

Hot Acts Work Few Club Dates

Many Disco Operators Are Swearing Off Live Talent

NEW YORK—While most disco owners will admit that live performances by name recording artists are the best way to draw attention to their clubs and go one up on the competition, many club owners are having an increasingly difficult time bringing in profitable shows.

What club owners are finding out is that many of the reasonably priced disco acts have no consumer identification and are therefore poor concert draws. And the disco acts that have strong live performance followings are either too expensive or unwilling to play clubs.

Many club owners like Winston Sanders, who operates the Ruling Class 1 in Jamaica, N.Y., and the Ruling Class 2 in Mt. Vernon, N.Y., have just about sworn off live entertainment.

"Groups that people want to see, like Chic, don't want to play clubs and I'm annoyed by that," Sanders complains. "These acts seem to forget that their records started out in discos and they owe a lot to the people who come into clubs."

To help attract people to his clubs without live shows, Sanders has resorted to a variety of special promotions such as pajama parties, kiddie discos, bathing suit parties, celebrity parties and performances by popular local DJs.

Leonard Stevens, who runs Philadelphia's successful Library disco, books talent into his club on a very selective basis. "We have no set talent policy. We bring in acts which we feel are reasonably priced and will appeal to our regular clientele."

Stevens augments his clubs with

special promotions too, such as Sadie Hawkins nights and regular fashion shows.

One reason why many of the more popular disco acts do not play discos is that many labels openly discourage it. Some label executives feel that playing in discos does not help acts build large followings. Most label execs would rather their disco acts play in larger concert halls.

Many artists are also opposed to playing in discos because they feel the club atmosphere offers too many distractions for the audience. As Atlantic artist Cerrone puts it: "When I perform I don't want people talking, or drinking or dancing. I want people to look at Cerrone."

Norby Walters, who is booking most of the major disco attractions currently working clubs, disagrees with the French drummer's logic. "When an act is onstage at a disco it is in concert, just as it is in a concert hall, the only difference is that many of the people are standing," says Walters.

Walters sees no difference between today's discos and the major nightclubs of yesterday. "And anyone who suggests that an act should not play night clubs doesn't know what he is talking about," Walters declares.

Walters feels it is mandatory for new acts to play clubs. "An artist must grow on the road in small clubs before he can go into a large concert hall and deal with an audience of that size," opines Walters.

Of course most club owners are not too keen on having their clubs used as classrooms, and their paying

customers used as learning aids for young performers. In fact many owners see no point in booking an act that cannot perform with the level of professionalism of their records.

Acts that perform with the professionalism of their records are extremely rare in disco since in many cases the group that comes into the club is not the group that plays on the record.

Some acts, in an effort to get closer to their recorded sound, have tried coming into clubs and singing over their prerecorded instrumental tracks. But critics, club owners, fans and even Walters agree that in most cases this doesn't work. "It works for Grace Jones because she's so theatrical the music is secondary," Walters states, "but otherwise I think it's a mistake for an act to try it."

Walters says his agency tries hard to make an act sound as good on the road as it does on record. "We want a live show to convey the same feeling the record does," Walters stresses, "We try to include the people who appear on the record whenever possible and any unique voice that is heard on the record must go on the road with the act."

Walters does admit that in some cases he has been unable to turn a recorded sound into a salable live act.

Despite the problems, Walters says the business of booking acts into discos is better than ever. In fact Walters says he is now feeling the heat of competition from the giant talent agencies. "The battle is on be-

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Disco Mix

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Whenever listening to a 12-inch record I always check the flip side to see if another song is listed, instead of the usual shorter version of the first side.

Jim Grady's new release on Chanterelle Disco Records, distributed by Mushroom, is "Touch Dancing."

Brass, drum and a cantina band sound climax the record. Surprisingly the flip side which

one might think to be a sleeper is actually the side which should garner the most play.

Titled "I Got What I Came For," the momentum of this 5:55-minute disk is driving, intense and spotlighted with an infectious melody line.

Background female voices add to the strength of the piano, keyboard and hand-clapping backbeat that interweave with the voice. Several crescendos are reached to add

further dimension to this record which is delightful and full of surprises.

The mix by Rick Gianatos maintains a high energy level which does not stop till the last beat of the record.

Westend Records' new 12 inch 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ r.p.m. by Taana Gardner has had a few test pressing previewed at selected discotheques. Reaction has been quite positive to this production by Kenton Nix titled, "Work That Baby."

Larry Levan, DJ at the Paradise Garage Disco, has effectively used high pitched voices, alternating with a whispering and sensuous vocal that combine well with the synthesizer, bongos and percussion rhythm tracks.

This certainly is a tremendous followup to the

label's already hit-bound "Everybody Get Dancing" and should do as well on the charts.

Roadshow Records has finally come across with a 12-inch 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ r.p.m. which should give this new disco company the attention it deserves. The release is "Bang A Gong" from the album "Witch Queen."

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tween me and the big guys," Walters declares.

To club owners who are reluctant to book acts Walters advises, "When you bring a name act into your club you bring the aura of stardom into your club, and that makes you head and shoulders over your competition."

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