 8 have scored platinum-or-better status. Additionally, 6 of these 10 LPs reached the number-one rung on the charts.

Sales Leaders

Leading Ode's sales parade, of course, has been Carole King's "Tapestry" release. It has sold more than 12-million copies worldwide and has been on the charts for 142-weeks. Since "Tapestry," Ms. King has had three other LP releases, and all three have each sold more than 1-million units. (They are "Music," "Rhymes and Reasons" and "Fantasy").

Another phenomenon on the Ode label has been the comedy team of Cheech and Chong. Their first release, "Cheech and Chong," sold more than 1-million units; their second, "Big Bambu," sold more than 2.1-million units. Their third album, "Los Cochinos," has been in release for 16-weeks, has already passed the 1-million unit sales mark and gives every indication of being their biggest hit yet. (An additional industry fact-of-interest in connection with Cheech and Chong sales is that an unprecedeted percentage are in tapes.)

Rounding up the list of Ode's 1-million unit album sellers was its all-star cast version of the Who's "Tommy," which was recorded in London over a nine-month period with the London Symphony Orchestra.

For the New Year, Ode will have two new albums in release, "Tom Scott and the L.A. Express" and David T. Walker's "Press On."