

YOU TOO CAN CON

Look kid, the first thing we gotta do is change your name. Whoever came up with this Doug McDougall garbage has probably got pay TV rights to Brigadoon. In Cambodia. Your parents? Try and forget who they are. You need an image that's gonna play in Peoria. From now on your name is Pop Smear and you were raised in a home for unwed teens outside of Youngstown, Ohio. Yeah you got it. You're every mother's worst nightmare.



Bryan and Tina

no idea of how things were done in the U.S. when he got down there to work the 1984 smash "Safety Dance". Here he was, a babe in the woods, with a number three single! Organized crime is involved, perhaps, (ha ha) with independent promotion, an industry that has more in common with the dry cleaning business than music. Number 138 with a bullet has taken on a whole new meaning. Like the chicken and the egg, what came first, the fraud or the cynicism?

But you're in a band and you're from Canada and if you ever hope to give up your day job driving the Zamboni at Gerda Munsinger Memorial Arena you had better give serious thought about giving it a crack Stateside.



Bruce Cockburn

While you're at it, buy a few assorted lottery tickets because the odds are the same.

'Cause even your local heros like Platinum Blonde and Larry Gowan can't get arrested south of Fort Erie. Between them they've sold almost a million records in the past twelve months in Canada and they're under contract to CBS, the most powerful record company in the world. In the U.S.A. they might have a combined sales of 100,000 units. Nada. No guarantees.

For every Bryan Adams there are about ten Refugees. Or The Dice. Or Parachute Club. Or The Spoons. Unmitigated disasters on foreign turf in losing situations that were often out of their own control.

Where did you get that manager? What's his firm - Bob's Bands and Disc Jockey Service? You're on the roster as suitable for bar mitzvahs. How can you operate an international office out of a place called Listowel? I gotta guy who's looking for someone like you. Remember The Knack? Remember Pink Lady? Missing Persons? He was involved with all of them. We're talking long term commitment here. Oh by the way. He'll want half your publishing.



Honeymoon Suite

It is a question an artist must ask his or herself every waking moment as would a skier checking his style through every gate. Am I in control? Just who is making this decision? Why am I doing this? Is there someone in town I can see about this cold sore?

The consensus within the industry in 1986 is that self-determination is established with a solid home base in Canada, a pleasant change from earlier methodology which dictated that it was better to publicly denounce all connections with the old neighborhood.



PHOTO: PAT HARBON/SNAPPED!

Gowan

Souls are not so much sold for rock 'n' roll anymore as much as they are perhaps temporarily leased, given the fickle tendencies of its audience. Long term these days is about 18 months with an option for another 30 days. At least that's the way she be in the U.S.A. where the rocky road from rags to riches and back is paved with bones crushed under the wheels of an industry driven by the explosive mixture of anger, fear and greed.

You saw the news reports. Payola is more than the name of some dead band in Vancouver. Marc Durand, manager of Men Without Hats (now Men Without Hits) last year admitted that he really had

PHOTO: GUNTER KIENITZ

PHOTO: PAT HARBON/SNAPPED!

CONQUER THE U.S.A.

BY JONATHAN GROSS

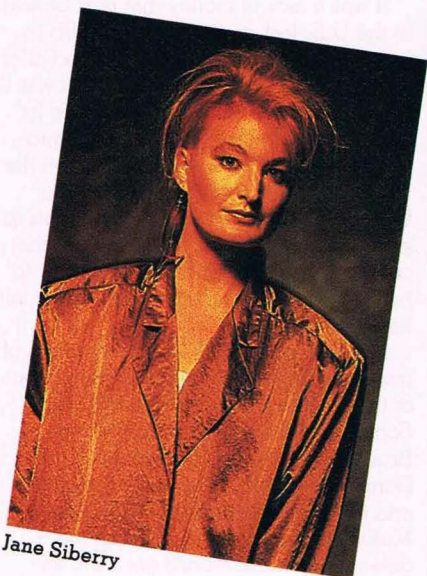


PHOTO: PAT HARBON

Rush

A good working model is Jane Siberry, who through her beliefs in self-determination and a fair bit of talent, has managed to maintain a grip on her own career. Though *Speckless Sky*, her self-produced second album on tiny Duke Street Records is little better than gold in Canada, Siberry is being treated like royalty stateside where her U.S. label Wyndham Hill/A&M recently invested \$100,000 on a new video for "One More Colour". That's more than double the total investment in her videos so far. Siberry, at this writing, was on the verge of a \$1 million international deal with Warner Brothers.

"Jane played the role of the press darling in the U.S. in her first year there," says Toronto-based manager Bob Bloomer whose only other client is cabaret singer Micah Barnes. "If our showcases in New York were disasters with the public, they did earn us stories in the New York Times and Rolling Stone.



Jane Siberry

THE IMMIGRATION MINEFIELD

You might get the impression from the accompanying article that any attempt to make an impression on the United States from chart positions in Flin Flon would qualify you for a role in the next remake of *Against All Odds*. That would also be a correct impression.

The only way to make it in the U.S. is to actually be there. Witness Bryan Adams who played hundreds of shows before he was a household name because he had a manager with insight (Bruce Allen), a record company that went to bat for him (A&M) and, probably, a pretty good immigration lawyer. For long is the list of bands, unknown and known, who have been turned away by a pencil-pushing St. Peter at a border immigration office.

And few are the success stories built on non-union illegal gigs by upstart Canadian bands who told the man at immigration they "were just going to visit our Aunt Myrt in New York." Above board means professional.

There are basically two ways of working in the United States, either on a temporary basis with H-1 or H-2 visas or as a permanent resident with the all powerful 'green card'. The latter situation requires much more legal finesse than space permits so we will address the former, more accessible status.

The H-1 and H-2 visas define two kinds of applicants. According to Howard Deutsch, a leading New York lawyer, who specializes in entertainer permits and who has represented David Bowie, The Clash and others, the H-1 applicant is of distinguished merit or ability, has performed to public acclaim outside the U.S., has received compensation commensurate with his or her status and has a substantial public inside the U.S. as

evidenced by press clippings, chart positions, record sales etc.

All of this goes into the application and even the biggest stars can't take these things lightly.

"When Diana Ross played her concert in Central Park a few years ago, she applied to have a very big European artist on the bill with her and was refused," says Deutsch who has written a successful book titled *Getting Into America*, available from General Publishing. "You really have to know what you're doing and with whom you are dealing. There are strategies involved, every point of entry is different and the immigration department mistakes both good and bad."

Deutsch says that if your band is hot in Toledo, then clear your national tour through the immigration office there. The average legal cost of a permit is \$75-2000 but, according to Deutsch, many lawyers will offer them cheaply just to get an entertainer's contract business.

The H-2 is somewhat more difficult only because the applicant is usually a lesser known quantity in the U.S. The immigration department takes an H-2 application to the American Federation of Musicians who determine if a musician or band is not taking work away from a suitably qualified American. Another clarinet player they don't need.

With an H-2, Deutsch recommends young acts to keep complete records of performances and press clippings to build the case of a unique talent that must be seen by the American public.

"How you make out your application is the most important thing," adds Deutsch. "But get your dates lined up, get support of an agent or club manager and then apply. Don't put any tickets on sale until you get your permit." □

The fallout from them was unbelievable."

Siberry is a rarity in the business. She is viewed as a real talent, a precious original who is attractive to A&R people as was Joni Mitchell and Ricki Lee Jones. A prestige item. Sales and airplay are not important right now.

"We did a fifty city tour of Canada and the U.S. in theatre-sized venues which everybody advised against," says Bloomer. "The whole thing was a major

success."

Bloomer adds that to compensate for his and Jane's inexperience, he's gone out and hired the best lawyers and secured contracts with a very powerful agency: "You can just get people to do the job or people that really want to help the project and we did just that. I think we surrendered a lot of publishing in the U.S. but we've basically been living off the advances."

Continued

YOU TOO SHOULD INVADE THE U.S.

Look, there's only about two decent labels in the U.S. right now. And they ain't RCA and Polygram. Sign with that guy I told you about and you'll probably get a deal on this new label. Yeah it's called Squandered Records. Gonna be picked up by a major real soon. Oh, you'll have to take six points on your first album. Toll calls to New Jersey are recoupable.

The lesson to be learned from Siberry

and others is that it is no longer necessary to pack up and move away because you think you're living in a one house town. Back in the late '70s it was fashionable to take a shot in London or New York without proper work permits and living from hand to mouth via under the table jobs in tacky restaurants. Take that route and you're working without a net risking the fatal falls taken by the likes of The Diodes, B-Girls and others too numerous to mention. The only band ever to break outside of Canada was Martha & The Muffins who had a top three U.K. single in "Echo Beach" in 1980.

"That whole thing was almost a fluke", says Gerry Young who first worked that

project as a rep from Polygram and now manages and records the Muffins reincarnation as M + M for his own label Current Records. "Today that kind of move is unnecessary and the world takes Canada seriously enough to look harder at what we have. Walk an unsigned Canadian project into a U.S. company and they'll ask why you can't get anything going in your hometown. It's a valid point."

Young and others, like Honeymoon Suite's manager Steve Prendergast who has done wonders with his band in the U.S., have essentially created international situations using Toronto as a springboard. Investments are a fraction of comparable launch prices in the U.S. and a little smarts can create an exciting profile, especially with the right video exposure.

"Last year when we were hot with "New Girl Now" on the charts (and *Miami Vice*), we toured as much as we could and we actually made money in situations with arena sized acts that some bands would have to pay for," says Prendergast's former partner Jeff Rogers. "We didn't need tour support from Warner Brothers and this allowed them to work the record harder. I think our success in Canada encouraged the U.S. company to get behind us, especially on the new album *The Big Prize*."

Look, I think I can get you the Uriah Heep reunion tour. What you have to do is call your label and get a certified cheque for \$10,000 payable to cash... what do you mean "You can't raise that kind of money?... You didn't expect to make any money on the road did you?... C'mon wake up and smell the bacon burning Bunky?... These are the '80s... Nobody rides for free.

Money will rear its ugly head quicker than you can say, "Hey this can't be my bar tab!" Often times a management company has to bring in its own money to support either radio, road, studio or video costs.

It was a lack of money that hurt Gowan in the U.S. last summer. When CBS International execs were unimpressed after seeing Gowan's Toronto concert, it was a signal that the label would prioritize its own signings rather than a foreign project for which their asses were not on the line. This is a chronic problem in the U.S., one that could cause real talents to simply bypass Canada entirely. But the consensus opinion says that it's better to be playing the game than skirting the left field fence.

Ray Danniels of SRO had the option of investing his own money into promotion of the Gowan record or watch it die. Some, like Vancouver super mentor Bruce Allen, would have taken the shot. Danniels, wealthy after years with Rush and the flash in the pan Bob & Doug McKenzie, merely shrugged off the defeat and let the record go. Ditto for Platinum Blonde's management at TBA in Toronto who couldn't get Epic excited

BEYOND THE BASICS



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about our teen dreams.

Fantastic sales in Canada didn't impress the U.S. and *Alien Shores* died on the vine, selling about 40,000 copies Stateside. Embarrassing. That's nothing compared to The Spoons whose records weren't even released in the U.S. after Ready Records invested large dollars in producer Nile Rodgers. It is said the setback was fatal for Ready Records and the band which is now limping along without a deal.

But what if you do get an offer from a major label that wants to guarantee a U.S. release? What do you look for?

First you have to examine the overall picture. If you're talking to a label that has some weight in Canada but has had no success in the U.S. or elsewhere with what you thought were strong acts, think of just signing for Canada only leaving you free to negotiate in other territories. This works better when you have either a production deal or are working through a small independent. For Bruce Cockburn at True North, international success has come through a variety of foreign licenses. Yet Young is doubtful that Parachute Club will return to the U.S. on RCA because of the poor showing generated by the Juno-winning band last time around. Siberry, as mentioned, is walking on air.

If you have to sign that world deal, look at the trade-offs. Are you giving up

your publishing to make a fast buck? "These days it's almost impossible to come away from a signing with your publishing intact," adds Young. If you have to make sacrifices, are you going to get the kind of investment to give you or your act a world class record? Has anybody at your label's international department contacted you? Will they take your calls?

"It is no longer possible to go into the studio and get a world class sound for less than \$100,000 claims Young who, at this writing was negotiating with John Oates as producer for the forthcoming Parachute Club album. "Just as an example, Oates is asking for \$40,000 plus an engineer plus four points in royalties. Not only can't I afford that, this guy hasn't done anything outside his own group. I haven't even included studio costs."

Of course, all this money is recoupable on the part of either Current Records or RCA. Ditto for most video expenses which come in at about \$30,000 per clip in Canada and over \$50,000 in the U.S. The video market is so glutted these days however, industry opinion is shifting slowly to the side of tour support if indeed a label is willing to invest over investments in second and third clips.

Of course all this is academic if you don't get some kind of airplay, if you can't even put together a freebie showcase in New York or a decent article

in a major daily. You're not going to have to worry about H-1 or H-2 visas if you're number 3538 on the chart. You really only get one shot. It had better be your best.

For that you need people around you who have steel in their balls. Guys who aren't scared to throw \$10,000 into contingency situations. Joe Owens, who manages Triumph is despised by many people in the business for precisely the same reasons that have kept the band alive. When a Triumph album is released in the U.S., Owens practically moves in the company president's office to keep the pressure on.

A manager can't be scared to walk up to total strangers in convention lobbies and fill their ear with hype. You need a band who enjoy playing Cleveland in February. Bryan Adams opened about 5,000 shows in the U.S. before anybody remembered his name.

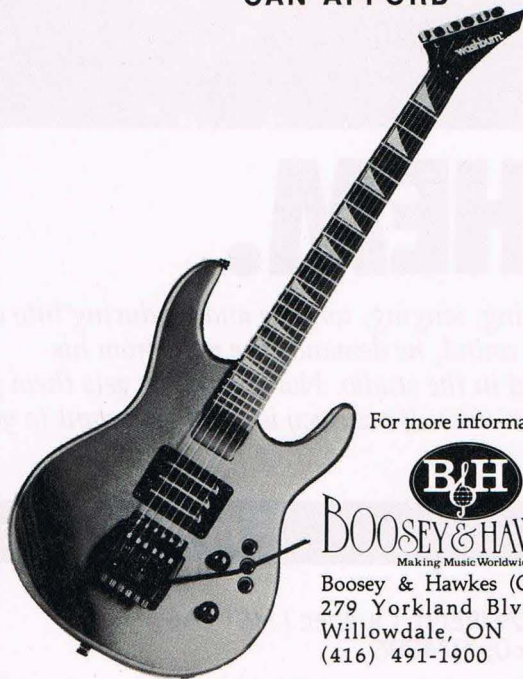
The point kid, is that we can't beat a dead horse anymore. The bullet dropped off the single weeks ago. Nobody at the agency is taking our calls. There's a few club dates on hold in the northeast but I'm not sure it's such a good idea. The boys in A&R are thinking about picking up the option on the second album. Why don't you go home and work on some new tunes. Leave this one alone.

We don't have to tell you what happens to quitters. □

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