



RICK JAMES



EVELYN KING



SAL MICHAELS



NORBY WALTERS



JERRY ADE



GAP BAND



ZAPP



DAZZ BAND



KOOL & THE GANG

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# NWAA

NORBY WALTERS ASSOCIATES

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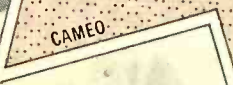
KLIQUE



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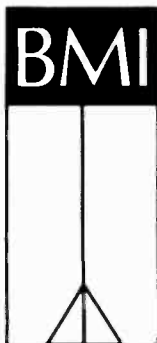
It takes a special partnership to make music happen.

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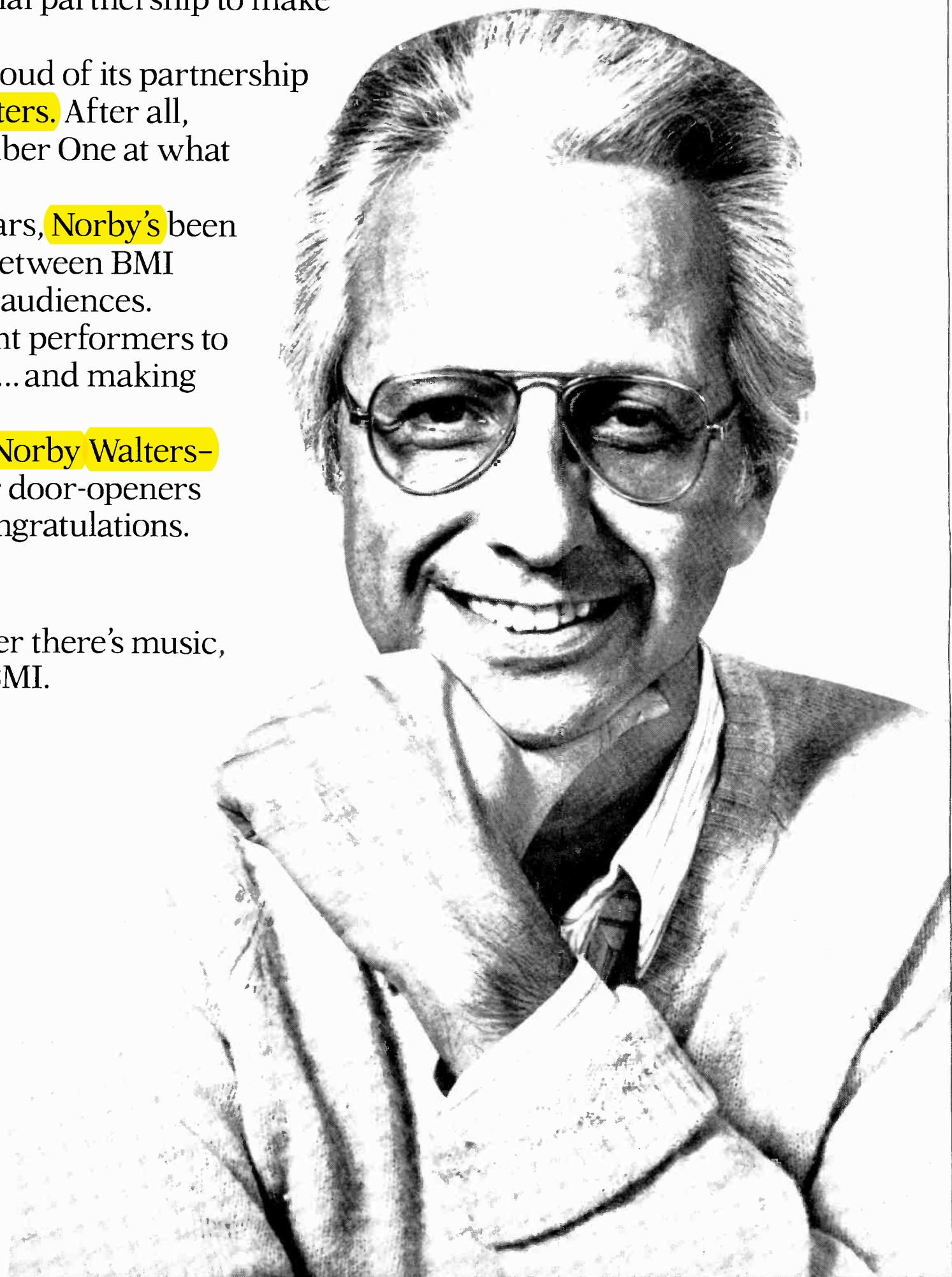
For fifteen years, **Norby's** been opening doors between BMI artists and their audiences. Bringing the right performers to the right people... and making the sparks fly.

From BMI to **Norby Walters-****and** all the other door-openers everywhere—congratulations.

And thanks.



Wherever there's music,  
there's BMI.





# WITH RARE BLEND OF HEART, SOUL AND SENSE— NOBODY BOOKS IT BETTER THAN NORBY WALTERS

By NELSON GEORGE

THERE ARE FEW FIGURES IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY who draw more immediate and strong responses at the mention of his name than **Norby Walters**. Sometimes the response is overwhelmingly positive as in "Norby did a hell of a job for me, man. I have no complaints." But **Norby** also draws extreme criticism from some about his programming policies and his personality.

**Norby** is hardly your shy retiring executive. He shakes hands and slaps back with the best of them. But that is just part of a style of salesmanship he learned as a young boy. His Jewish immigrant father was an army champion lightweight fighter turned concessionaire (with freak shows, animal shows and bottle games in Coney Island). From the age of eight through his early teenage years, **Norby** worked the carnivals ("My friends were home with marbles and baseball tickets and I was working girlie shows"). His father later entered the club field, where **Norby** further honed his entertainment skills.

**Norby's** rise to pre-eminence as black music's leading booking agent is a testament to his salesmanship and his business sense. In the mid-'70s he saw an opening in the black music field and filled it with a vengeance. Rick James, Luther Vandross, the Whispers, Shalamar, the Commodores, Midnight Star, the Gap Band, Kool & the Gang, Chaka Khan, are just a few of the major figures in the contemporary black music scene who have chosen **Norby Walters Associates** as their booking agent. It says a lot about **Norby** that this is so. It's been 15 years of selling, deal making and growth for **Norby Walters Associates** and, according to its founder, it has only just begun.

Nelson George: Do you see what you're doing now relating back to your childhood?

**Norby Walters**: Oh yes. How it all kind of hooked in was when I went to Brooklyn College. When I graduated I was a very serious jazz buff. While I was still in school I talked my father into bringing jazz into his club which was called Soldier Meyers. That was my father's fighting name. He always kept that name because he was kind of a celebrity all throughout Brooklyn, because there weren't too many Jews who were fighters and with his Coney Island background he was a great character. I talked him into putting jazz music into the club in 1949 and we started playing all the legendary people—Thelonius Monk, Miles Davis, Stan Getz, Lester Young, and just about everyone else.

NG: I remember after the Miles Davis tribute you were talking to Roy Haynes.

NW: Well, I was talking to Roy Haynes and then I later spoke to Miles Davis. Miles leaned over and we hugged each other. We hadn't seen each other in years. Then he leaned over to his wife, Cicely Tyson, and in his inimitable raspy voice said, "This is **Norby Walters**, whose father's club I played in with my very first band under my own name." That was the first time Miles Davis had a band and Roy Haynes was in that band and so it was kind of something to look back on. He asked about my father and I told him that the Soldier had passed about six years ago.

NG: Did your father like jazz?

NW: My father didn't know what it was at first, though he grew to be a great lover of jazz. He became pals with Miles and Charlie Parker and he became very friendly with Sarah Vaughan and Billy Eckstine. Symphony Sid was one of his

**Norby Walters**, left, greets George Clinton, Jerry Ade, Archie Ivy, vice president of Clinton Productions, and Nene Montez, director of business affairs, Clinton Productions



Celebrating at **Norby Walters Associates'** 15th anniversary party at the Red Parrot in New York are, from left vice president and partner Sal Michaels, Gaynor's manager Linwood Simon, Gloria Gaynor, vice president and partner Jerry Ade, producer Joel Diamond and **Norby Walters**



**Norby Walters** and Marvin Gaye

close pals who had a jazz program on WJZ in New York. Soldier became a part of the jazz world from 1949 to 1954.

NG: How did the neighbors feel about bringing blacks into the area through the club?

NW: Even when I was a young man, our area, Brownsville, was changing from a poor Jewish neighborhood to a poorer black neighborhood. It wasn't getting any better. I grew up in a world where everyone was judged for themselves. There were no pretentious people. If you had the talent, that was all that counted. I grew up in Brownsville surrounded by Jewish kids and black kids. It did not feel hostile, it felt comfortable. So, the black presence for me in my own neighborhood was kind of a comfortable presence. By bringing jazz into my father's club, the club became very integrated and it didn't create any ruckus in the neighborhood, because the neighbor-

### RICK JAMES

*"Norby is like a father; he's like a brother. He cares. He's one of the most sensitive men I've ever met in the music industry. It's hard to say what I feel about him without sounding corny."*

*"In this business, you meet a lot of people who are just in it for the money. When you meet someone who cares, who does the little things . . . He doesn't do it because I'm Rick James, he does it because he cares. He's special, and he's the greatest agent of all time."*

*"I'm probably Norby's biggest act, but even when I wasn't, he stood behind me. He did things he didn't have to do. My mother loves him, and she's a very good judge of character. He's Uncle Norby. When I'm down, he picks me up, and because of him I've become a stronger person."*

*"I love him, and that's where that's at."*



hood was a changing neighborhood.

So, I was dealing with a black presence for most of my life. That doesn't mean that there weren't any strange characters around, both black and Jews, but for the most part it was a comfortable existence, not endangered in the sense we now know ghettos to be. It was a different feeling going on 35 years ago. Everybody was kind of cool with each other.

NG: What then?

NW: I bought the club from my father in 1952 and renamed the club to **Norby** and **Walters** Bel Aire. Not that **Norby Walters** was my real name, because it wasn't. Nor was my father's name **Walters**.

NG: Where did you get **Norby Walters**?

NW: That's a funny story. Our real name was Meyer and so when my brother and I opened the club we called it **Norby** and **Walters** Bel Aire. But on opening night when they threw on the search light, there was not an "&" between the **Norby** and **Walters**, so it said **NORBY WALTERS BEL AIRE**. When people came through the door I would say, I'm **Norby** and this is my brother Walter. But after about four or five people I became **Norby Walters**.

My brother collapsed and stopped speaking to me because I became **Norby Walters**. To this day he says if it wasn't for him I would be **Norby** Nobody. It's a wild story but that's how I became **Norby Walters**. I was **Norby** Meyer legally, but **Norby Walters** professionally. My kids and wife were confused, my father said "Why did you change your name? It was good enough for me." I said, "But if you remember when you came here your name was Chakanowicz. That was your name and you changed it because no one could spell it." He said, "Oh, I forgot." He had changed his name over 60 years ago and he forgot. So I refer to myself as **Norby Walters**, the grandson of Meyer Chakanowicz from Lumza, Poland who was another great businessman, but that's another story.

NG: Didn't you also open a Latin club?

NW: In addition to being a jazz buff I was into Latin music myself. Latin and jazz were crossing and you had the Afro-Latin type of sound. It was a mixture of many of the things I was into. It wasn't making any money with jazz, so I brought the Latin bands in like Tito Puente, Tito Rodriguez, Joe Cuba, Ray Barretto.

In 1959 or 1960 I left Brooklyn and went to Forest Hills and opened a club called the Flamboyant, which was a very elegant club and quite different from my Brooklyn club which was definitely quite funky. I started bringing in different types of comedy people, not major names at the time but interesting names like David Frye, B.S. Pulley, and many others.

NG: Mort Sahl . . . Lenny Bruce

NW: No, Mort never worked for me. Lenny was a fantastic talent. I had enough problems just dealing with B.S. Pulley, who was just as rough as Lenny but knew when not to be so rough.

So finally I left. I went to the 1964 World's Fair and opened up a show called the **Norby Walters** Arabian Nights and they closed us down on opening night. We did advertising. We had incredible crowds. We had tremendous publicity. But the fair wouldn't let us open, they said it was a lewd/nude show."

NG: What was it?

NW: Just belly-dancers. We had the "O.K." to go with it, but security didn't let anyone in. I took about a \$150,000 bath. Then I sold the Flamboyant and went to the city to open the **Norby Walters** club in the old Hotel 14, next door to the Copa on E. 60th St. I was there about four years from 1964 to 1968 and we had a Vegas-lounge type of operation with real-

(Continued on page NW-4)

**Norby Walters** and Miles Davis



From left: Sal Michaels, **Norby Walters**, Kashif and Jerry Ade

**Norby Walters**, Richard Walters and Don Kirshner

15th Anniversary!

NORBY WALTERS ASSOCIATES



'Attitudes Have Changed'

# JERRY ADE: BUILDING A STRONG BLACK MUSIC NETWORK ACROSS AMERICA

PARTNER JERRY ADE CAME TO THE NORBY WALTERS firm 11 years ago in 1972 from the Banner Talent Agency. Although he (and most of the Walters hierarchy) is white, he has always seen the firm's strength as working closely with black promoters and black business. And, having established a position of strength within the black community, going one step further and bringing the music back into the white community.

"We helped establish on a national level what no other agency had done: a circuit of black artists, venues, and promoters across America," says Ade.

"The white rock 'n' roll kids are becoming aware of black

From left: Jerry Ade; Al Teller, senior vice president, general manager, Columbia Records; Jimmy Cliff; Norby Walters; Ray Anderson, vice president, promotion, Columbia Records; and Danny Simms



music," he continues. "And the resurgence that happened to r&b in the disco era is happening again. Radio is accepting black music. White rockers are emulating black music. Major black acts are moving—not into white venues, but into accepted venues. When the Greek Theatre and the Westbury Music Fair are playing black music and finding it profitable, it shows that we are being taken seriously."

Ade says that by their having increased the level of sophistication and professionalism within this "circuit" of black promoters, that very network is able to move its performers to the upper strata of an increasingly color-blind music business.

"Now people's attitudes have changed, and we have major headliners taking major money out of every major city in America."

## DUKE FAKIR, the Four Tops

"I've been working with him for about 10 years, and I say he's one of the best agents I know of. And I've been in this business 30 years and worked with a lot of agents. I always swore the Four Tops would never sign with an agency exclusively, but he convinced us that they would just do more for us than anyone else could."

"Norby is an artist himself, as far as I'm concerned. He's as entertaining and charismatic a person as you'll ever meet. And a hard worker—that agency is the only one I know of that's open every night till 9 o'clock, or whatever it takes to get the job done. They even give out their home phone numbers!"

"I would compare Norby to the one agent I had thought no one would ever be comparable to, and that's Joe Glaser, who managed Satchmo. He was always there for his artists, always went to bat for them. And I thought no one would ever be like that again, but Norby comes up to that man."

Jerry Ade, Sylvia Robinson of Sugar Hill Records, and Norby Walters



Partner and vice president Jerry Ade, Pegeen Ade, Irene and Norby Walters

NORBY WALTERS ASSOCIATES

15th Anniversary!

## Nobody Books It Better

• Continued from page NW-3

ly fast and furious Louie Prima/Keely Smith type of groups. Good music. Very entertainment oriented. What you normally expect to see in Vegas lounges.

NG: You got the spillover from the Copa?

NW: Sure, many people. Hip people. New York people. Show people would come to our club, catch the show at the Copa and come back to our club. Or come to our club, go to the Copa, back to our club, etc. We had a groove going. The Copa was still a big night club but didn't have a personal kind of atmosphere. At my club I acted as host and had a gift for remembering people's faces and names, especially the stars.

NG: Any special anecdotes about that time?

NW: Well, it wasn't a funny business, the club business is not a funny business. A good club has a relaxed groove and is enjoyable for the public. For the owner, however, it was like sitting on a time bomb. Because when people are drinking there is always the possibility that something may flair up. As an operator you're thinking about what the problems of the evening might be and trying to anticipate those problems.

It was the kind of place that all the leading stars came into: Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Diana Ross & the Supremes, Milton Berle, Steve Lawrence and Eydie Gorme, Sammy Davis. It was a place performers came to hang out because it had the right atmosphere. But finally, after being in the club business close to 20 years, I got tired of it.

NG: Next move?

NW: I was independently wealthy (laughter). I was comfortable and I had enough to live the rest of my life, provided it was done in three weeks. . . That's an old joke. A friend of mine, who was a buyer for the Concord Hotel upstate, needed a group for the hotel for the summer and called upon me to help him find a group. He suggested I take a commission. I thought it was a nice idea.

When I realized the extent of my knowledge of the business, and all the clubowners I knew, and all the different people I knew, I thought I might take a chance and become an agent and see what it would lead to.

So I started booking lounge bands, which were some of the stuff I was playing in my own club at the time. I knew that just because I knew quite a few stars, didn't mean they would let me book them. So I just booked lounge bands into all the different clubs in the New York metropolitan area and later the tri-state area.

After a few years I was booking on a national level and had about eight or ten agents working for me booking lounge groups across the country. Coming from an operators point of view, with a good understanding after 20 years of experience of what would sell in a club and what wouldn't, I was able to represent the bands properly and at the same time

give the operator fair value for his money.

NG: It had to be boring though.

NW: It was a way of making a living and a steppingstone. I felt that in order for me to become what I had intended to become, which was an agent of the people I knew and respected, it couldn't happen immediately. Those people were being represented by major agencies and I was a mature man but a young agent. Therefore, they didn't intend to have an amateur representing their multimillion dollar business. So, my attitude was, "Just get your act together and learn how to be an agent." I think most people respected that I was a successful businessman, but they wanted me to go out and learn what an agent is.

Those first five years from 1968 to 1973 were my training ground in becoming an agent, musically boring, but certainly interesting from an educational point of view.

NG: When did you leap into black music?

NW: Many of my lounge groups were black and I was the only one in the country booking black acts into lounges. That gave me a special kind of place in the business, in that the only people who were booking black lounge groups were small black agents who were booking a Chitlin type of circuit, the very low economic black bars. I was taking black lounge groups into Holiday Inns and Marriotts, and into places they had never played before. These groups were not playing their own music, they were playing cover music, so there was nothing interesting happening musically. Still, they had to be good strong entertaining groups. Also, I didn't sell for the sake of selling a black group. Either they cut it or they didn't.

NG: Disco hadn't affected you yet.

NW: 1973 was when disco started to rear its head. The lounges were just starting to turn to disco at that point. A producer who I knew recommended a girl singer to be in one of my groups and I auditioned her. She was a brilliant singer and I put her in one of my lounge groups. Her name was Gloria Gaynor. About six months later she recorded a song called "Never Can Say Goodbye," which was a smash record. I found myself being able to sell a record attraction and sold Gloria around the country and then around the world. I found that it was easier to sell an act for \$2,000 or \$3,000 a night, than to sell a band for \$1,500 a week, because I had to sell the band and stand behind it. In Gloria Gaynor's case, what I found was I was selling the record and the promoter really didn't know whether Gloria would be good or bad. He was only interested that the people would come see an artist who had a hit record so I wasn't responsible any longer and I found that was a pretty good place to be.

At that very same moment, another girl who was close to us, Carol Douglas, made another record called "Doctor's Orders" and that record started climbing the charts also. So we wound up having two acts in top 10, not in r&b, but in nation-

al top 10. Here I was a lounge booker and all of a sudden lucky to have two record acts. This presented an incredible opportunity for me.

At that point I made a very quick assessment of who was making money. I made the analysis that no one was paying very much attention to black music in general and that because of my own background and musical preference there was a need right at that moment for an agent who could sell black music to the world. I realized this would be a moment of opportunity for me, so I seized it and went on ahead.

NG: Between 1974 and 1977, how much did you grow?

NW: Between 1974 and 1977, we must have represented approximately 20 artists. At that time they were all middle line attractions, acts that had one major record and just weren't happening again at that moment.

NG: Just for the record, do you consider yourself the 'Godfather' of the disco act?

NW: (Laughter) I saw at that moment the phenomenon of disco being a continuing desire upon the part of the public to

(Continued on page NW-6)

## BOB SUMMER, President, RCA Records

"There are few people in the music industry with the know-how and the persuasiveness of Norby Walters. Years of experience in the marketing of talent have put him at the forefront of the concert promotion business. We extend our best wishes to this important agency and to its founder, Norby Walters."

## BUNNIE RANSOM, Manager, Cameo & S.O.S.

"Norby Walters is a guy who, in my opinion, can sell an ice box to the Sears Coldspot dealer. And with these descriptive words, it is no wonder that the Walters agency has a track record proving to the industry its capabilities. Cameo and the S.O.S. Band, two of Norby Walters' clients, are pleased to congratulate Norby on his 15th anniversary. We simply say, Norby, you got style and you're still on the rise."

## MICHAEL ROSENBERG, Producer, Budweiser Superfest Concert Series

"Working with Norby Walters and Jerry Ade is a pleasure by every standard in the business as their follow through is total and completely professional. Throughout our four years of national tours, their agency has been paramount in whatever success we've achieved. We congratulate them on their 15th anniversary."





RICHARD WALTERS



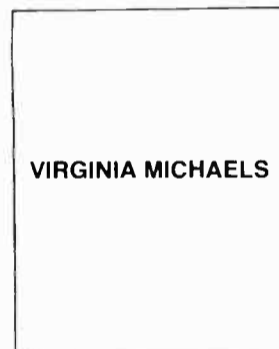
ROSE COOLEY



KARI OLSON



MARK SIEGEL



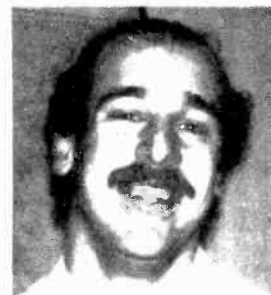
VIRGINIA MICHAELS



JOHN HENDERSON



MARIA POWELL



NICK SEWITCH



DEBBIE ALTER

**Congratulations  
Norby, Jerry  
& Sal...on  
your 15th  
Anniversary...  
It's Great  
working  
with you**

*The Staff at  
Norby Walters  
Associates*



JEFF FRASCO



CARA LEWIS



ELAYNE HIGHTOWER



GREGG FOSTER



IRENE WALTERS



LEON SAUNDERS



BRUCE NICOLS



LORI LEVIN



BARRY YEARWOOD



STEVE WALTERS

NW-6

THANKS **NORBY,**

FOR TAKING CARE OF

SOME OF OUR MOST

PRECIOUS RESOURCES:

RICK JAMES

MARY JANE GIRLS

COMMODORES

DAZZ BAND

STONE CITY BAND



© 1983 MOTOWN RECORD CORPORATION



Norby with Bobby Womack and Don Kirshner

## Nobody Books It Better

• Continued from page NW-4

dance. Some time after World War II, dancing had gotten out of fashion and everyone was into the small jazz groups. Rock'n'roll evolved into a listening medium. People were listening to music rather than dancing to music. Finally, in 1973, disco exploded 20 or 25 years of pentup energy. People wanted to come out and dance again. It had an unbelievable effect on people.

NG: Then you started booking acts into the discos.

NW: Yes, then we started bringing acts like Gloria Gaynor into the clubs. We created the track syndrome, which meant the artist would go with the very record tracks they had recorded on and sing live over those tracks. We were able to take an artist with only a road manager and a tape machine and fly around the country to many places that might not be able to hire a full band.

NG: Maybe even two or three places in a night.

NW: Yes, we would create a career for an artist working live. People who previously had only been able to work with a live band or come with charts and have local musicians play their charts, now could play anywhere. We created this circuit of

BERT PADELL, Business Manager, Partner; Padell, Nadell, Fine & Weinberger

"He makes things happen. On any group I've ever represented, if he said it was going to happen, it happened. From Rick James to Luther Vandross. He's one of the tops in the business."

clubs that was willing to play the disco attractions during those early years. We also developed a number of artists with their regular bands who were still working the regular full concert world. But we were still working and moving straight ahead and signing regular r&b groups such as Ecstasy, Passion & Pain, who were also disco, or BT Express.

NG: Didn't you also come up with the concept of touring disco groups, groups that had not sung on the actual recording?

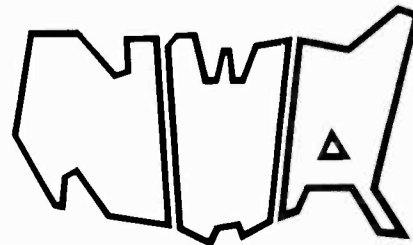
NW: That was another concept which we felt was a way to bring music by producers who produced a hit record with a unique sound, and we would work with the band that would be reproducing the concept that the producer had laid down. So basically, we took these bands out and gave the public an opportunity to hear the music being played live, that the composer/producer had developed on record.

There were many who disagreed with that. They felt that was not fair to the public. I said that if an orchestra or symphony orchestra plays the works of a composer it is only an interpretation of that composer's composition. So I didn't see anything wrong with that. Secondly, I felt that most stars, whether it is Kenny Rogers or Stevie Wonder, go into the studio and maybe have 30 or 40 different musicians in dubbing or over dubbing. When they finally go out on the road, none of the players that were in that studio will be out on the road with them anyhow, and they just hire a band to go out on the road. Basically it's the same thing, except for the lead voice

(Continued on page NW-8)

GUENTER HENSLER, President and Chief Executive Officer, PolyGram Records

"Norby Walters has made his mark on our industry and has become a friend to so many of us, because of his combination of experience, intelligence, and most of all, that remarkable sense of humor."





# To The Men Who Think They Can

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## **NORBY, SAL & JERRY**

*If you think you are beaten, you are.  
If you think you dare not, you don't.  
If you'd like to win, but think you can't,  
It's almost a cinch you won't.  
If you think you'll lose, you're lost.  
For out in the world we find  
Success begins with a fellow's will.  
It's all in the state of mind.  
If you think you're outclassed, you are  
You've got to think high to rise.  
You've got to be sure of yourself before  
You can ever win a prize.  
Life's battles don't always go  
To the stronger or faster men.  
But sooner or later, the men who win  
Are the men who think they can.*

**WE ARE VERY PROUD OF YOU  
HAPPY 15th**

From Your Friends in Baltimore,  
Dick, Dennis, Jeff, Don & Hank  
and the family at  
**AMERICA AMUSEMENT**

Special tribute to "your Jeff," who brought it together.

# SAL MICHAELS: DIRECTING AMERICAN R&B TO INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCES

PARTNER SAL MICHAELS JOINED NORBY WALTERS in 1975, having already honed his skills in the difficult field of developing lounge acts. In his tenure at the Walters agency, he feels his major contribution has been directing American r&b acts to an international audience.

"We take our artists to parts of the world where no other agency takes their artists," says Michaels. "Acceptance wasn't easy at the beginning, and it took a lot of hard work. I personally filled up four passports in a year."

Michaels remembers tours where his presence was required in Rome, Paris and London—all in a single day. But he doesn't mind, he says, because "when you care about what you're doing, it's easy to work hard."

The secret of the agency's success, thinks Michaels, is very simply a combination of creativity, hard work and good business sense. "You can't always have a hit record," he

*AL FEILICH, Vice President of Information and Research, BMI; President, Music & Performing Arts Lodge of the B'nai Brith*

*"Norby is one of the vice presidents of the Music and Performing Arts Lodge of B'nai Brith. As an active member of the Lodge, he has shown a great deal of his human traits in trying to assist those who are in greater need than many of us. He's contributed his time and effort in helping people who need assistance."*

*"He's a great believer in human rights. He hates bigotry and racial prejudice. And he does all this very quietly. It's just a pleasure having him on your team."*

says. "You have to make sure you can keep your artists working, with or without a hit. The trick is to put food on their table regardless."

In order to accomplish that, Michaels turns his acts into stars overseas, getting them to perform in places where American stars are so rare and well-appreciated that a show will sell out whether there is current hit product or not.

"You have to remember also that these artists, to the Europeans, are foreigners. So we set up interviews, television shows, radio—anything to make our people stars overseas. While everyone else was sleeping, we were moving forward."

As far as further forward movement, Michaels is looking intently at the video music revolution, considering it an exciting new vehicle to make their artists visible and to enhance their images.

"I love this. I love to make our artists feel proud of who they are, and who we are."



Partner and vice president Sal Michaels and Norby Walters



Sal Michaels; Don Dempsey, senior vice president and general manager, Epic/Portrait/Associated labels; Jerry Ade; Tony Martel, vice president and general manager, CBS Associated labels; Norby Walters



Sal Michaels, Norby Walters, Rodney Dangerfield and Jerry Ade

NORBY WALTERS ASSOCIATES

15th Anniversary!

## Gabe Vigorito

and

# De-Lite

RECORDS

## congratulate

# NORBY WALTERS ASSOCIATES

## on their 15th Anniversary



To One  
Who Dazzles

Norby Walters



Congratulations  
The Dazz Band



# Nobody Books It Better

Continued from page NW-6

who is the star himself. I felt that it was a legitimate piece of entertainment that was being brought to the public on behalf of the producer, just like any other entertainment package. NG: That helped make your reputation.

NW: In 1973, we started moving as hard as when I had the lounge business for the previous five years. I homed in on the black record business world, because I realized two things: I had a definite affinity and no competition. Up to 1977 we were heavy into the disco world, but were also planting our feet into the straight r&b world.

NG: It seems like from 1978 on you started getting superstars.

NW: That was the turning point, because at that time we signed Marvin Gaye, who was our first star of such a magnitude. Marvin was already a legendary character. Having signed Marvin and taking him on a 24-city tour including Hawaii and Japan, where he never missed a date, many different artists were now looking at us differently. They realized that if we could take Marvin Gaye and tour him in 24 cities, that we had the capability to represent anyone.

In 1978, Gloria Gaynor made another smash hit, "I Will Survive," which was a worldwide smash hit. We also got

From left: Harold Childs, PolyGram; **Norby Walters**; Mel Ilberman, executive vice president, PolyGram; Robert "Kool" Bell; Guenter Hensler, president, PolyGram; Jerome Gasper, PolyGram.



Peaches & Herb and were definitely off and running. In 1979 we signed Kool & the Gang, who had just made, "Ladies Night," and their then-manager Buzzy Willis had the confidence that we would be the agency who could give his act street sensitivity. In 1980 we signed the Gap Band, which was making its great move.

NG: You've had great success signing acts who were about to make their big move.

NW: My own love of music and my own love of black music, has given me what are called ears. I have been able to listen to music early and feel whether or not a particular artist, who may not have been super strong before this, would now have a record which I thought was going to be a smash. I had a streak of luck because at that time we signed in a row, Shalamar, the Whispers, who had those smash hits in 1979. We did the first Solar tour with Shalamar, Whispers, Lakeside and Dynasty and believe we were instrumental in bringing Solar to the front with that 72 city tour.

NG: You got Rick James in 1981?

NW: In 1981 we signed Rick James and the Commodores and Luther Vandross, so things were really flying. In 1982 the O'Jays came aboard and Bobby Womack and lots of wonderful groups. We were now in full swing. From 1980 to

**BRUCE LUNDVALL, President, Elektra Records**

"**Norby Walters** is one of the real professionals in our business. He is one of the most energetic and dedicated men I've had the pleasure of working with over the years."

**REV. AL SHARPTON, President, National Youth Movement, Inc.**

"I think **Norby** is symbolic of the man who helps bring others toward their dream. He has represented for black artists a bridge over the uncertain waters of show business. He guides them to the other shore of commercial success. He's the closest thing to a John Brown we have today.

"What I admire about him is that he has a personal commitment as well as business acumen. Yet it does not compromise his social compassion."



Rick James and Jerry Ade

1983 everyone we had signed seems to have gone No. 1: the Four Tops, who made a huge comeback, Evelyn King, a fabulous young lady, Cheryl Lynn, Cameo, Midnight Star, New Edition, the 1983 answer to the Jacksons, One-Way, Skyy, Grand Master Flash, George Clinton, the wild man of the Funkadelics, Zapp, and our latest signing, the great Chaka Khan. NG: How do you feel about the criticism of this white booking agent with all of these black acts?

NW: I've heard a lot of criticism from people who don't know any better. I think I'm extremely qualified to sell entertainment. I've been involved with selling entertainment since I was eight years old. That makes it 43 years. I've sold every type of show, from girlie shows to bellydancers, to comics to Latin bands, from every phase of contemporary music, but most importantly my true roots have gone back over some 30 years. In black music I gave Thelonious Monk one of his earliest chances. Miles Davis had his first band in my club

(Continued on page NW-12)



15th Anniversary!

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**With love and respect,**  
**RICK JAMES**  
**THE MARY JANE GIRLS**  
**THE STONE CITY BAND**



• Continued from page NW-10

and JJ Johnson had his first band in this club. I don't have to prove my credentials of how long I've been involved with black music, when most of the critics who are criticizing me for being involved in black music didn't pay any dues and didn't do anything to help black music. I've been involved with it from a business level and an emotional level for my entire life, so how can someone criticize my credentials because of the mere fact that the pigment of my skin happens to be what we call white.

NG: I've heard that **Norby Walters** overworks and oversaturates an artist in a particular market.

NW: My philosophy is as a businessman. I try to analyze each market as a freestanding area where I can sell the product, the product being the artist. In motion pictures there are places where a picture can play for a month, for six months, one year or two years. That means there is a demand for a particular product in a particular market. It doesn't hold true for every artist, or in every city. Yes, I will play an artist in a particular market more than another artist. That is because the market has such a huge amount of fans and I know if I go there and play in front of 3,000 people I have not scratched the surface. I might come back and play before another 3,000. But if I've sold 60,000 albums in that market, I know

I have 60,000 fans and I've only played to 6,000, which is only 1/20th of them. So why shouldn't I play to them, giving the fans an opportunity to see them, and giving the artist the opportunity to get more press.

I must be right because what we've done is create a gross dollar potential and a huge gross income for my artists. That is being proved, by the fact that so many managers are bringing their artists to us. Since we are a sales organization, they believe we can sell and develop more dollars per artist than other sales agencies. If the other sales (booking) agencies criticize us for our business techniques, shame on them, because we are winning as a result of those techniques.

NG: The company is called **Norby Walters Associates**. Do you have any partners or other agents in your company who help you with this operation?

NW: I was waiting for you to ask that question. I have two partners, Jerry Ade and Sal Michaels, who basically run the operation on a day to day basis.

Jerry landed on my doorstep 11 years ago as a youngster with an incredible drive. I just gave him a desk and a telephone and he hasn't gotten up or taken a break since then. He's an absolute powerhouse who kicks my butt if I try to slow down.

Sal Michaels is a lot more mellow. That doesn't mean he

**PAUL MARSHALL, Communications Attorney**

*"Norby Walters Associates stepped into the breach and pioneered the field of dance music and black music. It was a tremendous expenditure of energy on the part of three crazy guys, running around like madmen and believing in what they were doing."*

*"Now these people own the field, and it's the most rapidly expanding field in the industry. Through their hard work and expertise, they will continue to the top."*

**LARRY TROUTMAN, the Zapp Band**

*"Norby Walters, his agency and his associates, have achieved a great deal of success because they are willing to do things in a different manner, to take risks. I have a lot of respect for that."*

*"All the agencies courted us, but it was Norby who walked up to us with a long researched list of creative proposals. He didn't walk in with 'We'll book you and take 10%.' He saw us as unique and approached us uniquely."*

*"The firm's roster itself is one of its major selling points. And our association has been absolutely good for both them and us."*



Robert "Kool" Bell, Lionel Richie and Norby

can't get out of it every once in awhile, but generally speaking, he works in a slow but sure fashion. Sal's been with us since 1975 and has become the third leg of the tripod.

My feeling about both of my partners is that although I started the company, and my vast business experience gives us the cohesiveness and sense of direction, I fully believe that it take all three of us working full time, 12 hours a day non-stop, to bring the company to where we want to go.

I'd also like to mention that Jeff Frasco and my son Richie Walters have been with us for five or six years and are also unrelenting in their pursuit of delivering work to our artists.

I must also say that the rest of our agents and back up staff give it all they've got—long hours, no breaks, just pure dedication. I'm proud of all of them.

NG: What's the biggest new challenge for the **Norby Walters**

agency, what do you have to do that you haven't been doing? NW: We are celebrating our 15th year. The first five were selling bar bands. The second five disco, and in the third five we are selling r&b based/pop artists with a popular appeal to the general public but whose musical roots are based in black music.

Recently, we began an association with Don Kirshner, the rock and television personality and music publisher, to represent him in his new business ventures. We are working with him to develop his new companies, including videocassette programming, television programming for syndication and network, independent film production for theater release and films of the week, and new publishing companies. We are also developing a management company, a concert production company and a new record company. This new group of companies will all be grouped as one communications corporation. We are both excited about this venture.

We are also expanding into other areas of media which will include videocassette programming for both cable and syn-



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dication, the development of soundtracks for film and television, on behalf of our artists.

By concentrating heavily on r&b based/pop music, we believe we have the vehicle to educate the other areas of the media, of the viability of the product that has its roots in black music. I think that before us, it was so dispersed among so many different agencies that black music was a small portion of their business and not looked upon as being very important. We are now so strong and so respected by the powers that be, that when we walk into MTV, or Metromedia or NBC or Showtime or Universal or MCA, we are able to bring them a viable commodity. We come in a highly professional manner and with a lot of facts and figures to prove to them the saleability of black music. Don't ever kid yourself.



From left: **Norby Walters**, background singer, Luther Vandross, actress Leslie Uggams, Shirley Jones of the Jones Girls.

The bottom line is how much can they make, so if we can show corporate media, the networks, the syndicators, the people who control the major dollars for all the different areas, that black music is popular music, I believe they will buy it. Everybody is going to win by that.

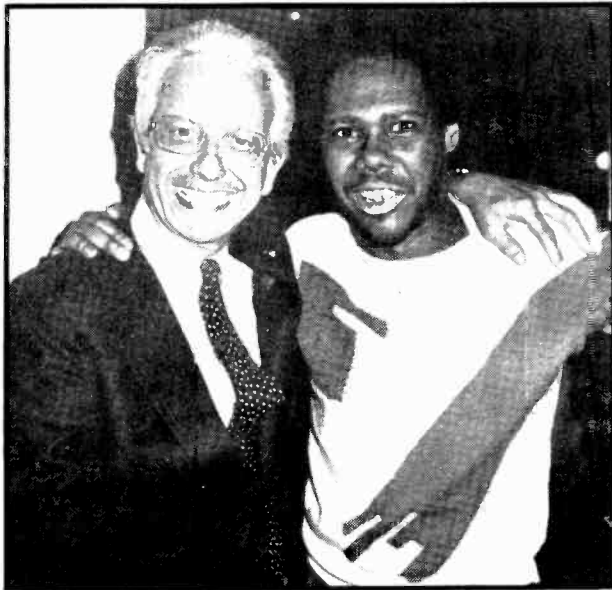
One of the things that bear this out is that the so called new music of today, by the Talking Heads and B-52's, are just groups that are playing black licks. Now that all these white groups are playing black music, you have a tremendous programming concept which is being referred to as urban contemporary programming and it is giving viability to the black artists, so that we can now show all the other media programmers and media developers, the viability of the musical sound itself. Once we establish that the musical sound

is accepted by America then we can now take it to the next step, because we can show that the black performer will also be accepted by America, given that opportunity.

I am happy to say that the black segment of record sales have been improving at a very strong pace. Michael Jackson has led the way. Lionel Richie has been doing an incredible job. Rick James and so many other black artists are reaching the gold and platinum status. I think that black music is showing it is capable of creating dollars, and I feel that within the next five years we'll be able to bring the recorded sound of black America to the combination of visual and audio-visual acceptance by the powers that be. That means they will give us the seed money to develop everything that is happening.

I think that the MTV controversy about not playing enough of black music is something that has to be addressed in its proper perspective. I think that Warner has to be given credit for spending this incredible amount of money on the idea that visual recorded music has a market. It's not a small thing. If they spend hundreds of millions of dollars trying to

• Continued on page NW-14



**Norby** and Nile Rodgers

**MARVIN SCHLACHTER**, President, Prelude Records  
*"I can't say too much about **Norby Walters**. I knew him when he was running Soldier Meyers, a jazz sa- loon in Brooklyn 30 years ago. I got into the music business, and he, too, left the club business and started to branch out as an agent. Our paths crossed again when he started to represent recording artists. He's an incredibly energetic individual who leaves no stone unturned in doing what he has to do."*

**AL DeMARINO**, Vice President, Artist Development, Epic/Portrait/Associated Labels  
*"**Norby Walters** and his associates, Jerry Ade and Jeff Frasco, have been working closely with the Epic/ Portrait/Associated labels for several years in a particularly professional and aggressive manner. Whether working a young artist, or star attractions such as the O'Jays and Luther Vandross, **Norby** and his team have helped E/P/A expose numerous artists in key markets—and always with great timing."*

**GEORGE WEIN & DINO SANTANGELO**, Festival Pro- ductions Inc.  
*"Congratulations to **Norby** and Sal, and their staff that has made our work a great deal easier. Not only does the **Walters** agency work full time for their art- ists, but they also follow up and make sure all the de- tails are attended to. Our very best wishes for another 15 successful years."*

**PABLO DAVIS**, Manager, Midnight Star  
*"Having known **Norby** for many years, I've watched him develop into an industry giant. I attribute his success to being efficient, aggressive, and most of all, concerned about the one thing that makes this indus- try work—talent."*

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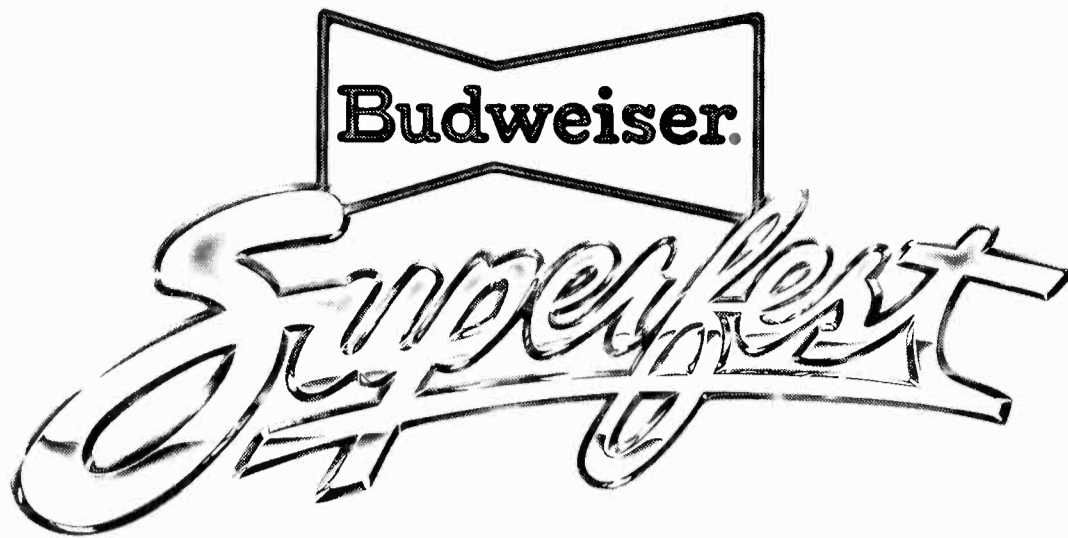
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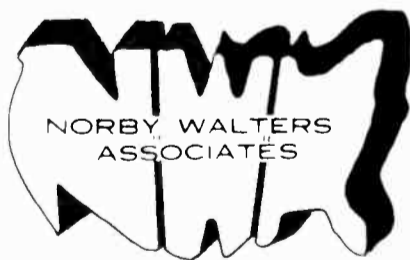
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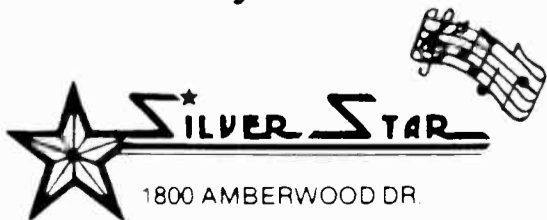
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## Nobody Books It Better

• Continued from page NW-13

bringing all this to the forefront of the American public, the mere fact that they are not programming enough black music may not be the issue. Most importantly I feel the fact that we have so much music now on television, we can get to the bottom of the racial battle in a couple of more minutes. First we had to find out whether or not mid-America would in fact tune into television to just see music at any given hour. Now the name of the game is to *make sure* that there is enough programming that will give everyone the opportunity to see *all* the music that is made available.

NG: Maybe they would have made more money on MTV if they had more black acts on that.

NW: There is no question about it. I would like to be able to point that out, and I hope someone from Warner Communications reads this article. If they would have spent just a couple of those dollars on black music, maybe they would have gotten more advertisers. So I give them credit for programming music, but we would certainly like to see them and other major corporations take a strong position in programming black music. Let's forget the color line and let's play music for music's sake. If it's good—play it, if it stinks—forget it. I don't care if it's black and it stinks, forget it. We don't need stinky music.

I think if we can give black music mainstream media acceptance then it will kind of be a continuing line. It will kind of continue from when we gave Miles Davis the opportunity to have his first bands back in Brooklyn in the late '40s. In the '80s, we can still forge ahead by bringing the black bands, once again, to the forefront of the American public. That's the connecting line from then to now, and that's where we are going.

*RUSS REGAN, Senior Vice President, Pop Music Division, PolyGram Records*

*"Norby never settles for second best; he is the best."*

*SONNY ANDERSON, Director of Talent Booking, Disneyland, Disney World, Epcot, Tokyo Disneyland*

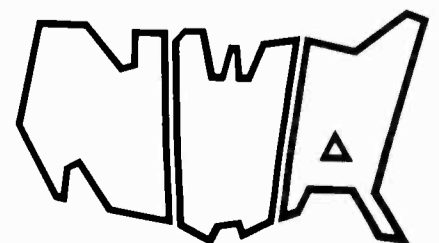
*"Everything has been absolutely terrific in all the years of business dealings I've had with Sal Michaels at Norby Walters Associates. I get the fastest answers there than from any other agency in the business. When you make an offer, it's great to have someone get back to you fast. Sal's one of the easiest, most cooperative people to do business with and I consider him a friend."*

*WALTER WILLIAMS, the O'Jays*

*"He did a wonderful job with us, and with the other acts he's taken on in the last year. He kept us working without hit product, and none of the other agencies keep you working without hit product. Norby Walters somehow manages to. It's his contacts, obviously, and the agents who work for him out hustling all the time to make these things possible. It's very important to us, especially in these times, to keep working."*



Norby Walters and Dick Clark





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### STAFF

**Norby Walters**—President  
Jerry Ade—Vice President, National  
Sal Michaels—Vice President, International  
Richard Walters—West Coast  
Jeff Frasco—Midwest  
Bruce Nichols—East Coast  
John Henderson—Southeast  
Leon Saunders—South  
Mark Seigel—South  
Cara Lewis—National Clubs  
Gregg Foster—International  
Eric Gold—Media Coordinator

**LONNIE SIMMONS**, President, Total Experience Records

"We have been with **Norby Walters** for our entire time with Total Experience Records, and we have found him to be a great inspiration and a great career builder. We take our hats off to him. He and his organization work extremely hard for our acts and we wish him the best of luck from the Gap Band, and the entire Total Experience roster."

**SCOTT SANDERS**, Vice President and Executive Producer, Radio City Music Hall concert division

"I think that **Norby Walters Associates** played a very influential role in the development of our very successful r&b business. We are pleased and proud to have had their support in the new Radio City Music Hall since 1979."

**RON STRASNER**, Manager, the Four Tops

"As a manager, it's good to be with an agency when an act needs help. In fact, it's more important to be with an agency then. In the past, when we needed help, **Norby** was always there for us."

"**Norby**, it's good to be the king, isn't it?"

**DAVID FRANKLIN**, Entertainment Attorney

"In this day of sophisticated salesmanship, **Norby's** the last of the real salesmen."

"He's also one of the few booking agents who calls me about an act before their records come out. Plenty of people call once your record's hit the charts, but **Norby** calls a month before it's even released. That's his forte—signing."

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*DICK KLOTZMAN, Veteran Talent Promoter*

*"In 19 years, I've done over 12,000 shows. In that entire time I have never seen the resiliency, guts and sheer dedication to one's goals as I have seen at the Norby Walters agency. I and my associates congratulate Norby, Jerry and Sal on their anniversary and wish them continued success, health and happiness."*

*BOB SHERWOOD, Vice President, Marketing, Columbia Records*

*"It's been a great deal of pleasure working closely with Norby first in the area of promotion, sales, and then in overall artist career development. He's a delight to work with because he's thorough, he keeps everyone informed of all facets of tours, and most important of all... he gets the job done!"*

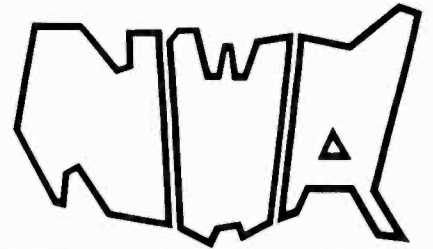
*KENDALL MINTER, Entertainment Attorney*

*"Without a doubt, Norby is and shall remain one of the most innovative, provocative, and progressive-minded entrepreneurs, and without a doubt one of the most successful talent agents in the music industry today."*

*"Working with him has always been exhilarating, sometimes challenging, but always productive."*

*"I wish Norby and his staff many more years of insightful, fast-paced success."*

Special Issues Editor, Ed Ochs; Assistant Editor, Robyn Wells; Jerry Ade and Sal Michaels profiles by Ethlie Ann Vare; Quote Box Editorial, Roman Kozak and Ethlie Ann Vare; Lead story, Nelson George, Billboard Black Music Editor; Cover design & layout, Kim Bucknam.



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LARKIN ARNOLD • ARMA ANDON • HENRY ALLEN • SONNY ANDERSON • ANHEUSER/BLSCH • SAM ALSTON • REGGIE ANDREWS • JAMES ALEXANDER • BUDDY ALLEN • ALAN BREGMAN • B.M.I. • SAL BONAFEDE • DARRYL BROOKS • JHERYL BUSBY • GORDON BAHARY • BURNING SPEAR • KURTIS BLOW • LARRY BLACKMON • DAVID BRAUN • SHERWIN BASH • IRV BEIGEL • ARTHUR BAKER • GATTO BARBIERI • BILL CHERRY • MARC CRISTINI • DAVID CARPIN • GEORGE CLINTON • FRANKIE CROCKER • JIMMY CLIFF • SERGIO CASSA • CAMEO • RAY CALABRESE • DICK CLARK • COMMODORES • HAROLD CHILDS • JACK CRAIGO • CARL CARLTON • RAY CAVIANO • PAUL COHN • **RONNIE** DYSON • BILL DERN • SIMO DOE • PABLO DAVIS • DAZZ BAND • CARL DAVIS • CLIVE DAVIS • SANDRA DECOSTA • GERALD DELET • AL DEMARINO • DEODATO • RON DELSENER • JOEL DIAMOND • TOM DRAPER • DON DEMPSEY • SUZANNE DEPASS • SAM DESTAFANO • MICKEY EICHNER • PARIS ELY • MICHAEL EPSTEIN • LEN EPAND • COPELAND FORBES • FOUR TOPS • DAVID FRANKLIN • FREEEZ • ARETHA FRANKLIN • MORT FARBER • AL FEILICH • JOE FRANKLIN • JEROME GASPER • BOB GROSSWEINER • JANE GREENWALD • GLORIA GAYNOR • DICK GRIFFEY • PAUL GONGOWERE • JOE GRANT • GAP BAND • DANNY GLASS • LEE GUBER • NELSON GEORGE • GRAND MASTER FLASH • MARVIN GAYE • BETTY GLADDEN • WILLIAM GARRISON • ERIC GOLD • JOHNNY GILL • ROY GERBER • SHEP GORDON • LEWIS GRAY • SANDY GALLIN • JACKIE GREEN • JERRY GREENBERG • GEORGE GRIEF • HOLMES HENDRICKSON • PHYLLIS HYMAN • AL HAYMON • WAYNE HALPER • STAN HOFFMAN • CHUCK HURWITZ • WILLIS HALL • FORREST HAMILTON • ALEX HARTNETT • CHARLES HUGGINS • HOWARD HEWITT • EDDIE HADDAD • CECIL HOLMES • GUENTHER HENSLER • ARCHIE IVY • MEL ILBERMAN • JOE ISGRO • RICK JAMES • TONY JONES • PENNY JOHNSON • THE JACKSONS • VARNEL JOHNSON • JOE JACKSON • LIONEL JOB • JONES GIRLS • KEITH JACKSON • HOWARD JOHNSON • CLARENCE JONES • ROY JOHNSON • KOOL & THE GANG • DON KING • MICHAEL KIDD • CAROL KIRKENDALL • DICK KLINE • EVELYN KING • LENNY KALIKOW • DON KIRSHNER • CHAKA KHAN • JOEL KATZ • KASHIF • BOB KRASNOW • CHARLES KOPPELMAN • KLIQUE • ALLEN KLEIN • LEW KIRTON • DICK KLOTZMAN • LAKESIDE • DONNY LINTON • STEVE LEBER • TONY LOPEZ • BRUCE LUNDVALL • ULYSSES LEWIS • VICKIE LIGHT • LABELLE • JOHN LUONGO • JAY LASKER • JOE LORIS • LILLO • CHERYL LYNN • DAVE LIEBERT • BASIL MARSHALL • SID MAURER • JAMIE MULHOLLAND • PAUL MARSHALL • MARY JANE GIRLS • RANDY MUELLER • DONJO MEDLEVINE • MIDNIGHT STAR • FRED MOULTRY • MECO MONARDO • SIDNEY MILLER • HOWARD MANNING • GEORGE MURPHY • RON MOSLEY • TONY MARTELL • DANNY MARCUS • TEENA MARIE • SKIP MILLER • MTUME • KENDALL MINTER • MIDEM ORGANIZATION • JAMES MASON • TIM McKENNA • NEW EDITION • O'JAYS • ONE WAY • QUENTIN PERRY • GREGG PECK • IRENE PERKINS • BERT PADELL • FREDDIE PERREN • NEIL PORTNOW • BUNNY RANSOM • JOE, SYLVIA & JOE ROBINSON, JR. • RUSS REAGAN • HENRY ROSENBERG • RUEBEN RODRIGUEZ • KEN REYNOLDS • FRED RAPPAPORT • RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL • BOB RENO • JULIE RIFKIND • SOLOMON ROBERTS • RICHARD ROEMER • MICHAEL ROSENBERG • DAVID RUBINSON • S.O.S. BAND • MARVIN SCHLACHTER • SUGAR HILL GANG • IRVING SQUIRES • BOB SUMMER • JON STOLL • JOE SIMONE • SYLVESTER • CHUCK SMILEY • LONNIE SIMMONS • SHALAMAR • RON STRASSNER • LINWOOD SIMON • SKYY • DAVID SHAMMA • VERNON SLAUGHTER • STARPOINT • REV. AL SHARPTON • RODDY SHASHUA • DARRYL STUART • TOM SILVERMAN • ED SUMMERFELD • SCOTT SANDERS • BOB SCHWAID • BOB SHERWOOD • MARGIE SEXTON • RUSSEL SIMMONS • PETER TOSH • THIRD WORLD • LEBARON TAYLOR • TAVARES • IRV TREUHAFT • THE TROUTMAN FAMILY • RUSSEL TIMMONS • FONZI THORNTON • BILL UNDERWOOD • ROBERT URBAND • LARRY UTTAL • LUTHER VANDROSS • GABE VIGORITO • PETER VAN BRUNDT • BOBBY VAN • BUZZ WILLIS • BELINDA WILSON • WHISPERS • GEORGE WARE • WALTER B. **WALTERS** • GEORGE WEIN • DIONNE WARWICK • SAM WEISS • IAN WRIGHT • CHARLES WARD • LENNY WHITE • JODI WILLIAMS • BETTY WRIGHT • VICKIE WICKHAM • BRUCE WALLACE • BOBBY WOMACK • LEE YOUNG JR. • TOMMY YOUNG • BILL ZISSBLATT • BURT ZELL • LEE ZHITO

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